

WEEK OF PRAYER FOR CHURCH UNITY



I pray... that all of them might be One,
Father,
just as You are in Me and I am in You.
May they also be in Us
so that the world may believe
that You have sent Me.

John 17:20-21

Heavenly Father,
Your blessed Son asked that Your church be One
as You and He are One,
but Christians have not been united as He prayed.
We have isolated ourselves from each other
and failed to listen to each other.
We have misunderstood and ridiculed
and even gone so far as to attack each other.
In so doing we have offended against You,
and against all who have not believed in You
because of our scandalous disunity.
Forgive us, Father, and make us fully one.
Blot out our sins, renew our minds,
enkindle our hearts,
and guide us by your Holy Spirit
into that Oneness which is Your will.
Amen.

THAT THEY BECOME ONE IN YOUR HAND

DAY 1: CHRISTIAN COMMUNITIES FACE TOFACE WITH DIVISION



For we are God's co-workers; you are God's field, God's building.
1 Corinthians 3: 9

SCRIPTURE: JOHN 17:17-21

Consecrate them in the truth. Your word is truth.

As You sent me into the world, so I sent them into the world.

And I consecrate Myself for them, so that they also may be consecrated in truth. "I pray not only for them, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word, so that they may all be one, as you, Father, are in Me and I in You, that they also may be in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me.

MEDITATION

Christians are called to be instruments of God's reconciling love in a world marked by separation and alienation. Baptized and professing faith in the crucified and risen Christ, we are a people who belong to Christ, a people sent forth to be Christ's body in and for the world. Christ prayed for this for his disciples: may they be one, so that the world may believe.

PRAYER

God of compassion, You have loved and forgiven us in Christ, and sought to reconcile the entire human race in that redeeming love. Look with favor upon us, who work and pray for the unity of divided Christian communities. Grant us the experience of being brothers and sisters in Your love. May we be ONE, ONE in Your hand. Amen.

DAY 2: CHRISTIANS FACE TO FACE WITH WAR AND VIOLENCE



They shall beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks; One nation shall not raise the sword against another, nor shall they train for war again.

Isaiah 2: 4

SCRIPTURE: MATTHEW 5: 38-48

You have heard that it was said, 'An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.'
But I say to you, offer no resistance to one who is evil. When someone strikes you on (your) right cheek, turn the other one to him as well. If anyone wants to go to law with you over your tunic, hand him your cloak as well. Should anyone press you into service for one mile, go with him for two miles.
Give to the one who asks of you, and do not turn your back on one who wants to borrow. You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I say to you, love your enemies, and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be children of your heavenly Father, for He makes His sun rise on the bad and the good, and causes rain to fall on the just and the unjust. For if you love those who love you, what recompense will you have? Do not the tax collectors do the same? And if you greet your brothers only, what is unusual about that? Do not the pagans do the same? So be perfect, just as your heavenly Father is perfect.

MEDITATION

War and violence are still major obstacles to that unity willed by God for humanity and are the result of unhealed division which exists inside ourselves, and of the human arrogance which prevents us from recovering the real foundation of our existence. What can bring an end to this cycle of war and violence? Jesus shows us the power which can stop the vicious cycle of war and violence. To his disciples he teaches the renunciation of violence (Matthew 26: 51–52). This hope encourages us to persevere in the search for Christian unity and in the struggle against all forms of war and violence.

PRAYER

Lord, You gave Yourself on the cross for the unity of all humankind, we offer up to You our human nature marred by egoism, arrogance, vanity and anger. Reach out to us with compassion and take care of Your people, so that we may enjoy the peace and joy integral to the order of your creation .May all Christians work together to bring about your justice. Give us the courage to help others to bear their cross, rather than putting our own on their shoulders. Amen.

DAY 3: CHRISTIANS FACE TO FACE WITH ECONOMIC INJUSTICE AND POVERTY



**The Lord raises up those who are bowed down; the Lord loves the righteous.
Psalm 146: 8**

SCRIPTURE: LUKE 4: 16-21

He came to Nazareth, where He had grown up, and went according to His custom into the synagogue on the Sabbath day. He stood up to read and was handed a scroll of the prophet Isaiah. He unrolled the scroll and found the passage where it was written: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because He has anointed me to bring glad tidings to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, and to proclaim a year acceptable to the Lord." Rolling up the scroll, he handed it back to the attendant and sat down, and the eyes of all in the synagogue looked intently at Him. He said to them, "Today this scripture passage is fulfilled in your hearing."

MEDITATION

We pray for the kingdom of God to arrive. Today the world community is confronted with the growing precariousness of labor and its consequences. The idolatry of the market (profit), like the love of money appears as 'the root of all evil'. What can and must the churches do in this context? Let us look at the biblical theme of jubilee which Jesus evoked to define His ministry.

According to the Leviticus text, during the jubilee, liberation was to be proclaimed. The jubilee implied a community ethic, the freeing of slaves and their return home, the restoration of financial rights and the cancellation of debts. For the victims of unjust social structures, this meant the restitution of law and of their means of existence.

The priorities of today's world, in which 'more money' is seen as goal of life, can only lead to death. As churches, we are called to counter this by living together in the spirit of jubilee and following Christ. As Christians experience the healing of their divisions they become more sensitive to other divisions which wound humanity and creation.

PRAYER

God of justice, there are places in this world overflowing with food but others where there is not enough and where the hungry and the sick are many.

God of peace, there are those in this world who profit from violence and war and others who because of war and violence are forced to leave their homes and become refugees.

God of compassion, help us to understand that we cannot live by money alone but that we can live by the Word of God, help us to understand that we cannot attain life and true prosperity except by loving God and obeying His will and His teaching. We pray in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen

DAY 4: CHRISTIANS FACE TO FACE WITH ECOLOGICAL CRISIS



**God looked at everything he had made, and he found it very good.
Genesis 1: 30**

SCRIPTURE: ROMANS 8: 18–23

I consider that the sufferings of this present time are as nothing compared with the glory to be revealed for us. For creation awaits with eager expectation the revelation of the children of God; for creation was made subject to futility, not of its own accord but because of the One who subjected it, in hope that creation itself would be set free from slavery to corruption and share in the glorious freedom of the children of God. We know that all creation is groaning in labor pains even until now; and not only that, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, we also groan within ourselves as we wait for adoption, the redemption of our bodies.

MEDITATION

God created our world with wisdom and love and God saw that it was good. Today however the world is confronted with a serious ecological crisis. The earth is suffering from global warming as a result of our excessive consumption of energy. The extent of forested area on our planet has diminished while the deserts are spreading ever faster. Three quarters of ocean life has already disappeared. Every day more than one hundred living species die out. With the apostle Paul we can affirm: creation has been delivered into the power of destruction, it groans as in the pains of childbirth.

We cannot deny that human beings bear a heavy responsibility for environmental destruction. Together Christians must do their utmost to save creation. Before the immensity of this task, they must unite their efforts. It is only together that they can protect the work of the creator. Christ shows great respect even for the smallest of all the seeds. With the biblical vision of creation as affirmation, Christians can contribute with one voice to the present reflection on the future of our planet.

PRAYER

God our Creator, Your Word created the world and You saw that it was good. But today we are spreading death and destroying our environment. Grant that we may repent of our greed; help us to care for all that You have made. Together, we desire to protect Your creation. Amen.

DAY 5: CHRISTIANS FACE TO FACE WITH DISCRIMINATION ANF PREJUDICE



**How good it is when people live together in unity.
Psalm 133: 1**

SCRIPTURE: GALATIANS 3: 26–29

For through faith you are all children of God in Christ Jesus.

For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.

There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free person, there is not male and female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's descendant, heirs according to the promise.

MEDITATION

In the beginning, human beings created in the image of God were but one in His hand. Sin, however, entered the hearts of men and women and since then we have built up all kinds of prejudice. In his earthly ministry, Jesus showed Himself to be particularly sensitive regarding the common humanity of all men and women. He continually denounced discrimination of all sorts and the pride which some of his contemporaries derived from it.

Psalm 133 compares the joy of a life shared with sisters and brothers to the goodness of a precious oil or the dew of Hermon. We are given to taste this joy with our sisters and brothers, each time we let go of our confessional prejudices within our ecumenical gatherings.

The restoration of the unity of all humankind is the common mission of all Christians. Together they must struggle against all discrimination. It is also their common hope because all are One in Christ and there is no longer Jew or Greek, slave or free, man or woman.

PRAYER

Lord help us to recognize the discrimination and exclusion which damage societies. Direct our gaze and help us to recognize our own prejudices. Teach us to banish all contempt and to taste the joy of living together in unity. Amen.

DAY 6: CHRISTIANS FACE TO FACE WITH DISEASE AND SUFFERING



Thus says the Lord God, "I have heard your prayer
and seen your tears. I will heal you."
2 Kings 20:5

SCRIPTURE: JAMES 3: 13–16

Is anyone among you suffering? They should pray. Is anyone in good spirits? They should sing praise.

Is anyone among you sick? They should summon the presbyters of the church, and they should pray over them and anoint them with oil in the name of the Lord, and the prayer of faith will save the sick person, and the Lord will raise them up. If they have committed any sins, they will be forgiven.

Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The fervent prayer of a righteous person is very powerful.

MEDITATION

Common to all our still separated churches is the awareness of our Lord's compassion for the sick. Christians have always followed his example, by healing the sick and caring not only for the souls but also the bodies of God's children. Those who are suffering might use words from the Bible to cry out or struggle with God: Why have you forsaken me? When an honest relationship with God is well established, grounded in language of faithfulness and thankfulness in good times, it creates space also for a language to express sorrow, pain or anger in prayer when necessary. A healing community can grow when the sick experience the presence of God through a mutual relationship with their sisters and brothers in Christ.

PRAYER

God, listen to people when they cry to You in sickness and pain. May the healthy thank You and serve the sick with loving hearts and open hands.

God, let all of us live in Your grace and providence, becoming a truly healing community and praising You together. Amen.

DAY 7: CHRISTIANS FACE TO FACE WITH PLURITY OF RELIGIONS



**This is the Lord for Whom we have waited.
Isaiah 25: 6**

SCRIPTURE: ROMANS 2: 12-16

All who sin outside the law will also perish without reference to it, and all who sin under the law will be judged in accordance with it. For it is not those who hear the law who are just in the sight of God; rather, those who observe the law will be justified. For when the Gentiles who do not have the law by nature observe the prescriptions of the law, they are a law for themselves even though they do not have the law. They show that the demands of the law are written in their hearts, while their conscience also bears witness and their conflicting thoughts accuse or even defend them on the day when, according to my gospel, God will judge people's hidden works through Christ Jesus.

MEDITATION

Nearly every day we hear of violence in different parts of the world between followers of different faiths. The churches are committed to dialogue in the cause of Christian unity. In recent years, dialogue has also developed between people of other faiths, particularly those "of the Book" (Judaism, Islam). And if we listen carefully to our neighbors of other faiths, can we learn something more of the inclusiveness of God's love for all people, and of his kingdom?

Dialogue with other Christians should not lead to a loss of a particular Christian identity but to joy as we obey Jesus' prayer that we become one, as he is one with the Father. Unity will not come today or even tomorrow; but together, with other believers, we walk towards that final, common destiny of love and salvation.

PRAYER

Lord our God, we thank You for the wisdom we gain from Your Scriptures. Grant us the courage to open our hearts and our minds to neighbors of other Christian confessions and of other faiths; the grace to overcome barriers of indifference, prejudice or hate; and a vision of the last days, when Christians might walk together towards that final feast, when tears and dissension will be overcome through love. Amen.

DAY 8: CHRISTIANS PROCLAIM HOPE IN A WORLD OF SEPARATION



When You send forth Your breath, they are created,
and You renew the face of the earth.
Psalm 104:4

SCRIPTURE: REVELATION 20:2-6

I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, God's dwelling is with the human race. He will dwell with them and they will be His people and God Himself will always be with them (as their God). He will wipe every tear from their eyes, and there shall be no more death or mourning, wailing or pain, for the old order has passed away." The One Who sat on the throne said, "Behold, I make all things new." Then He said, "Write these words down, for they are trustworthy and true." He said to me, "They are accomplished. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End.

MEDITATION

As reflected upon in meditations of previous days, Christians live in the midst of a world which is marked by various kinds of division and alienation. Yet the stance of the church remains one of hope, grounded not in what human beings can do, but in the power and abiding desire of God to transform fracture and fragmentation into unity and wholeness.

Christian hope lives on even in the midst of profound suffering because it is born out of the steadfast love of God revealed on the cross of Christ. Hope rises with Jesus from the tomb, as death and the forces of death are overcome; it spreads with the sending of the Holy Spirit, which renews the face of the earth. The risen Christ is the beginning of a new and authentic life. His resurrection announces the end of the old order and sows the seeds of a new eternal creation, where all will be reconciled in him and God will be all in all.

God's new beginning ends the sin, divisions and finitude of the world, transfiguring creation so that it can take part in God's glory and share in God's eternity.

When Christians gather to pray for unity, they are motivated and sustained by this hope. The strength of prayer for unity is the strength which comes from God's renewal of the created world; its wisdom, that of the Holy Spirit which breathes new life on dry bones; its integrity, that of opening ourselves completely to the will of God, to be transformed into instruments of the unity Christ wills for His disciples.

PRAYER

Gracious God, You are with us always, amidst suffering and turmoil, and will be to the end of time. Help us to be a people deeply imbued with hope, living out the beatitudes, serving the unity You desire. Amen.

