

Praying Together Across Europe for Racial Justice

Candles are lit

We meet in the presence of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, who knows our needs, hears our cries, feels our pain, and heals our wounds. **Amen.**

Introductory words

Thank you for your presence at this virtual service, dear friends. On 25 May, an African American, George Floyd, died in Minneapolis after being pinned to the ground by a white police officer who placed his knee on Mr Floyd's neck for 8 minutes and 46 seconds. Floyd was laid to rest on Tuesday this week. Across the world people have gathered in the hope that this death will be a catalyst for lasting change. Our gathering today is in this spirit.

Brothers and sisters, at the heart of the Gospel is the inclusion of all races and peoples in the Kingdom of God. Racism is thus a blasphemy against God, who creates all men and women with equal dignity. It has no place in our world, and certainly no place in the hearts of Christians. Yet, we know that racism and injustice persist in our communities, and even in our churches.

Our gathering is deliberately on a Friday and at the hour on when our Lord hung on the cross, as we pray for healing, reconciliation, and justice in our broken world. We will listen to Scripture and we will enter into a deep silence together, for 8 minutes and 46 seconds, a silence of solidarity, a silence of repentance, a silence at the foot of the cross, which brought about our reconciliation.

Let us pray:

God of justice, in your wisdom you create all people in your image, without exception. Through your goodness, open our eyes to see the dignity, beauty, and worth of every human being. Open our minds to understand that all your children are brothers and sisters in the same human family. Open our hearts to repent of racist attitudes, behaviours, and speech which demean others. Open our ears to hear the cries of those wounded by racial discrimination, and their passionate appeals for change. Strengthen our resolve to make amends for past injustices and to right the wrongs of history. And fill us with courage that we might seek to heal wounds, build bridges, forgive and be forgiven, and establish peace and equality for all in our communities. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

A reading from the Gospel according to St Luke: The Parable of the Good Samaritan (Lk 10.25-37)

²⁵ Just then a lawyer stood up to test Jesus.^[a] "Teacher," he said, "what must I do to inherit eternal life?" ²⁶ He said to him, "What is written in the law? What do you read there?" ²⁷ He answered, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbour as yourself." ²⁸ And he said to him, "You have given the right answer; do this, and you will live."

²⁹ But wanting to justify himself, he asked Jesus, "And who is my neighbour?" ³⁰ Jesus replied, "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell into the hands of robbers, who stripped him, beat him, and went away, leaving him half dead. ³¹ Now by chance a priest was going down that road; and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. ³² So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. ³³ But a Samaritan while traveling came near him; and when he saw him, he was moved with pity. ³⁴ He went to him and bandaged his wounds, having poured oil and wine on them. Then he put him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him. ³⁵ The next day he took out two denarii,^[b] gave them to the innkeeper, and said, 'Take care of him; and when I come back, I will repay you whatever more you spend.' ³⁶ Which of these three, do you think, was a neighbour to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers?" ³⁷ He said, "The one who showed him mercy." Jesus said to him, "Go and do likewise."

+ Silence: 8 minutes and 46 seconds +

Intercessions

In hope that the arc of history bends toward justice, we lift up our prayers for racial healing, saying: **Bind us together, O God of love.**

For the Church, that its prophetic voice may proclaim to all the challenge to break the hopeless cycles of poverty, ignorance, prejudice, and despair which degrade the sacred dignity of humankind, we pray: **Bind us together, O God of love.**

For the countries and places where we live, that we might celebrate our racial diversity and the distinctive and rich contributions of all. we pray: **Bind us together, O God of love.**

For wise and decisive action by those who govern, that the scandal of racism may be eradicated from our societies, we pray: **Bind us together, O God of love.**

For an end to the subtle racism of economic oppression which permeates the structures of our world and resides in many hearts, we pray: **Bind us together, O God of love.**

For the victims of racial discrimination, that they may be filled with hope for a more just future, that they may be healed from wounds received, and that they will be filled with grace to overcome hatred with love, we pray: **Bind us together, O God of love.**

For those who work for racial justice, that they may be sustained in hope, empowered with courage to advocate for change and for peace, and filled with the grace to persevere in love, we pray: **Bind us together, O God of love.**

For all who have died as victims of injustice, violence and hatred, that they may have a place at the banquet of eternal life, we pray: **Bind us together, O God of love.**

God-of-righteous-dreaming, give us an enlarged imagination to dream new possibilities, to imagine a world where transformation will happen, where creation is mended and restored, and where exiles and strangers can find a home and live in peace. Give us overflowing and extravagant hearts so that our whole lives may be full of love and mirror your dream and promise of goodness and abundance.

Jesus taught us to pray for God's Kingdom to come. And so as we close our gathering today, we pray,

Our Father...

The peace

Blessed be Christ, the Prince of Peace. He breaks down the walls that divide us: The peace of the Lord be always with you. **And also with you**

Sisters and brothers, we have prayed together and now, with changed hearts, let us move our feet to action. Go in peace to love and serve the Lord. **In the name of Christ. Amen**