

**Mount Hollywood United Church of Christ – Los Angeles**  
**Second Sunday of Advent – December 4, 2016 – PEACE – Communion**  
**Rev. Anne G. Cohen, Minister**

**Isaiah 11:1-10**

**For Reflection**

**"The Koran is saying to humans, this is the final guidance from your Creator, for the specific purpose of worshipping him and creating a civil society where you can live in peace with one another,"** says Muslim scholar Imam Sulayman S. Nyang of Howard University in Washington, D.C. Muslims around the world rely on the Koran for guidance, says Nyang. Devout followers heed the call to prayer five times each day and recite passages from the holy book. **Muslims believe that the Koran is God's unfiltered message—teaching them how to lead a good life and become a better, more moral person.**

**"The Koran is very specific with regard to the nature of human struggle, because in order for a human to be at peace with himself, they must control their baser instincts,"** says Nyang. **The quest to control base instincts such as greed, lust, and cruelty and to seek spiritual purity is known by Muslims as the "great jihad."** Featured widely in the Koran, the **"great jihad" is a person's most important internal struggle...**

- [http://news.nationalgeographic.com/news/2001/09/0925\\_TVkoran.html](http://news.nationalgeographic.com/news/2001/09/0925_TVkoran.html)  
"Koran a Book of Peace, Not War, Scholars Say"  
Peter Standring, National Geographic Today, September 25, 2001

**Tableaux of Peace vs. Pax Romana**

It was an annual tradition at Northridge UCC for the youth to present a manger scene tableau on Balboa Blvd. two nights the week before Christmas. Sumner Blaha, retired fire chief – with help – set up a stable with stage lighting – and brought in bales of hay. Moms made sure the bathrobes and fancy soap containers, halos and the baby doll in swaddling clothes were in good condition – and we had lots of hot chocolate on hand.

For two hours each night – with a warm-up break in the middle – the youth group – White, Black, Filipino – stood still and silent in adoration of the Christ Child – as drivers slowed or parked to look – took pictures – honked approval – called out "Merry Christmas." The kids took turns being angels and shepherds, Mary and Joseph, kings and queens – sometimes swapping costumes during the break. Parents stood around on the sidewalk, whispering conversations, making sure the tableau maintained itself – but keeping out of the light. Wind and cold were variables to be dealt with. It was a challenge and an adventure.

One December in the mid-1990's there was a drive-by shooting on a near-by street. There was a huge discussion about the safety of our kids and a debate about cancelling the tableau. Ultimately, the kids decided they wanted to go ahead and do the tableau for one night – as a needed gift to the neighborhood – and an un-self-

conscious act of courage. There were a lot of fathers out on the sidewalk that night. And an increase in the number of people stopping to say, "Thank you!" and "We needed this!"

I was proud of our kids – and their gift of peace.

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Two days ago we commemorated the one year anniversary of the mass murder at the Inland Regional Center in San Bernardino. The attack was deemed a terrorist act by Islamic extremists – a situation likely to engender community division, counter-attacks on Muslims, and a spiral of violence. What has happened instead is a community coming together, inter-faith cooperation and acts of healing. On Friday:

...three hours before a community memorial...was expected to bring thousands to Cal State San Bernardino, a smaller group, including several family members of the victims, gathered on the opposite end of campus to inaugurate a peace garden in memory of the five victims of the attack who were Cal State alumni... A bell with the names of the five alumni stood at the center of the garden, and a quote attributed to Albert Einstein was etched on a wall:

**"Peace cannot be kept by force," it said. "It can only be achieved by understanding."**

<http://www.latimes.com/local/california/la-me-ln-san-bernardino-terrorism-live-1480727221-htmlstory.html>

"Peace cannot be kept by force. It can only be achieved by understanding." It is a concept that flies in the face of every empire, including ours, that has practiced Pax Romana – peace through military occupation. This Einstein quotation comes from a speech to the New History Society (14 December **1930**). With prescience he said:

"Peace cannot be kept by force. It can only be achieved by understanding. You cannot subjugate a nation forcibly unless you wipe out every man, woman, and child. Unless you wish to use such drastic measures, you must find a way of settling your disputes without resort to arms."

from a speech to the New History Society (14 December 1930)

reprinted in "Militant Pacifism" in Cosmic Religion (1931).

Also found in The New Quotable Einstein by Alice Calaprice, p. 158.

[http://en.wikiquote.org/wiki/Albert\\_Einstein](http://en.wikiquote.org/wiki/Albert_Einstein) [Scroll down to Quotes: 1930's]

We might think about how the world might be different now – if we had responded to the 9/11 attacks in 2001 differently – with a peace garden, a tableau, understanding rather than warfare and Pax Romana.

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Pax Romana (Latin for "Roman peace") was the long period of relative peacefulness and minimal expansion by the Roman military force experienced by the Roman Empire after the end of the Final War of the Roman Republic and before the beginning of the Crisis of the Third Century... a span of approximately 206 years (27 BCE to 180 CE).

It was actually not a time of absolute peace but we are supposed to see it “in contrast to the much more frequent warfare in the Roman Republic in the 4th and 3rd centuries BCE.” Pax Romana as a concept is complicated – and better understood as a form of propaganda. In reality:

**Romans regarded peace not as an absence of war, but the rare situation that existed when all opponents had been beaten down and lost the ability to resist.** Augustus' challenge was to persuade Romans that the prosperity they could achieve in the absence of warfare was better for the Empire than the potential wealth and honor acquired when fighting a risky war. Augustus succeeded by means of skillful propaganda. Subsequent emperors followed his lead, sometimes producing lavish ceremonies to close the Gates of Janus, issuing coins with Pax on the reverse, and patronizing literature extolling the benefits of the Pax Romana...

... **"In other words, imperial peace becomes civil peace insofar as the memory of the previously independent political units are effaced, insofar as individuals within a pacified zone feel themselves less united to the traditional or local community and more to the conquering state."**

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pax\\_Romana](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pax_Romana)

Basically, Pax Romana is “any state of peace imposed by a strong nation on weaker or defeated nations; an uneasy or hostile peace.

<http://www.dictionary.com/browse/pax-romana>

This is an American legacy – part of the definition implied when someone says, “Make America Great Again!”

This is the kind of peace we need to guard against – and instead, building a Just Peace with mutual understanding.

A Just Peace is the kind of peace Michele Obama was alluding to when she said, “When they go low, we go high.”

A Just Peace is the kind of peace that was etched in my heart in a photograph from my childhood – picturing a young man placing a flower in the barrel of a rifle held by a soldier during a peace march in 1967.



*"Flower Power" is a historic photograph taken by American photographer Bernie Boston for the now-defunct Washington Star newspaper. It was nominated for the 1967 Pulitzer Prize. Taken on October 21, 1967, during the National Mobilization Committee to End the War in Vietnam's march to the Pentagon, the iconic photo shows a Vietnam War protestor placing a carnation into the barrel of a rifle held by soldier of the 503rd Military Police Battalion.*

*[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Flower\\_Power\\_\(photograph\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Flower_Power_(photograph))*

A Just Peace is the kind of peace found in San Bernardino this year – in the community response to that Dec. 2<sup>nd</sup> tragedy – that peace garden on a university campus declaring Peace through Understanding.

Two weeks after the 9/11/2001 attacks in New York, D.C. and Pennsylvania – National Geographic published an article based on information from Muslim scholars about the message of the Koran – a "book of peace, not war." It was a call to all of us to understand that the acts of 9/11 were aberrations, behavior of a fringe – not the intent of the vast majority of Muslims. The article tried to teach us that:

"The Koran is saying to humans, this is the final guidance from your Creator, for the specific purpose of worshipping him and creating a civil society where you can live in peace with one another..." ... Muslims believe that the Koran is God's unfiltered message—teaching them how to lead a good life and become a better, more moral person.

"The Koran is very specific with regard to the nature of human struggle, because in order for a human to be at peace with himself, they must control their baser instincts..." The quest to control base instincts such as greed, lust, and cruelty and to seek spiritual purity is known by Muslims as the "great jihad." Featured widely in the Koran, the "great jihad" is a person's most important internal struggle...

The "full picture" of Islam and the Koran...is captured by Chapter 5, Verse 32: "[I]f anyone slew a person—unless it be for murder or spreading mischief in the land—it would be as if he slew the whole people. And if anyone saved a life, it would be as if he saved the life of the whole people."

For most Muslims, the callous and indiscriminate taking of human life violates Allah's wishes. It defies the Koran's central message and undermines the peace that Islam promises to deliver to all people. "Human life in Islam is extremely sacred...We're not talking about just Muslim [life], but human life in general."

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"[I]f anyone slew a person...it would be as if he slew the whole people. And if anyone saved a life, it would be as if he saved the life of the whole people." This may sound familiar if you are Jewish – or if you saw the movie "Schindler's List." At the end of the movie Schindler regrets that he couldn't have saved more people and a man quotes the Talmud to him:

Whoever destroys a soul, it is considered as if he destroyed an entire world. And whoever saves a life, it is considered as if he saved an entire world.

Mishnah Sanhedrin 4:5; Yerushalmi Talmud 4:9, Babylonian Talmud Sanhedrin 37a.

Muslims are related to us in faith – as they honor Jewish and Christian traditions as intertwined with Islam. There are Jewish and Christian extremists who kill in the name of our religions as well. The extremists/terrorists do not define us. That understanding is foundational to our relationship with our Muslim neighbors in Los Angeles and beyond.

With a bully in the White House and other bullies controlling Congress – envisioning a new U.S. Pax Romana – we have a two-fold mission. We must control our own baser instincts (like revenge and hate-blogging) through personal "internal jihad" – which seems a lot like the Buddhist concept of self-understanding leading to no-self which opens us to receive understanding of others.

<http://www.accesstoinight.org/lib/authors/khema/bl095.html>

In other words, we have some self-regulation to work on. The other part of our mission is to protect life – protect others from harm – stand alongside "others" – let them teach us and tell their stories – and, as I've said before, be allies as we all stand up against the bullies.

Like those kids who stood in tableaux in the aftermath of a shooting, like the kids who took to the streets of Ferguson, Missouri, after the shooting of Michael Brown, like that guy Jesus who challenged the Roman occupation – we must stand with courage in the face of Empire – and make our own kind of peace.

## **Isaiah 11:1-10**

1 A shoot shall come out from the stump of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots. 2 The spirit of the LORD shall rest on him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD. 3 His delight shall be in the fear of the LORD. He shall not judge by what his eyes see, or decide by what his ears hear; 4 but with righteousness he shall judge the poor, and decide with equity for the meek of the earth; he shall strike the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips he shall kill the wicked. 5 Righteousness shall be the belt around his waist, and faithfulness the belt around his loins. 6 The wolf shall live with the lamb, the leopard shall lie down with the kid, the calf and the lion and the fatling together, and a little child shall lead them. 7 The cow and the bear shall graze, their young shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. 8 The nursing child shall play over the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put its hand on the adder's den. 9 They will not hurt or destroy on all my holy mountain; for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea. 10 On that day the root of Jesse shall stand as a signal to the peoples; the nations shall inquire of him, and his dwelling shall be glorious.

## **PEACE**

### **Psalm 72:1-7, 18-19**

**NRSV**

1 Give the king your justice, O God, and your righteousness to a king's son.

**2 May he judge your people with righteousness, and your poor with justice.**

3 May the mountains yield prosperity for the people, and the hills, in righteousness.

**4 May he defend the cause of the poor of the people, give deliverance to the needy, and crush the oppressor.**

5 May he live while the sun endures, and as long as the moon, throughout all generations.

6 May he be like rain that falls on the mown grass, like showers that water the earth.

**7 In his days may righteousness flourish and peace abound, until the moon is no more.**

18 Blessed be the LORD, the God of Israel, who alone does wondrous things.

19 Blessed be his glorious name forever; may his glory fill the whole earth. Amen and Amen.

## World Constitution

Preamble to the preliminary draft 1948

Peace Prayers p.119

The people of the earth having agreed  
that the advancement of [hu]man[kind]  
in spiritual excellence and physical welfare  
is the common goal of [hu]mankind;  
that universal peace is the prerequisite  
for the pursuit of that goal;  
that justice in turn is the prerequisite of peace,  
and peace and justice stand or fall together;  
that iniquity and war inseparably spring  
from the competitive anarchy of the national states;  
that **therefore the age of nations must end,  
and the era of humanity begin.**

## Prayer

By Maya Angelou

Father, Mother, God,  
Thank you for your presence  
during the hard and mean days.  
For then we have you to lean upon.  
Thank you for your presence  
during the bright and sunny days,  
for then we can share that which we have  
with those who have less.  
And thank you for your presence  
during the Holy Days, for then we are able  
to celebrate you and our families  
and our friends.  
For those who have no voice,  
we ask you to speak.  
For those who feel unworthy,  
we ask you to pour your love out  
in waterfalls of tenderness.  
For those who live in pain,  
we ask you to bathe them  
in the river of your healing.  
For those who are lonely, we ask  
you to keep them company.

For those who are depressed,  
we ask you to shower upon them  
the light of hope.  
Dear Creator, You, the borderless  
sea of substance, we ask you to give to all the  
world that which we need most—Peace.

### **School Prayer**

by Diane Ackerman, from I Praise My Destroyer (Vintage Books, 2000)

In the name of the daybreak  
and the eyelids of morning  
and the wayfaring moon  
and the night when it departs,

I swear I will not dishonor  
my soul with hatred,  
but offer myself humbly  
as a guardian of nature,  
as a healer of misery,  
as a messenger of wonder,  
as an architect of peace.

In the name of the sun and its mirrors  
and the day that embraces it  
and the cloud veils drawn over it  
and the uttermost night  
and the male and the female  
and the plants bursting with seed  
and the crowning seasons  
of the firefly and the apple,

I will honor all life  
—wherever and in whatever form  
it may dwell—on Earth my home,  
and in the mansions of the stars.



## Hilary read this one

### We interrupt this war

By Cappy Hall Rearick - 2001

From the author's book, Simply Said

We interrupt this war for doctors to heal,  
teachers to teach, and students to learn.

We interrupt this war to marvel at sunsets,  
listen to music, and to laugh.

We interrupt this war for poets to rhyme, sculptors to  
chisel, and writers to paint pictures with words.

We interrupt this war to plant tomatoes, mow  
the grass, and to smell the roses.

We interrupt this war to feed the hungry, build  
new schools, and to stamp out ignorance.

We interrupt this war to clean up the air, save  
the whales and to find a cure for cancer.

We interrupt this war to rebuild New Orleans,  
tickle babies and for world peace.

We interrupt this war for PTA meetings, band  
concerts, and high school graduations.

We interrupt this war for Girl Scout Cookies,  
church bake sales, and the Special Olympics.

We interrupt this war for Disneyland, the  
World Series, and the Super Bowl.

We interrupt this war for Halloween candy,  
Thanksgiving Turkey, and 4th of July fireworks.

We interrupt this war for Hanukkah,  
Christmas and Kwanza.

We interrupt this war to bring sons,  
daughters, sisters and brothers home.

We interrupt this war to hear a message from  
Our Sponsor: THOU SHALT NOT KILL.

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Pax Romana (Latin for "Roman peace") was the long period of relative peacefulness and minimal expansion by the Roman military force experienced by the Roman Empire after the end of the Final War of the Roman Republic and before the beginning of the Crisis of the Third Century. Since it was established by Augustus, it is sometimes called Pax Augusta. Its span was approximately 206 years (27 BC to 180 AD) according to Encyclopedia Britannica.

The Pax Romana is said to have been a "miracle" because prior to it there had never been peace for so many centuries in a given period of history. However, Walter Goffart wrote: "The volume of the Cambridge Ancient History for the years A.D. 70-192 is called 'The Imperial Peace', but peace is not what one finds in its pages". Arthur M. Eckstein writes that **the period must be seen in contrast to the much more frequent warfare in the Roman Republic in the 4th and 3rd centuries BC.** Eckstein also notes that the incipient Pax Romana appeared during the Republic, and that its temporal span varied with geographical region as well: "Although the standard textbook dates for the Pax Romana, the famous "Roman Peace" in the Mediterranean, are 31 BC to AD 250, the fact is that the Roman Peace was emerging in large regions of the Mediterranean at a much earlier date: Sicily after 210 [BC]; peninsular Italy after 200 [BC]; the Po Valley after 190 [BC]; most of Spain after 133 [BC]; North Africa after 100 [BC]; and for ever longer stretches of time in the Greek East."

The first known record of the term Pax Romana appears in a writing by Seneca the Younger in 55 AD. The concept was highly influential, and the subject of theories and attempts to copy it in subsequent ages. Arnaldo Momigliano noted that **"Pax Romana is a simple formula for propaganda, but a difficult subject for research."** In fact, the "Pax Romana" was broken by the First Jewish-Roman War, the Kitos War (also in Judea, 115-117), the Bar Kokhba Revolt (also known as the Third Jewish-Roman War), the Roman-Parthian War of 58-63, Trajan's Roman-Parthian War of 113, and Boudica's war in Britain in AD 60 or 61.

The Pax Romana started after Octavian (Augustus) defeated Marc Antony in the Battle of Actium on 2 September 31 BC. He became princeps, or first citizen. Lacking a good precedent of successful one-man rule, Augustus created a junta of the greatest military magnates and stood as the front man. By binding together these leading magnates in a coalition, he eliminated the prospect of civil war. The Pax Romana was not immediate, despite the end of the civil wars, because fighting continued in Hispania and in the Alps. Nevertheless, Augustus closed the Gates of Janus (the Roman ceremony to mark world Peace) three times, first in 29 BC and again in 25 BC. The third closure is undocumented, but Inez Scott Ryberg (1949) and Gaius Stern (2006) have persuasively dated the third closure to 13 BC with the Ara Pacis ceremony. At the time of the Ludi Saeculares in 17 BC the concept of Peace was publicized, and in 13 BC was proclaimed when Augustus and Agrippa jointly returned from pacifying the provinces. The Ara Pacis ceremony was no doubt part of this announcement.

Augustus faced a problem to make peace an acceptable mode of life for the Romans, who had been at war with one power or another continuously for 200 years. **Romans regarded peace not as an absence of war, but the rare situation that existed when all opponents had been beaten down and lost the ability to resist.** Augustus' challenge was to persuade Romans that the prosperity they could achieve in the absence of warfare was better for the Empire than the potential wealth and honor acquired when fighting a risky war. Augustus succeeded by means of skillful propaganda. Subsequent emperors followed his lead, sometimes producing lavish ceremonies to close the Gates of Janus, issuing coins with Pax on the reverse, and patronizing literature extolling the benefits of the Pax Romana...

...More generically, the concept has been referred to as pax imperia, (sometimes spelled as pax imperium) meaning imperial peace, or—less literally—hegemonic peace. Raymond Aron notes that imperial peace—peace achieved through hegemony—sometimes, but not always—can become civil peace. As an example, the German Empire's imperial peace of 1871 (over its internal components like Saxony) slowly evolved into the later German state. As a counter-example, the imperial peace of Alexander the Great's empire dissolved because the Greek city states maintained their political identity and more importantly, embryos of their own armed forces. Aron notes that during the Pax Romana, the Jewish war was a reminder that the overlapping of the imperial institutions over the local ones did not erase them and the overlap was a source of tension and flare-ups. Aron summarizes that, **"In other words, imperial peace becomes civil peace insofar as the memory of the previously independent political units are effaced, insofar as individuals within a pacified zone feel themselves less united to the traditional or local community and more to the conquering state."**

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pax\\_Romana](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pax_Romana)

- 1.the terms of peace imposed by ancient Rome on its dominions.
- 2.any state of peace imposed by a strong nation on weaker or defeated nations.
- 3.an uneasy or hostile peace.

<http://www.dictionary.com/browse/pax-romana>

the Roman peace; the long period of peace enforced on states in the Roman Empire

<https://www.vocabulary.com/dictionary/Pax%20Romana>

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**SAN BERNARDINO \* DEC. 2, 2016, 5:09 P.M.**

**Peace garden honors CSUSB alums killed in terror attack**

Paloma Esquivel

Three hours before a community memorial for the Dec. 2 attack was expected to bring thousands to Cal State San Bernardino, a smaller group, including several family members of the victims, gathered on the opposite end of campus to inaugurate a peace garden in memory of the five victims of the attack who were Cal State alumni.

"A year ago the unimaginable happened in our very own city," said Alex Gutierrez, president of the school's Associated Students group. "Today we convene for comfort and healing."

A bell with the names of the five alumni stood at the center of the garden, and a quote attributed to Albert Einstein was etched on a wall:

**"Peace cannot be kept by force," it said. "It can only be achieved by understanding."**

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