



A Liturgy on Celebration of Childhood

12 June 2009

World Day Against Child Labour

Call to worship

Jesus said "Come to me all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light." (Matt. 11:28-30).

Children sing a song

(A song of celebration is sung by a group of children including street children, children exposed to child labour, children orphaned and made vulnerable by HIV and AIDS and others from privileged and less privileged background)

Leader

Dear friends! Today we have gathered here to remember millions of children around the world and those children in our neighborhood who are subjected to hard labor, and child abuse. We have come together today to focus on the lives of these children who are robbed of their childhood for the Bible says Jesus had compassion on little children. We hope and pray that many would come forward in the name of God to bring about transformation in the lives of these little ones.

All : O God, sensitize us concerning dismal realities about child abuse and child labor, empower us to be agents of change in the lives of these tender ones.

Leader : Let us pray together.

Prayer

All : Creator God! We thank you for the gift of life. We thank you for the millions of children in this world who are created in your image. We thank you for their parents. We seek your blessing on each of these children because every child is special. May we understand your love and kindness, care and concern for these children. Accept our prayers in the name of your son Jesus who came into this world as a babe in the manger. Amen.

Scripture Reading

Deut.6:4-9; Ps.127:3-5; Mark 10:13-16; Eph.6:4

Message Mark 10:13-16

- a) Children are God's special gift, let us receive them with profound gratitude.
- b) Children are entrusted to our care by God, let us responsibly nurture them for the wellbeing of all.
- c) Jesus said unless we become Child-like we cannot enter into kingdom of God, so let us strive to enter the Kingdom as child-like.

Confession

Leader : Having heard now God's message, let us confess our sins and failures.

All : We acknowledge with horror O Lord, not only the incidence of child labor all around us, but also child prostitution, child abuse and exploitation. We realize with pain the fact that millions of children in the world are suffering and dying due to starvation, lack of clean water, health care, and proper shelter. We confess with deep regret that we have utterly failed in protecting the rights of children and thus have failed in fulfilling our primary responsibility. We confess that we have turned away from suffering children and did nothing about their suffering. O Lord, forgive us for our superficial and indifferent attitude. Empower us with love and compassion that we may be mindful of the suffering children and come forward to protect them from exploitation and abuse.

Commitment / pledge

All : Let us commit before God our Father that we shall uphold in prayer the suffering children of the world, particularly those children who are engaged in many hazardous jobs in mines and quarries, factories and brick kilns, hotels, agricultural fields and at construction sites. Let us commit before God that we shall strive to redress the suffering and injustice inflicted on children and safeguard their rights. Let us also commit before God that we shall find ways to care for children who are under-privileged and deprived in our neighborhood.

A song may be sung at this time.

Prayer

All : O God, Father of Lord Jesus! You rescued boy Isaac from being sacrificed by providing a ram. You heard the cry of little boy Ishmael and struck a spring in the desert. You prevented child Moses from being drowned in the Nile by sending Pharaoh's daughter to rescue him. You spoke to child Samuel in the Temple and revealed your will to him.

Now O Lord, have mercy on these millions of children in the world who cry out in pain and agony, and groan at their work places, exposed to risk and pain inflicted by their greedy masters, their captors. Come down and rescue them O Lord and deliver them from their miseries. You are a loving and compassionate God. Give ears to the cries of these suffering children. We pray for the families of these children. We pray for changing the structures and systems that thrive on child abuse and exploitation. O God, who feeds birds of the air, provide these children with food, and equal opportunities in education, medi-care, and recreation. Let these blessings flow to the children through your faithful people who love you, fear you and obey you.

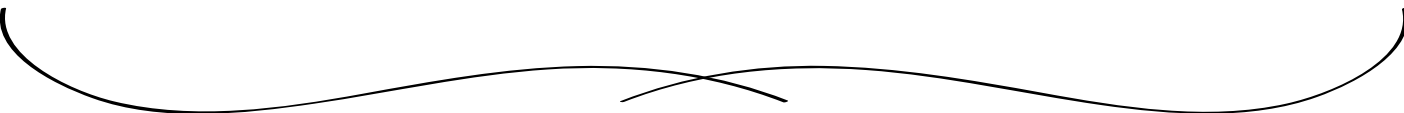
Leader : O Merciful God, we thank you for revealing to us of our responsibilities towards suffering children. We thank you because every child is unique and special. We commit all children of the world into your hands. Bless each one of them O Lord, protect them from all dangers and evils that strike them because they are vulnerable children. May all children grow up to their full potential of body, mind and soul. Let their lives remind us of your love and concern for them. Open our eyes O Lord, that we may be mindful of our responsibilities towards children. Continually remind us that unless we become child-like, we may not enter your kingdom. We ask this prayer in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

Leader : Let us say the Lord's Prayer together.

All : Our Father in Heaven. Hallowed be your Name. Your Kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in Heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. Lead us not into temptations. But deliver us from the Evil One. For yours is the Kingdom, the Power and the Glory forever. Amen.

Blessing/benediction

May Jesus who loves little children, and God who tends the vulnerable and the Holy Spirit who bonds with the broken be with you all now and for evermore. Amen.



This liturgy is brought to you by the Ecumenical Solidarity for HIV and AIDS (NCCI - ESHA), Micah Challenge, VIVA and World Vision India for observing the World Day Against Child Labour (12th of June) and is suggested for use in worship services and may be adapted to the context.

