

Support Life Sunday – “Living Peace”

11 October 2026

Liturgical Suggestions

COLLECT

Presider: Let us pray,

God of all life,
you invite every person to your banquet
and call us to recognise the dignity you have bestowed on every human being.

Open our hearts to welcome those who are vulnerable, forgotten, and excluded.
Strengthen us to be faithful witnesses to the Gospel of life,
working for justice, peace, and the flourishing of all creation.
As we await the day when you will wipe away every tear
and gather all peoples into your kingdom,
may our words and actions reflect your love and mercy.

Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
God, for ever and ever.
✠ Amen

Acknowledgements:

Te Kawe Ritenga Tapu – The Liturgy Centre, Diocese of Auckland; Rev Dr Damian Wynn-Williams; The Nathaniel Centre for Bioethics - Te Kupenga

READINGS OF THE DAY – 28TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

(PARALLEL TRANSLATIONS PROVIDED BELOW)

FIRST READING

Isaiah 25: 6-10a

JB 1966

On this mountain,
the Lord of hosts will
prepare
for all peoples
a banquet of rich food,
a banquet of fine wines,
of food rich and juicy, of
fine strained wines.

On this mountain
he will remove
the mourning veil covering
all peoples,
and the shroud enwrapping
all nations,
he will destroy Death for
ever.
The Lord will wipe away
the tears from every cheek;
he will take away his
people's shame
everywhere on earth,
for the Lord has said so.
That day, it will be said:
See, this is our God
in whom we hoped for
salvation;
the Lord is the one in whom
we hoped.
We exult and we rejoice
that he has saved us;
for the hand of the Lord
rests on this mountain.

RNJB 2019

On this mountain,
for all peoples, the LORD
Sabaoth is preparing
for all peoples
a banquet of rich food,
a banquet of fine wines,
of succulent food,
of well-strained wines.

⁷ On this mountain,
he has destroyed
the veil which veiled all
peoples,
the pall enveloping all nations.
⁸ He has destroyed death for
ever.
Lord God has wiped away
the tears from every cheek;
he has taken his people's
shame away over all the earth,
for the LORD has spoken.
⁹ And on that day, it will be
said, 'Look, this is our God,
in him we put our hope
that he should save us,
this is LORD, we waited for
him.
Let us exult and rejoice in his
salvation.
¹⁰ For the LORD's hand will rest
on this mountain.

NRSV 1989

On this mountain
the LORD of hosts
will make
for all peoples
a feast of rich food,
a feast of well-aged wines,
of rich food filled with
marrow, of well-aged wines
strained clear.
⁷ And he will destroy on this
mountain
the shroud that is cast over all
peoples,
the sheet that is spread over all
nations;
⁸ he will swallow up death
forever.
Then the Lord GOD will wipe
away the tears from all faces,
and the disgrace of his people he
will take away from all the earth,
for the LORD has spoken.
⁹ It will be said on that day,
Lo, this is our God;
we have waited for him,
so that he might save us.
This is the LORD for whom we
have waited;
let us be glad and rejoice in his
salvation.
¹⁰ For the hand of the LORD will
rest on this mountain.

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RESPONSORIAL PSALM

Psalm 22(23) - I shall live in the house of the Lord all the days of my life.

SECOND READING

Philippians 4: 12-14, 19-20

JB 1966

I know how to be poor and I know how to be rich too. I have been through my initiation and now I am ready for anything anywhere: full stomach or empty stomach, poverty or plenty. There is nothing I cannot master with the help of the One who gives me strength. All the same, it was good of you to share with me in my hardships. In return my God will fulfil all your needs, in Christ Jesus, as lavishly as only God can. Glory to God, our Father, for ever and ever. Amen.

RNJB 2019

¹² I know how to live modestly, and I know how to have plenty: I have been initiated into every condition and all conditions, both being full-fed and being hungry, both in plenty and in poverty. I can do all things in the One who strengthens me, though it was good of you to share with me in my hardships. ¹⁹ And my God will fulfil all your needs according to the riches of his glory in Christ Jesus. ²⁰ To our God and Father be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

NRSV 1989

I know what it is to have little, and I know what it is to have plenty. In any and all circumstances I have learned the secret of being well-fed and of going hungry, of having plenty and of being in need. ¹³ I can do all things through him who strengthens me. ¹⁴ In any case, it was kind of you to share my distress. ¹⁹ And my God will fully satisfy every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus. ²⁰ To our God and Father be glory forever and ever. Amen.

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GOSPEL READING

Matthew 22: 1-14

JB 1966

Jesus began to speak to the chief priests and elders of the people in parables: 'The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who gave a feast for his son's wedding. He sent his servants to call those who had been invited, but they would not come.

Next he sent some more servants. "Tell those who have been invited" he said "that I have my banquet all prepared, my oxen and fattened cattle have been slaughtered, everything is ready. Come to the wedding." But they were not interested: one went off to his farm, another to his business, and the rest seized his servants, maltreated them and killed them.

The king was furious. He despatched his troops, destroyed those murderers and burnt their town.

Then he said to his servants, "The wedding is ready; but as those who were invited proved to be unworthy, go to the crossroads in the town and invite everyone you can find to the wedding."

So these servants went out on to the roads and collected together everyone they could find, bad and good alike; and the wedding hall was filled with guests.

RNJB 2019

Jesus began to speak to them in parables once again, ² 'The kingdom of Heaven may be compared to a king who gave a feast for his son's wedding. ³ He sent his servants to call those who had been invited, but they would not come.

⁴ Next he sent some more servants with the words, "Tell those who have been invited: Look, I have prepared my banquet, my oxen and fattened cattle have been slaughtered, everything is ready. Come to the wedding." ⁵ But they were not interested: one went off to his farm, another to his business, ⁶ and the rest seized his servants, maltreated them and killed them.

⁷ The king was furious. He despatched his troops, destroyed those murderers and burnt their town.

⁸ Then he said to his servants, "The wedding is ready; but as those who were invited proved to be unworthy, ⁹ go to the main crossroads and invite to the wedding everyone you can find."

¹⁰ So these servants went out onto the roads and collected together everyone they could find, bad and good alike; and the wedding hall was filled with guests.

NRSV 1989

Once more Jesus spoke to them in parables, saying: ² "The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who gave a wedding banquet for his son. ³ He sent his slaves to call those who had been invited to the wedding banquet, but they would not come.

⁴ Again he sent other slaves, saying, 'Tell those who have been invited: Look, I have prepared my dinner, my oxen and my fat calves have been slaughtered, and everything is ready; come to the wedding banquet.' ⁵ But they made light of it and went away, one to his farm, another to his business, ⁶ while the rest seized his slaves, mistreated them, and killed them.

⁷ The king was enraged. He sent his troops, destroyed those murderers, and burned their city.

⁸ Then he said to his slaves, 'The wedding is ready, but those invited were not worthy.⁹ Go therefore into the main streets, and invite everyone you find to the wedding banquet.'

¹⁰ Those slaves went out into the streets and gathered all whom they found, both good and bad; so the wedding hall was filled with guests.

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When the king came in to look at the guests he noticed one man who was not wearing a wedding garment, and said to him, "How did you get in here, my friend, without a wedding garment?" And the man was silent.

Then the king said to the attendants, "Bind him hand and foot and throw him out into the dark, where there will be weeping and grinding of teeth."

For many are called, but few are chosen.'

¹¹ When the king came in to look at the guests he noticed one man who was not wearing a wedding garment, ¹² and said to him, "How did you get in here, my friend, without a wedding garment?" And the man was silent.

¹³ Then the king said to the attendants, "Bind him hand and foot and throw him into the darkness outside, where there will be weeping and grinding of teeth."

¹⁴ For many are invited but not all are chosen.'

¹¹ "But when the king came in to see the guests, he noticed a man there who was not wearing a wedding robe, ¹² and he said to him, 'Friend, how did you get in here without a wedding robe?' And he was speechless.

¹³ Then the king said to the attendants, 'Bind him hand and foot, and throw him into the outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'

¹⁴ For many are called, but few are chosen."

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HOMILY NOTES FOR SUPPORT LIFE SUNDAY

The readings for **Support Life Sunday 2026 (28th Sunday in Ordinary Time)** provide a powerful image: a banquet prepared by God for "all peoples." Isaiah speaks of the Lord gathering all nations to a feast where death itself is destroyed. Jesus develops that image in the parable of the wedding banquet, where the invitation is extended far beyond the original guests to "everyone you can find."

These readings invite us to reflect on a fundamental Christian conviction: every human person possesses an inherent, God-given dignity and is welcomed by God to the banquet of life.

Isaiah's vision is remarkable because it includes all peoples and all nations gathered on God's holy mountain. What was once understood primarily as a promise to Israel is revealed as part of God's plan for the whole world. Likewise, in Matthew's Gospel, the king's servants are sent out to gather people from the streets and crossroads, "good and bad alike." The Reign of God is not reserved for a privileged few. God's invitation is radically inclusive; it challenges every tendency towards exclusion such as racism and ethnic prejudice, discrimination based on disability, suspicion of migrants and newcomers and class divisions – any and all judgements that assign greater worth to some lives than others.

The Gospel reminds us that, before we decide who belongs, God has already extended the invitation.

The Inherent Dignity of Every Person and a Consistent Ethic of Life:

The principle of the inherent dignity of every person is a key part of Catholic Social Teaching. As the New Zealand Catholic Bishops remind us in their 2023 publication, [*Te Kahu o Te Ora: A Consistent Ethic of Life*](#), human life is sacred because every person is created in God's image and possesses an intrinsic dignity that belongs to them from conception until natural death.

In *Te Kahu o te Ora*, the bishops describe a "consistent ethic of life" as recognising that "everything is connected." Advocacy for human dignity cannot be selective, and respect for life must shape our response to the spectrum of issues across the whole spectrum of the creation: unborn children, the elderly, the poor, migrants, refugees, other victims of war and violence, prisoners, the environment, and those who experience discrimination.

In the Gospel parable we hear today, the king tells his servants: "Go to the crossroads and invite everyone you can find." Who are those standing at the crossroads of contemporary Aotearoa?

Support Life Sunday 2026 offers an opportunity for such reflection. The list includes:

- the homeless person living on the streets;
- the unborn child whose life is vulnerable;
- our socially isolated elders who feel forgotten;
- the person struggling with mental illness;
- the refugee seeking belonging;
- the prisoner hoping for a second chance;
- the family trapped in poverty;
- the person living with disability;
- those negatively impacted by racism or social exclusion

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Developments in the Church's Teaching on Peace and War:

This year, **the specific focus for Support Life Sunday is on those who are impacted by violence and war and on the 'right to peace'**, something which all the principles of Catholic Social Teaching speak to. As wars rage around the world, it is timely for us to reflect on the Gospel call to peace as well as the latest teaching of the Catholic Church about whether war is ever justifiable.

Recently, Pope Leo reminded us through his encyclical [*Magnifica Humanitas*](#) (MH): "Today, more than ever, without prejudice to the right to self-defense in the strictest sense, it is important to reaffirm that 'just war' theory, which has all too often been used to justify any kind of war, is now outdated" (MH, n.192).

From its earliest days, the Church has consistently held that peace – not violence or war – must unquestionably and always be the object of our intentions. This teaching originates in the example and teaching of Jesus to "love thy neighbour" (Matthew 22:37-39 & Mark 12:30-31) and his command to Peter to "put your sword back in its place" (Matthew 26:47-56). As Pope Pius XII stated shortly before the advent of the Second World War: "Nothing is lost by peace; everything may be lost by war". And as Pope Francis wrote more recently: "Never has the use of violence brought peace in its wake. War begets war, violence begets violence" (Angelus, 1 September 2013).

In *Magnifica Humanitas*, Pope Leo articulates a very recent significant shift within global politics which he describes as the "normalisation of war" (MH nn.189 – 200); evidenced by a context in which war has come to be seen as "a natural extension of politics", fuelled by "enormous economic interests" (MH n.193) that are "transforming war into a "way of life" for entire generations of young people and children (MH n.196). Pope Leo also calls out the emergence of "culturally conditioned simplistic narratives" that are being used to sanitise violence, thus making it easier to justify violence as necessary; narratives increasingly fuelled by algorithms that "prioritise conflict and confrontation" and that are shaping and conditioning public opinion as to the desirability of war.

Pope Leo's conclusion in MH is simple: "Humanity possesses far more effective and capable tools for promoting human life and resolving conflicts, such as dialogue, diplomacy and forgiveness. The use of force, violence and weapons reflects a relational poverty that always has disastrous consequences for civilian populations" (MH, n.192).

It can be persuasively argued that the advent and effects of modern technological developments in warfare, including the worrying and increasing use of AI along with the ongoing prospect of nuclear war, make it *impossible* to satisfy one of the conditions of just war theory - *consideration of the peace of civilians on the other side of the battlelines*. By this measure, no war in our time can ever be categorised as 'just'.

Recent Catholic teaching on war also emphasises its impact on our "common home", including the destruction of crops and land, contamination and poisoning of the environment and devastation of fragile ecosystems. (See [NZ Bishops, *Te Kahu o te Ora*](#), p. 34)

For more detail, see The Nathaniel Report, Issue 79: Dr Greg Marcar, Dr John Kleinsman. (2026) [Never Just about War: Reflections on an "Outdated" Theory](#).

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We Each Have a Responsibility to Build a Civilisation of Love:

Today's readings offer a vision of extraordinary hope. God prepares a banquet for all peoples and wipes away every tear. Sitting down together at the banquet table and sharing food requires a commitment to peace and respect. At the same time, the effort of sitting down together further builds up the bonds of trust, *strengthening the recognition of our common humanity that peace is built upon*. Our God is a God of peace, and God extends an invitation to everyone to sit together in peace.

As disciples of Christ, we are called not only to accept our invitation to the table but to look at the 'empty chairs' – to think about those not there because of the consequences of war and violence.

Equally, there are those who have come to Aotearoa because of wars that have forced them to flee their country of origin – their stories deserve to be heard, something which also requires deliberate attention and effort.

In his recently released encyclical, [*Magnifica Humanitas*](#), Pope Leo speaks of a "subtle temptation," "namely the thought that the problems are too big and we are too small, and that our choices, therefore, cannot make a difference." This, he says, is "a polite form of resignation, often disguised as realism. Certainly, not everyone has the same power to make a difference ... Yet, no one is without responsibility. We all have our own areas for action, and it is precisely there — and nowhere else — that we must choose whether to fuel the mentality of force (even if only through indifference, cynicism, lies or hatred), or to preserve the mindset of peace (with truth, moderation, closeness and care)" (*Magnifica Humanitas*, 212).

Pope Leo proposes five paths toward daily and public responsibility for building the civilization of love (*Magnifica Humanitas*, 212-227):

- refusing (and countering) language which diminishes the "other" (racial and religious prejudice etc.);
- a commitment to justice (recognising injustices within our own community/nation);
- putting oneself in the shoes of the other, seeing things from her/his point of view;
- cultivating a healthy realism, avoiding both political idealism and cynicism; fact checking;
- a rejection of the notion that the use of force, violence etc. is inevitable.

Every one of us, therefore, can, through our words, behaviour and attitudes towards others, be an instrument of peace.

Questions to Ponder:

- Identify people whom you think of as (ethnically, culturally, religiously) different from yourself. How might this prejudice the way you think about, speak about and act towards them?
- How might we have become indifferent to the suffering caused by the violence humans do to each other and our common home through warfare.

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- How can we join with others to advocate for peace in concrete ways?
- How might we be, unwittingly, benefitting from the war industry? Are we prepared to boycott investment funds that benefit from wars in any way.
- How can we be part of providing genuine assistance to those impacted by wars, including displaced peoples?
- As wars and violence rage around the world, how can you create an opportunity in your parish to host a session to (i) reflect on the Gospel call to peace and (ii) think about recent Catholic teaching on peace as highlighted by Pope Leo? *(Consider asking people who have been displaced by war if they would like to be involved, while being mindful that the topic could be traumatic for them.)*

On this **Support Life Sunday**, may we renew our commitment to work for peace as well as a consistent ethic of life: defending the dignity of every human person, accompanying the vulnerable, working for justice and helping to build a society centred on peace where every person knows they are not just welcome at God's banquet table but that they are able to be there because the barriers of violence in all of its forms, especially wars, have been destroyed.

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PRAYERS OF THE FAITHFUL

For the Church – that we develop and express deep gratitude for all that has life, and work to protect it wherever it is threatened or vulnerable.

(Silence)

Reader: E te Ariki All: whakarongo mai rā ki a mātou

For peace among nations – that world leaders may reject the arms race; that they may neither resort to violence nor the threat of violence in the name of peace; that they may they pursue, instead, the path of dialogue, justice, and mutual respect. We pray especially for those in the Middle East, Eastern Europe, and religions afflicted by conflict, that they may soon experience the gift of a just and lasting peace.

(Silence)

Reader: E te Ariki All: whakarongo mai rā ki a mātou

For all who suffer because of war – that the elderly, the disabled, women, children, refugees, and all innocent victims of violence may be protected and comforted. May God move hearts to value every human life and work tirelessly for reconciliation and peace.

(Silence)

Reader: E te Ariki All: whakarongo mai rā ki a mātou

For the leaders of Aotearoa New Zealand – that they establish laws that are just, protecting the vulnerable, safe-guarding human dignity, and preserving the integrity of the natural world.

(Silence)

Reader: E te Ariki All: whakarongo mai rā ki a mātou

For ourselves – that where we see that life is under threat, a desire will awaken in us to support and protect life.

(Silence)

Reader: E te Ariki All: whakarongo mai rā ki a mātou

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PRAYERS AFTER COMMUNION

OPTIONAL COMMUNAL PRAYER TO BE RECITED BY THE CONGREGATION:

OPTION 1: SUPPORT LIFE SUNDAY PRAYER FOR LIFE

Lord, you call us, your pilgrim people,
to be people *of* life and *for* life;
to journey in confidence
towards "a new heaven and a new earth"
that is characterised by a commitment
to the infinite dignity of every person.

Lord, look down upon the vast numbers of
babies not allowed to be born;
the poor whose lives are made difficult by economic injustice;
those who are victims of slavery, war and violence;
the elderly and the sick
killed by indifference or out of misguided mercy;
refugees and migrants
who find themselves rejected in their new countries;
disabled people who are excluded;
those who are exposed to and damaged by prejudice;
survivors of sexual and other forms of abuse;
and workers who are exploited.

Grant that we who believe in you
may proclaim the Gospel of life
in what we think, say and do.

Grant us the grace
to accept the Gospel as a gift ever new,
the joy of celebrating it with gratitude,
and the courage to bear witness to it resolutely
so as to build, together with all people of good will,
a world of justice, mercy, truth, compassion and love.

To the praise and glory of God,
the Creator and lover of all life.

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OPTION 2: SUPPORT LIFE SUNDAY 2026 PRAYER FOR PEACE

God of all peoples
E te Atua o ngā iwi katoa,
we pray for the power to be gentle;
the strength to be forgiving;
the patience to be understanding;
and the endurance to accept the consequences
of holding to what we believe to be right.

May we put our trust in the power of good to overcome evil
and the power of love to overcome hatred.
We pray for the vision to see,
and the faith to believe in a world free from violence,
a new world where fear shall no longer lead people to commit injustice,
nor selfishness make us bring suffering to others.

Help us to devote our whole life and thought and energy
to the task of making peace,
praying always for the inspiration and the power
to fulfil the purpose for which we and everyone were created.
AMEN

(Adapted from a prayer by unknown author)

See: <https://www.caritas.org.nz/catholic-social-teaching/promotion-of-peace>

OPTION 3: SUPPORT LIFE SUNDAY 2026 PRAYER FOR PEACE

Lord, make us instruments of your peace:
where there is hatred, let us sow love;
where there is injury, pardon;
where there is doubt, faith;
where there is despair, hope;
where there is darkness, light;
where there is sadness, joy.

O divine Master, grant that we may not so much seek
to be consoled as to console,
to be understood as to understand,
to be loved as to love.
For it is in giving that we receive,
it is in pardoning that we are pardoned,
and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.

(Adapted from the Prayer of St Francis of Assisi)

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Presiders Prayer after Communion:

Presider: God of life and love,
through this holy Eucharist
you have nourished us with the Bread of Life
and renewed us in the love of your Son.
Strengthen us to recognise your image
in every person we meet,
to defend the dignity of every human life,
and to serve with compassion those who are poor, vulnerable, excluded, or in need.

As we have shared at this sacred table,
make us instruments of your justice, peace, and mercy,
so that our lives may proclaim the Gospel of life
and help build a culture where all people are welcomed, cherished, and protected.

We ask this through Christ our Lord.

✠ Amen

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