

Pax Christi Asia Pacific Ecumenical Prayer: 28 November 2017

Opening Responses

Leader: *O God, who called all life into being.*

ALL: The earth, sky and sea are yours.

L: *Your presence is all around us.*

ALL: Every atom is full of your energy.

L: *Your spirit enlivens all who walk the earth.*

ALL: With her we yearn for justice to be done.

L: *For creation to be freed from bondage.*

ALL: For the hungry to be fed.

L: *For captives to be released.*

ALL: For your kingdom of peace to come on earth. Amen

Whither our times? See, Judge, Act

2017 is a year of significant anniversaries. In 1517 Martin Luther gave us the Reformation that 'The Economist' magazine has described as one landmark in human history that *'more than any other gave birth to the modern world'*. Five centuries later our modern world is noted for a mindset that justifies inequitable economic systems in the name of growth and progress. 1917 saw the Russian Revolution which unleashed its own tale of conflict and suffering. This year is also the 100th Anniversary of the Balfour Declaration that sealed the fate of the Palestinian people whose struggle remains till **today** a trauma for them, the Middle East and the world at large.

'*See, Judge and Act*' is an approach that integrates knowledge, faith and response devised by Joseph Cardign, the founder of Young Christian Workers, nearly a hundred years ago. It is a methodology that has been found useful by church and ecumenical groups.

See: Yesterday the reflections came thick and fast from all around the Asia Pacific region. We learnt of the discrimination and injustice our indigenous sisters and brothers are faced with. We spoke of the neo-liberal economic model and the profit motive that eventually shape governments and policies. We decried the excessive over-extraction of the earth's resources. Militarisation, the silencing of dissent, the role of the media, the power of the corporations, xenophobia, violence at all levels of society were among some of the other concerns raised. As the facilitator Myla said, the suffering is extensive, structural, palpable. How do people of faith respond?

Judge: The words Pax Christi - the Peace of Christ - give us, people of faith and goodwill, a framework for reflecting on our times. It is based on the Gospel that is not complicated to understand, but is challenging to practise. Pax Christi is not Pax Greca, Pax Romana, Pax Victoriana, Pax Americana ...all of them based on notions and values of muscularity and superiority. Pax Christi, the Peace of Christ, by contrast, is counter-cultural, exalting the values

and spirit of the Beatitudes. Two of the Beatitudes particularly apply to us: *Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for what is right, for they shall be satisfied. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called children of God.* Pax Christi is an invitation to advance a Kingdom based on love and hope, listening and discerning, reconciliation with people and creation, on truth and justice. In fact, truth is a 'sine qua non' for justice.

ACT: Moved by the spirituality of Pax Christi, we are called to act in our world, to stand for creative and active non-violence, to recommit ourselves to the centrality of Gospel non-violence and peace. Using all our energies of mind and heart, without naivety but with impeccable scholarship, acting and collaborating with those of goodwill, we are called to speak, as did St Paul, truth to power, those who shape the socio-economic architecture of our times that results in vast numbers of the suffering, including war victims, refugees, and the poor at large. We proclaim the prophetic voice of the Church. But, as Christians, we act with the certainty of hope – not passive, flaccid hope but an active hope, one that we help realise because we believe. Yesterday we dreamed and hoped for another world. It is a hope that Isaiah already expressed when he wrote eloquently and prophetically about 'new heavens and a new earth' in the following text:

Scripture Text: Is 65: 15 – 25

Reader 1: 'For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth;
and the former things shall not be remembered or come into mind.
But be glad and rejoice forever in that which I create;
for behold, I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy.'

Reader 2: I will rejoice in Jerusalem, and be glad in my people;
no more shall be heard in it the sound of weeping and the cry of distress.
No more shall there be in it an infant that lives but a few days,
or an old man who does not fill out his days,
for the child shall die a hundred years old,
and the sinner a hundred years old shall be accursed.

Reader 3: They shall build houses and inhabit them; they shall plant vineyards and eat their fruit. They shall not build and another inhabit; they shall not plant and another eat; for like the days of a tree shall the days of my people be, and my chosen shall long enjoy the work of their hands. They shall not labour in vain, or bear children for calamity; for they shall be the offspring of the blessed of the Lord, and their children with them.

Reader 4: Before they call I will answer, while they are yet speaking I will hear. The wolf and the lamb shall feed together, the lion will eat straw like the ox; and dust shall be the serpent's food. They shall not hurt or destroy in all my holy mountain, says the Lord.'

Brief Reflections (if time allows)

Closing

We close with a Franciscan Benediction:

Leader: May God bless us with Discomfort....at Easy Answers, Half-Truths, and Superficial Relationships, so that we may live Deep Within Our Hearts.

All: May God bless us with Anger.... at Injustice, Oppression, and Exploitation of People, so that we may work for Justice, Freedom, and Peace.

Leader: May God bless us with Tears...to shed for those who suffer from Pain, Rejection, Starvation and War, so that We may reach out Our Hands to Comfort them and to turn their Pain into Joy.

All: And may God bless us with enough foolishness....to Believe that We Can Make a Difference in this World, so that We can DO what others claim cannot be Done. Amen

As missionaries of mercy and pilgrims of peace, let us call upon the Light of Christ to sparkle among us as we sing:

Longing for light, we wait in darkness

Longing for truth, we turn to you

Make us your own, your holy people,
light for the world to see.

Refrain

Christ, be our light! Shine in our hearts.
Shine through the darkness.
Christ, be our light!
Shine in your church gathered today.

2. Longing for peace, our world is troubled.

Longing for hope, many despair.
Your word alone has pow'r to save us.
Make us your living voice.

3. Longing for food, many are hungry.

Longing for water, many still thirst.
Make us your bread, broken for others,
shared until all are fed.

4. Longing for shelter, many are homeless.

Longing for warmth, many are cold.
Make us your building, sheltering others,
walls made of living stone.

5. Many the gifts, many the people,
many the hearts that yearn to belong.

Let us be servants to one another,
making your kingdom come.