



National Lament Week of Prayer

*Where two or more are gathered in my name
I am there in the midst of them*

Matthew 8:20

Welcome

Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge the traditional custodians of country throughout Australia. As you take your next step remember the first people who walked this land.

Aboriginal Catholic Ministry, Sydney

Introduction

Leader: We begin our prayer with a minute's silence, remembering and acknowledging the members of our human family who are being affected by the punitive and harsh policies and conditions to which people seeking asylum in Australia are being subjected.

All: We lament the lack of compassion for people seeking asylum in Australia

We lament the denial of human dignity and freedom

We lament the indifference

We lament our inability to turn the tide

A minute's silence

Opening Prayer

Leader: God of love, mercy and compassion, we gather in your name. Open our hearts as a nation that we may be ready to share the beauty, lifestyle, resources and space of this land we call home.

We pray for all people who seek asylum and refuge. May their journey to freedom be safe and may they find a welcoming destination.

We pray in solidarity with all who seek you.

All: Amen

Reading

Matthew 25:35-40

Reader: I was hungry and you gave me food,
I was thirsty and you gave me a drink,
I was homeless and you gave me a room,
I was shivering and you gave me clothes,
I was sick and you stopped to visit,
I was in prison and you came to me.'

All: Lord, when did we ever see you hungry and give you food, or thirsty and give you a drink? When did we ever see you a stranger and welcome you or naked and give you clothing? When did we ever see you sick or in prison and come to you?

Reader: Whenever you did this to one of these members of my family you did it to me.

All: Thanks be to God

Pause for a few moments of silent prayer

Blessing

Pope John XXIII *Pacem in Terris*

May God banish from our hearts whatever might endanger peace.
May God transform us into witnesses of truth, justice and love.

May God enlighten the rulers of peoples
so that in addition to their solicitude
for the proper welfare of their citizens,
they may guarantee and defend the great gift of peace.

May God enkindle the will of all,
so that they may overcome the barriers that divide,
cherish the bonds of mutual charity, understand others,
and pardon those who have done them wrong.

May all peoples of the earth become as one,
and may the most longed-for peace blossom forth
and reign always among them.

2. We pray that the Australian community may experience a change of heart, and welcome those who come to our shores. God hear us

All: God hear our prayer

3. We pray for an end to the violence and poverty that displace so many of our sisters and brothers from their homes and homelands. God hear us

All: God hear our prayer

4. We pray that all Australian political parties may come to an awareness of their legal and moral responsibilities to people seeking asylum and refuge. God hear us

All: God hear our prayer

5. Pope Francis has made it clear that the gospel and politics do mix. May his invitation to leaders to see government as service and to practice the two virtues of a leader, love for the people and humility, be heeded. God hear us

All: God hear our prayer

Leader: Awaken our hearts and deepen our commitment to work for a world where every person is able to live with dignity and freedom. Grant us the wisdom and courage to stand in solidarity, so that together and with You we will find ways to fullness of life for all people.

All: Amen

Reflection

Emerging from Pope Francis' words at Lampedusa

Leader: People seeking asylum are dying at sea. Boats which were vehicles of hope have become vehicles of death.

All: We pray and offer a sign of our closeness and our solidarity.

Leader: The Church is at the side of all people journeying towards a better future; people seeking a more dignified life for themselves and their families

All: May the Word of God challenge our consciences and lead us into a concrete change of heart.

Leader: Many of us, myself included, have lost our bearings; we are no longer attentive to the world in which we live; we don't care; we don't protect what God created for everyone, and we end up unable even to care for one another! And when humanity as a whole loses its bearings, it results in tragedies and destruction.

All: "The other" is my brother or sister to be loved, not someone who disturbs my life and my comfort.

Leader: These brothers and sisters of ours are trying to escape difficult situations to find some serenity and peace; they are looking for a better place for themselves and their families, but instead they find death or imprisonment.

All: May their cry rise up to God! May they find understanding, acceptance, solidarity.

Leader: Today no one in our world feels responsible; we have lost a sense of responsibility for our brothers and sisters. We have fallen into the hypocrisy of the priest and the levite whom Jesus described in the parable of the Good Samaritan: we see our brother half dead on the side of the road, and perhaps we say to ourselves: "poor soul!", and then go on our way. It's not our responsibility, and with that we feel reassured, assuaged.

All: We are responsible. We will be responsible.

Leader: The culture of comfort, which makes us think only of ourselves, makes us insensitive to the cries of other people, makes us live in soap bubbles which, however lovely, are insubstantial; they offer a fleeting and empty illusion which results in indifference to others; indeed, it even leads to the globalization of indifference.

All: We will not be indifferent. We will be responsible.

Leader: In this globalized world, we have fallen into globalized indifference. We have become used to the suffering of others.

All: This will affect us; this will concern us; this is our business.

Leader: "Has any one of us wept because of this situation and others like it?" Has any one of us grieved for the death of our brothers and sisters? Has any one of us wept for these people in detention? For the young mothers carrying their babies? For the men looking for a means of supporting their families?

All: We are a society which has forgotten how to weep, how to experience compassion, how to suffer with others. We will not be indifferent. We will weep!

Leader: We ask the Lord to remove the part of Herod that lurks in our hearts. We ask the Lord for the grace to weep over our indifference, to weep over the cruelty of our world, of our own hearts, and of all those who in anonymity make social and economic decisions which open the door to tragic situations and harsh treatment of detainees.

All: We beg forgiveness for our indifference to so many of our brothers and sisters. Father, we ask your pardon for those who are complacent and closed amid comforts which have deadened their hearts; we beg your forgiveness for those who by their decisions on the global level have created situations that lead to these tragedies. Forgive us, Lord! Amen

Pause for a few moments of silent prayer

Prayer of the Community

Leader: As Christians seeking to integrate our response to the justice issues of the day with our belief in God and our participation with Christ to establish the reign of God in today's world, sometimes we face an issue that seems overwhelming. Our efforts appear futile. We pray, believing our God hears our prayer.

1. We pray for the women, men and children who embark on hazardous journeys seeking freedom and dignity. God hear us

All: God hear our prayer