

International Day for the Eradication of Poverty Prayer Service

Theme: *Path of hope towards the eradication of Poverty*

The prayer ritual outlined below, broken into three parts, provides a framework for focusing poverty both at a global and local level. Through prayer, song, symbol, participatory activities, and reflection on poverty issues the materials can be adapted for school, parish or community groups.

Part 1: Gathering prayer and ritual based on the Millennium Development Prayer

Part 2: Reflecting on the experience and reality of poverty in your community

Part 3: Carriers of a new vision

PLANNING NOTES:

To use the symbolic actions, you will need:

A ground sheet (18" X 18")

Clay

Eight large stones or blocks

Small stones or pebbles

A large bowl filled with water

People copy of prayer

PREPARATION

A ground sheet 18" X 18" is placed in the centre of the room. This sheet is lightly covered with clay symbolizing the earth. A large bowl filled to the brim with water is placed at the centre of the ground sheet. Eight markers 1- 8, are placed on the ground marking a path towards the centre of ground sheet.

INTRODUCTION

Reader 1: Today, poverty prevails as the gravest human rights challenge in the world. Combating poverty, deprivation and exclusion is not a matter of charity, and it does not depend on how rich a country isBy tackling poverty as a matter of human rights obligation, the world will have a better chance of abolishing this scourge in our lifetime.....Poverty eradication is an achievable goal.

(Louise Arbour, United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights)

Reader 2: Many people are not free to break out of the cycle of poverty, or to make choices about where and how they would like to live. Poverty can be reduced and eliminated, but the first step is for each individual to become informed about the crisis that is a threat to the common good. We must then inform those we interact with about the impact of poverty and eliminate some of the public misconceptions about it.

Call to Prayer

Leader: We gather today

Mindful of the gift of God's life and love and goodness to us, we begin our time together in a spirit of prayer. And so we sign ourselves with the mark of our faith – In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

Leader God calls me...

All: to gather in thanksgiving, to rejoice in our sharing, to remember with hope and love

Leader Christ calls me...

All to share in his mission, to help build the kingdom, to be a light for the way

Leader The Spirit calls me ...

All to give witness to God's love, to trust in the journey, to go where I am led

Leader: We gather to build a path of hope

All: and remember our call:

to hear the cry of all those who are suffering;

to stand in solidarity with those who are poor and without rights

and are at the mercy of every kind of exploitation.

Psalm 34: The Cry of the Poor (read aloud or sung)

Refrain: The Lord hears the cry of the poor, Blessed be the Lord.

1. I will bless the Lord at all time, with praise ever in my mouth. Let my soul glory in the Lord, who will hear the cry of the poor. R/
2. Let the lowly hear and be glad: the Lord listens to their pleas; and to hearts broken God is near, who will hear the cry of the poor. R/
3. Every spirit crushed God will save; will be ransom for their lives; will be safe shelter for their fears, and will hear the cry of the poor. R/
4. We proclaim your greatness, O God, your praise is ever in our mouth; every face brightened in your light, for you hear the cry of the poor. R/
(John Foley, SJ)

Reader Today we have each received a stone. They can either be stumbling blocks or building blocks. These stones can weigh us down and can symbolise our pursuit of wealth at the expense of the poor and our failure to live in solidarity with our community both local and global. Or, they can be building blocks of hope for paths of change symbolizing renewed lives of simplicity, sustainability and solidarity. These stones we hold will become building blocks for the future.

All: You will teach me the path of life (Psalm 16:11)

Leader In a world where so many go hungry,
All Let us make the fruits of Creation available for all.

(A stone is laid on marker 1)

Leader: In a world where more than a billion people still live on less than a dollar a day.
All Animate us to eradicate extreme poverty and hunger

(A stone is laid on marker 2)

Leader In a world where one billion of our brothers and sisters do not have safe drinking water or access to proper sanitation
All Let us help the waters run clear to ensure environmental sustainability

(A stone is laid on marker 3)

Leader In a world where many children die young, many mothers die in childbirth, and families are ravaged by disease
All Let us bring health and healing.

(A stone is laid on marker 4)

Leader In a world where women carry heavy burdens,
All Let us recognize and restore the rights of all.

(A stone is laid on marker 5)

Leader: In a world where as many as 113 million children do not attend school.
All Let us work toward achieving universal primary education

(A stone is laid on marker 6)

Leader: In a world where millions of people are living with HIV and other diseases
All Let us work towards combating HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases.

(A stone is laid on marker 7)

Leader: In a world where there are many obstacles that separate the rich and poor nations

All: Let us dismantle the barriers so that we might be empowered to build together global partnerships for development.

(A stone is laid on marker 8)

Silent Reflection (Instrumental Music)

All: We are called to re-examine our lifestyles, both individually and as a community, and to choose to live simply, sustainably and in solidarity with the poor. So let us journey on with fresh insight and renewed commitment, encouraged by those who have gone before us and inspired by the vision of a world in which human dignity is respected and everyone can reach their full potential.

Part 2

Leader: They will answer him, 'Lord when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?' Then the Lord will reply, 'I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these friends of mine, you did for me.'" (Matthew 25:37-40)

Reflect on the experience and reality of poverty

- What does poverty look like in your community? Is it visible?
- Invite someone who can speak from their own experience of poverty who lives in the community. That person may be a migrant, asylum-seeker, refugee, traveller, addict, or whoever the class or group after reflection believe is on the edge of society they live in (global or local).
- Invite someone from an organisation in the local area, who works directly with people who can speak to the challenges of living in poverty.
- Explore the situation in the light of faith, values, and responses.
- Engage the group in discussion about how poverty impacts their lives and identify what changes they would like to see within the community

To conclude part two invite the group to pray *The Lord's Prayer*

Leader **In confidence let us pray:**

Our Father, who are in this place with us,
May your name be blessed in our incessant search for justice and peace.

May your kingdom come.
God we offer you this earth, symbol of those displaced by poverty and oppression
Give us today our daily bread to build a new society.
Forgive us our trespasses.

Do not let us fall into the temptation of believing ourselves already new women and men
and deliver us from the evil of war and its preparation
and from the evil of forgetting that our lives
and the life of our communities, this country, and the world are in your hands. Amen.
(Adapted from the prayer used by Christians in Nicaragua)

Leader: How shall I bring hope to a world challenged to live in poverty?

All: I make a commitment to work for change, and be a carrier of the new vision on a path of hope towards the eradication of poverty.

Suggested hymn: Ubi caritas et amor, ubi caritas Deus ibi est. (Les Presses de Taizé)

Part 3

Theme: Carriers of a new vision

Leader: After each verse as a sign of your commitment to bring about change towards the eradication of poverty, you are invited to drop some pebbles into the bowl full of water. As the pebbles are dropped, water will be displaced flowing over the side of the bowl.

As carriers of a new vision for our world and the part that we play in it, the displaced water symbolizes our contribution toward making a difference.

(Split group into two, Group 1 and Group 2)

1. We are Carriers of a new vision that is the Trinity's dream for all to be creative, loving and free as we reflect and affirm the word in the world.
2. We are carriers of the Creator's dream for every living being for the fertile earth for the mysterious universe.
1. We are carriers of Jesus' dream that all may be one loved and respected as persons of immeasurable value.
2. We are entrusted with the responsibility and privilege of carrying a new vision for humanity as collaborators not competitors as stewards and life givers, kindling hope and joy as peacemakers living in harmony.
1. We are carriers of the Spirit's dream to participate in the mission of Jesus who frees the oppressed and brings new life and who loved especially the little ones
2. We are called to be people of the Gospel identifying with Christ in the many passages of our life committed to conversion in our effort to become a community of disciples who live simply, love tenderly, act justly.
1. We are called to action, resting in God loving us, freeing us to incarnate this love wherever injustice and oppression rob humanity of dignity and value.

Leader Let us affirm what we have discovered of God's will in the company of each other.

All That it is central to the mission of Christ to participate, by work and action,
in the struggles of the poor for justice,
to share justly the earth's land and resources,
to rejoice in the diversity of human culture,
to preserve human life in all its beauty and frailty,
to witness to the love of God for all people of the earth,
and to invite all to share that converting experience,
This we believe

Final Hymn: Come and Follow me: (David Haas)

Alternative Hymns

Take, Lord, Receive (J.S. Foley)
They'll Know We Are Christians - Peter Scholtes
Who will speak? – Marty Haugen
Here I am, Lord. – Dan Schutte S.J.
Christ has no body – John M. Talbot

Prayer ritual adapted from materials by

Prayer for the Millenium Mission Goals - Center For Concern, <http://www.coc.org/>.
The Center for Global Justice and Reconciliation (CGJR), Washington
Episcopal Church Centre, New York

Jane Ferguson, Mission Alive 2005; Fr. Angelo Lafferty SMA, Cois Tine, St. Mary's, Popes Quay, Cork