

Praying for Palestine & Israel through Lent & Holy Week 2025

with Rev Dr Ray Williamson OAM, PIEN Vice President

5th March - Ash Wednesday

Matthew 6:16-17

"And whenever you fast, do not look dismal, like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces so as to show others that they are fasting. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward. But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face"

Bounteous God, you create the abundance of the earth to be shared by all, we remember those denied sustenance for life, prisoners and hostages in the Holy Land deprived of food, those in Gaza, victims of starvation used as a weapon of war. In our Lenten journey, may we have the grace to connect with them and to seek justice for them.

9th March - Lent 1

Luke 4: 1-2

"Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness, where for forty days he was tempted by the devil. He ate nothing at all during those days, and when they were over, he was famished."

Holy God, the wilderness is a place of vulnerability and uncertainty, though also a place where your presence can be profoundly experienced. We pray for the people of Gaza, whose homes and land have been laid waste: may they be sustained by knowing your grace-filled presence to journey in hope through wilderness to an abundant future.

16th March - Lent 2

Luke 13: 6-9

"Then he told this parable: 'A man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard; and he came looking for fruit on it and found none. So he said to the gardener, "See here! For three years I have come looking for fruit on this fig tree, and still I find none. Cut it down! Why should it be wasting the soil?" He replied, "Sir, let it alone for one more year, until I dig round it and put manure on it. If it bears fruit next year, well and good; but if not, you can cut it down.'"

Forgiving God, you call us to repentance, to live lives bearing fruit. Grieved by the suffering in the Holy Land, we pray for the Israeli people and their government, that those who exercise oppressive power may turn to become a source of blessing, especially for their cousins, the Palestinian people.

23rd March - Lent 3

Luke 13: 34

"Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often have I desired to gather your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing!"

Patient and merciful God, you lure us to live in peaceful community and we lament the tragedy of our resistance. We pray for the ancient city of Jerusalem in its resistance to prophetic voices, that it might become a beacon of reconciliation, peace and justice.

30th March - Lent 4

Luke 15:20, 21-24

"So he set off and went to his father. But while he was still far off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion; he ran and put his arms around him and kissed him. Then the son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son'. But the father said to his slaves, 'Quickly, bring out a robe - the best one - and put it on him; put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. And get the fatted calf and kill it, and let us eat and celebrate; for this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found!' And they began to celebrate."

Compassionate God, you reach out to us in reconciling love: we pray for all people, especially in the Holy Land, who live in unreconciled conflict, and for wisdom and patience to be given those who seek to negotiate a peace secured with justice, and reconciliation immersed in compassion.

6th April - Lent 5

John 12:1-3

"Six days before the Passover Jesus came to Bethany, the home of Lazarus, whom he had raised from the dead. There they gave a dinner for him. Martha served, and Lazarus was one of those at the table with him. Mary took a pound of costly perfume made of pure nard, anointed Jesus' feet, and wiped them with her hair. The house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume."

God of intimate love, we thank you for Mary of Bethany and her prophetic sign of anointing Jesus. We pray for Christians in the Holy Land, diminishing in number, facing threats and attacks on their ancient holy sites, that they may continue to be a prophetic sign of their faith in Christ amidst the suffering they endure.

13th April - Palm Sunday

Luke 19:35-37

"Then they brought it to Jesus; and after throwing their cloaks on the colt, they set Jesus on it. As he rode along, people kept spreading their cloaks on the road. As he was now approaching the path down from the Mount of Olives, the whole multitude of the disciples began to praise God joyfully with a loud voice for all the deeds of power that they had seen."

God of peace, today we celebrate Jesus' arrival in Jerusalem as the bearer of peace, unwelcomed by the powerful: we pray for peace in the land where Jesus walked, that those who exercise power will commit to work for peace, to end oppression and violence, and to enable all to live with dignity.

17th April - Maundy Thursday

1 Cor 11:23-26

"For I received from the Lord what I also handed on to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took a loaf of bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, 'This is my body that is for you. Do this in remembrance of me.' In the same way he took the cup also, after supper, saying, 'This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.' For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes."

Gracious God, we thank you that in the sacramental elements of broken bread and out-poured wine we have the assurance that your gracious gift of love is for us and all people. Open our eyes to see your presence in our broken world, in the shattered lives and lost hopes of people in the land of the Christ: may your grace be their source of strength.

18th April - Good Friday

John 19:28-30

"After this, when Jesus knew that all was now finished, he said (in order to fulfil the scripture), 'I am thirsty.' A jar full of sour wine was standing there. So they put a sponge full of the wine on a branch of hyssop and held it to his mouth. When Jesus had received the wine, he said, 'It is finished.' Then he bowed his head and gave up his spirit."

Self-giving God, in Jesus' death on the cross we see unveiled the glory and mystery of your inexhaustible love, defeating all that holds us captive, breaking the cycle of violence. We pray for those who give of themselves in bringing relief to people in Gaza and the West Bank - the aid workers and medical staff - that through their sacrificial endeavours hope may be renewed and new possibilities opened.

19th April - Holy Saturday

Matthew 27: 57-61

"When it was evening, there came a rich man from Arimathea, named Joseph, who was also a disciple of Jesus. He went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus; then Pilate ordered it to be given to him. So Joseph took the body and wrapped it in a clean linen cloth and laid it in his own new tomb, which he had hewn in the rock. He then rolled a great stone to the door of the tomb and went away. Mary Magdalene and the other Mary were there, sitting opposite the tomb."

Holy God, on this day of recalling Jesus' body lying in the tomb, we remember before you all who have died and been buried in the Palestinian Territories and the unknown ones buried under rubble in Gaza. We pray for all who grieve and for those who wait - may they know the hope that comes from your love.

20th April - Easter Sunday

John 20: 11-16

"But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb; and she saw two angels in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had been lying, one at the head and the other at the feet. They said to her, 'Woman, why are you weeping?' She said to them, 'They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him.' When she had said this, she turned round and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not know that it was Jesus. Jesus said to her, 'Woman, why are you weeping? For whom are you looking?' Supposing him to be the gardener, she said to him, 'Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away.' Jesus said to her, 'Mary!' She turned and said to him in Hebrew, 'Rabbouni!' (which means Teacher)."

Life-giving God, with Mary meeting the Risen Christ, discovering that death does not have the last word, we give you thanks for the new reality of Resurrection. We pray for the emergence of a new reality for the people of the Holy Land, that they may live with dignity and in true peace, which is your purpose for them and for all people.