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Ash Wednesday 9 March 2011



*Resistance to
and
Repentance for*

*Nuclear War
Preparations*

*Ministry of
Defence, London*

Let your hearts be broken, not your garments torn, turn to the Lord your God again, for God is all tenderness and compassion.
(*Joel 2:13*)

Repentance means a change of mind and heart. Joel calls it heart-break... The call to repentance is a call to the Nation to change political, social and economic structures which oppress and exploit the weak. (*Gerry Hughes, sj*)

We take this action in a spirit of openness and nonviolence. To create an atmosphere of confidence and security for *all* those involved - and to communicate a clear, strong message to the public and the police, we invite you to be nonviolent in word and deed throughout this action. This means

- Showing respect for all people we encounter.
- Taking care that you do not endanger yourself or others when crossing roads, and keeping pathways clear for those passing by.
- Engaging only in the scenarios set out in the Liturgy booklet

Our liturgy and witness today is undertaken in respectful opposition to the MoD's preparations for the deployment of weapons of mass destruction. We have never sought permission from the police to engage in the act of prayer and resistance which has taken place here every year since 1982. The police are normally courteous, but under recent legislation may deem this an 'unauthorised protest'. If the police try to prevent our gathering, you will be given sufficient **warning to walk away and avoid arrest**. Members of CCND and Pax Christi will give guidance and further warnings if required.

Please read this before the Liturgy begins. The sponsoring organisations have agreed to guidelines for this action, for those who have prepared to mark the building and those taking part in the procession and liturgy. Those willing to risk arrest today are known to the sponsoring organisations, have prepared themselves through prayer and discussion, and have fully accepted the Guidelines.

If you **have not been part** of this preparation, we ask you to respect the process for this witness and not involve yourself in any civil disobedience activity.

Welcome & introduction from Pax Christi

We will put one foot in front of the other
On the road to peace, on the road to peace.
We will put one foot in front of the other
And with God's help we shall arrive.

We will walk in hope and care for each other
On the road to peace, on the road to peace.
We will walk in hope and care for each other
And with God's help we shall arrive.

We will leave behind our fear and suspicion
On the road to peace, on the road to peace.
We will leave behind our fear and suspicion
And with God's help we shall arrive.

We will learn to trust and learn to be trusted
On the road to peace, on the road to peace.
We will learn to trust and learn to be trusted
And with God's help we shall arrive.

And with each small step we're all getting closer
On the road to peace, on the road to peace,
And with each small step we're all getting closer
And with God's help we shall arrive.

We will put one foot in front of the other
On the road to peace, on the road to peace.
We will put one foot in front of the other
And with God's help we shall arrive.

Words and music by Sue Gilmurray

Commitment - said in two parts

Side 1. In this world of hatred, indifference, fear and anxiety, we pledge to be instruments of your love.

Side 2. In this world of selfishness, greed and materialism, we pledge to be instruments of your selfless service and generosity.

Side 1. In this world of revenge and retaliation and resentment, we pledge to be instruments of your mercy and compassion and forgiveness.

Side 2. In this world of doubt and despair, we pledge to be instruments of faith and hope.

Side 1. In this world of lies and darkness, to we pledge be instruments of truth and light.

Side 2. In this world of war and nuclear weapons and death, we pledge to be instruments of your peace and nonviolence and life.

Blessing

All: And so, may the God of peace, who loves each one of us infinitely, send us forth as an instrument of God's peace, love, and nonviolence, and may the God of peace bless us, the Creator, the Christ and Holy Spirit! Amen.

(Adapted from prayer offered by John Dear sj at the Los Alamos, New Mexico liturgy of sackcloth and ashes)

Road to Peace

Musical notation for the hymn "Road to Peace". The music is written in 4/4 time with a key signature of one flat (B-flat). The lyrics are: "We will put one foot in front of the o-ther On the road to peace, on the road to peace, We will put one foot in front of the o-ther And with God's help we shall ar- rive." The notation includes two staves of music with lyrics underneath. Chord symbols are placed above the notes: Dm, C, F, C, A7, Dm, C, A7, Dm.

A. You are welcome here in the name of Jesus Christ, to share his way to the Cross, that we may pass with him from death to life.

B. You are welcome here in the name of Jesus Christ, to repent of all violence and to accept a life based on hope, through trust in God, rather than despair through trust in nuclear weapons.

A. This year marks the 29th consecutive year that a Lenten witness has been held outside the Ministry of Defence. We are here to witness to our belief that it is better to risk living by the code of nonviolence, rather than to live a half-life hiding behind the false security of nuclear deterrence. We shall not be deterred from our witness, which we make in the name of Jesus Christ, who was arrested and scorned for his acts of civil disobedience, when he opposed the hypocrisy of the Holiness code and overturned the tables in the Temple.

All: We will pray here, as Christ prayed in the garden of Gethsemane, in preparation for our journey with him to Golgotha. With Christians throughout the world on this day, we turn from sin and proclaim an alternative to the world's way by committing ourselves to the Way of Peace in solidarity with Christ and the kingdom of God.

Call to worship

A. By tradition on Ash Wednesday each year, we mark ourselves with a cross in ash, to signify our repentance of all that prevents us from following Christ on his way to the cross. The violence and fear, which provoked imperial forces to execute Jesus, still dominate the agenda of world powers today. Our Lenten Witness attempts to speak out against those powers and dominations, particularly with regard to the threat to deploy and use nuclear weapons. We are here as those who dissent from the notion that the MoD speaks in our name on this issue. Our liturgy is intended to ask: "what exactly is the Trident missile system going to deter?". We are here to proclaim a Christian alternative to nuclear deterrence, and to put our trust in God.

B. The government continues with its plans to replace Trident, in contradiction of our obligations to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. We protest against this idolatry by being here to worship God, who sent his Son as a sign of peace. We offer worship here, in the presence of those who are required to carry out the bidding of the government to maintain the Trident nuclear system. We pray to God, undeterred by the indifference of our political leaders, and convinced by the power of God to bring life out of death, and to help restore a maddened world to its rightful mind.

Prayers of Penitence

A. Within weeks of the bombing of Coventry Cathedral in 1940, a wooden cross of charred timbers was set up, and in chalk on the wall was written 'Father, forgive'. Before we go to mark another place with that same call to repentance, let us recognise our own sinfulness and ask our God to forgive us of all that separates us from his divinity and from one another.

All: We confess that in our lives
 we do not always choose the way of peace;
 we spread gossip which fans the flame of hatred;
 we are ready to make any sacrifices when Caesar demands,
 but few when God invites.
We worship the false god of security and nationalism;
 we hold out our hand in friendship
 but keep a weapon in the other behind our back.
 We have divided your body of people
 into those we trust and those we do not.
 Huge problems challenge us in the world
 but our greed, fear and selfishness
 prevent us from uniting to solve them.
 Lord, we pray for your help, your forgiveness,
 and your reconciling power in our lives. *(Pax Christi)*
Gospel reading: Mathew 6:1-6, 16.18

Blessing of water

B: When we beg you to instill into the hearts of all human beings the wisdom of peace, the strength of justice and the joy of fellowship.

Hear our voice.

A: For we speak for multitudes in every country and every period of history who do not want war and are ready to walk the road of peace.

Hear our voice

B: And grant insight and strength so that we may always respond to hatred with love, to injustice with total dedication to justice, to need with sharing of self and to war with peace.

Oh God, hear our voice and grant unto the world your everlasting peace.

Pope John Paul II (amended)

A: Let us now offer one another a sign of peace



A: We have offered a prayer of hope. As a sign of that hope we will use the ash that has been for us a symbol of sorrow and death as a symbol of life, and the joy that is to come. Gardeners often improve compost with wood ash.

The ash that has been carried on the sackcloth is now added to soil in a bowl. As each of three bulbs is planted the planter says:

1st planter: from repentance to forgiveness

2nd planter: from despair to hope

3rd planter: from death to Life

The bulbs are now watered with the remaining blessed water.

B: For questioning the authority of Jesus' teaching on the Cross, we ask you...

B: For placing human standards above divine compassion, we pray...

B: For the moral blindness of our nuclear intention, we beg you...

B: For trusting in instruments of death to save us rather than in the power of the Living God, we beseech you...

B: For betraying Christ's love by allowing hunger and violence that claim lives daily, we implore you...

We repeat this as the sprinkling continues

Song: Diverse in culture, nation, race (*Ruth Duck / Music: Thomas Tallis*)

Diverse in culture, nation, race,
we come together by your grace.
God let us be a meeting ground
where hope and healing love are
found.

When chasms widen, storms arise,
O Holy Spirit, make us wise.
Let us resolve, like steel be strong
To stand with those who suffer
wrong.

God let us be a bridge of care
connecting people everywhere.
Help us confront all fear and hate
and lust for power that separate.

God, let us be a table spread
With gifts of love and broken bread,
Where all find welcome, grace
attends,
and enemies arise as friends.

We move on in silence, carrying our sackcloth past the front entrance of the Ministry of Defence. We gather again in the garden on the South side of the building where we look up and offer our prayer of hope.

A: To you, Creator of nature and humanity, truth and beauty, we pray:
Hear our voice.

B: For it is the voice of the victims of all wars and violence among individuals and nations.
Hear our voice.

A: For it is the voice of all children who suffer and will suffer when people put their faith in weapons and war:

Hear our voice

A. All God's creation is holy. This water is already holy, but we ask God our Father to bless it for its special use today.

All stretch out their hands and say:

All: Lord God Almighty, Creator of all life, we ask you to bless this water as we use it in faith. Forgive our sins and save us from the power of evil. Amen

Blessing ash & charcoal

Those who have prepared to mark the building come forward with charcoal. The ash and charcoal are blessed with holy water and we will mark ourselves before going to mark the Ministry of Defence

A. Dear friends in Christ, let us ask God to bless this charcoal and ash, which we will use as a mark of our repentance.

All: Holy and immortal God, you do not desire the death of sinners, but rather that we should repent of our sins and live. Bless this charcoal and ash, that it may be for us a sign of repentance, and a mark of your salvation through Christ, who died for us and rose from the ashes of death to bring us eternal life. Amen

Act of Penitence

Representatives of the sponsoring groups use the ash to mark each of us with a cross on our forehead

A: From the dust of the earth were we created.

All: To the dust we shall return

B: Through our sins, we have destroyed and squandered the resources of the earth.

All: May our repentance gather us into a new community, which cherishes the earth and all her people.

A: Direct our hearts to better things, O God. Heal us from sin and ignorance, as we turn again to you, to repent and believe the gospel.

Those who wish to be marked with the cross come forward. Those marking us with ash say:

Repent, and believe the Gospel.

Response: Amen

During the ashing we sing:

*O Lord, hear my prayer, O Lord hear my prayer, when I call, answer me.
O Lord, hear my prayer, O Lord hear my prayer, come and listen to me.*

Commissioning

All: Our merciful God gave his son to die for us upon the cross. We who have been marked with the cross bear witness to salvation through Jesus Christ our Lord.

A: Do not put your trust in princes, but trust in God alone.

Dismissal

All: As members of the body of Christ, we will witness together to the peace of Christ at the Ministry of Defence.

B. We pray that our peaceful intentions may be clearly expressed in our worship, our symbolic acts of witness, and in the way that we relate to those we meet this day and throughout Lent - particularly any who may not understand the Christian basis for our action.

Let us pray...

Loving God, inspired by your Holy Spirit, we go to the Ministry of Defence to worship, vigil, fast and pray. In undertaking this witness, we commit ourselves to act in a spirit of love and nonviolence, in the name of Christ. Amen.

consists, and on this depends your long stay in the land which Yahweh swore to your fathers Abraham, Isaac and Jacob he would give them. (*Dt. 30:15-20*)

C: Disarming now, reversing the decision to replace Trident with a new system, would show Britain to be truly great... Ultimately, to continue with a new generation of Trident, whether three submarines or four, 200 warheads or 160, is to admit failure and weakness. It would be weakness because weak people and weak nations do not trust their own resources, do not see their own natural strengths as adequate, and instead saddle themselves with the tools and trappings of power and might. But as people of faith we believe that only God should come with power and might.

Cardinal Keith O'Brien, of St Andrews and Edinburgh Diocese, Scotland.

All: Call us Lord Jesus to repent, to turn away from the culture of death and choose a culture of life. Give us the courage to speak and act against the logic of violence and militarism; nuclear weapons policies and the false peace they offer our world.

A sheet of sackcloth is place in front of the MoD building. The word REPENT will be marked out at the steps of the MoD. Once the outline is marked, those who wish may come forward and add to the outline with blessed ash or sprinkle ash onto the cloth as our community symbol of repentance.

A: Let your hearts be broken, not your garments torn, turn to the Lord your God again, for God is all tenderness and compassion. (*Joel 2:13*)

All: Repentance means a change of mind and heart. Joel calls it heart-break, letting God who is all tenderness and compassion, break the cocoon of selfishness with which we defend ourselves from God and others. The call to repentance is a call to the Nation to change political, social and economic structures which oppress and exploit the weak. (*Gerry Hughes, sj*)

Litany of Repentance : *Response:* Lord, Lead us to repentance

cooperation and respect. A peace that has as its ultimate security our trust in and love of God.

We now walk to our second prayer point on the other side of Horseguards Avenue: please cross the road with care

Song : Ubi caritas, et amor. Ubi caritas, Deus ibi est
(Where charity and love are, God is there).

Station 2. The Ministry of Defence

I set before you, life and death - choose life!

C. It is tempting to think that the task is too difficult. Once we have discovered this destructive technology, we cannot pretend it does not exist. Yet equally we cannot - if we are serious about our human dignity - behave as though we had no choice, as if we were the slaves of what our own hands had made. That would be a kind of idolatry: a sin against the God who has made us free to choose between life and death. However precisely we seek to make real the hope of a world without nuclear arms, we should not lose sight of the need to make real moral choices about them. Even a small step is an act of witness. *(Archbishop Rowan Williams, speech at Nagasaki, September 2009)*

B: See, today, I set before you life and prosperity, death and disaster. If you obey the commandments of the Lord your God that I enjoin on you today, if you love the Lord your God and follow his ways, if you keep his commandments, his laws, his customs, you will live and increase and the Lord your God will bless you in the land which you are entering to make your own. But if your heart strays, if you refuse to listen, if you let yourself be drawn into worshipping other gods and serving them, I tell you today, you will most certainly perish; you will not live long in the land you are crossing the Jordan to enter and possess. I call heaven and earth to witness against you today: I set before you life or death, blessing or curse. Choose life then so that you and your descendants may live, in the love of the Lord your God, obeying his voice, clinging to him; for in this your life

IMPORTANT

We will walk in silence to Horseguards Avenue, stopping three times for prayer and reflection.

Station 1. Old War Office

Waiting and Betrayal

A: Then Jesus went with the disciples to a place called Gethsemane: and he said to them,

All: "Sit here while I go to pray."

A: He took with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and began to be grieved and agitated. Then he said to them,

All: "I am deeply grieved, even to death; remain here, and stay awake with me."

A: And going a little farther, he threw himself on the ground and prayed,

All: "My father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me; yet not my will but your will be done."

A: And then he came to the disciples and found them sleeping; and he said to Peter,

All: "Could you not stay awake with me one hour? Stay awake and pray that you do not come into the time of trial; the spirit indeed is willing but the flesh is weak."

A: Again he went away for the second time and prayed,

All: "My father if this cannot pass unless I drink it, your will be done."

A: Once more he came and found them sleeping, for their eyes were heavy. So he went away and prayed for the third time, saying the same words. Then he came to the disciples and said,

All: "Are you still sleeping and taking your rest? See, the hour is at hand, and the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. Get up, let us be going. See, my betrayer is at hand. (Mt 26:36-46)

A: We choose to prayer here today. To 'stay awake' to the threat of nuclear terrorism and reality of nuclear war. As Jesus faced his fear, we too face our fear of violence with our longing for peace. We confront the power of this place through our prayer, our physical presence and our resistance.

All: Jesus our brother, you call us to stay awake and follow you. We long to walk with you and learn the meaning of your way for our time.

Our cross is brought into the centre of our worship

B: Betrayal is a feature of war and war preparations. The poor at home and globally are betrayed when billions are spent on military rather than human security. The poor are betrayed when their crops, their homes, their places of work are damaged and destroyed. Victims of war are betrayed when they have to leave behind their homes, their livelihoods in search of peace and security. Among these we remember the peoples of Iraq, Afghanistan, Sri Lanka, Congo, Israel, Palestine. Indigenous people are betrayed when their lands are used as testing ground for nuclear weapons. Scientists are betrayed when their skills and talents are turned to creating systems of death and destruction. Nations are betrayed when their politicians place their security in weapons and threats.

C: There are no victories in human history without their element of tragedy. Victory in human affairs always means that someone has lost. And this usually means that life or welfare, hope or security has been lost. But sometimes the victory has been gained at the price of such violence that we have to say that everyone has lost. Those who have won the conflict have lost some dimension of their own life, their own welfare and integrity.....

The Catholic writer Ronald Knox, commenting in 1945 upon the events that took place in August that year, said that the bomb was an attack on faith, hope and love - an attack on the central virtues of Christian existence.

That attack will continue so long as weapons of mass destruction like nuclear armaments are used as threats in international conflict. They are necessarily indiscriminate; that is, they will always kill the innocent. They destroy the living environment; they have long-term effects on every aspect of the material and organic world. To plan a strategy around such weapons is to be defeated by them. To threaten such an outrage against humanity and its world is to begin to lose one's moral and human dignity. To work for a world free from nuclear arms is to work for the sake of that moral and human dignity. (Archbishop Rowan Williams, speech at Nagasaki, September 2009)

B: We now remember all those who have been betrayed by war, the poor, whose voice cries out to be heard. We invite you to come forward and tie a ribbon to our cross in memory of a person or place you wish to remember in our witness. While we do this we sing :

The Cry of the Poor (John J Foley sj, based on Psalm 33)

The Lord hears the cry of the poor, Blessed be the Lord.

I will bless the Lord at all times, with praise ever in my mouth Let my soul glory in the Lord Who will hear the cry of the poor	Ev'ry spirit crushed, God will save; will be ransom for their lives; Will be safe shelter for their fears, And will hear the cry of the poor.
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Let the lowly hear and be glad: The Lord listens to their pleas; And to hearts broken, God is near, Who will hear the cry of the poor.	We proclaim your greatness, O God, Your praise ever in our mouth; Ev'ry face brightened in your light, For you hear the cry of the poor.
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All: Call us, Lord Jesus, to seek your way of peace and proclaim it to the nations. A peace that seeks security through love, justice,