# Ash Wednesday 2025

# Leeds

## a service of repentance for the continued possession and development of nuclear weapons

A collage of a nuclear explosion

Description automatically generated

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## Welcome & introduction from Pax Christi

Loving God of peace and justice

We gather today to dream in the tradition of the

prophets, to dream of a world community that cares for

all its peoples, that gives priority to feeding the

hungry, clothing the naked, educating the young,

caring for those on the margins and acknowledging and

celebrating the human dignity of all.

We dream of a world where swords are beaten into

ploughshares, spears into pruning hooks, and far more

dangerous in our day than any swords or spears, we

not only dream but work to commit ourselves to the

end of nuclear weapons.

Help us all, dear God to disarm our hearts, to promote

nonviolence in our homes, cities, communities, nations, our world, and even to renew our energy that we may

work harder and more fruitfully to take away the threat

of nuclear war.

Assist our leaders, and all those who hold on to power

in this world, especially those who use their power to

annihilate or destroy another, even those who would

use their power in the name of defence but would still

use nuclear weapons to destroy.

Enable us to be as clever as serpents and as gentle as

doves, as we work this day to take away this threat

among many threats, this powerful threat that can do

so much damage Let us live the joy of the Gospel and

work for that vision of all living in community with one

another **AMEN**

## Reading: Pope Francis – *Saying yes to the Prince of Peace, Urbi et Orbi,*

1. **Pope Francis, Urbi et Orbi, 2023**

To say “yes” to the Prince of Peace, then, means saying “no” to war, to every war and to do so with courage, to the very mindset of war, an aimless voyage, a defeat without victors, an inexcusable folly. This is what war is: an aimless voyage, a defeat without victors, an inexcusable folly. To say “no” to war means saying “no” to weaponry. The human heart is weak and impulsive; if we find instruments of death in our hands, sooner or later we will use them. And how can we even speak of peace, when arms production, sales and trade are on the rise? Today, as at the time of Herod, the evil that opposes God’s light hatches its plots in the shadows of hypocrisy and concealment. How much violence and killing takes place amid deafening silence, unbeknownst to many! People, who desire not weapons but bread, who struggle to make ends meet and desire only peace, have no idea how many public funds are being spent on arms. Yet that is something they ought to know! It should be talked about and written about, so as to bring to light the interests and the profits that move the puppet-strings of war.

## Prayers of Penitence

**L*.*** *Lord Jesus, how many people today are nailed to the cross of poverty, violence, prejudice or indifference? People become increasingly abandoned and invisible. People with disabilities or chronic illness are often ignored or looked upon as burdens. Perhaps the worse cross of all is to be unwanted, unappreciated and unloved. Open our eyes and ears, Lord, to recognize you in everyone we meet,*

*especially the least, the lonely and the lost.*

**Together:**

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*

*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)*

## Reading: Joel 2:12-18 Let your hearts be broken

#### *Rend Your Hearts and Not Your Garments*

#### Yet even now, says the Lord, return to me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning. Rend your hearts and not your garments, and turn back to the Lord, your God. For he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, rich in kindness, and always prepared to relent from punishing. Perhaps he will turn back and relent, and leave a blessing behind him, cereal offerings and libations to be presented to the Lord, your God.

#### Blow the trumpet in Zion! Proclaim a fast!

#### Announce a solemn assembly! Gather the people together; summon the community; assemble the elders; gather the children, even infants at the breast. Call forth the bridegroom from his bedroom and the bride from her wedding chamber.

#### Let the priests, the ministers of the Lord, stand weeping, between the temple porch and the altar, as they say, “Spare your people, O Lord, and do not allow your heritage[[b](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Joel+2%3A1-2%2CJoel+2%3A12-17&version=NCB#fen-NCB-26689b)] to be mocked and subjected to the contempt of the nations. Why should the peoples say ‘Where is their God?’ ”

**Silence**

## A Prayer of Remembrance

O God, tender and just, the names of Hiroshima and Nagasaki cut through our denial that we are capable of destroying the earth  
and all that dwell therein. Forgive us - and help us to always remember.

We must remember because this must never happen again.  
We must remember because you would have us live in harmony with each other, seeing the joy of your creation in our sisters and brothers.

Holy God, God of all the ages, lead us from death to life, to the stockpiling of hope, and of possibilities, of love rather than the stockpiling of weapons, or stones to throw, or of words or actions of hate.

## A Time of Remembrance

**L**. We now remember all those who have been betrayed by war, who seek bread, not weapons. We invite you to come forward and tie a **ribbon to our cross** in memory of a person or place you wish to hold and pray for in our witness. *(****While this is done 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.***

**Together:** Help us to imagine that another world is possible and guide our actions towards the peace you envision, the peace you have already given us. In the name of the One who came so that we might have life, and have it abundantly, we pray.   
Adapted: *Rev. Loey Powell, United Church of Christ*

**Litany of Repentance**

***Response:* Lord, Lead us to repentance**

**L:** For questioning the authority of Jesus’ teaching on the Cross, we pray

R/

**L:** For placing human standards above divine compassion, we pray

R/

**L:** For the moral blindness of our nuclear intention, we pray

R/

**L:** For trusting in instruments of death to save us rather than in the power of the Living God, we pray

R/

**L:** For failing to listen to the cry and suffering of the earth, we pray

R/

**L** For betraying Christ’s love by allowing hunger and violence that claim lives daily, we pray

**Together :** 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, wars and the false peace they offer our world.

## Some - a poem by Daniel Berrigan (U.S antiwar activist)

**Some stood up once and sat down.**

**Some walked a mile and walked away.**

**Some stood up twice and sat down I’ve**

**had it, they said.**

**Some walked two miles and walked away It’s**

**too much, they cried.**

**Some stood and stood and stood.**

**They were taken for dummies.**

**They were taken for fools.**

**They were taken for being taken in.**

**Some walked and walked and walked.**

**They walked the earth.**

**They walked the waters**

**They walked the air.**

**Why do you stand? they**

**were asked,**

**and why do you walk?**

**Because of the children, they said, and**

**because of the heart, and Because of**

**the bread. Because the cause is the**

**heart’s beat and the children born**

**and the risen bread.**

## Sing: UBI CARITAS (TAIZE)

***Please sing this three times***

**Ubi Caritas est amor**

**Ubi Caritas Deus ibi est**

**Before we part, let us offer one another and those   
around us a sign of peace**

[**https://paxchristi.org.uk**](https://paxchristi.org.uk)

[**https://www.leedsjp.org.uk**](https://www.leedsjp.org.uk)