



WEEK OF WITNESS

FOR PERSECUTED CHRISTIANS



Liturgical Resource

Mass for Persecuted Christians
&
Prayer Vigil for Persecuted Christians



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FOR PERSECUTED CHRISTIANS

Since 2016, the Wednesday during the Week of Witness has become known as Red Wednesday. This year, Red Wednesday falls on 20th November. Red is the liturgical colour for the feast days of martyrs, representing the blood of those who suffered death for their faith. On Red Wednesday, where possible, cathedrals, churches, and public buildings around the world will be lit up in red to show solidarity with our suffering brothers and sisters.

During the Week of Witness (Sunday 17th to Sunday 24th November 2024) is 'Red Wednesday', held this year on the 20th of November, wherein the faithful are invited to make visible their solidarity with the persecuted Church. During the Week of Witness, the faithful can bear personal witness to God's Love and Mercy for the persecuted Church through our Ways to Witness:

- **ILLUMINATING** your Church or school in red to show the world that the sacrifice and suffering of the persecuted and martyred Church is an ongoing reality.
- **WEARING** a red tie, scarf or scapular as a mark of the blood lost by Christians in defence of our Faith.
- **PRAYING** for the suffering and persecuted Church at the hours of the Angelus, 1200 and 1800 and during Holy Mass, asking your Parish Priest to consider giving his homily on the theme of persecution and martyrdom in the Church.
- **ATTENDING** a Red Wednesday Prayer Vigil.
- **BLESSING** oneself in public when having a meal, passing a graveyard or a Church.
- **DONATING** to ACN Ireland to help in our work for persecuted Christians globally – your donations constitute a powerful corporal work of mercy.

MASS FOR PERSECUTED CHRISTIANS

THE INTRODUCTORY RITE

Entrance Antiphon

Acts 12: 5

Peter thus was being kept in prison, but prayer was made without ceasing by the Church to God for him.

Penitential Rite

Lord, Jesus, you came to gather the nations into the peace of God's kingdom:
Lord, have mercy.

Lord Jesus, you came to reconcile us to one another and to the Father:
Christ, have mercy.

Lord Jesus, you heal the wounds of sin and division:
Lord, have mercy.

Collect

O God, who in your inscrutable providence
will that the Church be united to the sufferings of your Son,
grant, we pray, to your faithful who suffer for your name's sake
a spirit of patience and charity,
that they may be found true and faithful witnesses
to the promises you have made.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever.

THE LITURGY OF THE WORD

First reading:

1 Mac 2.49-52, 57-64

A reading from the first Book of Maccabees.

Now the days drew near for Mattathias to die, and he said to his sons:

“Arrogance and scorn have now become strong; it is a time of ruin and furious

anger. Now, my children, show zeal for the law, and give your lives for the covenant of our Fathers. Remember the deeds of the ancestors, which they did in their generations; and you will receive great honour and an everlasting name. Was not Abraham found faithful when tested, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness? David, because he was merciful, inherited the throne of the kingdom forever. Elijah, because of great zeal for the law was ten up into heaven. Hananiah, Azariah, and Mishael believed and were saved from the flame. Daniel, because of his innocence, was delivered from the mouth of the lions.

And so observe, from generation to generation, that none of those who put their trust in him will lack strength. Do not fear the words of sinners, for their splendour will turn into dung and worms. Today they will be exalted, but tomorrow they will not be found because they will have returned to the dust and their plans will have perished. My children, be courageous and grow strong in the law, for by it you will gain honour.”

The word of the Lord.

or:

A reading from the Acts of the Apostles.

Acts 4.1-5, 18-21

While Peter and John were speaking to the people, the priests, the captain of the temple, and the Sadducees came to them, much annoyed because they were teaching the people and proclaiming that in Jesus there is the resurrection of the dead. So they arrested them and put them in custody until the next day, for it was already evening. But many of those who heard the word believed; and they numbered about five thousand. The next day their rulers, elders, and scribes assembled in Jerusalem. They called Peter and John and ordered them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus. But Peter and John answered them, “Whether it is right in God’s sight to listen to you rather than to God, you must judge; for we cannot keep from speaking about what we have seen and heard.” After threatening them again, they let them go, finding no way to punish them because of the people, for all of them praised God for what happened.

The word of the Lord.

Responsorial Psalm

27.1,2,3,5

R. The Lord is my light and my salvation.

The Lord is my light and my salvation;
whom shall I fear?
The Lord is the stronghold of my life;
of whom shall I be afraid. **R.**

When evildoers assail me to devour my flesh
my adversaries and foes
they shall stumble and fall. **R.**

The Lord is my light and my salvation.
Though an army encamp against me,
my heart shall not fear;
though war rise up against me,
yet I will be confident. **R.**

The Lord is my light and my salvation.
For he will hide me in his shelter
in the day of trouble;
he will conceal me under the cover of his tent;
he will set me high on a rock. **R.**

Gospel Acclamation

Alleluia. Alleluia.

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

Alleluia.

Gospel

Mt 5,1-12a

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew.

When Jesus saw the crowds, he went up the mountain; and after he sat down,
his disciples came to him. Then 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 will be comforted.

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

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be satisfied.

Blessed are the merciful for they will receive mercy.

Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.

Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will 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 revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of calumny against you on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven.”

The Gospel of the Lord.

Homily

Prayers of the faithful:

Celebrant:

Let us bring to mind the suffering Church, asking the Lord to live ever more deeply in the lives of our brothers and sisters in faith who are oppressed and persecuted for their love of Christ.

1. For the Church. That the Lord will keep our Holy Father, Francis, Thomas our Bishop, the clergy and all the faithful in constant concern for their persecuted Christian brothers and sisters. Lord, hear us.
2. For our brothers and sisters afflicted by discrimination and religious persecution. That the Lord will give them the strength to respond to hatred with love. Lord, hear us.
3. For those in exile. That the Lord protect men, women and children who have been forced to leave their homeland because of religious persecution. Lord, hear us.

4. For religious freedom. That all people will be able to seek truth, and that this fundamental human right be protected and fostered in national laws. Lord, hear us.
5. For our parish. That we who live with freedom of worship will open our hearts and our hands to help keep the faith alive where it is most in need. Lord, hear us.
6. For those who have died. May those who have lost their lives as a result of their faith be united with Christ in heavenly glory. Lord, hear us.

Celebrant:

Heavenly Father, look upon Your people who entrust themselves to Your mercy. May those of us who enjoy freedom of worship, never forget the cries of those who bear a heavy cross for their faith. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

THE LITURGY OF THE EUCHARIST

Prayer over the Offerings

Receive, we ask, O Lord,
the prayers and sacrificial gifts we offer in humility
and grant that those who suffer persecution
for their faithful service to you
may rejoice to be united to the sacrifice of Christ your Son
and may know that their names are written in heaven
among the company of the elect.
Through Christ our Lord.

EUCCHARISTIC PRAYER FOR RECONCILIATION II
The Gift of Mutual Reconciliation

The Lord be with you.

And with your spirit.

Lift up your hearts.

We lift them up to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

It is right and just.

It is truly right and just
that we should give you thanks and praise,
O God, almighty Father,
for all you do in this world,
through our Lord Jesus Christ.

For though the human race
is divided by dissension and discord,
yet we know that by testing us
you change our hearts
to prepare them for reconciliation.

Even more, by your Spirit you move human hearts
that enemies may speak to each other again,
adversaries may join hands,
and peoples seek to meet together.

By the working of your power
it comes about, O Lord,
that hatred is overcome by love,
revenge gives way to forgiveness,
and discord is changed to mutual respect.

Therefore, as we give you ceaseless thanks
with the choirs of heaven,
we cry out to your majesty on earth,
and without end we acclaim:

**Holy, Holy, Holy Lord God of hosts.
Heaven and earth are full of your glory.
Hosanna in the highest.
Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.
Hosanna in the highest.**

You, therefore, almighty Father,
we bless through Jesus Christ your Son,
who comes in your name.
He himself is the Word that brings salvation,
the hand you extend to sinners,
the way by which your peace is offered to us.
When we ourselves had turned away from you
on account of our sins,
you brought us back to be reconciled, O Lord,
so that, converted at last to you,
we might love one another
through your Son,
whom for our sake you handed over to death.

And now, celebrating the reconciliation
Christ has brought us,
we entreat you:
sanctify these gifts by the outpouring of your Spirit,
that they may become the Body and Blood of your Son,
whose command we fulfil
when we celebrate these mysteries.

For when about to give his life to set us free, as he reclined at supper,
he himself took bread into his hands,
and, giving you thanks, he said the blessing,
broke the bread and gave it to his disciples, saying:

**TAKE THIS, ALL OF YOU, AND EAT OF IT,
FOR THIS IS MY BODY,
WHICH WILL BE GIVEN UP FOR YOU.**

In a similar way, on that same evening,
he took the chalice of blessing in his hands,
confessing your mercy,
and gave the chalice to his disciples, saying:

**TAKE THIS, ALL OF YOU, AND DRINK FROM IT,
FOR THIS IS THE CHALICE OF MY BLOOD,
THE BLOOD OF THE NEW AND ETERNAL COVENANT,
WHICH WILL BE Poured OUT FOR YOU AND FOR MANY
FOR THE FORGIVENESS OF SINS.
DO THIS IN MEMORY OF ME.**

The mystery of faith.
And the people continue, acclaiming:
We proclaim your Death, O Lord,
and profess your Resurrection
until you come again.

Celebrating, therefore, the memorial
of the Death and Resurrection of your Son,
who left us this pledge of his love,
we offer you what you have bestowed on us,
the Sacrifice of perfect reconciliation.

Holy Father, we humbly beseech you
to accept us also, together with your Son,
and in this saving banquet
graciously to endow us with his very Spirit,
who takes away everything
that estranges us from one another.

May he make your Church a sign of unity
and an instrument of your peace among all people
and may he keep us in communion
with Francis our Pope and N. our Bishop,
and your entire people.
Just as you have gathered us now at the table of your Son,

so also bring us together,
with the glorious Virgin Mary, Mother of God,
with your blessed Apostles and all the Saints,
with our brothers and sisters
and those of every race and tongue
who have died in your friendship.
Bring us to share with them the unending banquet of unity
in a new heaven and a new earth,
where the fullness of your peace will shine forth.
in Christ Jesus our Lord.

**Through him, and with him, and in him,
O God, almighty Father,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
all glory and honour is yours,
for ever and ever.**

THE COMMUNION RITE

At the Saviour's command and formed by divine teaching, we dare to say:

**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 trespass against us;
and lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.**

Deliver us, Lord, we pray, from every evil.....

Communion Antiphon

Mt 5: 11-12

Blessed are you, when they insult you and persecute you because of me, says the Lord. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward will be great in heaven.

Prayer after Communion

By the power of this Sacrament, O Lord,
confirm your servants in the truth
and grant to your faithful who suffer tribulation
that, as they follow your Son in bearing their cross,
they may, in every trial, glory in the name of Christian.
Through Christ our Lord.



(Mass texts taken from The Roman Missal, Mass for Persecuted Christians, 2011, Veritas.)

PRAYER VIGIL FOR PERSECUTED CHRISTIANS

Entrance Hymn

Abide with Me

Lyte

1 Abide with me: fast falls the eventide;
the darkness deepens; Lord, with me abide.
When other helpers fail and comforts flee,
Help of the helpless, O abide with me.

2 Swift to its close ebbs out life's little day;
earth's joys grow dim, its glories pass away.
Change and decay in all around I see.
O thou who changest not, abide with me.

3 I need thy presence every passing hour.
What but thy grace can foil the tempter's power?
Who like thyself my guide and strength can be?
Through cloud and sunshine, O abide with me.

4 I fear no foe with thee at hand to bless,
ills have no weight, and tears no bitterness.
Where is death's sting? Where, grave, thy victory?
I triumph still, if thou abide with me.

5 Hold thou thy cross before my closing eyes.
Shine through the gloom and point me to the skies.
Heaven's morning breaks and earth's vain shadows flee;
in life, in death, O Lord, abide with me.

After the entrance procession, the Blessed Sacrament is exposed.

Opening Prayer

O God of all the nations,
the One God who is and was and always will be,
in your providence you willed that your Church
be united to the suffering of your Son.
Look with mercy on your servants
who are persecuted for their faith in you.
Grant them perseverance and courage
to be worthy imitators of Christ.
Bring your wisdom upon leaders of nations
to work for peace among all peoples.
Give us the grace to be united in truth and freedom,
and to always seek your will in our lives.
Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Silent adoration.

Scripture Reading:

Acts 4.1-5, 18-21

While Peter and John were speaking to the people, the priests, the captain of the temple, and the Sadducees came to them, much annoyed because they were teaching the people and proclaiming that in Jesus there is the resurrection of the dead. So they arrested them and put them in custody until the next day, for it was already evening. But many of those who heard the word believed; and they numbered about five thousand. The next day their ruler, elders, and scribes assembled in Jerusalem. They called Peter and John and ordered them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus. But Peter and John answered them, "Whether it is right in God's sight to listen to you rather than to God, you must judge; for we cannot keep from speaking about what we have seen and heard." After threatening them again, they let them go, finding no way to punish them because of the people, for all of them praised God for what had happened.

Silent adoration.

Rosary Meditations for Persecuted Christians

1. The Agony in the Garden

Jesus knows torture and death lie ahead and he prays that the cup will pass. He also prays God's will be done. In his agony, he carries the weight of our sins so that we may be saved. We think of the courage it took to give himself to God's plan. We too suffer and while we may pray the suffering will end, we are given support from Our Lord to endure, as Jesus received strength from the angel in the garden.

We pray for our Christian brothers and sisters in China and North Korea. For those who are imprisoned for refusing to deny their faith in Jesus Christ. Protect them from abuse and torture. For those in prison who are sick.....restore them to wholeness and healing in Jesus' name. Strengthen and encourage Church leaders who are pressured and monitored.

Pray for the 'Underground Church'. Help them to remain spiritually strong and healthy, and to remain resilient in persecution.

For suffering communities and their leaders who continue serving the Lord and encouraging their churches.

Our Father

10 Hail Marys

Glory be

Conclude each decade with: 'Our Lady, Queen of Peace, pray for us.'

2. The Scourging at the Pillar

Jesus is brutally tortured to near death. Scourging was more than mere beating; it involved using instruments to inflict the most pain and blood loss possible without actually killing. Jesus was beaten for our sins.

His mother watched as her son's blood spilled on the ground. We imagine the horror she felt watching her precious child being brutalized, and how hard it must have been to not run to his rescue.

For our Christian brothers and sisters in Iraq, Syria, the Palestinian Territories, Egypt, Lebanon, Israel and throughout the Middle East. As the number of Christians in the Middle East declines, persecution against those who remain is increasing. As waves of turmoil and persecution intensify, the Christian exodus leaves fewer Christians to build community.

Strengthen believers who are victimised and minoritised to be salt and light. Bless their lands with peace, tolerance and freedom. Bless our Christian brothers and sisters with your protection in the midst of fear.

May your wisdom guide decision makers, governments and legislators to safeguard the religious freedom of Christians.

3. The Crowning with Thorns

Jesus is stripped, re clothed with a scarlet robe and crowned with thorns. He is mocked and spit upon by the soldiers. The people demand his crucifixion. Despite his innocence, he does not defend himself. He is strong in the face of hatred. We imagine his sadness at the people's ignorance, his sorrow at their contempt. We pray for courage to defend God's truth and strength to withstand the criticism and hatred of others.

We pray for an end to Islamic extremism and its persecution against Christians. We pray for our Christian brothers and sisters in Burkina Faso, Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, Mali, Nigeria, Pakistan, Somalia, and Niger.

Lord, in Your great love, comfort the widowed and orphaned. May governments work diligently, impartially, and transparently to address violence and its effects against Christians.

As the Church ministers to those who are persecuted, give them strength, wisdom, and resilience.

4. Jesus takes up his Cross

Jesus' humiliation continues as he carries the Cross he will be crucified on through the town and people continue to mock him. We imagine the pain of the heavy wood against his back, rubbing against the open wounds from the scourging, the hot sun on him, the thirst, and hunger. We imagine his grief at seeing Mary, knowing she is watching her son die. Jesus is patient in enduring this suffering for us.

For Christians who speak out in the cause of right. We pray for Christians who speak out against extortion, corruption, displacement, exploitation of the young, criminal gang activities. We pray especially for Christians in Mexico, Columbia and Guatemala who condemn violence, discourage church members from joining their ranks or refuse to pay extortionate bribes. Protect church leaders despite imminent danger. They are perceived as a threat to criminal activities because they oppose corruption and drug use and reject the requests of criminal organisations. Bring guerillas and gang members to know You as their king.

5. The Crucifixion and Death of Jesus

Jesus arrives and is nailed to the cross. As he hangs, slowly dying, he is comforted by the presence of Mary, her sister, John and Mary Magdalene. Mary is strong. She has watched him suffer and now die and she never leaves him. I imagine her heartache. In his words to Mary, "Woman, behold, your son" all of us are entrusted to her love.

We pray for persecuted Christians in Nigeria, Chad, Cameroon who face kidnapping, torture, and death. We pray for our Christian brothers and sisters in India, Myanmar and Nepal where authorities force Christians under the control of one religion, where Christians are beaten, imprisoned and killed for their faith in Jesus.

Lord, give our brothers and sisters courage, boldness, and peace despite the uncertainties they face. Bring healing and lasting peace to the Hindu-majority region. We pray for those who are unjustly imprisoned, that they will know the true freedom of Christ, being filled with joy of belonging to Him

Make Me a Channel of Your Peace

Temple

Make me a channel of your peace
Where there is hatred let me bring your love
Where there is injury, your pardon Lord
And where there is doubt true faith in You

Make me a channel of your peace
Where there is despair in life let me bring hope
Where there is darkness only light
And where there's sadness ever joy

Oh, Master grant that I may never seek
So much to be consoled as to console
To be understood as to understand
To be loved as to love with all my soul

Make me a channel of your peace
It is in pardoning that we are pardoned
It is in giving to all men that we receive
And in dying that we are born to eternal life

Oh, Master grant that I may never seek
So much to be consoled as to console
To be understood as to understand
To be loved as to love with all my soul

Make me a channel of your peace
Where there's despair in life let me bring hope
Where there is darkness only light
And where there's sadness ever joy

Silent adoration

Tantum Ergo

Benediction

Final Prayer

Heavenly Father,
rooted in faith and love for your son, Jesus,
strengthened the members of Your Church
who stand in the face of opposition, ridicule, oppression and exclusion.
We pray for their protection;
may their words, appearance, and actions
radiate their love of Christ,
and may their faith bring honour and glory to your name.
We ask this through Christ, our Lord. **Amen.**

Final Hymn

Glory and Praise to Our God

Schutte

Glory and praise to our God
Who alone gives light to our days
Many are the blessings He bears
To those who trust in His ways

We the daughters and sons of Him
Who built the valleys and plains
Praise the wonders our God has done
In every heart that sings

Glory and praise to our God
Who alone gives light to our days
Many are the blessings He bears
To those who trust in His ways

In His wisdom He strengthens us
Like gold that's tested in fire
Though the power of sin prevails

Our God is there to save

Glory and praise to our God
Who alone gives light to our days
Many are the blessings He bears
To those who trust in His ways

God has watered our barren land
And spent His merciful rain
Now our rivers of life run full
For anyone to drink

Glory and praise to our God
Who alone gives light to our days
Many are the blessings He bears
To those who trust in His ways