

Praying for Peace  
A Time for Prayer and Meditation  
at the end of the Church's Year of Mercy

Our Lady's  
Stricklands Road, Stowmarket  
3pm, Sunday 20 November

*Peace, to have meaning for many who  
have only known suffering in both peace  
and war, must be translated into bread or  
rice, shelter, health and education, as well  
as freedom and human dignity.*

Ralph Johnson Bunche (1904-1971)

*Presider*

O God, come to our aid.

*All*

**O Lord, make haste to help us.**

*Presider*

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit,

*All*

**as it was in the beginning,  
is now and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.**

**Hymn**

**God of mercy (840)**

*Presider*

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

*All*

**It is right to give him thanks and praise.**

**Please sit**

*Presider*

A year ago Pope Francis proclaimed the church's Year of Mercy, and Mercy Doors were opened in cathedrals all over the world. That year ends today - but its message has never been more important. Because to find peace, we must first forgive - and find forgiveness.

*Jo Lea, Chair of our Parish Council, introduces the candle brought today from the cathedral in Norwich to mark the end of the Year of Mercy.*

## **Reading 1 A reading from the Gospel according to Luke**

One of the Pharisees invited Jesus to a meal. When he arrived at the Pharisee's house and took his place at table, suddenly a woman came in, who had a bad name in the town. She had heard he was dining with the Pharisee and had brought with her an alabaster jar of ointment.

She waited behind him at his feet, weeping, and her tears fell on his feet, and she wiped them away with her hair; then she covered his feet with kisses and anointed them with the ointment.

When the Pharisee who had invited him saw this, he said to himself, 'If this man were a prophet, he would know who this woman is and what sort of person it is who is touching him and what a bad name she has.' Then Jesus took him up and said, 'Simon, I have something to say to you.' He replied, 'Say on, Master.'

'There was once a creditor who had two men in his debt; one owed him five hundred denarii, the other fifty. They were unable to pay, so he let them both off. Which of them will love him more?' Simon answered, 'The one who was let off more, I suppose.' Jesus said, 'You are right.'

Then he turned to the woman and said to Simon, 'You see this woman? I came into your house, and you poured no water over my feet, but she has poured out her tears over my feet and wiped them away with her hair.

You gave me no kiss, but she has been covering my feet with kisses ever since I came in. You did not anoint my head with oil, but she has anointed my feet with ointment. For this reason I tell you that her sins, many as they are, have been forgiven her, because she has shown such great love. It is someone who is forgiven little who shows little love.'

Then he said to her, 'Your sins are forgiven.'

Those who were with him at table began to say to themselves, 'Who is this man, that even forgives sins?'

But he said to the woman, 'Your faith has saved you; go in peace.'

*Reader*        The Word of the Lord  
*All*             **Thanks be to God**

- Meditation**
- How easy do we find it to forgive others?
  - In these difficult times, can we accept that those with differing views are as sincere in their arguments and beliefs as we are in our own?
  - Can we forgive political campaigners who do not tell the truth - and who make promises they fail to keep?

*Pause for silent prayer*

**Please stand**

**Psalm:**        **Remember, remember, your mercy Lord (843)**  
*Repeat refrain after cantor first time: cantor will sing verses*

**Prayer**        **Pope Francis' prayer for the Year of Mercy**

Lord Jesus Christ, you have taught us to be merciful like the heavenly Father, and have told us that whoever sees you sees Him. Show us your face and we will be saved.

Your loving gaze freed Zacchaeus and Matthew from being enslaved by money; the adulteress and Magdalene from seeking happiness only in created things; made Peter weep after his betrayal, and assured Paradise to the repentant thief.

Let us hear, as if addressed to each one of us, the words that you spoke to the Samaritan woman: "If you knew the gift of God!"

You are the visible face of the invisible Father, of the God who manifests his power above all by forgiveness and mercy: let the Church be your visible face in the world, its Lord risen and glorified.

You willed that your ministers would also be clothed in weakness, in order that they may feel compassion for those in ignorance and

error: let everyone who approaches them feel sought after, loved, and forgiven by God.

Send your Spirit and consecrate every one of us with its anointing, so that the Jubilee of Mercy may be a year of grace from the Lord, and your Church, with renewed enthusiasm, may bring good news to the poor, proclaim liberty to captives and the oppressed, and restore sight to the blind.

We ask you this, Lord Jesus Christ, who live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit for ever and ever.

*All*            **Amen**

**Please sit**

*Presider*      Syria is still in the grip of civil war, and other conflicts still rage across the Middle East. Seeing these images every day peace seems further away than ever - but we must never lose sight of it...

**Reading 2    Extracts from a speech by Federico Mayer, former Director-General of UNESCO**

A war is never won.

Never mind that history books tell us the opposite. The psychological and material costs of war are so high that any triumph is a pyrrhic victory.

Only peace can be won, and winning peace means not only avoiding armed conflict but finding ways of eradicating the causes of individual and collective violence.

Injustice and oppression. Ignorance and poverty. Intolerance and discrimination.

We must construct a new set of values and attitudes to replace the culture of war which, for centuries, has been influencing the course of

civilization.

Winning peace means the triumph of our pledge to establish, on a democratic basis, a new social framework of tolerance and generosity from which no one will feel excluded.

- Meditation**
- Moshe Dayan said that 'to make peace you don't need to talk to your friends. You need to talk to your enemies.' Can we forgive our enemies? Whoever they are?
  - What 'values and attitudes' do we want to instil in our children? Do the media instil those same values and attitudes?
  - Are we creating 'a new social framework of tolerance and generosity'?

*Pause for silent prayer*

**Hymn      A touching place (882)**

**Please stand**

**Prayer      (From a prayer of Sister Joan Chittister)**

Great God, who has told us  
"Vengeance is mine,"  
save us from ourselves,  
save us from the vengeance in our hearts  
and the acid in our souls.

Save us from our desire to hurt as we have been hurt,  
to punish as we have been punished,  
to terrorize as we have been terrorized.

Give us the strength it takes  
to listen rather than to judge,

to trust rather than to fear,  
to try again and again  
to make peace even when peace eludes us.

This we ask through Jesus,  
the one without vengeance in his heart.  
This we ask forever and ever.

*All*      **Amen**

**Litany**      **Give peace in our time (Martin Foster)**

*Repeat refrain after cantor first time: readers will say verses*

Give peace in our time, O Lord, in our hearts, in our homes, in our  
land, in our world, give peace in our time, O Lord; Give...

May the Church proclaim your Gospel  
to the poor and the oppressed  
For the nations torn by conflict,  
for countries broken by hatred.

For people starving for food,  
For people thirsting for life,  
For all scarred by abuse,  
For all hurt by addiction.

For all waiting for news,  
For all burdened by sin,  
In the light of your resurrection,  
In the hope of each new day.

**Please sit**

### **Reading 3 Extracts from an article in The Guardian**

I arrived in the UK when I was just 13 years old and was completely alone. I spent a year travelling through 10 countries, was sent to jail, had my face burnt with chemicals and almost died in the Mediterranean.

Three weeks after all this was finally over, I found myself in front of five strangers who were tasked with assessing my age. They were so careless they didn't bother to spell my name right or get the month and day of my birth correct on their form. They were in charge of my future.

They asked me questions about my family background, my journey – even silly questions about the province I came from in Afghanistan. After three or four hours they announced I was not 13 but 16-and-a-half.

They put me in an independent living centre with adult asylum seekers and told me I would be deported back to Afghanistan. After that, I felt broken inside. I felt hopeless that I had come all this way, through so much hardship, and now people were saying I was a liar; it was so bad that I tried to kill myself twice in the months that followed.

Finally, by chance, I found my brother and moved up to Bolton to be with him as soon as I could. There I found an education centre for migrant children called Starting Point. The headteacher there said a few small words that changed my life. She said she believed me. It meant everything.

The teachers at the school fought on my behalf, and I also took matters into my own hands. I went to the Afghan embassy and got a birth certificate and a passport; I went to a specialist doctor to confirm my age. Eventually because I also had my Home Office card with my real name on it, the Home Office had to accept I was telling the truth.

From then on I was put into foster care and allowed to go to school. I got 10 GCSEs and five A levels, and I have just graduated with a degree from Manchester University. Along the way I have written a book, spoken at the UN and carried the Olympic torch. All of those things happened because I was able to get the support and help I needed.

*Gulwali Passarlay, writer, student and activist*

- Meditation**
- What do we say to those suspicious of child refugees?
  - How do we respond to those who feel threatened by refugees and migrants?
  - How can we help countries bearing the brunt of the refugee crisis, as Pope Francis has asked us to do?
  - How can we, as individuals or as a community, best help people who seek a haven from war or poverty?

Pause for silent prayer - and later for our own spoken intercessions.

**Psalm**      **In your goodness, O God, you prepared a home for the poor**  
*Repeat refrain after cantor first time: cantor will sing verses*

**Please stand**

*Presider*      Let us say the prayer Our Saviour taught us.

*All*              **Our Father...**

*Presider*      The Lord bless us,  
and keep us from all evil,  
and bring us to everlasting life.

**Hymn**              **For the healing of the nations (886)**

*Presider*      This is the day that the Lord has made.

*All*              **Let us rejoice and be glad in it. Amen.**

**Acknowledgements:**

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