

Great Thanksgiving  
*(Peace Makers in a Culture of Violence)*

You are love.  
You love those who see themselves as Your enemies.  
You love the ignorant and uncreative who too often resort to violence.  
You love those who are unique, those who view the world differently,  
even those who always seem to be misunderstood.  
You love the bullied.  
You will not allow anyone to escape Your compassionate embrace.  
You will make room for everyone and turn no one away.  
Your way is the way of peace.  
Your way ends segregation, ends separation and promotes reintegration.  
Your way is the way of reconciliation.  
You never justify violence.  
Your justice is always restorative.  
Your way is always instructive.  
Your way is good news and it is worth celebrating.

Jesus embraced Your way, Your truth and Your vision for abundant life for all.  
Jesus did not turn anyone away, and was filled with grief when anyone chose to leave him.  
These were people Jesus continued to love deeply.  
Jesus did not turn away those rejected and ignored by those who saw themselves as holy.  
Jesus taught those others said were unworthy to even speak to.  
Jesus claimed as family, the poor and the rejected.  
Jesus claimed as disciples, women, sinners, and the questionable.  
Jesus died for everyone.  
Jesus forgave the sins of everyone.  
All because God so completely loved the whole world.

To make peace among the disciples,  
Jesus stepped away from the seat of honor  
and embraced the status of the lowest slave,  
by taking up the towel and basin and kneeling down to serve.  
This is how Jesus wants us to treat those who will betray us.  
This is how Jesus wants us to treat those who will deny our friendship.  
This is how Jesus wants us to treat the self serving people who will care only about their own  
well being.

To make peace in a violent world,  
Jesus took with a prayer of thanksgiving,  
the bread of Passover, a holy reminder of the very real needs of the oppressed,  
and Jesus broke the bread and shared it with all, saying:  
“Take and eat, this is my body broken and given for you.”  
Remember and live in peace.

To make peace in a violent world,  
Jesus took with a prayer of thanksgiving the cup of Passover wine,  
a holy reminder of the suffering caused by hardened hearts,  
and Jesus shared the cup with all, saying:  
“Drink from this cup filled with my blood, poured out as a holy offering  
celebrating God’s everlasting covenant of grace, forgiving every sin  
and establishing peace forever.” Remember and live in peace.

We long for all violence to end.  
We hunger to follow the way of peace,  
and we have found this way through the holy mystery we declare:

Christ died because of our violence.  
Christ arose to counter our violence.  
Christ returns to establish everlasting peace.

Gentle Kiss, Reassuring Touch  
rest upon these gifts of bread and wine,  
allow them to be for us the body and blood of Christ,  
the Prince of Peace.

Gentle Kiss, Reassuring Touch  
rest upon the gift of our hearts, our minds, and our bodies,  
allow them to be for others, Your church,  
the body and bride of Christ, the Prince of Peace.

Gentle Kiss, Reassuring Touch  
rest upon us who are caught up in cycles of violence,  
give us the courage to follow Christ as we turn the other cheek;  
give us the compassion of Christ as we show Your love to our enemies;  
hear our prayers that we lift up before Your throne of grace for those who seek our harm.  
Let us turn away from responding to violence with more violence,  
instead give us the creative opportunity to respond with good in Your name.  
In the name of Jesus, whose way is peace.  
In the name of the Holy Spirit, whose gift to the world is peace.  
In the name of the One whose kingdom is a peaceful refuge for all.  
So that our lives might help the world to come together in peace, to praise and worship before  
Your throne together, always. Amen.

Now as those who renounce violence and embrace the ways of Christ, let us pray:  
Our Father, who art in heaven hallowed be thy name.  
Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.  
Give us this day our daily bread.  
And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespassed against us.  
And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.  
For thine is the kingdom, and the power and the glory, forever. Amen.

*Prayer after communion:*

Thank you for sharing with us all, this holy mystery found in Jesus Christ. We are drawn to his peace. We are drawn to his courage when confronted with violence. We are empowered by the force of his mercy and forgiveness. We feel set free. Now send us out to share this peace with the world. Use us to give others an alternative to violence. Allow us the privilege of sharing Christ's mercy and forgiveness with all who bring harm to our lives or to our world. Use our lives to bring you glory and honor and praise. Amen.