



LITURGY FOR THE INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY 2017



Hospitality Towards Stranger: Remembering and Standing in Solidarity with The Refugees



Prepared by the Regional Women's Committee of WSCF Asia Pacific

INTRODUCTION

March 8th is known as International Women's Day (IWD) across the nations. It is a day of hope, a day of courage, of celebration for women who fought for equality, justice and peace. It is also a time to reflect on progress made, to call for change and to celebrate acts of courage and determination by ordinary women who have played an extraordinary role in the history of their countries and communities. United Nations (UN) has marked it as a day for Women's Rights and International Peace since 1977.

International Women's Day first emerged from the activities of labour movements at the turn of the twentieth century in North America and across Europe. On March 8th, 1857 it marked the day when one of the first organized actions by working women anywhere in the world took place, where hundreds of women garment and textile workers went on strike in New York City protesting against low wages, long working hours and inhuman working conditions. Again on March 8th in 1908, fifteen thousand women marched through New York City demanding shorter hours, better pay, voting rights and an end to child labour. They adopted the slogan "Bread and roses" with bread symbolizing economic security and roses a better quality of life. On March 25th 1911, it marked the day when more than 140 working girls mostly Italian and Jewish immigrants died in the tragic Triangle fire accident, an event that had a far-reaching effect on labour legislation in the USA. While on March 19th, 1911 many rallies and organized meetings successfully took place in Austria, Denmark, Germany and Switzerland to mark the inauguration of International Women's Day. The March 19th date was chosen because it commemorated the day that the Prussian king promised that to introduce votes for women in 1848. The promise gave hope for equality but it was a promise that he failed to keep. The date for International Women's Day was then moved to March 8th in 1913.

The United Nations has mentioned that until now nowhere in the world women can claim to have all the same rights and opportunities as men despite much progress to protect and promote women's right have been made in these days.

Women represent almost half of the 244 million migrants and half of the 19.6 million refugees as per the report of the Secretary-General at the UN General Assembly (2016) entitled "In safety and dignity: addressing large movements of refugees and migrants". Governments and aid agencies are failing to provide even basic protections to women refugees traveling from Syria and Iraq. New research conducted by Amnesty International shows that women and girl refugees face violence, assault, exploitation and sexual harassment at every stage of their journey, including on European soil. Some women took extreme measures such as not eating or drinking to avoid having to go to the toilet where they felt unsafe. Today, 50 percent of the world's refugees are women and girls [6]. Yet as per the UN OCHA (2015) World Humanitarian Data and Trends report, only 4 percent of projects in UN inter-agency appeals were targeted at women and girls in 2014, and just 0.4

percent of all funding to fragile states went to women's groups or women's ministries from 2012 to 2013.

The World Economic Forum predicts the gender gap won't close entirely until 2186. This is too long to wait! International Women's Day provides an important opportunity around the world, for groundbreaking action that can truly drive greater change for women.

The Regional Women's Committee of the World Student Christian Federation Asia-Pacific(WSCF AP) chose the theme ***Hospitality towards Stranger: Remembering and Standing in Solidarity With The Refugees*** for the IWD 2017, as an expression and a call to stand in solidarity with the refugees particularly the most vulnerable ones – women and children refugees. We as a Christian faith community believe and uphold that Hospitality is the core value of Christianity. As Jesus said, *“For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me..... Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.”* (Matthew 25 : 35-36 and 40) .

May this liturgy inspire and empower all to be a hospitable community to our neighbors!
Greetings and Wishing you all a happy and meaningful IWD celebration!

**Regional Women's Committee
World Student Christian Federation Asia-Pacific**

ORDER OF WORSHIP

Music: *(music can be played according to your local tradition to prepare for the worship)*

Call to Worship

Leader: We gather here to celebrate the International Women's Day. May God's spirit and Divine Wisdom touch us so that we are renewed to sing a new song of liberation for the humanity

All: God, the Liberator, we invite you in our midst to realize your vision in our response towards liberating humanity for envisioning a transformed world

Leader: We gather here, to hear the voices and stories of our neighbors - voices of refugees, asylum seekers, migrants whose lives have been uprooted by war, famine, violence, calamities and economic injustices. We stand in solidarity with them in their search for a new life, a new home, a new promise.

All: God the energizing spirit, ignite us and open our eyes so we may see you in strangers; open our ears so we may hear and recognize their voices; open our mouth so we may speak the truth to the world; open and transform our hearts so we may share love and compassion with the strangers in our midst.

Song

ref. Joel 2:28-9

Timothy C. Hurd



A new proclamation of hope,
A new generation awakes,
Christ calls us, disciples for this age and place,
The Church that will witness the dawn as it breaks:
The gift of God's prophetic grace!

O daughters and sons, you catch sight,
You glimpse what the world cannot see:
The mantle of prophecy rests on the young
To name and to nurture, to action and be
The Kingdom we're standing among!

So speak with the wisdom of youth,
That does not accept habit's ways
But wills into being a world yet to be
Where truth rediscovered may offer its praise:
God's image on humanity!

We utter these words-not-our-own,
The voice of the prophet who speaks
Of hope in calamity, joy in despair,
Of justice made real, levelled valleys and peaks:
The Kingdom of God coming near!

O God, give us vision to see
The promise of life yet to come,
The beauty around us, the wounds to be healed,
We dance with the joyful, enliven the numb,
Forever God our strength and shield!

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Confession and Assurance

All: God, who made me in Your image, teach me to love myself as You love me.
God, who made me in Your image, allow me to show that image to the world.
God, who made me in Your image, help me to see Your image in all those I meet.
God, who made me in Your image, teach me to conserve and protect all Your creation.
God, who made me in Your image, bless, protect, and keep me and all Your children safe.

L: The One who breathed life into our lungs continues to be present with us. God, who has made us reflective of God's own image, has forgiven us all and made us new creations. Therefore, since our sins are forgiven, let us go forth with love and peace, honoring and upholding the dignity of all we meet, knowing we see reflections of God's image all around.

All: Thanks be to God.

Song

1. Will you come and follow me if I but call your name?

Will you go where you don't know and never be the same?

Will you let my love be shown? Will you let my name be known,

will you let my life be grown in you and you in me?

2. Will you leave yourself behind if I but call your name?

Will you care for cruel and kind and never be the same?

Will you risk the hostile stare should your life attract or scare?

Will you let me answer prayer in you and you in me?

3. Will you let the blinded see if I but call your name?

Will you set the prisoners free and ever be the same?

Will you kiss the leper clean and do such as this unseen,

and admit to what I mean in you and you in me?

4. Will you love the "you" you hide if I but call your name?

Will you quell the fear inside and never be the same?

Will you use the faith you've found to reshape the world around,

through my sight and touch and sound in you and you in me?

5. Lord your summons echoes true when you but call my name.

Let me turn and follow you and never be the same.

In Your company I'll go where Your love and footsteps show.

Thus I'll move and live and grow in you and you in me.

Bible Reading and Reflection

The massive refugee movements worldwide have been a result of people fleeing from war/ conflict, extreme poverty/ devastation in the harsh social, economic and political realities of their own situations and countries. According to the UNHCR any refugee population has approximately 50 percent of women and girls. They face the rigors of long journeys where they face official harassment or indifference and frequent sexual abuse – even after reaching a place which is apparently safe. The UN report also show that 60 percent of preventable maternal deaths take place in humanitarian settings and at least 1 of 5 refugees or displaced women are estimated to have experienced sexual violence.s

Some theologians have reflected on the issue of global refugee crisis by relating it to the flight of Mary, Joseph, and Jesus. They make reference to Matthew 2: 13-18 (NIV):

¹³*When they had gone, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream. “Get up,” he said, “take the child and his mother and escape to Egypt. Stay there until I tell you, for Herod is going to search for the child to kill him.”*

¹⁴*So he got up, took the child and his mother during the night and left for Egypt,¹⁵ where he stayed until the death of Herod. And so was fulfilled what the Lord had said through the prophet: “Out of Egypt I called my son.”*

¹⁶*When Herod realized that he had been outwitted by the Magi, he was furious, and he gave orders to kill all the boys in Bethlehem and its vicinity who were two years old and under, in accordance with the time he had learned from the Magi.¹⁷ Then what was said through the prophet Jeremiah was fulfilled: ¹⁸ “A voice is heard in Ramah, weeping and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children and refusing to be comforted because they are no more.”*

Godfrey Chigumira says “ Escape to Egypt (Matthew 2: 13-18) – the distance from Bethlehem to Egypt is over 200 miles. By applying the hermeneutics of suspicion, intuition, and vision, one could say because of Herod, Mary left Judea in emotional agony, distress, sorrow, and fear. She suffered on the journey, struggling for food, water, and shelter in the desert.

Does the manger scene of Jesus’ birth 2000 years ago cause you to think about millions of homeless people who are seeking refuge from multiple forms of socio-economic realities and political oppressive regime and any other harsh conditions? Where did/do they flee to and who gave/give them shelter? What were/are the harsh socio-economic-political conditions? What were the harsh and brutal conditions that forced Mary, Joseph, and the newborn Jesus to flee from the Bethlehem manger to Egypt?

Does the flight and journey to Egypt recall/reflect what misplaced women and girl refugees are facing in escaping or hiding, in seeking for refuge or exile?

(In solidarity with the refugee, we invite you (individually or group) to reflect on the struggles and challenges of refugees today and make a commitment, a prayer or write a letter for the refugee.)

Intercessory Prayer

(Prepare candles to light before saying the prayer)

L: We light this candle and pray to God who calls us by name and we reaffirm that we all are created in God's own image and likeness. May our faith inspire and motivate us to do justice for the low and the oppressed. Today we remember and uphold the women in our prayers as we celebrate the international women's day this month. We especially uphold those millions of women, girls, and children who are suffering and experiencing various forms of violence and discrimination.

Response: **Oh Lord, Hear our prayer(2x) When we call answer us**
 Oh Lord, Hear our prayer (2x), come and listen to us

L: We light this candle to remember the refugee women and men, victims of human trafficking, migrants anyone torn away from her family due to war, violence, calamities and economic injustices and surviving in a foreign land. May the peace for women uplift them out of poverty, stabilize their governments, and free them from military interference into their homes and lives. May they find a new home, a new community in a new country to celebrate life together.

Response: **Oh Lord, Hear our prayer(2x) When we call answer us**
 Oh Lord, Hear our prayer (2x), come and listen to us

L: We light this candle to remember all the members of the World Student Christian Federation and Student Christian Movements. Help us to continue to respond to the challenges we witness in our world today. May you strengthen and empower the student community to be prophetic in the present time. May you lead and guide this unique federation to create the inclusive community and becoming a welcoming community to the strangers.

Response: **Oh Lord, Hear our prayer (2x), When we call answer us**
 Oh Lord, Hear our prayer (2x), come and listen to us

(participants can add more prayers for the people)

Lord's prayer *(based on Is 46:3-4 with the structure taken from Mat 6: 9-13) By Dekker Y. Mauboi)*

Our Mother Who art in heaven,

hallowed be Thy love.

Thy mercy come.

Make this universe a pendulum of life.

Pour upon us this day

 the milk upon Thy breast,

 nourishment for all life,

 so that we may live as new creation,

 forgiving each other, what more,

 loving and serving each other

on earth
Lead us gently
toward love, truth, justice, and peace.
Salvation, full of tranquility, is on your lap,
so hug us there tightly
in order that we may be delivered from
corruption and misfortune.
O God, Mother of life,
all good things, all glorious things –
life and love – are Thine
now and forever. Amen

Song

Refrain:

*Jesu, Jesu, fill us with your love,
show us how to serve
the neighbors we have from you.*

Neighbors are rich and poor,
varied in color and race,
neighbors are near and far away.

Refrain

These are the ones we should serve,
these are the ones we should love;
all these are neighbors to us and you. *Refrain*

Prayer for Refugee and Asylum Seeker

By Pope Francis (Pope Francis on Lesbos Prayer 2016)

Merciful God, we pray to you for all the men, women and children who have died after leaving their homelands in search of a better life. Though many of their graves bear no name, to you each one is known, loved and cherished. May we never forget them, but honour their sacrifice with deeds more than words.

We entrust to you all those who have made this journey, enduring fear, uncertainty, and humiliation, in order to reach a place of safety and hope. Just as you never abandoned your Son as he was brought to a safe place by Mary and Joseph, so now be close to these, your sons and daughters, through our tenderness and protection.

In caring for them may we seek the world where none are forced to leave their home and where all can live in freedom, dignity, and peace.

Merciful God and Father of all, wake us from the slumber of indifference, open our eyes to their suffering, and free us from the insensitivity born of worldly comfort and self-

centeredness. Inspire us, as nations, communities, and individuals, to see that those who come to our shores are our brothers and sisters. May we share with them the blessings we have received from your hand, and recognize that together, as one human family, we are all migrants, journeying in hope to you, our true home, where every tear will be wiped away, where we will be at peace and safe in your embrace.

Closing Song

Draw The circle, draw the circle wide
Draw the circle, draw the circle wide
no one stands alone,
standing side by side, draw the circle
draw the circle wide.
Draw the circle wide, draw it wider still.
Let this be our song, no one stands alone,
standing side by side, draw the circle wide.

Source:

CRWRC Refugee Kit Liturgy

Day of Prayer for Refugees and Migrants Liturgy Notes by New Zealand Catholic Conference

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