

STAND UP FOR HUMAN DIGNITY

2018 FLC In-Gathering Liturgy

Texts: Luke 4.18-19; Micah 6.8 (NRSV)

PREPARING OURSELVES

Quiet Meditation:

The essence of our dignity comes from our being human – beings created in God's image. Treating others with respect and dignity regardless of our many differences is being human. Treating ourselves with respect and dignity in our being women is standing up for human dignity. (Foreword, CoP 24)

INVITATION

(Moments of silence.)

Liturgist: We are all invited: “Be still, and know that I am God.” (Ps. 46.10a) Let us be still. Let us be fully aware we are in the loving presence of God. Let us listen. Listen to our breathing – taking in the Breath of God, breathing out Love that is of God.

(Moments of silence.)

Through Music: Come to the Circle

Come to the circle, and tell your story.
Listen, and share the world inside you.
Come to the circle, and tell your story.
Your friends are waiting, to listen and share their stories, too.

Prayer:

God of Life, we praise and feel your loving presence. We pray for openness to hear and wisdom to discern. How can we be more attuned to you today? Grant us humility and grace, we pray, to see you, to hear you, and to know you more, in our worship today. Amen.

LISTENING...DISCERNING...

Reading of the Scripture Texts: Luke 4.18-19; Micah 6.8 (NRSV)

(Moments of silence.)

Readings: Texts of Women's Stories of Today:

(can be presented creatively, e.g. thru drama or creative reading)

Reader 1:

I am Isabis from Africa. At a young age I was raped and got pregnant. As an orphan of parents who died of Aids, there was no one to turn to. Then a women's center helped me and took me in. I learned to read and write, to do math, with my baby taken care of by the center's nursery when I am in school. The center cared to help me demand that my rapist acknowledge my child and give support. As a young woman I also learned baking bread, a kind of work I love doing. Now I am out of the center, and having my small bakery in the community, and taking care of my child.

(Moments of silence.)

Response: We hear you, Isabis. Thank you for your story of courage and perseverance. Praise God for the institution that helped you!

Reader 2:

I am Manale, 33, a mother of three, from Lebanon. I am a survivor of domestic abuse and lately was accused of adultery. My family rejected me and I was condemned to jail for one-and-half years in a Women's Prison. I was totally destroyed, depressed and sometimes hysterical. A social worker and a psychologist helped me, and for several sessions I was able to share my story and saw a way through my predicament. A lawyer assisted to shorten my jail term. I later joined a computer class and jewelry making workshop while serving my term in jail. Upon release, I hope to find a safe place to stay and possibly reunite with my family, to embrace my children and find a job.

(Moments of silence.)

Response: We hear you, Manale. Thank you for your story of courage and perseverance. Thank you God, for the kind people you sent to help Manale.

Reader 3:

My sister, Sentila, a widow, came to visit my boys two years ago. One day she called me up when I was in a women's workshop, saying she was shocked and traumatized by neighbors who quarreled. She sounded a bit different than usual. She wanted me to come immediately. I cancelled my next day train ticket and took the overnight train. My sister Sentila expressed her fear for the first time. She was incoherent. Illogical. Perhaps hallucinating. Not only was she having her pre-menopause. She was also living in poverty with her abusive and alcoholic husband for the past 19 years. She wanted me to stay near her. I took her to a psychiatrist and another physician. Then to prayers and Bible Study. We recollected fond memories and shared laughter with tears. **I am Renema, from India.** My sister, Sentila, is healing.

(Moments of silence.)

Response: We hear you, Renema. Thank you for being a compassionate sister to Sentila. We thank you for your generous heart.

Reader 4:

I am Marie from the United States. I grew up in the foster care system. I was abandoned by my mother and went from one home to another where I was physically and sexually abused. Eventually I ran away and lived on the street. Turning to drugs and alcohol led me into a world of despair and addiction. I ended up in the Barnstable County Correctional Facility on Cape Cod where I experienced a Residents Encounter Christ (REC) weekend. The REC weekends began in the jail in 1991 run by laymen and women from the Roman Catholic Diocese and have been a source of transformation for many of the residents. A team of men and women go in for three days and present a program of love and forgiveness where the sacrament of Reconciliation is offered. The team does not judge but simply presents the message of God's unconditional love. Today I am living at St Clare House, a transitional home for women coming out of prison. I thank God daily that I did encounter the

risen Christ in the men and women who came into the jail to share their time, their faith and their love with me and for my fellow residents.

(Moments of silence.)

Response: We hear you, dear Marie. We admire your brave and decent heart. Thank you for your story.

Reader 5:

I am Merinita, from Albania in Europe. Bible stories and reflections, body awareness and women's sexual health care, good nutrition, caring for babies, personal hygiene, knowing what is HIV and sexually transmitted diseases and what to do... sharing of life stories ... praying together, imagining what if Jesus visits one's home today and how to respond, knowing more about the World Day of Prayer and the Fellowship of the Least Coin... sharing life stories to other women... These are what we talked about in our trainings.

Talking about our bodies is not openly discussed in our culture. To some it was the first time to go out of their homes, meet other women and talk to them, as husbands or mothers in-law usually do not allow them to socialize. I met new women friends with whom I was able to openly share joys and sorrows. I received a hygiene kit and food package. I am happy!

(Moments of silence.)

Reader 6:

I am Elisabeth, and I share with you a piece from our many women's stories in Latin America: "The wise women were accompanied by young women, heirs of their struggles and beneficiaries of their revolution who explained: "They have been struggling for so many years. We want to be like them, grow older and reach their age and know that we still are struggling. Each year that comes to an end we hope to be able to say: This has been a year of struggle!"

It seems like taking another step towards a diverse feminist collective, like a true feminist spring challenging the bases of the patriarchal dominance. Struggles which question the power relations in all spheres of life, where public and private aspirations join to defend democracy. This is very hopeful

movement ... things are moving. (Quotes from an article in “*La República de las Mujeres*,” on March 8.)

(Moments of Silence.)

Response: Thank you, Elisabeth, for sharing this very hopeful story of older and younger women from Latin America – struggling side by side to stand up for human dignity.

Liturgist: My friends, these stories are our own. The names may be fictitious but the accounts are true and known to sisters around the FLC circle who shared them. These stories are life stories of our sisters in their struggle to stand up for human dignity – for themselves, for others. We have heard their stories - which are really gifts to discern what God wills for us to do. Let me invite you to share your own story, if you may. Let me invite all of us to listen once more, to stories taking place right in our midst today.

(At this moment, those who are so moved are welcome to share their own stories of standing up for dignity.)

Sung Response: (chorus of *Blessed Assurance*)

This is our story, this is our song; praising our Savior all the day long!
This is our story, this is our song; praising our Savior all the day long!

The Challenge: (read in unison)

“The situation in the world today calls us to “Stand-Up” for human dignity. This does not necessarily mean physically standing. It rather means doing everything possible with God’s help - to uphold, protect and promote human dignity. This could be through prayer, teaching, engaging leaders on issues that violate human dignity, showing love for all, preaching and speaking out against acts of violence, against women, men, youth, children, and all vulnerable people...

The little you do individually or as a group to “Stand-Up” for human dignity will go round and round like the least coin and bear much fruit, for God’s glory. Do what you can, with what you have, and right where you are.”

(Introduction, CoP 24)

RESPONSE:

Hymn: Draw the Circle Wide

7 Draw the circle wide

Gordon Light, Canada

Draw the cir - cle wide, draw it wid - er still.
Tra-çons un grand cercle, tra-çons-le plus grand.

Let this be our song: no one stands a - lone, stand-ing side by
C'est no - tre seul chant: nul n'est so - li - taire de - bout, so - li -

fine

side.
daïres; Draw the cir - cle wide.
tra - çons un grand cercle.

1. God the still point of the cir - cle round which all cre - a - tion turns;
2. Let our hearts touch far hor - i - zons, so en com-pass great and small;
3. Let the dreams we dream be larg - er than we've ev - er dreamed be - fore;

To refrain

no-thing lost but held for - e - ver in God's gra-cious arms.
let our lov - ing know no bor - ders, faith - ful to God's call.
let the dream of Christ be in us, op - en ev - ery door.

Music and words by Gordon Light, Canada © 1994 Common Cup Company. www.commoncup.com
French © 2006 Denise Soulodre, Canada

1. Dieu est le centr' de notre cercle;
tournent la terre et les cieux.
Nous serons toujours à l'abri
dans les bras de Dieu. (*Refrain*)

2. Que nous coeurs touchent les horizons,
enveloppant chaque lieu;
notre amour sans fin répondra
à l'appel de Dieu. (*Refrain*)

3. Que tous nos rêves s'épanouissent,
plus que nos rêves passés,
car le rêve de Christ en nous
est à partager. (*Refrain*)

Taking Part in the FLC Movement: (presentation or sharing on what is FLC, and how to be part of it.)

Offering of the ‘Least Coins’:

Doxology:

Praise God, from whom all blessings flow.

Praise God, all creatures high and low.

Praise God, in Jesus fully known:

Creator, Word and Spirit One. Amen. *(Brian Wren)*

Ritual of Re-commitment:

(A moment may be offered for this purpose for those who wish to renew their commitment to follow Christ by serving others, by coming to the altar and to be prayed over by a Minister or by the congregation.)

The FLC Prayer:

O loving Creator, we present ourselves in your divine presence to thank you for all the beautiful gifts of life. We are especially grateful for the Fellowship of the Least Coin which binds us together in love and forgiveness around the world. Free us from all doubts and prejudices, we pray. Inspire us to love in solidarity with humankind that we may know the joy of giving and receiving.

Dear God, accept the least coin “token of love.” Make us mindful of the miracles of these coins. Let us honor your creation with love, as shown through the life and resurrection of your son, Jesus the Christ. Amen.

Hymn of Dedication: Draw the Circle Wide

Closing Prayer: The Lord’s Prayer in one’s chosen language

SENDING AND BLESSING

Liturgist: You are the salt of the earth!

Response: We are the salt of the earth!

Liturgist: You are the light of the world!

Response: We are the light of the world!

Liturgist: Miracles happen when we share what we have.

Response: Miracles!

Liturgist: Miracles!

Response: Miracles!

Liturgist: Miracles!

Response: Miracles!

Liturgist: The blessing of God our Creator, of the Holy Wisdom, and of the Son Jesus Christ our Friend is upon us!

Response: Thanks be to God!

All: Amen, Amen! (From the *Conference Spiritual Life Resources, Conference on World Mission and Evangelism, 2018*)

Three-fold Amen (or any song of sending-out).

Prepared by Liza B. LAMIS/21 May 2018