

**Prayer Service for Peace and Nonviolence  
On the 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Armistice Day, November 2018**

Armistice Day note by Camillo Mac Bica, September 30, 2018, from  
Common Dreams

Following World War One, up until then the bloodiest and most destructive war in the history of humankind, many of the beleaguered belligerent nations resolved, at least temporarily, that such devastation and tragic loss of life must never happen again. In the United States, on June 4, 1926, Congress passed a concurrent resolution establishing November 11<sup>th</sup>, the day in 1918 when the fighting stopped, as Armistice Day, a legal holiday, the intent and purpose of which would be to “commemorate with thanksgiving and prayer and exercises designed to perpetuate peace through good will and mutual understanding between nations.”

**Song:** Lord, Make Me a Channel of Your Peace

**Prayer:** (by Hildegard Goss-Mayr, March 2016)

Merciful God, our Father and Mother, you sent your Son Jesus, our Brother, to reveal through his life and teaching your divine, self-giving Love and so incarnate in our world the power of nonviolence, able to overcome ALL forms of violence and to reconcile humanity in justice and peace.

We confess that for centuries our Church, people of God, has betrayed this central message of the Gospel many times and participated in wars, persecution, oppression, exploitation and discrimination.

Holy Spirit, as we meet as peacemakers, we count on your light and your strength to help revive in the Theology of Peace the nonviolent message of Jesus in which there is no place for violence and to offer to all Christians the arms of peacemaking, pardon and reconciliation.

Holy Spirit, we trust in your light and strength...on our Church's way to becoming a Church of Peace, in the spirit of our Brother Jesus and so respond to the cry of humanity for life in dignity and peace.

## Reading about Ben Salmon (1888–1932)

Ben Salmon was a conscientious objector in World War I who is currently being proposed for canonization in the Catholic Church. Ben Salmon wrote to President Woodrow Wilson in 1917. In his letter he says that, although he just registered for the draft as required by law, he is claiming an exemption based on conscience. An excerpt follows:

“Regardless of nationality, all men are my brothers. God is ‘our Father who art in heaven.’ The commandment ‘Thou shalt not kill’ is unconditional and inexorable.

If the parent orders the child to do wrong, the child should disobey. If the State commands the subject to violate God's law, the subject should ignore the State. Man is anterior to the State, and God is supreme.”

Bensalmon.org

[From Wikipedia:] Salmon was born and raised in a working-class Catholic family. When President Woodrow Wilson ordered a draft, Salmon was one of a number of Americans to refuse to cooperate. Salmon was arrested in January 1918 for refusing to complete a Selective Service questionnaire. While out on bail, he was re-arrested for refusing to report for induction. Despite not having been inducted, he was court-martialed in 1918, charged with desertion and spreading propaganda.<sup>[5]</sup> He was sentenced to death, but later re-sentenced to 25 years hard labor. He arrived at Fort Leavenworth, just one month before World War I ended on November 11, 1918. He began a hunger strike "for liberty or death" on July 13, 1920.<sup>[6]</sup> The government claimed that his fast was a symptom of mental illness and sent him to a ward reserved for the "criminally insane" at St. Elizabeth's Hospital in Washington, D.C .

Upon his release, Salmon led a quiet life with his family, but his prison ordeal, which included beatings and force-feedings, had permanently damaged his health. He died of pneumonia in 1932.

**Readings from: Pope Francis' 2017 World Day of Peace message, "Nonviolence: A style of politics for peace"**

“The Church has been involved in nonviolent peacebuilding strategies in many countries, engaging even the most violent parties in efforts to build a just and lasting peace.”

...

“An ethics of fraternity and peaceful coexistence between individuals and among peoples cannot be based on the logic of fear, violence and closed-mindedness, but on responsibility, respect and sincere dialogue. Hence, I plead for disarmament and for the prohibition and abolition of nuclear weapons: nuclear deterrence and the threat of mutual assured destruction are incapable of grounding such an ethics.”

### **Reading from Isaiah 2:4**

God shall judge between the nations, and impose terms on many peoples.

They shall beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks;

One nation shall not raise the sword against another, nor shall they train for war again.

### **Readers' Theatre: "What is Nonviolence?"**

(MCC Mennonite Central Council)

**Voice 1:** What is nonviolence?

**Voice 2:** It is a strategy for social change that rejects violence.

**Voice 3:** It is a philosophy of active peacemaking.

**Voice 2:** It is a spiritual discipline.

**Voice 2:** It is a pragmatic choice based on what works.

**Voice 2:** It is an active response to violence.

**Voice 3:** It is a force more powerful than violence.

*(pause)*

**Voice 1:** Why are we talking about nonviolence during a worship service?

**Voice 3:** Because God's will is for peace.

**Voice 2:** Because God calls us to turn swords into ploughshares.

**Voice 3:** Because God is the source of power.

**Voice 2:** Because God is the source of love.

**Voice 3:** Because God is love.

*(pause)*

**Voice 1:** Did Jesus ever say anything about nonviolence?

**Voice 2:** Jesus said, "Blessed are the peacemakers."

**Voice 3:** Jesus said, "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you."

**Voice 2:** Jesus said, "Do not be afraid."

**Voice 3:** Jesus said, "Put down your sword."

**Voice 2:** Jesus said, "Turn the other cheek and go the second mile."

**Voice 3:** Jesus said, "Love your enemies."

*(pause)*

**Voice 1:** How do Christians walk the talk of nonviolence in everyday life? **Voice 2:** By working for justice.

**Voice 3:** By trusting in God rather than trusting in weapons.

**Voice 2:** By rehearsing creative and disarming ways of responding to a crisis. **Voice 3:** By actively and publicly resisting war.

**Voice 2:** By building relationships with those who are supposed to be enemies. **Voice 3:** By training for love.

*(pause)*

**Voice 1:** Don't people already know enough about love?

**Voice 2:** The nonviolent love of Christ surpasses knowledge.

**Voice 1:** Does that mean people will never really understand nonviolence? **Voice 2:** It means that nonviolence is rooted in the mind, but also in the heart.

*(pause)*

**Voice 1:** What is nonviolence?

**Voice 2:** The way of Jesus.

**Voice 3:** A force more powerful than violence.

**Voice 2:** The way of love.

### **Gospel reading: Lk 6:27-28**

"To you who hear me, I say: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you; bless those who curse you and pray for those who maltreat you."

### **Take 5 minutes to talk with one or two people seated near you.**

*Do you agree with the statement: "The time has come for our Church to be a living witness and to invest far greater human and financial resources in promoting a spirituality and practice of active nonviolence and in forming and training our Catholic communities in effective nonviolent practices"? How can you help the Church promote nonviolence? How is "Jesus our inspiration and model" for this?*

## **Closing prayer: Prayer for World Peace**

*by Sr. Joan D. Chittister, OSB*

Great God, who has told us “vengeance is mind,” 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.

- ~ We ask, O God, for the grace to be our best selves.
- ~ We ask for the vision to be builders of the human community rather than its destroyers.
- ~ We ask for the humility as a people to understand the fears and hopes of other peoples.
- ~ We ask for the love it takes to bequeath to the children of the world to come more than the failures of our own making.
- ~ We ask for the heart it takes to care for all peoples.

Give us the depth of soul, O God, to constrain our might, to resist the temptations of power, to refuse to attack the attackable, to understand that vengeance begets violence, and to bring PEACE, not war wherever we go.

- ~ For you, O God, have been merciful to us.
- ~ For you, O God have been patient with us.
- ~ For you, O God have been gracious to us.

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

## **Final song: (Choose one)**

“Let There Be Peace on Earth”

“This little Light of Mine”

“If You Believe, and I Believe,” Zimbabwean traditional

[Source of Armistice Day prayers: Resources from Pax Christi International's Catholic Nonviolence Initiative, at [www.nonviolencejustpeace.net](http://www.nonviolencejustpeace.net)]