

Gender Equality & Empowerment of Women

December, 2008



Introduction

Opening Prayer

Leader: Let us pray . . .

All: Loving God, in your very being you are a God in relationship, manifested as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. As we gaze at your people, we pray that we may see them as you do. We pray that we may celebrate differences, end discrimination, work for freedom, cease to hurt one another, and begin the work of healing. May we work to transform the world into a place where being female and being male are valued equally.

Justice Reflections

Litany of Mary of Nazareth with Intercessions

Glory to you, God our Creator ... **Breathe into us new life, new meaning.**

Glory to you, God our Savior ... **Lead us in the way of peace and justice.**

Glory to you, healing Spirit ... **Transform us to empower others.**

Mary, wellspring of peace ... **Be our guide.**

Model of strength ... Model of gentleness ... Model of trust ...

Model of courage ... Model of patience ... Model of risk ...

Model of openness ... Model of perseverance ...

Mother of the liberator ... **Pray for us.**

Mother of the homeless ... Mother of the dying ...

Mother of the nonviolent ... Mother of widowed mothers ...

Mother of unwed mothers ... Mother of a political prisoner ...

Mother of the condemned ...

Mother of the executed criminal...

Response to Intercessions: **Mary of Nazareth, Pray for us.**

Oppressed woman ... **Lead us to life.**

Liberator of the oppressed ... Marginalized woman ...

Comforter of the afflicted ... Cause of our joy ...

Sign of contradiction ... Breaker of bondage ...

Political refugee ... Seeker of sanctuary ...

First disciple ... Sharer in Christ's passion ...

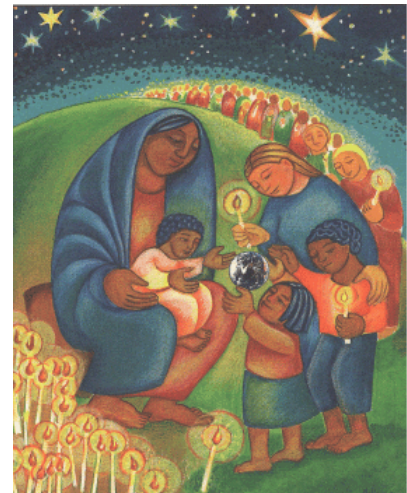
Seeker of God's will ... Witness to Christ's resurrection ...

Woman of mercy ... **Empower us.**

Woman of faith ... Woman of contemplation ... Woman of vision ...

Woman of wisdom and understanding ... Woman of grace and truth ...

Woman, pregnant with hope ... Woman, centered in God ...



Closing Prayer

Notes for using this prayer:

Please feel free to make adaptations to this prayer to meet the needs of your learning community. You may decide to add music before, during or after the pieces that are outlined here. Other materials needed:

- ✓ A copy of the 1st page of this document for each participant
- ✓ A leader of the prayer and additional readers if you decide to use them for the various parts.
- ✓ A copy of the content below for the leader and/or readers.

This prayer service is an adaptation of the "Prayer Service for Women" by Jessica Taylor found at www.educationforjustice.org

The Litany is adapted from Pax Christi's "Litany of Mary of Nazareth".

Introduction

LEADER: This prayer service is a celebration of all women and the contributions they continue to make in our communities, workplaces, and at home, as workers, mothers, wives, daughters, sisters, citizens, caregivers, laborers, teachers, volunteers, leaders and lawmakers, and in all capacities in which they serve. We recall the principles of Catholic Social Teaching that compel us to be aware of the Life and Dignity of the Human Person, the Call to Family, Community, and Participation, the Option for the Poor, and the Rights and Responsibilities of every human being. As we begin this prayer service, please put yourself in a prayerful place, in the presence of the Lord, with a keen awareness of women as beings created in God's image. Take time to reflect on your experiences as a woman, and/or your interactions with women, and especially consider those women most dear to you in your own life.

(Pause to allow time for reflection.)

Justice Reflections

LEADER: We reaffirm the fundamental equality of women and men who, created in the image of God, "all are called to participate in the same divine beatitude: all therefore enjoy an equal dignity." Catechism of the Catholic Church, #1934

READER 1: "When women are able fully to share their gifts with the whole community, the very way in which society understands and organizes itself is improved, and comes to reflect in a more comprehensive manner the substantial unity of the human family. Here we see the most important condition for the consolidation of authentic peace. The growing presence of women in social, economic and political life at the local, national and international levels is thus a very positive development. Women have a full right to become actively involved in all areas of public life, and this right must be affirmed and guaranteed, also, where necessary, through appropriate legislation." Pope John Paul II, World Day of Peace Message, 1995, #9

READER 2: "Women have the right to insist that their dignity be respected. At the same time, they have the duty to work for the promotion of the dignity of all persons, men as well as women." Pope John Paul II, World Day of Peace Message, 1995, #11

READER 1: "There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus." Galatians 3:28

READER 2: "Mary, Queen of Peace, is close to the women of our day because of her embracing motherhood, her example of openness to others' needs and her witness of suffering. Mary lived with a deep sense of responsibility the plan which God willed to carry out in her for the salvation of all humanity. When she was made aware of the miracle which God had worked in her by making her the Mother of his Incarnate Son, her first thought was to visit her elderly kinswoman Elizabeth in order to help her. That meeting gave Mary the chance to express, in the marvelous canticle of the Magnificat (Lk 1:46-55), her gratitude to God who, with her and through her, had begun a new creation, a new history." Pope John Paul II, World Day of Peace Message, 1995, #12

READER 1: "We implore the Most Holy Virgin Mary to sustain those men and women who, in the service of life, have committed themselves to building peace. With her help, may they bear witness before all people, especially those who live in darkness and suffering and who hunger and thirst for justice, to the loving presence of the God of peace." Pope John Paul II, World Day of Peace Message, 1995, #12

Litany with Intercessions

(Leader begins the litany... It will be helpful to the participants to have the leader say the response with them. The responses are in bold blue)

L: Glory to you, God our Creator R: ... **Breathe into us new life, new meaning.**
L: Glory to you, God our Savior R: ... **Lead us in the way of peace and justice.**
L: Glory to you, healing Spirit R: ... **Transform us to empower others.**

L: Mary, wellspring of peace ... **Be our guide.**
L: Model of strength ... **Be our guide.**
L: Model of gentleness ... **Be our guide.**
L: Model of trust ... **Be our guide.**
L: Model of courage ... **Be our guide.**
L: Model of patience ... **Be our guide.**
L: Model of risk ... **Be our guide.**
L: Model of openness ... **Be our guide.**
L: Model of perseverance ... **Be our guide.**

L: Mother of the liberator ... **Pray for us.**
L: Mother of the homeless ... **Pray for us.**
L: Mother of the dying ... **Pray for us.**
L: Mother of the nonviolent ... **Pray for us.**
L: Mother of widowed mothers ... **Pray for us.**
L: Mother of unwed mothers ... **Pray for us.**
L: Mother of a political prisoner ... **Pray for us.**
L: Mother of the condemned ... **Pray for us.**
L: Mother of the executed criminal... **Pray for us.**

(continued on next page)

(Each of the following intentions should be read thoughtfully by the prayer leader.)

LEADER: Our response is: Mary of Nazareth, pray for us.

1. As Pope Benedict XVI prayed in his special intention for month of April, 2006: That the individual, social and political rights of women may be respected in every nation. We pray ...
2. For an end to sexism, and an increase in our critical thinking so that we may examine with an open mind the changes needed in private and public life. We pray ...
3. For an end to abuse and domestic violence and the resurgence of sustainable, healthy relationships between men and women, especially in the homes where children are at risk. We pray ...
4. For access to education and an increase in literacy for women worldwide. We pray...
5. For the elevation and support of women who have been impacted by economic inequalities, those made more vulnerable to chronic poverty because of gender inequalities in the distribution of income, access to productive inputs such as credit, command over property, or control over earned income, as well as gender biases in labor markets and in trade policies. We pray ...
6. For an increased awareness to women's health issues, an emphasis on women in health research, and greater research toward a cure for female cancers. We pray ...
7. For an end to human trafficking and the sale of women into the slavery of prostitution, that their human rights may be upheld, and their freedoms protected. We pray ...
8. For the adequate protection of incarcerated women from sexual assault, and for restoration of their human rights, especially the rights of mothers in prisons. We pray ...
9. That the women and girls in Congo, Darfur, Sudan - and around the world - may find refuge from the systematic and wide scale murder, rape, torture, abduction and displacement that they face in the violence of war and conflicts. We pray ...
10. For the millions of women worldwide affected by the spread of HIV and AIDS. We pray...
11. That our law makers will continue their support of women's dignity with appropriate actions such as the renewal of the Violence Against Women Act. We pray ...
12. For the protection of those working to respect the dignity of women, that their courageous and generous actions may not be hindered by limitations on freedom of expression or threats of violence. We pray ...
13. That the women of Juarez, Mexico and the women in Guatemala will see an end to the murders of women, and for the safety of the hundreds of missing women and for the souls of the murdered. We pray ...
14. For these and all the intentions of women in the need of support and solidarity, we pray...

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(Prayer Leader continues with the last two parts of the litany.)

L: Oppressed woman ... **Lead us to life.**
L: Liberator of the oppressed ... **Lead us to life.**
L: Marginalized woman ... **Lead us to life.**
L: Comforter of the afflicted ... **Lead us to life.**
L: Cause of our joy ... **Lead us to life.**
L: Sign of contradiction ... **Lead us to life.**
L: Breaker of bondage ... **Lead us to life.**
L: Political refugee ... **Lead us to life.**
L: Seeker of sanctuary ... **Lead us to life.**
L: First disciple ... **Lead us to life.**
L: Sharer in Christ's passion ... **Lead us to life.**
L: Seeker of God's will ... **Lead us to life.**
L: Witness to Christ's resurrection ... **Lead us to life.**

L: Woman of mercy ... **Empower us.**
L: Woman of faith ... **Empower us.**
L: Woman of contemplation ... **Empower us.**
L: Woman of vision ... **Empower us.**
L: Woman of wisdom and understanding ... **Empower us.**
L: Woman of grace and truth ... **Empower us.**
L: Woman, pregnant with hope ... **Empower us.**
L: Woman, centered in God ... **Empower us.**

(Allow a moment of quiet reflection and then conclude the prayer with the following:

Closing Prayer

LEADER: Mary, model of courage and compassion for women and for men, we pray for gentleness and strength, patience and perseverance, so that with you and your son, Jesus Christ, we may bring forth justice in our world. May you who identify with oppressed women, whose son died a criminal's death and who comforted the grieving, pray that we might be filled with hope and peace. Teach us to celebrate our differences and never to let them be the cause of suffering or harm. Lead us in your way of concern and care, one for another. Pray that we might transform our world into one where women's voices are heard, where women's work is valued, and where families, workplaces, schools and communities nurture equality and mutuality. In the name of your son, Jesus Christ, we pray...

ALL: Amen.