

Vigil for peace

YOU HAVE BLESSED, LORD, YOUR EARTH!

Lent 2026

Let us pray for
our leaders with
Giorgio La Pira



Presentation

A vigil for peace, promoted by [Italian Catholic Action](#) and [the Pius XI Catholic Action School of Holiness Foundation](#), an invitation to intensify prayer during Lent, a moment to be included in the itinerary of family, group, parish and diocesan prayer.

Taking into account the global context that presents us with situations of conflict involving many countries every day, we propose a **special prayer intention for those in government**, for those who have responsibility for the common good at all levels, with the certainty that all peoples desire to live in peace.

We entrust our prayer to the **intercession of the Venerable Giorgio La Pira** (1904-1977), who lived his faith in the Church and in the world of his time in a radical and consistent way, with a spirit of service, always nourished by prayer and study, and by hope in fraternity between cities and peoples. The example of Giorgio La Pira challenges each of us with the evangelical simplicity that enabled him to make concrete choices and gestures of peace in order to open paths of dialogue even where it seemed impossible.

All his actions, initiatives and responsibilities were based on prayer, on the awareness of the effectiveness of prayer, to the point that he sought the support of many cloistered monasteries, which accompanied him in particular as mayor of Florence, founding father and ambassador of peace in the world's hot spots.

We too want to commit ourselves to involving **the cloistered monasteries of our dioceses** so that they may join us in this Vigil, so that our prayer for peace may be supported by their intercession.

Words that accompany us

Through the intercession of the Virgin Mary, we invoke from the Holy Spirit the gift of peace. First of all, peace in our hearts: only a peaceful heart can spread peace in the family, in society, and in international relations. May the Spirit of the risen Christ open paths of reconciliation wherever there is war; may he enlighten those who govern and give them the courage to make gestures of détente and dialogue. Leo XIV

It does not take much intelligence to understand that unity is the condition for peace and that unity can only be achieved through justice and freedom. Division is the real cause of wars. Even the leaders of those great powers that hold the means of universal destruction in their nuclear arsenals are increasingly aware of this. Giorgio La Pira

"YOU HAVE BLESSED YOUR EARTH, LORD!"

Guide: "I am optimistic: I believe that peace among peoples will be achieved, in every corner of the earth: and it will be achieved because God himself - the common Father of all men and the common light of all peoples - wants to give us, if we ask Him, the gift of this peace!

We must therefore pray with all our hearts: pray with all our hearts, offer the Lord, for this sacred purpose, a sacrifice of praise, adoration, purity and fasting: so that the waters of grace may descend abundantly on the arid earth of the world and make it blossom again in hope and goodness! (*Circular letter from La Pira to several political and religious leaders in the Middle East, 15 December 1957*).

Opening hymn

Celebrant: In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

All: Amen.

Celebrant: Brothers and sisters, since you are loved by God and are holy by vocation, grace and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ be with you all.

All: And with your spirit.

Celebrant: Let us welcome one another by exchanging a sign of peace.

FIRST MOMENT

The Covenant that does not waver

Reader: Let us listen to the Word of God from the book of the prophet Isaiah (54:5-10)

For your Maker is your husband, the

Lord of hosts is his name; your

Redeemer is the Holy One of Israel,

he is called God of all the earth.

Like a woman forsaken

and with a broken spirit, the Lord has called you back. Is a

woman married in her youth ever repudiated?

says your God.

For a brief moment I abandoned you, but I

will gather you with immense love.

In a fit of anger

I hid my face from you for a moment; but

with everlasting affection

I have had mercy on you,

says your Redeemer, the Lord. Now it

is to me as in the days of Noah,

when I swore that I would never again pour
out the waters of Noah upon the earth;
so now I swear that I will never again be
angry with you or threaten you.
Even if the mountains were to move and the hills to shake,
my affection would not depart from you,
nor would my covenant of peace be shaken,
says the Lord who shows you mercy.

Reader: From the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World *Gaudium et Spes* (n. 80)

Any act of war which aims indiscriminately at the destruction of entire cities or vast regions and their inhabitants is a crime against God and against humanity itself and must be condemned firmly and without hesitation.

The characteristic risk of modern warfare lies in the fact that it offers those who possess the most modern scientific weapons the opportunity to commit such crimes and, through a certain inexorable chain of events, can push men's wills to make the most atrocious decisions. Therefore, so that this may never happen again in the future, the bishops of the whole world, now gathered together, implore everyone, especially rulers and supreme military commanders, to continually consider, before God and before all humanity, the enormous weight of their responsibility. (*Gaudium et spes* 80)

Reader: From a circular letter from Giorgio La Pira to some political and religious leaders in the Middle East (15 December 1957)

Please allow me to send you this letter, which has also been sent to other civil and religious leaders in the Middle East

to inform you of my Christmas trip to the Holy Land.

On Christmas Eve, I will be in Bethlehem to participate in the mystical services that renew the Angels' magnificent proclamation to the world: a Saviour is born; glory to God in the highest and peace on earth to people of good will!

I will not be alone: invisibly present with me will be all the cloistered monasteries of the five continents associated with me in prayer and hope!

Prayer for what purpose? Hope for what? The answer is clear: prayer and hope for peace among nations! Has this not always been the purpose of the Florentine conferences for peace and Christian civilisation? Because if we do not build on the level of God and prayer, we cannot build the solid peace to which all peoples aspire!

This is the sole purpose of my Christmas trip to the Holy Land.

A purpose that goes beyond all political contingencies and rises to that transcendent plane of God from which alone all grace and all authentic hope for human history derives.

For this religious purpose of peace, I have invited all souls consecrated to God in monasteries throughout the world: I have invited them to "compel", so to speak, with their prayers and fasting, the Heart of the Heavenly Father and obtain from the Lord the gift of that peace which we all ask of Him with such insistence.

To make this prayer even more effective, I decided to visit the tomb of Patriarch Abraham, the father of believers, to ask him, the father of all nations, and all the great patriarchs and prophets, and especially Mary, the sweet and Immaculate Mother of Jesus, to intercede with the Lord for peace and brotherhood among peoples.

SECOND MOMENT

Peacemakers among the peoples

Reader: Let us listen to the Word of God from the Gospel according to Matthew (5:1-11)

Seeing the crowds, Jesus went up the mountain, sat down, and his disciples came to him. He began to speak and taught them, saying:

Blessed are the poor in spirit,
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are those who mourn, for
they shall be comforted.

Blessed are the meek,
for they shall inherit the earth.

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness,
for they shall be filled.

Blessed are the merciful,
for they shall obtain mercy. Blessed
are the pure in heart,
for they shall see God.

Blessed are the
peacemakers,
for they shall be called children of God.

Blessed are those who are persecuted for
righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom
of heaven.

Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven. For in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

Reader: From Pope Leo XIV's Address to the Diplomatic Corps (9 January 2026)

In our time, the weakness of multilateralism is a particular cause for concern at the international level. Diplomacy that promotes dialogue and seeks consensus among all parties is being replaced by diplomacy based on force, either by individuals or groups of allies. War has come back into fashion and a fervour for war is spreading. The principle established after the Second World War, which prohibited countries from using force to violate the borders of others, has been broken. Peace is no longer sought as a gift and a desirable good in itself 'in the pursuit of an order willed by God, which entails a more perfect justice among men', but is sought through weapons, as a condition for asserting one's own dominion. This seriously compromises the rule of law, which is the basis of all peaceful civil coexistence. (...) Despite the dramatic picture we are facing

In our eyes, peace remains a difficult but possible good. As Augustine reminds us, it is 'the end of our good', since it is the very end of the city of God, to which we aspire, even unconsciously, and of which we can enjoy a foretaste in the earthly city. During our pilgrimage on this earth, it requires humility and courage. The humility of truth and the courage of forgiveness. In Christian life, these are represented by Christmas, when Truth, the eternal Word of God, becomes humble flesh, and by Easter, when the condemned Just One forgives his persecutors, giving them his risen life.

Reader: From La Pira's message to the Euro-Arab meeting in Florence on 22 April 1977 Building the tent of peace is also the destiny of the Mediterranean. These peoples, although full of divisions and conflicts, have, in a certain sense, a common historical background, a common spiritual, cultural and, in some ways, political destiny. Their 'unity' is essential and is almost a prerequisite for the unity of the entire family of peoples.

In recent decades, valuable research has sought to make, and continues to seek to make, a more careful analysis of this 'common background' and this 'common history' of the triple family of Abraham that bathes the shores of the Mediterranean, the new Lake Tiberias!

THIRD MOMENT **The unarmed power of prayer**

Reader: Let us listen to the Word of God from the First Letter of St Paul the Apostle to Timothy (2:1-8) I urge, then, first of all, that petitions, supplications, prayers, and thanksgivings be made for all people, for kings and all who are in high positions, so that we may lead a quiet and peaceful life in all godliness and dignity. This is good and pleasing to God our Saviour, who wants all people to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth. For there is one God and one mediator between God and humankind, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all. This testimony he gave at the appointed time, and I was made a herald and an apostle—I am telling the truth, I am not lying—a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and truth. I therefore want men everywhere to pray, lifting up holy hands without anger or disputing.

Reader: From the Pastoral Note *Educating for a disarmed and disarming peace* by the Italian Episcopal Conference (5 December 2025)

It is a matter of building peace; we need artisans of peace, people who, from a peaceful heart, know how to draw the energy to work for it in history and in time, at all levels. It is a responsibility that strongly challenges believers, who are called to seek the Kingdom of God, which is a kingdom of justice and peace, and to work for it with courage and creativity. Peace comes from the future and invites us to overcome contradictions and fears, in a lucid evangelical witness. [...] "Every change requires an educational journey to bring about a new universal solidarity and a more welcoming society" (Pope Francis). Education is crucial for a true conversion to peace. It is an urgent matter that requires the synergistic involvement of a plurality of individuals, in the ecclesial community and beyond, to cultivate peaceful and pacifying hearts and ways of life.

Reader: From Giorgio La Pira's speech to the members of the Supreme Soviet (1959)

Gentlemen, I am a Christian believer and therefore I start from a working hypothesis which, for me, is not only a matter of religious faith but also rationally scientific. I believe in the presence of God in history and therefore in the incarnation and resurrection of Christ after his death on the cross; I believe that the resurrection of Christ is an event of salvation that attracts centuries and nations to itself. I therefore believe in the historical power of prayer. So, following this logic, I have decided to contribute to peaceful East-West coexistence, as Mr Khrushchev says, by building a bridge of prayer between the West and the East to support, as best I can, the great edification of peace to which we are all committed. There are those who have atomic bombs, I only have the bombs of prayer, and since every bridge has two pillars, I first went to the Western shrine of Fatima, where Our Lady promised peace, linking it to the Christian tradition of Russia, and then I went, the day before yesterday, the Feast of the Assumption, to your traditional shrine of the Holy Trinity in Zagorsk to pray at the tomb of St. Sergius and under the icons of your greatest hagiographer, Andrey Rublev, spiritual relative of Beato Angelico of my Florence. Therefore, gentlemen of the Supreme Soviet, our architectural design must be this: to give peace to the peoples, to build houses, to fertilise the fields, to open workshops, schools and hospitals, to make the arts and gardens flourish, to rebuild churches and cathedrals everywhere. Because peace must be built on several levels, at every level of human reality: economic, social, political, cultural and religious.

Invocation

Celebrant: Let us pray earnestly to the Lord that, together with our brothers and sisters in faith and the whole world, we may experience more deeply our participation in the glorious coming of the Kingdom.

Reader: Let us say together: 'Hear us, Lord'. All: Hear us, Lord.

- May your Church walk in the way of the Gospel.
- May your peace free the life of every person.
- May Christians be witnesses of hope.

All: Hear us, Lord.

- May families grow in faithfulness and service.
- May young people recognise their vocation with passion.
- May children be understood and accompanied in their uniqueness.

All: Hear us, Lord.

- May school be an opportunity for growth for all.
- Work should not be the privilege of the few.
- May poverty and illness soon find a definitive cure.

All: Hear us, Lord.

- May democracy breathe life into every political action.
- May shared responsibility heal all dryness and weariness.
- May every person be a guardian of creation and of their neighbour.

All: Hear us, Lord.

Celebrant: Blessed are you, O Father, who hears the voice of your Christ; for this we rejoice in the Holy Spirit and with our voices we give you thanks, praying for one another:

All: Our Father.

Blessing

Celebrant: May God bless you with every blessing from heaven and make you pure and holy in his sight; may he pour out upon you the riches of his glory, instruct you with the words of truth, enlighten you with the Gospel of salvation, and make you joyful in brotherly love.

All: Amen.

Celebrant: And may the blessing of Almighty God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, descend upon you and remain with you always.

All: Amen.

Final hymn

Giorgio La Pira. *Biographical note*¹

Born in Pozzallo in 1904 and died in Florence in 1977, La Pira was educated in Messina where, thanks to his wealthier uncle Luigi Occhipinti, he was able to attend technical college and then, after passing his classical studies, enrol in the Faculty of Law. To graduate, he followed his professor Emilio Betti to Florence. An animator of youth groups within Catholic Action and an active member of the FUCI and Catholic Graduates in the 1920s and 1930s, professionally, in 1934, he was a very young professor of Roman law in Florence. In the same year, together with Don Raffaele Bensi, he founded the *Messa del Povero* (Mass for the Poor) in the church of San Procolo, a material and spiritual assistance activity that complemented his participation in numerous conferences of St. Vincent de Paul. After Fascist Italy's rapprochement with Nazi Germany and with the racial laws of 1938, La Pira developed a radical and irreversible anti-Fascism, publishing, between 1939 and 1940, the magazine 'Principi', which was soon suppressed by the regime.

Forced to flee Florence after 8 September because he was wanted by the Nazis, fascists, he committed himself in Rome to laying the foundations for the democratic reconstruction of the country.

Returning to Florence in September 1944, he was entrusted by the new administration of liberated Florence with the presidency of the ECA (Ente Comunale di Assistenza), the most important municipal social welfare organisation. Elected to the Constituent Assembly, he was one of its leading figures, collaborating in particular with his friends Amintore Fanfani, Giuseppe Dossetti, Giuseppe Lazzati and Aldo Moro. As a member of the Commission of 75, he was rapporteur for the First Sub-Commission dealing with civil rights. Undersecretary for Labour under Minister Amintore Fanfani in the fifth De Gasperi government, he left the government with Dossetti's group, judging the executive's action on social policy to be too timid. His intervention in favour of full employment through the adoption of Keynesian policies of state intervention dates back to 1950, with two famous articles in *Cronache sociali*, which would later form *L'attesa della povera gente* (The Wait of the Poor).

Mayor of Florence from 1951 to 1965, through three administrations (1951-1956; 1956-1957; 1961-1964), he left an indelible mark of good governance, courage and political foresight at local, national and international level.

Between 1953 and 1958, La Pira fought tooth and nail to defend thousands of jobs in the factories of 'Pignone', 'Galileo' and 'Fonderia delle Cure'; He requisitioned empty villas belonging to the city's nobility to accommodate displaced persons and the homeless. He pressed the government with tenacious insistence to speed up the construction of the new INA-Casa dell'Isolotto neighbourhood, which was inaugurated in 1954. He definitively municipalised the Centrale del Latte (milk plant) and guaranteed the efficiency and widespread coverage of municipal transport and urban sanitation services. In the centre-left council (1961-1964) and with the help of capable socialist councillors such as Enzo Enriquez Agnoletti and Edoardo Detti, he launched the Master Plan in 1962, which is still today a model of forward-thinking territorial planning; Finally, he organised original initiatives for peace and disarmament which, between 1952 and 1965, saw Florence become, without rhetoric, a city of dialogue between peoples, religions and cultures. Between 1952 and 1956, six *Conferences for Peace and Christian Civilisation* were held, in 1955, the *Conference of Mayors of Capital Cities*, which was attended by mayors from the communist East, and from 1958 to 1964, the four *Mediterranean Colloquiums*, where cultural and religious dialogue between all the countries of the Mediterranean and Black Africa was experimented with; Memorable, in 1958, was the first dramatic but 'prophetic' meeting between Arab-Israelis and French-Algerians.

¹ P.D. Giovannoni, *Preface* to L. Micelli (ed.), *Il principio e il progetto di ogni speranza. Con G. La Pira, parole e visioni per le sfide del nostro tempo*, Ave, Rome 2025, pp. 9–11.