Prayer Service

This Prayer Service was written by Lorenzo Gamboa from the Archdiocese of Chicago. You will need the following materials: cross, candle, copy of the readings and prayers for each participant.

Gathering

Leader: As we gather today in prayer, we come together before the cross and a lighted candle in order to remember and reflect on the sufferings that many people in our world encounter daily. Let us reflect on the moment when Simon helped Christ to carry the cross. We can act in the same way as Simon the Cyrene. This Lent, Operation Rice Bowl provides us the opportunity to help our needy brothers and sisters to bear the cross of their sufferings caused by hunger, injustice and the lack of material resources. So let us alleviate those sufferings with our prayers and actions, as Simon did for Jesus.

(Short pause)

Call to Prayer

Leader: In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.
All: Amen.
Leader: We adore you, Christ, and we praise you.
All: Because by your Holy Cross you have redeemed the world, and me, a sinner.
Leader: Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit.
All: As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be world without end. Amen.

Opening song

“Seek the Lord’ (Gather #395)

Opening Prayer

Leader: Lord Jesus, Good Master, who in the Sermon on the Mount said, “Blessed are they who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be satisfied,” pour forth your mercy on all those who suffer throughout the world because of injustice and extreme poverty, especially for our brothers and sisters in Guatemala, Mali, India, Haiti, Cameroon and here in the United States. And to us, your servants, give us generous hearts, disposed to help whoever is in need. Bless all our efforts especially this Lent when we shall help our brothers and sisters by lessening the cruel yoke of hunger and poverty that affects their daily lives. Maintain unity among those who contribute toward this noble cause. Bless, Lord Jesus, those who work around the world on our behalf through Catholic Relief Services, so that they may see your countenance in the faces of the poor, and in that way be witnesses of your love for others.

All: Amen.

First Reading

Reader 1: A reading from the Book of Deuteronomy 15:7-11.
If one of your kinsmen in any community is in need in the land which the Lord, your God, is giving you, you shall not harden your heart nor close your hand to him in his need. Instead, you shall open your hand to him and freely lend him enough to meet his need. Be on your guard lest, entertaining the mean thought that the seventh year, the year of relaxation, is near, you grudge help to your needy kinsman and give him nothing; else he will cry to the Lord against you and you will be held guilty. When you give to him, give freely and not with ill will; for the Lord, your God, will bless you for this in all your works and undertakings. The needy will never be lacking in the land; that is why I command you to open your hand to your poor and needy kinsman in your country. The Word of the Lord.

All: Thanks be to God.

Second Song

“The Harvest of Justice” (Gather #716)
Second Prayer

Divide the group into two sides for the reading of the prayer.

All:  God Our Father, full of mercy and goodness, we give you thanks for the blessings we have received from you.
Side 1:  We ask you, Father, that in this Lenten season, you will kindly hear those who suffer from hunger and injustice.
Side 2:  Help us to be mindful, Father, of your sons and daughters who are suffering in this world from the effects of egoism and indifference. Grant that the monetary and spiritual contributions we make this Lent will help us enrich our spiritual lives, and at the same time be a soothing balm for those who are in material need.
Side 1:  Have mercy on us, Lord, and hear our prayer that the cry of your sons and daughters suffering here on earth may rise to the majesty of your throne.
Side 2:  Help us, Lord, to be true apostles of Jesus Christ, your Son, who taught us by his example true charity and true love for our needy brothers and sisters.
Side 1:  Give us the strength to struggle for a better world where there is no hatred and resentment and where we can live without wars, anxieties and sufferings.
All:  May your Word be a living force in our hearts to help us overcome the obstacles that life presents us. Lord, illuminate the life of each one of us with the flame of the Holy Spirit, Father of the poor and Conso ler of the afflicted. Grant us this petition, Heavenly Father, through the same Jesus Christ, Our Lord. Amen.

Spiritual Exercise

For the spiritual exercise, nine participants are chosen. Each will read a Beatitude leaving a small pause for meditation afterwards.

Leader:  As a spiritual exercise, we will now take a few moments to reflect on the Beatitudes.
Reader 1:  Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. (Pause)
Reader 2:  Blessed are they who mourn, for they will be comforted. (Pause)
Reader 3:  Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the land. (Pause)
Reader 4:  Blessed are they who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be satisfied. (Pause)
Reader 5:  Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy. (Pause)
Reader 6:  Blessed are the clean of heart, for they will see God. (Pause)
Reader 7:  Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God. (Pause)
Reader 8:  Blessed are they who are persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. (Pause)
Reader 9:  Blessed are you when they insult you and persecute you and utter every kind of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward will be great in heaven. Thus they persecuted the prophets who were before you.
(Pause for Reflection)

Closing Prayer

Leader:  Let us continue our Lenten journey as we leave this space by together praying the Operation Rice Bowl prayer.

All:  Good and Gracious God,
You who are full of compassion,
Help us to show compassion towards others this Lent.
During this Holy Season we:
Pray that we may be transformed,
Fast in solidarity with those who are hungry,
Learn to live with less, and
Give so that others may live.
May we join in solidarity as one human family
and love one another as you love each of us.
Amen.

Closing Song

“City of God” (Gather #663)