

Prayer for International Women's Day

As we come together to celebrate the International Women's Day, we join our sisters (and brothers) throughout the world remembering that "the care we have for one another leads us to engage with the pain and suffering of all people and creation" (USG/UISG).

Song: *Choose an appropriate song known to your group*

Let us begin by acknowledging those around us

Adapt the following prayer to suit your situation or choose another

The Woman Next to You *

Look around Sisters, look around you!

WHO IS THE WOMAN sitting next to you?

The woman next to you is an inexhaustible reservoir of possibility...

With possibilities that have never been completely realised...

Full of necessity and possibility...dread and desire...smiles and frowns...

laughter and tears...fears and hopes...

all struggling to find expression.

The woman next to you is striving to BECOME something in particular,

to arrive at some destination...to have a story... a song...

to be known and to know...

The woman next to you believes in something...

something precious...

stands for something...counts for something...

lives for something...

runs towards something.

The woman next to you...has problems and fears, wonders how she is doing...

and often doesn't feel very good about it...

is often disorganized and sometimes close to chaos...

but endowed with great toughness in the face of adversity...

and able to survive great difficulties.

The woman next to you is a colony of persons...

persons all met during her lifetime...

father and mother, friend and enemy.

The woman next to you has something she can do well...

something she can do better than anyone else in the whole world...

there is something that she and she alone can do...but she may not dare speak of it to you.

The woman next to you can live with you, not just along side you...she can live, not just for herself, but for you, also...

she can comfort, encounter, understand you if that is what you want...and in turn she is to be understood, too.

The woman next to you...can never be fully understood...

*

Please note in the above poem that use of the term 'woman' can **also** signify any person, e.g. in the case of a male community choosing to use this prayer.

Depending upon your circumstances, please choose from alternative prayers or poems to fit the theme of your prayer service.

she is more than any description or explanation...
she can never be fully controlled nor should she be.
The woman next to you is a MYSTERY...
and the WORD MADE FLESH is MYSTERY.

The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us...
and so my Sisters (and Brothers) look around you...
for CHRIST IS HERE, HE DIED and IS RISEN, ALLELUIA!

Courtesy of Vidimus Dominum - The Portal for Religious Life www.vidimusdominum.org

Scripture reading: Luke 13: 10-17 – Healing of the woman

Look at and listen to Jesus in this passage:

- Who is the woman whom Jesus looks at in the synagogue, and how does He relate to her?
- In what way can we identify with this situation?
- What things today bend or hold back the life of people, particularly of women?
- Does the sight of those in need remind us of our own vulnerability?
- Which are some of my personal experiences of having been "straightened" by the Lord or having witnessed the liberation experienced by others?
- Can we see in this action of Jesus a graced opportunity to reach out with compassion?

Take time to share your reflections with the group

Prayer

May God bless you and be with you in your time of deep sorrow and pain,

Through our tears, know that He weeps with you

By our touch, know that His arms are holding you

In our endeavour to assist you, know that He is helping you to cope from day to day

Through our prayers, know that He hears your plea.

And in the desolation you suffer, know that we bring God's love to you to filter into those empty spaces his compassion and understanding.

(Taken from: Marjorie Dobson in: A World of Blessing, Compiled by Geoffrey Duncan, Canterbury Press, 2000)

We now invite you to spend some time focusing on the exploitation of people:

“The trade in human persons constitutes a shocking offence against human dignity and a grave violation of fundamental human rights” John Paul II

Briefly share an example of human trafficking that relates to your situation

(As part of your community’s preparation for this prayer service, please research and use specific examples of suffering caused by human trafficking from your country or from around the world. Examples close to your home country and city are in many cases unfortunately easy to find. Some web resources are included at the end of this prayer).

Take a few moments to reflect on what action you might take to become more involved with the reality of human exploitation

Prayer of Blessing

- God bless the people who never had a voice, the ones in silence who endured such pain and violation.
- God bless the people who never had a chance, the ones in innocence who suffer in their vulnerability.
- God bless the people who never had a hope, the ones who died within themselves. A death before old age.
- God bless the people who caused this pain, the ones who in their selfishness, took life from someone else.
- God bless the people who are left to cope, the ones who face a lifelong toil of memories and pain.
- God bless the people who are needing love, the ones who yearn for love, yet live in disappointment.
- God bless the people who are created in your image, all your children, love them hold them and make them whole

Having prayed together, let us now reach out

- To see **The Women Next to Us** who today are suffering under many types of burdens
- To join them in their **hopes and actions** to be free, to stand up, to walk with dignity.
- To try to **network** with people and organizations who share our commitment to bring fullness of life to people, particularly exploited women.

Song of hope

Choose an appropriate song that your group knows

References and resources

Soul Sisters: Women in Scripture Speak to Women Today - Edwina Gately, Orbis Books, 2002.

Behold a woman – Camilla Burns, in Contact (WCC) No 184, May 2007

Poetry and prayer celebrating International Womens day: www.richmonddiocese.org

Some websites

UNANIMA:

<http://www.unanima-international.org/>

CATW (The Coalition Against Trafficking in Women-International)

<http://www.catwinternational.org/>

ACRATH (Australian Catholic Religious Against Trafficking in Humans)

<http://www.acrath.org.au>

US Dept of State Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons (G/TIP),

www.state.gov/g/tip

The Polaris project

<http://www.polarisproject.org/>

http://actioncenter.polarisproject.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=section&layout=blog&id=6&Itemid=68

<http://www.state.gov/g/tip/c16482.htm>

<http://www.cathnews.com/article.aspx?aeid=14509>

www.ruhama.ie

www.stophetraffik.org

www.coatnet.org

www.antislavery.org

www.gaatw.org

www.ecpat.net