

Liturgy for an Abrahamic Faiths Prayer Service

By liturgist Rev. Dr. Gwynne Guibord

(This liturgy is adapted from a prayer service held on Memorial Day, May 26, 2008 at All Saints Church, Pasadena. It was originally compiled for an interfaith setting and incorporated several music selections, although clergy, congregations or others may adapt it for their use as appropriate.)

OPENING MEDITATION

"There is no flag large enough to cover the shame of killing innocent people."

- Howard Zinn

Silent Procession

Call to Worship: Jewish/Christian/Muslim

Invocation

Let us pray

O God, you made us in your own image. Look with compassion on the whole human family; take away the arrogance and hatred which infects our hearts; break down the walls that separate us; unite us in bonds of love; and work through our struggle and confusion to accomplish your purposes on earth; that, in your good time, all nations and races may serve you in harmony. Amen.

- Adapted from The [Book](#) of Common Prayer

Welcome (by hosting clergy)

Prayer of Confession

Leader: God of mystery, you are far beyond our telling and the tales of our imagining, far beyond the doctrines and the dogmas of our believing

All: When we try and trap you inside, you are outside.

When we claim you as our own, you are another's.

When in fear we shut you out, you are [found](#) within.

When in anger we blame and accuse and judge our neighbor, we only condemn ourselves and blasphemy [your name](#).

Your love embraces all and loses no one.

Your care extends to every person and all things.

In such love is our cherishing and our peace,

And in such love may we journey on in peace.

- Week of Prayer for World Peace

First Reading (from the Jewish statement of the AFPI)

The Torah extols us to revere the holiness not only within others, but also to cultivate the holiness within ourselves: "You shall be holy, for I the Lord your God am holy" (Leviticus 19:2). The Talmud further underscores the necessity for Jews to emulate God's holiness in our actions:

Rabbi Hama, son of Rabbi Hanina, taught: [Deuteronomy 13:5] says, 'You shall follow Adonai your God'. Is it possible for humans to follow God? ... It means that people must imitate the divine attributes of the Holy One. Even as God clothes the naked, so shall you do likewise; even as God visits the sick, so shall you; even as God comforts mourners, so shall you. As God acts, so must we.

It is not an accident that the most commonly quoted Torah verse regarding justice – tsedek, tsedek tirdof, “justice, justice you must pursue” – and the verse from the Psalms, bakesh shalom ve-rodfehu, “seek peace and pursue it,” – both utilize the Hebrew root פ ד פ (P-D-F) meaning “pursue.” Shalom is not passive; we are obliged to work for shalom actively and consistently. “Rabban Shimon ben Gamliel taught: The world rests on three things – on Justice, on Truth, [and] on Peace, as it is written, ‘With truth, justice and peace shall you judge in your gates.’” In our tradition, the most effective and most righteous path to peace is the path of justice, and this intimate and symbiotic **relationship** between peace and justice compels us to be righteous in all relations in order to establish peace – at home and when we travel, with our families, with our neighbors, and even with our enemies.... When we fail to recognize and value the holiness inherent in another by acting violently or dismissively, the Torah suggests that the consequences are dire for us and our descendants because in negating or minimizing another’s sacredness and dignity, we necessarily negate or minimize our own.

First Affirmation

Leader: We pray with compassion for all who have been bereaved, or wounded by wars.

All: May they find comfort.

Leader: We pray with compassion for communities divided by fear and hatred.

All: May they know justice.

Leader: We pray with gratitude for those who work for peace.

All: May they have courage.

Prayer

Leader: May it be pleasing before you, Lord God of our Mothers and Fathers,
To abolish wars and shedding of blood from the world,
And to extend a great and wondrous peace through the world.
No more shall nation lift up sword unto nation, and no more shall they learn war.
Be Blessed Forever...

May the scripture be fulfilled as it is written:

And I will give peace in the land

And you shall lie down with none to make you tremble

And I will cause evil beasts to cease from the land

And the sword shall not pass through your land.

- Rabbi Nathan of Braslav: Likkutei Tefilot, 2,53

Second Reading (from the Christian statement of the AFPI)

False and violence-making boundaries are overcome by Jesus' vision of community. Under the corrupt imperial honor code, "neighbor" had been defined only as a peer – someone in one's own clan, village, region, economic class or political faction; there was no imperative to include outsiders or people of lesser status. Jesus speaks of "sheep who don't belong to this fold" (Jn 10:16)

– people outside of one's own tribe who nevertheless carry God's full blessing. The parable of the Good Samaritan (Lk 10:30-37) redefines the neighbor as anyone in need, especially the outsider. This is Jesus' vision of God's true community of compassion. In contemporary life, followers of Jesus understand that the living Christ calls people to meet God in the lives of the marginalized – those in need of justice and healing care – whoever they are. Whole nations are ultimately judged by the manner in which they respond collectively to the estranged and the poor:

“... ‘Come, you blessed of my Abba God! Inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the creation of the world! For I was hungry and you fed me; I was thirsty and you gave me drink. I was a stranger and you welcomed me; naked and you clothed me. I was ill and you comforted me; in prison and you came to visit me.’ Then these just will ask, ‘When did we see you hungry and feed you, or see you thirsty and give you drink? When did we see you as a stranger and invite you in, or clothe you in your nakedness? When did we see you ill or in prison and come to visit you?’ The ruler will answer them, ‘The truth is, every time you did this for the least of my sisters and brothers, you did it for me.’” (Mt 25:??-40)

The refusal to see that my enemy is actually my neighbor in God's eyes leads us to base foreign policy on the lie that an American life is more precious than any other. Jesus rejected such discriminatory ways of regarding others, insisting that whoever is in need is one's neighbor and whenever we extend compassion to “the least of these, you did it for me” (Mt 25:40).

Second Affirmation

Leader: We pray for those who make war weapons and profit from war.

All: May their consciences be awakened to what they do.

Leader: We pray for those who are tortured in mind, body and spirit.

All: May we hear their screams and be horrified into action.

Leader: We acknowledge the prejudice, greed, and lack of concern in our own hearts.

All: May we become aware of the sufferings of others.

Prayer

Leader: Lord make us an instrument of your peace.

Men: Where there is hatred, let me sow love.

Where there is injury, pardon.

Where there is doubt, faith.

Women: Where there is despair, hope.

Where there is darkness, light.

Where there is sadness, joy.

Leader: O Divine Master, grant that we may not so much seek

To be consoled, as to console;

To be understood, as to understand;

To be loved, as to love.

All: For it is in giving that we receive,
It is in pardoning that we are pardoned,
and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.
- St. Francis of Assisi

Third Reading (from the Muslim statement of the AFPI)

The Arabic word "Islam" is derived from the same root as the word "salaam" and has the same connotation as the Hebrew word "shalom." The best definition of the word "Islam" is to establish or promote inner and outer peace, in harmony with the will of God. The primary duty of a Muslim is to establish peace so that justice prevails and humanity prospers. A true Muslim does not commit acts of violence, either for the spread of Islam or for the purpose of achieving power in the name of Islam....

The fundamental premise of the Qur'an is tawheed, the oneness of God from which follows the unity of all humans with one another and with nature. The Shahadah, the central creed of Islam, testifies that "there is no god but God." The Qur'an asserts that God breathed His Spirit in every human being; this makes every human life sacred. Hence any wanton act of destruction of human life, whether self-inflicted or perpetuated on others, is strictly prohibited. We cannot love and revere all-merciful God by destroying His creation.

A person who does kill another will be lost to God's guidance in this life and denied entry to Paradise in the Afterlife. As the Quranic story of Cain and Abel states, "Because of this did We ordain unto the children of Israel that if anyone slays a human being – unless it be [in punishment] for murder or for spreading corruption on earth – it shall be as though he had slain all mankind; whereas, if anyone saves a life, it shall be as though he had saved the lives of all mankind" (5:32). The value of one life is equivalent to an entire world; to kill another person is to kill one's own brother or sister because all human beings are the progeny of Adam.

"And do not destroy one another: for, behold, God is indeed a dispenser of grace unto you" (4:29). This can be interpreted as a prohibition against suicide as well as murder; do not kill yourself because you are God's creation, and do not kill other humans who, like yourself, are God's creations. Life is a divinely granted trust, and humans are charged as khalifas, caretakers, and trustees of tawheed, God's oneness, so that we are obligated to treat all life with the utmost sanctity. Humans are given the gift of life with the admonition that they live it as moral beings. With free will and the independence to make choices, humans are given responsibility and are accountable for the consequences of our actions.

Third Affirmation

Leader: We recognize the failure of the nations to which we belong to seek peace and pursue it.

All: May we help awaken our nation to its urgent responsibility.

Leader: We acknowledge that thousands and thousands
of people are left homeless...without shelter of home or country.

All: We pray that all may be returned to their homeland with safety.

Leader: We know that the religions of the world have been misused to ferment violence and hatred.

All: May people of faith everywhere work together for understanding.

Prayer

Leader: In the name of Allah, the all-merciful, most compassionate

Praised be Allah, Lord of the Universe,

The all-merciful, most compassionate,

Lord of the day of judgment,

It is you alone we adore, you alone are our succor,

Show us the straight path.

The path of those whom you have blessed, not the path of Those who have incurred your wrath, nor the path of those

Who have strayed.

- The Holy Qu'ran, Surah Al-Fatiha

Closing Prayer of Dedication

Leader: In the name of our children and our children's children we dedicate ourselves in heart mind and soul toward creating a just and peaceable world. To our children we say...

All: May we give you the strength to be people of peace through our example and the strength of our faith... to have the courage and wisdom to transcend the temptation of war and instead to persevere to create the environment where peace can flourish.

In the many names of God... Lord of the Universe, Allah and Jesus Christ... may it be so... Amen and Amen.

Silent Procession

CLOSING MEDITATION

"Some day after we have mastered the winds, the waves, the tides and gravity, we will harness for God the energies of love and then for the second time in the history of the world, humankind will have discovered fire."

- Teilhard de Chardin