

THE WEEK OF PRAYER FOR CHRISTIAN UNITY 2019

*Justice and only justice
you shall pursue
(Deuteronomy 16:18-20)*

Jointly prepared and published by
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CONTENTS

	Page
Forward	03
Biblical Text for 2018	06
Introduction to the Theme for the Year	07
Ecumenical Worship Service	10
Order of the Service	11
Biblical Reflection and Prayers for the Eight Days	18
Ecumenism Sunday	27
Introduction to the Readings	28
Points for Homily	30
Prayer of the Faithful	31

FOREWORD

“Dear brothers and sisters, I have desired to come here, a pilgrim in quest of unity and peace. I thank God because here I have found you, brothers and sisters already making this same journey.” These were the concluding words of Pope Francis’ address at the prayer service on June 21, 2018 when he visited World Council of Churches’ (WCC) Ecumenical Centre in Geneva to mark the 70th anniversary of the foundation of the WCC. The Holy Father’s ‘pilgrimage in quest of unity and peace’ is indeed “an historical milestone in the search for Christian unity and for the cooperation among the churches for a world with peace and justice,” according to Olav Fykse Tveit, WCC general secretary. It was a long journey for a Pope from *Mortalium Animos* to Geneva, indeed a long journey for the Roman Catholic Church! In 1928 Pope Pius XI in his *Mortalium Animos* had forbidden the Catholics from participating in any ecumenical initiatives. This has to be appreciated in the historical context of the time. Today, however, the Pope himself leads the Roman Catholic Church in a pilgrimage in search of unity, nay, in search of brothers and sisters and finds them at WCC in the same pilgrimage. This heralds the common pilgrimage, all churches hand in hand marching towards the Omega point.

It is heartening to note that this ‘pilgrimage in quest for unity’ was begun in our own country. In 1806, William Carey, a Baptist Missionary working in Calcutta dreamt of a World Missionary Conference to be held in Cape Town in 1810, to be repeated every ten years. This was one of the solutions he foresaw to overcome the hurdles posed by the disunity among the churches in the mission field. It took another hundred years for his dream to be realized at the first World Missionary Conference at Edinburgh in 1910 which heralded the modern ecumenical movement culminating in the founding of WWC in 1948.

The theme of Holy Father’s address on the occasion was ‘Walking, praying and working together.’ The Roman Catholic Church, since

Vatican II, has joined the above ecumenical journey and found itself in Geneva praying with the WCC for unity among the Christians that facilitates the ushering of peace in the world. Speaking on prayer, Pope Francis said, “we cannot move forward by ourselves because God’s grace is not so much tailored to fit each individual as spread harmoniously among believers who love one another. Whenever we say “Our Father”, we feel an echo within us of our being sons and daughters, but also of our being brothers and sisters. Prayer is the oxygen of ecumenism.”

The common pilgrimage, as mentioned above, is in search of Unity which is the gift of God and therefore, as Cardinal Walter Kasper says, “it is fitting that Christians pray for it together.” Vatican II states, “Such prayers in common are certainly an effective means of obtaining the grace of unity, and they are a true expression of the ties which still bind Catholics to their separated brethren,” (*UR 8*). In the words of Cardinal Kasper, “The celebration of the annual Week of Prayer for Christian Unity world-wide is an initiative of singular importance to be encouraged and further developed,” (*A Handbook of Spiritual Ecumensim, no. 28*). Hence, the CCBI Commission for Ecumenism is happy to forward this booklet “The Week of Prayer for Christian Unity 2019” soliciting all Catholics to join other Christians and pray together for the precious gift of Christian Unity which is *sine qua non* for witnessing to the Gospel.

As seen above, the desire for Christian Unity for the credibility of the Gospel message originated in our land in the prophetic vision of William Carey. India has been always on the forefront in ecumenical initiatives. After the World Missionary Conference at Edinburgh, the Ecumenical Forum of the Protestant and Orthodox Churches in India established ‘The National Council of Churches in India’ in 1914 as the National Missionary Council which in 1923 became the National Christian Council of India, Burma and Ceylon, and in 1979 became the National Council of Churches in India (NCCI). Similar ecumenical initiatives were behind the founding of CSI in 1947,

CNI in 1970, Evangelical Fellowship of India (EFI) in 1951 etc., the United Christian Prayer for India (UCPI) being the latest. In this fertile soil of ecumenism our 'pilgrimage in quest of unity and peace' would certainly help us find our 'brothers and sisters already making this same journey.' This is our prayer and our hope.

This year's prayer for Christian unity has been prepared by all the churches in Indonesia. Christians belonging to various denominations who make a meagre up 10% of the population of the country have chosen the theme, "Justice and only justice you shall pursue," (Dt 16:18-20) highlighting the rampant corruption in the country that has undermined justice. As a result, "the gap between the rich and the poor has widened; and so a country rich in resources has the scandal of many people living in poverty." In fact, "Justice is, ... one of the foundational values of human society for the simple reason that the harmonious existence and its continuation in any society are wholly dependent on it," (Fr. Andrew Anil Sequeira, OFM Cap., "*Christian Moral Theology Series: Living Christian Life*," Vol. 3, p. 219). Therefore, all the Churches of Indonesia request our prayers in their united efforts in pursuit of justice. Let us support them with our prayers, especially this week.

It is now our tradition in India that the Sunday within "The Week of Prayer for Christian Unity" is celebrated as "Ecumenism Sunday". This year the 'Ecumenism Sunday' falls on January 20, 2019. As every year, the material for the liturgy is provided at the end of this booklet (page 27-32). The Commission wishes fruitful celebration of these important days and hopes that these prayers in common will go a long way in sustaining us in our pilgrimage in search of the unity so dear to the Lord.

Fr. Gilbert Aranha
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BIBLICAL TEXT FOR 2019

(Deuteronomy 16:11-20)

Rejoice before the Lord your God – you and your sons and your daughters, your male and female slaves, the Levites resident in your towns, as well as the strangers, the orphans, and the widows who are among you – at the place that the Lord your God will choose as a dwelling for his name. Remember that you were a slave in Egypt, and diligently observe these statutes.

You shall keep the festival of booths for seven days, when you have gathered in the produce from your threshing-floor and your wine press. Rejoice during your festival, you and your sons and your daughters, your male and female slaves, as well as the Levites, the strangers, the orphans, and the widows resident in your towns. For seven days you shall keep the festival to the Lord your God at the place that the Lord will choose; for the Lord your God will bless you in all your produce and in all your undertakings, and you shall surely celebrate.

Three times a year all your males shall appear before the Lord your God at the place that he will choose: at the festival of unleavened bread, at the festival of weeks, and at the festival of booths. They shall not appear before the Lord empty-handed; all shall give as they are able, according to the blessing of the Lord your God that he has given you.

You shall appoint judges and officials throughout your tribes, in all your towns that the Lord your God is giving you, and they shall render just decisions for the people. You must not distort justice; you must not show partiality; and you must not accept bribes, for a bribe blinds the eyes of the wise and subverts the cause of those who are in the right. Justice, and only justice, you shall pursue, so that you may live and occupy the land that the Lord your God is giving you.

INTRODUCTION TO THE THEME FOR THE YEAR 2019

Justice and only justice you shall pursue
(Deuteronomy 16:18-20)

Every year Christians across the world gather in prayer for growth in unity. We do this in a world where corruption, greed and injustice bring about inequality and division. Ours is a united prayer in a fractured world: this is powerful. However, as individual Christians and communities, we are often complicit with injustice, and yet we are called together to form a united witness for justice and to be a means of Christ's healing grace for the brokenness of the world.

The Week of Prayer for Christian Unity 2019 has been prepared by Christians from Indonesia. With a population of 265 million, 86% of whom are reckoned to be Muslim, Indonesia is well known as having the largest Muslim population of any country. However, about 10% of Indonesians are Christian from various traditions. In terms of both population and the vast extension of the country Indonesia is the biggest nation in South East Asia. It has more than 17,000 islands, 1,340 different ethnic groups and over 740 local languages and yet is united in its plurality by one national language Bahasa Indonesia. The nation is founded on five principles called Pancasila with the motto *Bhineka Tunggal Ika (Unity in Diversity)*. Across the diversity of ethnicity, language and religion, Indonesians have lived by the principle of *gotong royong* which is to live in solidarity and by collaboration. This means sharing in all aspects of life, work, grief and festivities, and regarding all Indonesians as brothers and sisters.

This always fragile harmony is today threatened in new ways. Much of the economic growth that Indonesia has experienced in recent decades has been built on a system that has competition at its heart. This is in stark contrast to the collaboration of *gotong royong*. Corruption is experienced in many forms. It infects politics and

business, often with devastating consequences for the environment. In particular, corruption undermines justice and the implementation of law. Too often those who are supposed to promote justice and protect the weak do the opposite. As a consequence, the gap between the rich and the poor has widened; and so a country rich in resources has the scandal of many people living in poverty. As a traditional Indonesian saying goes, “A mouse dies of hunger in the barn full of rice.” Meanwhile particular ethnic and religious groups are often associated with wealth in ways that have fed tensions. Radicalization that pits one community against another has grown and is exacerbated by the misuse of social media that demonizes particular communities.

Christian communities in such an environment become newly aware of their unity as they join in a common concern and a common response to an unjust reality. At the same time, confronted by these injustices, we are obliged, as Christians, to examine the ways in which we are complicit. Only by heeding Jesus’s prayer “that they all may be one” can we witness to living unity in diversity. It is through our unity in Christ that we will be able to combat injustice and serve the needs of its victims.

Moved by these concerns, the Christians of Indonesia found that the words of Deuteronomy, “Justice, and only justice, you shall pursue ...” (see Deut. 16:18-20) spoke powerfully to their situation and needs. Before the people of God enter the land God has promised them they renew their commitment to the Covenant God established with them. The pericope comes in a chapter whose central theme is the festivities to be celebrated by the Covenant people. After each festival the people are instructed, “Rejoice during your festival, you and your sons and your daughters, your male and female slaves, as well as the Levites, the strangers, the orphans, and the widows resident in your towns” (Deut. 16:14, see also 16:11). Indonesian Christians look to recover this same spirit of inclusive festivities across communities, which they previously enjoyed. At the end of this long chapter it may seem strange to

have two verses about appointing judges, but in this Indonesian context the links between festivities for all and justice become alive. As people of the Covenant established in Jesus, we know that the delights of the heavenly banquet will be given to those who hunger and thirst and are persecuted for justice “for theirs is the kingdom of heaven” (Matt. 5:6, 10).

Christ’s Church is called to be a foretaste of this kingdom. However, in our disunity we fall short. We fail to be the sign of God’s love for his people. Just as injustice has widened the divisions that have riven Indonesian society, so injustice has also fed the divisions of the Church. We repent of the injustice that causes division, but as Christians we also believe in the power of Christ to forgive us and heal. And so, we find ourselves united under the cross of Christ, calling both for his grace to end injustice and for his mercy for the sins which have caused our division.

The reflections for the eight days and the worship service will be focused on the chosen theme. To deepen our reflection on unity and justice, the topic of each day has been carefully chosen to present struggles that result from injustice. The themes are:

Day 1: Let justice roll down like water (Amos 5: 24)

Day 2: Let your word be ‘Yes, Yes,’ or ‘No, No’ (Matthew 5:37)

Day 3: The Lord is gracious and merciful to all (Psalm 145: 8)

Day 4: Be content with what you have (Hebrews 13:5)

Day 5: To bring good news to the poor (Luke 4: 18)

Day 6: The Lord of hosts is his name (Jeremiah 10:16)

Day 7: Woman, great is your faith! (Matthew 15:28)

Day 8: The Lord is my light and my salvation (Psalm 27: 1).

ECUMENICAL WORSHIP SERVICE

Introduction

This worship service emphasizes the importance of moving from our discourses about unity, justice and mercy to action and concrete commitment, and to acts of unity, justice and mercy in our personal lives and in the life of our Christian communities.

Two particular elements of the worship need to be noted in the preparation of the celebration.

The first concerns the choice of readers in the **Prayer of Repentance**. It is important that the first reader (R1) be either an ordained minister or congregational leader while the other two readers may be members of the congregation.

The second element concerns the liturgical symbolic action which takes place after the **Commitment to Unity through Justice and Mercy**. It will be necessary to prepare two cards or tags for each person. During the service, participants are called to reflect on how they might commit to a particular act of justice, mercy, or unity. They will then be invited to write on each of the two cards what their own concrete commitment is. Each person attaches one of these cards to their own shirt. The second cards will be gathered up at the offering and will be put at the foot of the cross. At the conclusion of the worship, these cards will be distributed to each one as they leave the church, so that each may pray for another's commitment.

ORDER OF THE SERVICE

Justice, and only justice, you shall pursue

(Deuteronomy 16:18-20)

L Leader

C Congregation

R Reader

Call to worship

L Let us worship the Triune God. God, our Father, you crown your creation with justice and mercy.

C we come to worship you.

L Jesus Christ, your cross brings new life and justice,

C we come to worship you.

L Holy Spirit, you inspire our hearts to act justly,

C we come to worship you.

L May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

C And also with you.

Gathering hymn *(will be chosen locally)*

Introductory words

L As Christians from separated communities, we gather here to pray for unity. This year, the theme of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity chosen by the churches in Indonesia is “Justice, and only justice, you shall pursue.” This theme is imperative due to the recurring situations that bring divisions and conflicts. As we pray together, we are reminded that our calling as members of the body of Christ is to pursue and embody justice. Our unity in Christ empowers us to take part in the wider struggle for justice and to promote the dignity of life.

Hymn of praise

Prayer of repentance

L Beloved sisters and brothers, let us confess before the Lord that we have sinned and ask for forgiveness so that our worship will be pleasing to God.

R1 *(read by an ordained minister or a leader of the congregation)*

Compassionate God, you have chosen us to shepherd your flock. Jesus, your Son, taught us to act justly. We are aware that in our ministry, we sometimes behave unjustly towards the people whom you have entrusted to us by: prioritizing those who are close to us or those who have higher social status; ignoring strangers, the poor and the least in society; fearing to defend the oppressed; misusing church resources. These deeds have caused some people to turn away from your church. Lord, have mercy.

C **Lord, have mercy.** *(This response may be sung.)*

R2 *(read by a member of the congregation)*

Loving God,

You have gathered us as members of your flock. Jesus, your Son, taught us to love one another as a sign of being his disciples. We confess that we have failed to live his commandment of love by: regarding those of other churches as rivals; being hostile to each other and slow to forgive; focusing only on our personal interest; ignoring the needs of sisters and brothers; excluding those who do not share our point of view. In these ways, our attitudes strengthen the dividing walls between us. Lord, have mercy.

C **Lord, have mercy.**

R3 *(read by a different person)*

Gracious God,

You have commissioned us to make our common home a place of justice for all. In your generous love, you send rain on the righteous and the unrighteous and, in Jesus, teach us to love without discrimination. We confess that we have failed to follow this teaching by: disrespecting our neighbours; spreading falsehoods through various social media; participating in the disruption of social harmony. Our conduct risks making the world a barren field that no longer brings forth your justice for all of creation. Lord, have mercy.

C Lord, have mercy.

L May almighty God have mercy on us, forgive our sins and lead us to eternal life.

C Amen.

Hymn/Song/Meditative music

Proclamation of the Word of God

First reading: Deuteronomy 16:11-20

Responsorial Psalm: 82:1-8 (*read or sung*)

Response: Rise up, O God, judge the earth.

God has taken his place in the divine council;
in the midst of the gods he holds judgement:
'How long will you judge unjustly
and show partiality to the wicked?

Response: Rise up, O God, judge the earth.

Give justice to the weak and the orphan;
maintain the right of the lowly and the destitute.
Rescue the weak and the needy;
deliver them from the hand of the wicked.

Response: Rise up, O God, judge the earth.

They have neither knowledge nor understanding,
they walk around in darkness;
all the foundations of the earth are shaken.

Response: Rise up, O God, judge the earth.

I say, 'You are gods,
children of the Most High, all of you;
nevertheless, you shall die like mortals,
and fall like any prince.
Rise up, O God, judge the earth;
for all the nations belong to you!

Response: Rise up, O God, judge the earth.

Second reading: Romans 12:1-13

Alleluia (*sung*)

Gospel reading: Luke 4:14-21

Alleluia (*sung*)

Sermon

Commitment to Justice, Mercy and Unity

L Jesus Christ prays for the unity of his disciples.
The gift of his life is justice for the world.

R1 As members of the body of Christ, we are called to walk together
in his path.

R2 Let us hear his calling.

C Holy Spirit, unite us in action.

R1 As members of the body of Christ, we are called to keep our
lives free from the love of money, and be content with what we
have.

R2 Let us break the cycle of greed and live in simplicity.

C Holy Spirit, unite us in action.

R1 As members of the body of Christ, we are called to proclaim release to captives and victims of all forms of violence.

R2 Let us help them to live in dignity.

C Holy Spirit, unite us in action.

R1 As members of the body of Christ, we are called to extend hospitality to strangers.

R2 Let us outdo one another in showing honour.

C Holy Spirit, unite us in action.

R1 As members of the body of Christ, we are called to proclaim the good news to the whole creation.

R2 Let us protect the life and beauty of God's creation

C Holy Spirit, unite us in action.

L To make concrete our individual commitment to work together for justice, you are invited to write your commitment on two separate cards. We invite you to keep one of these cards close to your heart. The second one will be collected and brought forward as an offering.

(A song for unity and/or justice may be sung as the congregants write their commitments.)

Offering

L What does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God? (Micah 6:8) We commit ourselves to acts of justice.

(At this point the ushers collect the second card and bring them forward to be put at the foot of the cross.)

L Gracious God,

you have shown us your compassion and care for all creation. Your love inspires us to offer these commitments to act justly by loving others wholeheartedly regardless of their cultural, ethnic, and religious backgrounds. Accept now our offerings and transform them into action for the unity of your Church. We ask this through your Son Jesus Christ, in the power of the Holy Spirit, who live with you as one God forever and ever.

C Amen.

Sharing peace *(The leader invites the assembly to exchange a sign of peace, so that together we can proclaim our faith.)*

The Nicene Creed

Prayers of the people

L Let us raise to the Lord our common prayer for the Church and for the needs of all humanity.

R From the islands and the oceans,
we worship you, O God, the Creator of life.
Throughout the mountains and the valleys,
we praise you, O God, the Saviour of the world.
With the tongues of all nations,
we thank you, O God, the Comforter of bodies and souls
We come before you bearing our burdens and hopes.
Today we ask you:

C O God, hear our prayer and grant us your love.

R We pray for those who live in the midst of injustice.
Encourage us to lift up their voices and strengthen their hope.
We pray for those who continue to perpetuate injustice.
May your kindness fill our hearts and make us
agents of freedom and peace.
We pray for every institution and person who stands for justice.
Let us act justly according to your words.

Today we ask you:

C O God, hear our prayer and grant us your justice.

R We pray for the visible unity of the Church.
Lead us to fulfil Jesus' prayer that we may be one
and work together to manifest your Kingdom.

Today we ask you:

C O God, hear our prayer and grant us passion for unity.

R We thank you for the many colours, cultures, and customs that
we share in this world.

In our differences, unite us by your love

Enable us to act together to uphold life and to make this world a
just and peaceful household for all humanity.

Today we ask you:

C O God, hear our prayer and grant us your peace.

The Lord's Prayer

Hymn/Song

Dismissal

L As you leave this gathering you will be given one of the
commitment cards. We invite you to pray for the commitment
written on the card.

Blessing

L May God embrace you with love
and make kindness flow out from you
May God ignite courage within you
and transform you into agents of his justice and peace.
May God grant you humility
and give you perseverance to nurture unity.

C Amen!

*(As the congregants leave, the ministers distribute the commitment
cards.)*

BIBLICAL REFLECTIONS AND PRAYERS FOR THE EIGHT DAYS

Day 1

Let justice roll down like waters

(Amos 5:24)

Amos 5:22-25

Luke 11:37-44

Reflection

The Israelites' memory of being strangers in the land of Egypt lay behind tChristians can sometimes be very committed to prayer and worship, but less concerned for the poor and the marginalized. Sometimes we pray in church, but at the same time oppress our fellow human beings or exploit the environment. Christians in Indonesia recognize that in their land there are people who passionately try to practise their faith, but who oppress those of other beliefs, even using violence in doing so. But in the Gospel of Luke, Jesus reminds us that the outward sign of true worship of God is acting justly. He is fierce in his condemnation of those who neglect this obligation.

In the prophecy of Amos, God rejects the worship offered by those who neglect justice, until they 'let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream' (5:24). The prophet insists on the absolute link between worship and doing deeds of justice. When Christians work together to listen to the cry of the poor and the oppressed, they grow in communion with one another and with the Triune God.

Prayer

God of the widow, the orphan and the stranger,
You have shown us the path of justice.
Help us to follow your way by doing justice as our worship of you.
As Christians together, may we worship you not only with our hearts and minds, but also by our deeds.
May the Holy Spirit help and guide us
to work for justice wherever we are,
so that many people may be strengthened through our works.
In the name of Jesus. Amen.

Day 2

Let your word be 'Yes, Yes' or 'No, No'

(Matthew 5:37)

Ephesians 4:22-25

Matthew 5:33-37

Reflection

Violence towards fellow humans is not found only in physical assault and robbery, but also in gossip and malicious rumours. Social media have made it easy for untruths to be circulated instantly to a wide audience. Christians in Indonesia are aware of how this has sometimes led to lies and prejudice being propagated by religious groups, including Christians, against other religious groups. Fear and the threat of reprisals can make people reluctant to stand up for the truth and can cause them to remain silent in the face of unjust and untrue statements aimed at causing fear.

Jesus boldly said, 'Let your word be "Yes, Yes" or "No, No"; anything more than this comes from the evil one.' Deceitfulness destroys good relationships between persons and between groups, including churches. Dishonesty disrupts the unity of the Church. The Letter to the Ephesians reminds us that we are members of one another. This is a call for Christians to be honest and accountable to each other, so that they may grow in fellowship. When we do so, it is not the spirit of the evil one, but the Holy Spirit of God who will be with us.

Prayer

God of righteousness,
grant us wisdom to distinguish right from wrong.
Let our hearts be guided by honesty and our lips speak the truth.
Give us courage to be truthful even when others go against us.
Keep us from spreading deceit;
make us, rather, agents of unity and peace,
spreading good news for all people.
We pray in the name of your Son, Jesus Christ. Amen.

Day 3

The Lord is gracious and merciful to all

(Psalm 145:8)

Psalm 145:8-13

Matthew 1:1-17

Reflection

'The Lord is good to all, and his compassion is over all that he has made', said the psalmist, proclaiming that the love of God is beyond boundaries of ethnicity, culture, race, and even religion. The account of the genealogy of Jesus in Matthew's gospel reflects this expansive vision. While ancient cultures often saw women as inferior, or as the property of their fathers or husbands, Matthew names four women among the ancestors of Jesus, two of whom, Ruth and Rahab, were Gentiles. Three other ancestors in the list were known for their sinfulness, including the adulterous King David. Naming these in the genealogy of Jesus and making them part of God's human history, proclaims that God includes everyone, male and female, sinner and righteous, in his plan of salvation, regardless of their backgrounds.

Indonesia is a nation of over 17,000 islands and 1,340 different ethnic groups, and churches are often separated along ethnic lines. Such exclusivity can lead some to see themselves as the sole possessors of the truth, thus wounding the unity of the Church. Amidst escalating ethnic and religious fanaticism and a growing spirit of intolerance throughout the world today, Christians can serve the human family by joining together to bear witness to the all-embracing love of God, proclaiming with the psalmist that 'the Lord is gracious and merciful' to all.

Prayer

Father, Son and Holy Spirit, one God,
we give praise to you for your great glory
made manifest in all of creation.
Give us an open heart to embrace

all who experience discrimination.
Help us to grow in love beyond prejudice and injustice.
Grant us the grace to respect the uniqueness of each person,
so that in our diversity we may experience unity.
This prayer we make in your holy name. Amen.

Day 4

Be content with what you have

(Hebrews 13:5)

Hebrews 13:1-5

Matthew 6:25-34

Reflection

The writer of the letter to the Hebrews warns against excessive love of money and material things. In the face of our tendency to think we never have enough, the text reminds us of God's providence and assures us that God will never forsake creation. Through the fruitfulness of earth, rivers and seas, God's goodness has provided ample food and fresh water to sustain all living beings, and yet many people lack these basic necessities. Human weakness and greed frequently lead to corruption, injustice, poverty and hunger. It can be tempting, instead of caring about others and sharing our goods with them, to gather and accumulate money, food and natural resources for ourselves, or our own nation or ethnic group.

Yet, Jesus teaches us that material things should not be our main concern. Rather, we should strive first for the reign of God and its values, trusting that our heavenly Father will provide for us. In recent years, some churches in Indonesia have been providing various kinds of financial, human and educational support to small churches in rural areas. In this simple and practical example of mutual love they are demonstrating the unity with their fellow-Christians which is God's gift to his Church. Living more simply, not preoccupied with earning money beyond our needs or with hoarding resources for the future, can enable us to make the earth, our common home, a more just place.

Prayer

Compassionate God,
we thank you for your bountiful gifts.
Give us the grace to accept all blessings
in simplicity and with humble gratitude.
Enable us to be content and
ready to share with others who are in need,
so that all may experience unity in the love that flows from you,
our Triune God,
who live and reign for ever and ever. Amen.

Day 5

To bring good news to the poor

(Luke 4:18)

Amos 8:4-8

Luke 4:16-21

Reflection

The prophet Amos criticized traders who practiced deceit and exploited the poor in order to gain maximum profit. Amos also underlined how God observes their wrongdoing and will never forget it. God listens to the cries of victims of injustice and never forsakes those who are exploited and treated unjustly.

We live in a globalized world where marginalization, exploitation and injustice are rampant. The gap between the rich and the poor is getting wider. Economic achievement becomes a deciding factor in relationships between peoples, nations and communities. Economic issues often trigger tensions and conflicts between them. It is hard to enjoy peace when justice is absent.

By virtue of our common Baptism, all Christians share in the prophetic mission of Jesus to proclaim good news to the poor and the weak, in both words and deeds. When we recognise this mission, the Spirit of the Lord will be upon us too, empowering us to work for justice. Our dignity as Christians calls us to speak and act

in such a way that the words from the scroll of the prophet Isaiah which Jesus proclaimed in Nazareth are fulfilled each day in the hearing of those around us.

Prayer

God our Father,
forgive our lust for power
and free us from the temptation to oppress others.
By your Holy Spirit of communion,
help us to live in solidarity with our neighbour,
and so share together with your Son Jesus
in fulfilling your promise of freedom from poverty and oppression.
We pray in his name. Amen.

Day 6

The Lord of hosts is his name

(Jeremiah 10:16)

Jeremiah 10:12-16

Mark 16:14-15

Reflection

The created world is a manifestation of God's wondrous power. The greatness of God is made visible in and through all creation: 'The Lord of hosts is his name.'

Today, however, we are facing a serious global ecological crisis, which threatens the survival of the natural world. Many people have been driven by greed to exploit creation beyond its capacity. In the name of development, forests are cleared and pollution destroys land, air, rivers and seas, rendering agriculture impossible, making fresh water unobtainable and causing animals to die. In this context it is useful to remember that after his resurrection, Jesus commissioned the disciples to proclaim the good news 'to the *whole* creation'. No part of creation is outside God's plan to make all things new. And so conversion is needed from a tendency to exploit to an attitude that values and reconciles us with creation.

Movements among people of different faiths in Indonesia and many other places are inspiring Christians to promote eco-friendly churches, and to take a stand against environmental abuses. This unites Christians in bearing witness to their Creator, 'for he is the one who formed all things'. When we join with other Christians in defence of our common earthly home, we are not just engaging in activism, but are fulfilling the Lord's command to proclaim the good news of God's healing and restoring love to *all* of creation.

Prayer

Loving God,
By your word all things came to be.
We thank you for the universe
which manifests your glory, beauty and kindness.
Grant us the wisdom to walk gently upon the earth
and together to be prophets of your good news to all creation.
Amen.

Day 7

Woman, great is your faith!

(Matthew 15:28)

1 Samuel 1:13-17

Matthew 15:21-28

Reflection

Eli misjudges Hannah's deep and fervent prayer and condemns her, dismissing her supplications as drunken ramblings. Yet the words of her reply, calling on him not to dismiss her as 'a worthless woman' softened his heart and he sent her away with a blessing. Likewise, when the Canaanite woman came to beg Jesus to heal her daughter, he initially dismissed her, saying that he had come only for his own people. Yet she persisted in her begging and challenging and eventually, recognising her great faith, Jesus granted her request. In both cases, a woman who was initially marginalised and judged unworthy of attention turned out to be speaking prophetic words that softened hearts and brought healing and wholeness.

The marginalization and dismissing of women's voices continues in our own times. Indeed even within our churches we are often complicit with cultures that devalue women. As Christians become aware of their own failings in this area, they come to recognize more clearly the horror of violence against women and children, snatched forcibly from their homes and trafficked to other lands. These and many other migrant workers are often treated as less than human, and are denied the most basic human rights. In recent years churches in Indonesia have taken common action against human trafficking and the sexual abuse of children. Their efforts, and those of people of other faiths, are all the more urgent since the number of victims in some parts of their country is increasing daily.

As Christians unite in prayer and study of the Scriptures, truly listening for God's voice, they can discover that God also speaks today through the cries of the most abused in society. It is when they hear God's call together that they are inspired to join in common action against the scourge of human trafficking and of other evils.

Prayer

Gracious God,
You are the source of human dignity.
By your grace and power
the words of Hannah changed the heart of Eli the Priest;
by your grace and power
the words of the Canaanite woman moved
Jesus to heal her daughter.
As we search to manifest the unity of the Church,
grant us the courage to reject all forms of violence against women
and to celebrate the gifts of the Spirit
that women bring to the service of the Church.
This we pray through Jesus Christ our Lord,
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God for ever and ever. Amen.

Day 8

The Lord is my light and my salvation

(Psalm 27:1)

Psalm 27:1-4

John 8:12-20

Reflection

Throughout the eight days of this Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, the daily reflections have considered many difficult situations facing the world today, including greed, violence, exclusion, exploitation, poverty, pollution, hunger and trafficking. Churches in Indonesia are conscious of these issues as challenges facing all Christians. They recognise and confess that some of these sins have tainted the lives of their churches too, wounding their unity and diminishing their witness to the world. At the same time, they recognise as well the many promising instances of churches coming together to witness to their unity in Christ. Christians in other parts of the world can name many other examples from their own situations.

Day by day, year by year, and especially during this Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, Christians join together for common prayer, professing their common baptismal faith, listening for God's voice in the Scriptures and praying together for unity in Christ's body. In doing so, they recognise that the Holy Trinity is the source of all unity and that Jesus is the light of the world, who promises the light of life to those who follow him. The many injustices in the world frequently sadden or anger them. But they do not lose hope, they move to action. Because the Lord is their light and their salvation and the stronghold of their lives, they do not fear.

Prayer

God our Sustainer,
we praise you for your loving kindness,
for upholding us in times of trial,
and showing us your light in times of darkness.
Transform our lives so that we may be a blessing for others.
Help us to live unity in diversity as a witness to your communion,
Father, Son and Holy Spirit,
one God now and forever. Amen.

ECUMENISM SUNDAY

January 20, 2019

INTRODUCTION

Today is the 2nd Sunday of the Ordinary time and the Church in India celebrates it as “Ecumenism Sunday”. Ecumenism is a movement among Christians towards unity. The Church through today’s liturgy calls on us to pray for unity among Christians. We are in “The Week of Prayer for Christian Unity”, January 18-25.

Various reasons in history have separated Christians from each other but Churches today have come to underline the baptismal unity, the fundamental bond that unites us with Christ as one Body. Every Church is sad about the divisions and craves for unity. While the modern ecumenical movement was the initiative of our protestant brethren, Roman Catholic Church is intensively active since Vatican II which declared that “restoration of unity among all Christians is one of *(its)* principal concerns” (*UR.1*). Let us join the Christians worldwide during this ‘Week of Prayer for Christian Unity’ and in a special way today in this Eucharistic celebration for the gift of unity, especially in India for the credible witnessing to the Gospel.

The Church in Indonesia is asking for our prayers so that they may all be united to fight the various types of injustice that has beset their country. Let us rise them up in our prayers during this Mass.

Penitential Act

Selfishness and pride have divided and fragmented the church. Let us ask forgiveness for our shortcomings that have contributed to the separation and aloofness, and for our failure to take necessary steps to reconcile with our separated Christian brethren.

INTRODUCTION TO THE READINGS

Today is the 2nd Sunday in the Ordinary Time. The readings proper of the day are retained except for the First reading where an option is offered (Deuteronomy 16: 18-20) as it is the passage chosen for this year's biblical theme for "The Week of Prayer for the Christian Unity."

First Reading: Is 62: 1-5

Today's first reading is from the Servant's Song where the Messiah vows to continue proclaiming salvation and intercede for Jerusalem. The Lord will avenge wrong done to his people. The Lord will forgive his people, give her a new name and marry her – a biblical imagery expressing the covenantal relationship between God and His people – the spousal metaphor. In the New Testament this metaphor is used to describe the relation between Christ who is the bridegroom and the church his bride. The sin of division has caused violence and bloodshed in the history. In recent years it has exposed Christians to an unprecedented persecution. Christians should repent like the people of Israel and reconcile. The Lord will raise his church up. She will then be "a bride beautifully dressed for her husband" as described in the book of Revelations. The relationship between this couple will be very intimate, for the bridegroom will not only be her husband but also builder.

Or

Deuteronomy 16: 18-20

Moses appointed judges to administer justice. They were expected to be persons fair and impartial. They were not to pervert justice either by bribe or by influences. They were to follow justice and justice alone. Injustice is one of the serious sins for which the Israelites were punished (Cf. Amos). Injustice is the root cause of most of today's conflicts. Justice is a requirement for peace in the

world. Injustice also feeds our divisions. Christians, especially the leaders in the Church, must unite against injustice and facilitate the ushering in of Peace – the gift of the risen Christ.

Second Reading: 1 Cor. 12: 4-11

In today's 2nd reading we hear Paul insisting that there are different kinds of gifts, different kinds of services and different kinds of working all for the building up of the Body of Christ. Vatican II in *Lumen Gentium* 8, recognizes that "many elements of sanctification and of truth are found outside of its (Roman Catholic) visible structure. These elements, as gifts belonging to the Church of Christ, are forces impelling toward catholic unity." These gifts are from the Holy Spirit, single source, and they are to be shared with each other for the building up of the Body of Christ. Every church has something to offer us. We shall pray for the grace of humility to recognize the presence of the Holy Spirit in other Churches and accept His gifts bestowed to other churches, and at the same time, for the generosity to share our gifts with them.

Gospel: Jn 2:1-12

The 'joy of heaven' is expressed in the imagery of the wedding feast of the Lamb (Rev. 19: 6-9) and Jesus speaks of the invitation to the wedding feast in the Gospels. He began his ministry with the invitation, "Repent and believe in the Gospel." His first miracle was at the wedding feast of Cana where he turned water into wine. Wine is the sign of joy. Conversion and reconciliation between churches should precede the proclamation of the Gospel. The "Joy of the Gospel" has to be shared at every cost. The invitation to banquet is open to everyone but we need messengers to reach the invitation.

POINTS FOR HOMILY

Introduction to each reading given above, and the “Forward” in the beginning of this booklet could be developed for the homily. A few more points are given here:

- The people of the Old Testament committed sins and broke the spousal covenant with God and brought punishment upon themselves. Sin of selfishness and pride have caused divisions in the church, the spousal relationship is damaged. The weakness that stems from our disunity has emboldened our enemy to hurt us. (Pope Francis says, “Those who kill do not ask to which church we belong, they kill because we are Christians.” We are united in the ecumenism of blood.)
- Eucharistic banquet that we participate in is the foretaste of the wedding banquet of the Lamb in heaven. No meal is a joyful experience if our dear ones are not present. The absence of our separated brethren at the Eucharistic table should hurt us – if it does not, we lack something vital. Wounds stop hurting when dead, but we are emphatically alive. The nostalgia for our separated brethren who are not with us here at Eucharist should grow stronger. The wedding feast is ready but our joy is incomplete – our brethren are not at table.
- Mother Mary senses the situation at the wedding and instantly rushes to help. This reveals our Heavenly Mother. Her natural response was to turn to her Son for help in addressing a crisis. Jesus heeded to her by turning water into wine. Isaiah and Jeremiah speak of messianic banquet where there would be abundant wine, superior wine (Is 25: 6; Jer 31:12).

PRAYER OF THE FAITHFUL

Celebrant: Brothers and sisters unity is a Grace which only God can grant us through the Holy Spirit. Gathered around the altar on this Ecumenism Sunday let us implore our loving Father for the gift of unity in the Body of His only begotten Son.

Response: Lord, hear our prayer.

- We pray for Pope Francis who as the successor of Peter is nostalgically going after our separated brethren yearning for the joy of their embrace. May God bless him with good health and continue to bless his ministry to unity. We pray to the Lord:
- May the words of Pope Francis at the WCC center at Geneva on the occasion of its 70th anniversary last June, “I have desired to come here, a pilgrim in quest of unity and peace. I thank God because here I have found you, brothers and sisters already making this same journey,” inspire all our church leaders and each one of us to earnestly seek unity. We pray to the Lord:
- We pray for the world ecumenical organizations like, World Council of Churches, Anglican Communion, Lutheran World Federation, World Methodist Council, World Communion of Reformed Churches, World Evangelical Alliance and others. May their efforts for unity and the various ecumenical dialogues we have with them, bear fruits. We pray to the Lord:
- We pray for the Church in India that we may through prayer and fraternal dialogue overcome the difference inherited from the west and come to appreciate each other’s gifts and work unitedly as one Body of Christ for the noble cause of the Gospel. We pray to the Lord:

- We pray for our national and state governments and all the other leaders that they develop a genuine concern for and compassion towards their less privileged countrymen. May their commitment towards the spirit of secularism and democracy enshrined in our constitution be their beacon light in the service of the nation. We pray to the Lord:
- We heed the prayer request of the Churches in Indonesia for unity among themselves to fight various types of injustices that are present in their country. Through their united efforts, may justice, peace and prosperity for all be established. We pray to the Lord:
- We pray for our brethren persecuted all over the world for their profession of faith in Christ. May the Spirit of God touch the hearts of the persecutors and convert them as Saul to Paul, and may God sustain those being persecuted with His grace to bear witness to Him as St. Stephen did. Let us pray to the Lord:

Celebrant: Loving Father, Hear the prayers of your children imploring you on behalf of all the churches for the gift of unity in the Mystical Body of your Son. Grant us the earnestness to seek our separated brethren and embrace them so that our Eucharistic banquet is complete. We make this prayer through Christ Our Lord.

People: Amen.

