

**Ecumenical Centre
Worship, Monday, 5 March 2018
In Recognition Of International Women's Day**

Ecumenical Prayer Cycle: Ireland, United Kingdom: England, Northern Ireland, Scotland, Wales

Call to worship

We come into your presence, loving Creator; our protector, who holds us in loving arms, helps us, strengthens us, and promises fullness of life to God's sons and daughters.

Spirit of Wisdom – come! Be among us! Move us! Embrace us! Unite us!

Song

Litany of Prayers for Justice

O God our Creator, you made us male and female in your image and love us as we are.

We ask your blessing on all who are gathering this week to declare that Women's Rights are Human Rights. Grant that this message may guide those who now have the power to shape our policies, and keep us steadfast in upholding the dignity of all.

Guide us and strengthen us, O God of love and justice

O Holy One, you call us to do justice, to love kindness and to walk humbly with you.

We pray for Economic Justice in our society and throughout the world. Help us to work for a world in which all women may all be able to care for and nurture their families unhindered by culture and structures of control. Guide and inspire our leaders, we pray, and give us energy and determination to seek economic justice for all.

Guide us and strengthen us, O God of love and justice.

O God of healing and wholeness,

You grieve with those who are victims of violence and judge those who inflict such violence. Give us grace to work diligently for the elimination of all violence, and especially to create a world where all women and girls are safe from physical and psychological violence, rape and exploitation, in their homes, churches or workplaces.

Guide us and strengthen us, O God of love and justice

Help us to remember, in the words of your servant St. Teresa, that

You have no body now on earth but ours,

No hands, no feet on earth but ours.

Help us to know that ours are the eyes through which You look compassion on this world.

Ours are the feet with which you walk to do good. Let ours be the hands through which you bless the entire world.

Ours are the hands, ours are the feet, and ours are the eyes. We are your body.

Help us to be your body, your presence, bearing the light of hope for this struggling world.

(Adapted from: A Litany of Prayers inspired by the Women's March Manifesto (January 2017) by Kathy Staudt)

Bible text: Psalm 51: 1-12

Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love;
according to your abundant mercy blot out my transgressions.
Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin.

For I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me.
Against you, you alone, have I sinned, and done what is evil in your sight,
so that you are justified in your sentence and blameless when you pass judgment.
Indeed, I was born guilty, a sinner when my mother conceived me.

You desire truth in the inward being; therefore teach me wisdom in my secret heart.
Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.
Let me hear joy and gladness; let the bones that you have crushed rejoice. Hide your face
from my sins, and blot out all my iniquities.

Create in me a clean heart, O God, and put a new and right spirit within me.
Do not cast me away from your presence, and do not take your holy spirit from me.
Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and sustain in me a willing spirit.

Reflection**Song****Prayers**

God of widows, widow's sons,
abused daughters, beaten wives,
damaged husbands, famished souls,
those trapped and waiting to die,
summon up prophets,
who dare to visit those cut off
to learn from them, and with them, your ways,
discerning carefully what is
and what you yet will to be.
Call forth your church,
too accustomed to speaking on high,
to re-embody your Beloved, Jesus,
in the flesh encountering flesh,
grounded in brokenness,
giving away its last morsels so others might eat,
pouring itself out even to the last drop,
to participate in your saving love.

Song

God of harvest,
we confess that too often, the more we have, the more we keep,
and wonder why you weep.
The gods of power and wealth command more than their tithe,
forcing those who fail to meet their demands to fall into despair.
Forgive us our solemn feasts
when they leave the stranger, the troubled, the failures outside.
Forgive us our pious fasts,

when they turn repentance into self-improvement
or bargaining for a better deal.
Spread before us your feast
where all are invited and the wine never runs out.
Lead us to your fast
where we learn dependence on you,
and discover the gift of new sisters and brothers,
your hungry family gathered as one,
around the table where life is abundant and abundantly shared.

Song

Christ of generous hospitality,
you offered your body,
down to the last measure,
giving away everything,
even to the last breath
so you might become bread for the whole world;
instil in us a depth of gratitude
through which we dare to become empty for your sake,
and the sake of those you love,
trusting that you will fill us up.
You gave up even the last bit of blood,
nothing left but nails, a wound weeping, a cry,
so you might become saving wine,
the strong sign of renewal and hope;
take away our fear,
so that death holds no power over us,
and we are free to hold the poor and dying in our arms
singing love songs that shine with your coming reign,
where no one need be worried taking measure of what is left,
but all will be freed to give themselves away,
the jar of love never running dry. *(Terry MacArthur 2017)*

Our Lord's Prayer – in our own language...

Blessing

May God bless you with a restless discomfort
about easy answers, half-truths, and superficial relationships,
so that you may seek truth boldly and love deep within your heart.

May God bless you with holy anger
at injustice, oppression, and exploitation of people,
so that you may tirelessly work for justice, freedom, and peace among all people.

May God bless you with the gift of tears
to shed for those who suffer from pain, rejection, starvation, or the loss of all that they
cherish, so that you may reach out your hand to comfort them and transform their pain into
joy.

May God bless you with enough foolishness
to believe that you really can make a difference in this world,
so that you are able, with God's grace, to do what others claim cannot be done.

(A four-fold benedictine blessing - sr. ruth marlene fox, osb - 1985)

Song