



16 Days of Activism against Sexual and Gender-Based Violence

“Awareness, Action, Accountability”

2021 marks the 30th anniversary of the Global 16 Days Campaign. Inspired by the original vision and history of the Campaign, which focused on raising awareness about violence against women (VAW), and considering the continuing impunity for femicide, this year the Campaign will focus on the issue of “femicide or the gender-related killing of women.”

Let this liturgy unite our hearts and minds as we prayerfully seek to overcome Sexual and Gender-Based Violence together.

Opening song: *choose a song or chant or sound of a gong /drum to prepare our hearts for worship*

Invocation

In the name of the Holy Trinity, we are gathered to pray.

Let the beauty of God be upon us, as we worship in Spirit and truth.

(Pause)

One: I will bless God at all times.

Many: God ‘s praises will always be in my mouth.

One: Declare God’s glory among the nations;

Many: All creation declares God’s glory.

One: Glory to the Father, and to the + Son, and to the Holy Spirit:

Many: as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.

Prayer for God's defence for God's city and People - (Psalms 46)

One: God is our refuge and strength,
a very present help in trouble.

**Many: Therefore, we will not fear, though the earth should change,
though the mountains shake in the heart of the sea;**

One: Though its waters roar and foam,
though the mountains tremble with its tumult.

**Many: There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God,
the holy habitation of the Most High.**

One: God is in the midst of the city; it shall not be moved;
God will help it when the morning dawns.

**Many: The nations are in an uproar, the kingdoms totter;
God utters God's voice, the earth melts.**

One: The Lord of hosts is with us;
the God of Jacob is our refuge.

**Many: Come, behold the works of the Lord;
see what desolations he has brought on the earth.**

One: God makes wars cease to the end of the earth;
God breaks the bow, and shatters the spear;
God burns the shields with fire.

**Many: "Be still, and know that I am God!
I am exalted among the nations, I am exalted in the earth."**

One: The Lord of hosts is with us;
the God of Jacob is our refuge.

**Many: Glory to God, Source of all being, Eternal Word and Holy Spirit as it was
in the beginning is now and shall be forever. Amen.**

Scripture: The New Testament reading is from the Gospel of Mark 12:38–44.

As he taught, he said, “Beware of the scribes, who like to walk around in long robes, and to be greeted with respect in the marketplaces, and to have the best seats in the synagogues and places of honor at banquets! They devour widows’ houses and for the sake of appearance say long prayers. They will receive the greater condemnation.”

He sat down opposite the treasury, and watched the crowd putting money into the treasury. Many rich people put in large sums. A poor widow came and put in two small copper coins, which are worth a penny. Then he called his disciples and said to them, “Truly I tell you, this poor widow has put in more than all those who are contributing to the treasury. For all of them have contributed out of their abundance; but she out of her poverty has put in everything she had, all she had to live on.”

Word of God, Word of life.

Many: Thanks be to God.

Reflection: Refer to the contextual bible study “A Widow’s Presence” included at the end of this document.

Intercessory prayers

One: Jesus Christ, the righteous one, you spoke truth to power and sought transformation through love. Strengthen your churches worldwide as they speak and act against patriarchal violence and structural injustices in both public and private spaces - even in circumstances where they could be a lonely voice. Embolden churches to delink themselves from all forms of complicity to gender-based violence and become instruments of life and hope, rather than weapons of death and harm. Teach us and transform us in your grace.

Many: Teach us and transform us.

One: Jesus Christ, the first fruits of the new creation. In the ordinariness of daily life, through those the lives of the marginalised, you call our attention to the various ways in which we have wielded our cultures, our structures, our traditions, and our institutions as weapons against women and the vulnerable. Teach us to overcome our hypocrisies and supremacies that seek justification in empty rhetoric and hollow actions. Teach us and transform us in love.

Many: Teach us and transform us.

One: Jesus Christ, the crucified one, we pray for all those who have been at the forefront of justice for those who have been trafficked and whose bodies are seen and sold as sexualized commodities. We bring before you domestic and public contexts where rape is used as a weapon of control and war, where women's bodies are converted into extended battle fields. We pray for an end to these cycles of violence and for healing amidst brokenness. Teach us and transform us through your hope.

Many: Teach us and transform us.

One: Jesus Christ, the resurrected one, we remember all those women who are abused and assaulted verbally, mentally, emotionally, and physically for their assertiveness in challenging sexual and gender-based violence. we continue to pray for physical and emotional healing for women and girls who have gone through Female genital mutilation or cutting (FGM/C). Protect our sisters, daughters and mothers who are targets of cyber-bullying, online misogyny, name-calling and media-trials. Strengthen and sustain them in their struggles and raise up for them support and accompaniment as they work towards the flourishing of all life. Teach us and transform us through your presence.

Many: Teach us and transform us.

One: Jesus Christ, the way and the truth and the life, we bring before you boys and men who are working towards gender justice and are breaking down the patterns of abuse that have been perpetrated down the generations in our churches and communities. We pray for them as they speak against 'traditions' which can be dangerous and lead to being ostracised from their communities. Merciful God, fill our hearts with compassion to accompany survivors and help tell stories of hope, restoration, and acceptance, rather than stigma, rejection, and brokenness. Teach us and transform us through your love.

Many: Teach us and transform us.

The Lord's Prayer

Song: There is a Balm in Gilead

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BN9JALQRMb0>

African American spiritual

There is a balm in Gil - e - ad, to make the wound - ed whole.

Fine

There is a balm in Gil - e - ad, to heal the sin - sick soul.

1. Some - times I feel dis - cour - aged, and think my work's in
2. Don't ev - er feel dis - cour - aged, for Je - sus is your
3. If you can - not preach like Pe - ter, if you can - not pray like

D.C. al Fine

vain, but then the Ho - ly Spir - it re - vives my soul a - gain.
friend, who, if you ask for knowl - edge, will nev - er fail to lend.
Paul, you can tell the love of Je - sus, who died to save us all.

Suggested songs for Healing, Justice and Peace

- For everyone Born, there is a place at the table, by Shirley Erena Murray © 1998 Hope Publishing Company, Carol Steam IL 60188. Music@ Brain Mann, administered by the General board of Global ministries, GBG Music.

- Stand, o Stand firm, original text and music: Cameroon traditional. German: Dieter Trautwein@ Strube Verlag, Pettenkofenstr, 24, D-803336 Munich, Germany.
- Despite the wounds, by Rev. **Per Harling**, member of the Church of Sweden contributed this song for the WCC 70th anniversary.

Benediction

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 with 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 – Sister Ruth Marlene Fox, Osb – 1985)

Contextual Bible Study:

This passage is usually titled as a “widow’s mite”. Once again, it is the story of one more unnamed woman and is traditionally interpreted as the story of a “cheerful giver” whose actions of giving all that she had is praised.

As we observe the 16 Days of Activism against Sexual and Gender Based Violence on the theme, “Awareness, Action, Accountability”, we are invited to ponder on, how this story can enlighten us and call us to action.

The setting of the story is the socio-economic and political context of ancient Palestine which was marked by both poverty and patriarchy. In the Roman imperial context of excessive militarization and people’s resistance it is likely that many men were killed leaving behind their widows and orphans with little sources of income and open to abuse. The woman’s social status as a widow and economic status as someone who is poor are an indicator of the intersection between patriarchy and poverty. The widow therefore can be seen as one who was triply oppressed – for being a woman, for being poor and then for being a widow. This intersection between patriarchy and poverty often makes women dependent on men even to the extent of tolerating violence and abuse.

In Jesus’s actions in the story, we find a movement from awareness to accountability. If we read the verses that precede this story of Jesus and the widow, we find Jesus exposing and denouncing the scribes for their hypocrisy. They wear cloaks of respectability while devouring the houses of widows (Luke 20 45-47). One of the primary reasons for the continued violence against women is the ‘conspiracy of silence and secrecy’ that covers up abuse and violence against women. Our patriarchal society places so much value on respectability, piety, and privilege that people abuse them to cover up exploitation.

In this story when Jesus lifts the widow up as an example of generosity in front of those present, he is simultaneously critiquing the system that extracts all that she had to live on. He calls out the system, and exposes the gaps that have made the woman poor in the first place. In a system where people like the widow are rendered invisible, Jesus refuses to cover up the suffering of those at the margins of the system. He exposes it, drawing attention to the widow and her actions.

The journey from awareness to accountability is possible only if we learn to understand and acknowledge our complicity in systems that perpetrate abuse. Out of this realisation emerges repentance, that ensure that sins of the past are not repeated but are redressed so that a life free from violence and violation becomes possible.

Question to ponder:

As believers of Christ, are we aware of the structural injustices which promote Sexual and Gender Based Violence Against women and men that we encounter in our own time? How do we make ourselves accountable in addressing these issues in our communities?