

CELEBRATING A WEEK of PRAYER for CHRISTIAN UNITY

JANUARY 18 – 25

“He even makes the deaf to hear and the mute to speak.”

Mark 7: 37

This year’s Week of Prayer for Christian Unity brings together two themes and two invitations: to pray and strive together for Christian unity, and to join together in responding to human suffering. These two responsibilities are deeply intertwined. Both relate to healing the body of Christ and that is why the text from Mark was chosen for this week of prayer.



L: Let us keep silence before God...silent within ourselves...opening our hearts to the silence of our sisters and brothers living in suffering: “if one member suffers, all suffer together” (1 Cor 12: 26).

May our ears be opened by this silence in communion with those whose voice we do not hear, either because they keep silent or they are silenced. Let us hear the call of Christ rather than remain deaf. He teaches that we should allow ourselves, like Him, to feel the suffering of others, placing us firmly as Christians of all denominations before our common responsibilities.

Two minutes of silence.

Hymn HEALER OF OUR EVERY ILL

Healer of our every ill, light of each tomorrow,

Give us peace beyond our fear, and hope beyond our sorrow.

You who know our fears and sadness,

Grace us with Your peace and gladness.

Spirit of all Comfort; fill our hearts.

In the pain and joy beholding,

How Your grace is still unfolding,

Give us all Your vision; God of love.

Give us strength to love each other,

every sister, every brother,

Spirit of all Kindness: be our Guide.

You Who know each thought and feeling,

Teach us all your way of healing,

Spirit of Compassion; fill each heart.

Marty Haugen, 1987, GIA Publications, INC



PRAYER:

L: O God Who reigns in heavenly splendor, You have broken the silence through the revelation of Your Word, Jesus Christ, Who came forth from the heart of your silence and was hidden from the Prince of this world.

Open our eyes that we may see Jesus, the Star Who dispels our shadows;

Open our ears that we might hear the voices muffled in the silence of millions, those voices muffled by the trials and suffering of this transient world.

Open our hearts that we may know how to respond to the pain of those who suffer among us, as the woman of Bethany pouring perfume on Jesus' head, and like Simon of Cyrene who without complaint carried Your Son's cross, reduced to silence by those who attacked him.

Assembled here together, we shatter the silence with the words of the prayer which Jesus taught us.

A. Our Father

THE WORD OF GOD

PSALM 28:1-2, 6-91

To you, LORD, I call; my Rock, do not be deaf to me. If you fail to answer me, I will join those who go down to the pit.

Hear the sound of my pleading when I cry to you, lifting my hands toward your holy place.

Blessed be the LORD, who has heard the sound of my pleading.

The LORD is my strength and my shield, in whom my heart trusted and found help.

So my heart rejoices; with my song I praise my God.

LORD, you are the strength of your people, the saving refuge of your anointed king.

Save your people, bless your inheritance; feed and sustain them forever!

1 CORINTHIANS 12: 12-29

As a body is one though it has many parts, and all the parts of the body, though many, are one body, so also Christ.

For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, slaves or free persons, and we were all given to drink of one Spirit.

Now the body is not a single part, but many.

If a foot should say, "Because I am not a hand I do not belong to the body," it does not for this reason belong any less to the body.

Or if an ear should say, "Because I am not an eye I do not belong to the body," it does not for this reason belong any less to the body.

If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole body were hearing, where would the sense of smell be?

But as it is, God placed the parts, each one of them, in the body as he intended. If they were all one part, where would the body be?

But as it is, there are many parts, yet one body.

The eye cannot say to the hand, "I do not need you," nor again the head to the feet, "I do not need you."

Indeed, the parts of the body that seem to be weaker are all the more necessary, and those parts of the body that we consider less honorable we surround with greater honor, and our less presentable parts are treated with greater propriety, whereas our more presentable parts do not need this. But God has so constructed the body as to give greater honor to a part that is without it, so that there may be no division in the body, but that the parts may have the same concern for one another.

If (one) part suffers, all the parts suffer with it; if one part is honored, all the parts share its joy.

Now you are Christ's body, and individually parts of it.

MARK 7: 31–37.

Again He left the district of Tyre and went by way of Sidon to the Sea of Galilee, into the district of the Decapolis.

And people brought to Him a deaf man who had a speech impediment and begged Him to lay His hand on him.

He took him off by himself away from the crowd. He put His finger into the man's ears and, spitting, touched his tongue;

then He looked up to heaven and groaned, and said to him, "Ephphatha!" (that is, "Be opened!")

And (immediately) the man's ears were opened, his speech impediment was removed, and he spoke plainly.

He ordered them not to tell anyone. But the more He ordered them not to, the more they proclaimed it.

They were exceedingly astonished and they said, "He has done all things well. He makes the deaf hear and (the) mute speak."

REFLECTION

INTERCESSIONS

L: God of grace, our Creator, God of mercy, our Savior, merciful God, our Help, Who knows what we need before we ask it, we praise You for Your creation, for salvation and Your unceasing compassion for us.

R: Heal us, heal our churches of their deafness, that together we may more clearly hear the sound of your voice in the silence of the poor and suffering.

L: We pray for your still-divided church spread through all the world and charged with the proclamation of the Christ, Light of the Nations.

R: Breathe into us the desire to work without ceasing for that Christian unity which is your desire and grant that nothing will overcome our search for that unity for which Jesus prayed.

L: Creator God, in Your love You created us for Yourself, and our hearts will have no respite until they find their rest in You.

R: Give us Your assurance that nothing will separate us from Your love.

L: God our Shepherd, You called us from the shadows into Your marvelous light. Make us to shine as children of light.

R: Shine, Lord, shine. Shine in our lives.

L: God our Father, Who takes infinite care of each of us, make us attentive to the needs of others.

R: In Your loving kindness teach us to take others into our arms, as You have taken us into Your arms in Jesus Christ, and strengthen our common witness as Christians in favor of justice, compassion and pardon.

L: Jesus, friend of the poor and of strangers, You have held out Your hand to lead all who were far away to Your grace and salvation.

R: May those who feel like strangers find comfort and signs of Your presence in our communities of faith.

L: Jesus, sent by the Father, You have called Your disciples to announce the gospel and to be instruments of transformation in this world together.

R: Help us – that the vision of a world transformed may fire the imagination of all believers!

L: Holy Spirit, giver of life, may we continually be nourished by Your life giving power.

R: Through Your presence among us, give power to those who are powerless and help us to give a voice to those who are voiceless.

L: Holy Spirit, Who leads us to unity, give to the leaders of our faith communities unshakeable zeal in their efforts towards unity.

R: Hear our prayers, open new ways for Your church to be united.

L: O God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, One in three persons.

R: Be with us and break down the walls which separate us. Bring us together in Christ through Your Spirit.

Let us pray:

Merciful God of love, Who sees all things, and Whose kindness is beyond all measure; Who in breaking the silence approached us before we approached You, so proving Your love for us in Jesus Christ Your only Son, born of the Virgin Mary: We lift up our prayers to You! Be with all humanity. Look kindly upon our churches whom You call to join together in reflecting in everyday life the merciful and kindly love of Your Son Jesus Christ, God with us for ever and ever. Amen.

HYMN THE PEOPLE OF GOD

Come to Me all who are burdened, come and rest in My love.

Rejoice and be glad, your hope lies in heaven, your home with the people of God.

**Blessed, blessed are the poor in spirit,
blessed be the Lord's own children,
theirs is the kingdom of God.**

**Blessed, blessed are they who walk in sorrow,
blessed be the Lord's own children,
they are embraced by God.**

**Blessed, blessed are the ones who are lowly,
blessed be the Lord's own children;
they shall inherit the land.**

**Blessed, blessed are the ones who thirst for righteousness,
Blessed be the Lord's own children, all their dreams will come true.**

**Blessed, blessed are they who show mercy,
blessed be the Lord's own children,
mercy from God shall be theirs.**

**Blessed, blessed are the ones with a pure heart,
Blessed be the Lord's own children for they shall see God.**

**Blessed, blessed be the ones who make peace.
Blessed are they who know pain for the sake of righteousness.
Blessed, blessed are you who know suffering,
blessed are you who know insult because of your God.**

Francis Patrick O'Brien, 1992, GIA Publications.

BLESSING

L: "As you did it to one of the least of these who are members of My family, you did it to Me." Mt 25: 40

"Come to Me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest." Mt 11: 28

Dear friends, these words of Christ apply to each and every one of us. Christ is close to us in the heart of our actions, including our ecumenical actions, as well as in the suffering of the sick, the solitude and discouragement of many of us. He supports us in our weakness. He is our consolation and blessing.

Blessed be the Lord our God for the love which you have shown us through Jesus Christ our Lord.

In Him Who loved us we are conquerors over hardship, distress, persecution, famine, nakedness, peril and the sword.

In the silence of abandonment and solitude,
of sickness and death,
pour out the riches of Your blessing,
that we may be ever more faithful to serve You
in our sisters and brothers,
and that our joy to do Your will be ever greater.

We bless You and glorify You,
for You listen to the silence of our hearts.

You act within us with power, healing us and leading us
to speak in the name of Jesus, Your Son.

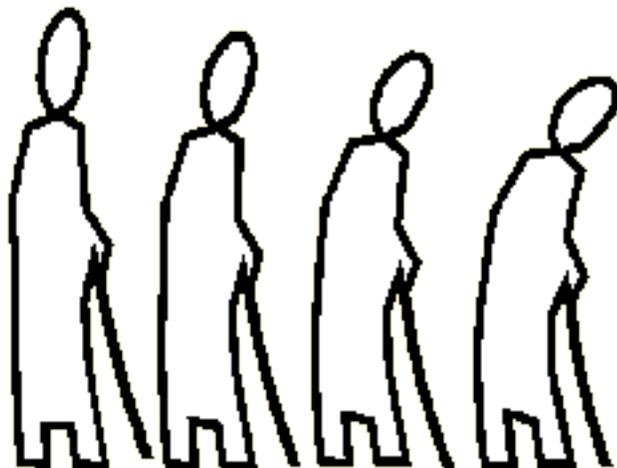
Send us into the world to carry out Your will
and to break down the walls of silence which separate us.

May we witness to You, our only Savior,
being ever more united by "one faith and one baptism".

And may we grow in grace
and in the peace of God which passes all understanding,
that Your name may be glorified.

Amen.

Live Jesus in our hearts. Forever!



**The Lord
Raises Up
Those
That Are
Bowed Down**