



# Peace Sunday 2026

Peace be with you all: towards an  
'unarmed and disarming' peace

Promoted by Pax Christi  
with the support of the  
International Affairs Department,  
Catholic Bishops' Conference, England and Wales

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*The 59<sup>th</sup> World Day of Peace will be observed in England and Wales on Sunday 18 January 2026, the 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of Ordinary Time (Year A). The readings for the Sunday Eucharist are Isaiah 49.3, 5-6; Psalm 39.2, 4, 7-10 (resp. vv. 8-9); 1 Cor. 1.1-3; John 1.29-34.*

## Introduction to the Liturgy

The Bishops of England and Wales invite us to keep this Sunday as a day of prayer for world peace. Pope Leo has chosen the theme: *Peace be with you all: Towards an 'unarmed and disarming' peace*. This is a daunting goal in the light of the widespread belief that we must be armed, even with nuclear weapons, to protect ourselves. Both Pope Leo and a recent statement from our own Bishops' Conference of England and Wales (*Called to be Peacemakers*) indicate that peace should not rely on fear, threats or weapons. Peace should have the capacity to resolve conflicts and open hearts through mutual understanding and hope. The phrase 'Peace be with you' is an integral part of our Liturgy in each Mass. We are all invited to be peacemakers. Let us start in our own hearts, asking forgiveness, and praying that we will be people of peace in a world of violence. Let us ask Jesus, the Prince of Peace, to guide us.

Lord Jesus, you prayed for peace in our world. **Lord, have mercy.**

Christ Jesus, you responded to violence with forgiveness. **Christ, have mercy.**

Lord Jesus, you forgave the sinner and those who persecuted you. **Lord, have mercy.**

## Introduction to the Readings

### First Reading (*Isaiah 49.3,5-6*)

The Prophet Isaiah is God's servant and messenger to bring the news of salvation to the ends of the earth. We too are ambassadors to bring that same peace to all nations.

### Second Reading (*1 Cor. 1.1-3*)

In his first words to the Corinthians St Paul reminds them that they are called to be saints. His greeting is a beautiful prayer, 'May God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ send you grace and peace'. Hopefully they will pass on that grace and peace.

## Gospel (Jn 1.29-34)

John the Baptist has just baptised Jesus in the river Jordan and pointed out 'the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world'. He is filled with the power of the Holy Spirit. We too, from our baptism, have that same Holy Spirit to inspire us with courage to work tirelessly for peace and reconciliation in our world.

## Homily Notes

What does peace feel like? What might we say? The absence of tension, a being in touch with the present moment, freedom from fear, feeling at one with those around us, contentment? And those feelings might lead us, at least from time to time, to recognise something holy happening, a presence, the touch of the Holy Spirit.

When we get in touch with our heart, images of peace will naturally emerge. Perhaps a baby at the breast, a sunrise or sunset, a particular place or view or a particular season in nature. Maybe it will be the presence of a loved one, a gathering of family - or the opposite, being free from the demands of others, alone, un-hassled. The images that come to mind are eloquent and important - icons and archetypes of what could be, the realm of human possibility and - at the same time - the uncovering of our woundedness.

Even in these few seconds of imagining, we glimpse this elusive thing called peace - whether as possibility, reality or the absent thing for which we thirst. If we never permit ourselves to dream, if we never register these images or listen to these feelings, the resources for building any sort of lasting peace evaporate. We each need a spiritual practice, be that formal meditation and fixed prayers or simply what happens when we walk the dog or do the Park Run or work out in the gym, that awakens our hearts each day to the dream of peace.

As we celebrate the theme Pope Leo gave for the World Day of Peace - *Peace be with you all: towards an 'unarmed and disarming' peace* - the Holy Father invites us to dream God's dream of peace.

Our western individualistic culture tends to think of peace in terms of 'being left alone', un-interfered with, to get on with our little personal pursuits of happiness. But that is not peace. Peace is about being connected. 'Peace be with you ALL' is the greeting Pope Leo extends to us today. I cannot be truly at peace if you, my brother or my sister, are not.

Again, our formation tends to make us think that peace is just an absence, of violence, of instability, of disorder. But through all the years of the Cold War there was never peace along the Iron Curtain, just increasing threat. And a harsh imposed order based on fear is just another form of violence. True peace means building trust, a certain vulnerability, the offering of the hand of friendship - ungloved, open-palmed, unarmed.

Peace must be 'disarming', says the Pope, not just in our personal relationships but on the global stage as well. To work for peace is to seek to bridge the gaps which separate, willing that our opponent might become our friend. It is a protest against the wasting of our energies and the resources of our planet on planning its destruction. 'Disarming peace' is not naivete but a hard-headed realisation that current planning for war and the billions being now spent on re-

armament are already robbing the poor of work, housing, education, health and life itself, before a shot is ever fired.

Many angry voices in our day attack those who do not simply get in line and endorse the march to war. But our Scriptures place before us an unarmed Saviour, the one the Baptist recognises as the Lamb of God. We know how this film ends. Badly. Christ becomes the lamb of sacrifice, crucified for his refusal to hate. Yet that, says faith, is the only way to peace or life. Look, says John, to where the Spirit descends and stays. That's where Christ is. That's where peace is. That's where we should head.

Believers cannot step outside the struggles of our world, cocooning ourselves in holy thoughts. We should be at the heart of those struggles, moved like our Lord and Master by others' hurts and hopes. But always we should remember what St Paul had to offer to his hearers in the Church at Corinth: '*grace and peace from God our Father and from Christ*'. Always our actions, our plans and our inspirations face this question: are we also ministers of grace and peace? Why would we want to spend our lives on anything less than these gifts, grace and peace, for the sake both of our children and of our planet?

Like the one of whom the prophet Isaiah sings today, we also are both servants and more than servants of our God; called to be '*a light for the nations, that God's salvation may reach the end of the earth*'. But it's not our light, our brilliance or our grace we have to share. It's always and only Christ's, a light we have to tap, to mine and to reflect for others by asking what peace would feel and look like here and now, on this January day in 2026.

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## Acknowledgements

Pax Christi would like to thank Fr Joe Ryan (Diocese of Westminster) for preparing this outline liturgy, and Canon Rob Esdaile for the homily notes. (Canon Rob Esdaile is Parish Priest of Woking & Knaphill Catholic Community, Surrey.)

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## Additional Resources

For additional Peace Sunday resources please see our website:

<https://paxchristi.org.uk/peace-sunday-2026/>

## Prayers of the Faithful

*You may wish to include one or more of the following intercessions.*

**Priest:** Let us pray to Jesus, the Lamb of God and Light of the Nations, that his light may shine in the dark places of our troubled world and that we will be bearers of that same light and hope.

We pray for Leo, our Pope, and all leaders, civil and religious: that together they will lead our world on a path of peace and dialogue to ensure that no stone is left unturned in the attempt to bring an end to war and violence. **Lord hear us.**

We pray for peace in our homes, our families, our parish community and neighbourhood: that the grace of peace which Jesus prayed for may be with us, so that we may be instruments of peace, justice and reconciliation. **Lord, hear us.**

We dare to pray for a desire to reject the false concept that nuclear weapons bring security; that we might understand what Gospel nonviolence looks like in the face of power, threats, injustice and suffering. **Lord, hear us.**

We pray for the prophets of peace in our day that, following the example of Jesus and John the Baptist, they will speak out boldly and inspire us to follow their example without fear - even to the point of being ridiculed. **Lord, hear us.**

We pray for all the victims of war and violence as we remember the areas of conflict imprinted in our minds through the news every day. We pray for a negotiated end to the wars in..... (mention ongoing and forgotten wars). May we never be complacent, but continue to believe that peace is possible.

**Lord, hear us.**

We pray for the United Nations, and for all who work locally and nationally for peace, reconciliation and the care of all humanity. On this Peace Sunday we ask God's blessing especially on the work of Pax Christi, the international Catholic peace movement, as we offer support with our prayers and financial help.

**Lord, hear us.**

We pray for all who are ill in our community (especially.....) and all who have died (especially.....) We pause to remember our own intentions. **Lord, hear us.**

**Priest:** God our Father, as the Spirit descended like a dove on your Son at his baptism, grant that the same Dove of Peace may guide us in our efforts for peace in our world today. We make these prayers, through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**