

A Litany of Social Penance

(Adapted, Walter Russell Bowie in The Wideness of God's Mercy: Litanies to Enlarge our Prayer, compiled by Jeffrey Rowthorn. Reprinted with permission.)

GATHERING PRAYER

O God, our Creator, who has made us your human children as one family in you, so that what concerns any must concern all, we confess the evils we have done and the good we have left undone. We have spent our strength too often upon the tower of Babel of our own pride, and have forgotten the city that has foundations, of whom You are the builder and maker. We have been content that we ourselves should prosper though many might be poor, that a few should feast while multitudes were famished both in body and in soul. O God, You who have taught us that whatsoever we sow, that shall we also reap, help us to repent before your judgment comes.

After each petition, there is a time for silence where people may add their own petitions.

Holy and loving God, you create all of humanity in your image and bind us together in your eternal love. Inspire our minds, embolden our actions and ignite our hearts to love one another as you love us; that hope may conquer despair, compassion conquer apathy, and love conquer fear.

Bless and protect the 1.2 billion people who live on less than \$1 a day and the 815 million who will go to bed hungry this night. As we gather around your table, help us remember that gathered with us are those who hunger. As we are nourished by your Son's body and blood, empower us to bring food to those who have none.

Silence

Lord, hear our prayer
And ignite our hearts to do your will

Bless and protect the 115 million school-aged children who cannot go to school. The little boy in Ghana who sells fruit on the street because his family cannot afford school fees. The girl in Bangladesh who sells herself for the same reason. As we gather to learn of your Word, help us remember those who wish to learn but lack the opportunity.

Silence

Lord, hear our prayer
And ignite our hearts to do your will

Bless and protect the women of this world who are not given the same opportunities as men. The little girl in Sierra Leone who stays home because her family has only enough money to send her brother to school. The woman in Tanzania who is not allowed to protect herself from HIV/AIDS. Even as we still struggle with gender inequality in our own society, help us remember those women whose lamps are kept hidden under bushels around the world, to the poverty of all.

Silence

Lord, hear our prayer
And ignite our hearts to do your will

Bless and protect the child that dies every three seconds on this planet of preventable and treatable causes. The young boy in Malawi who dies of malaria for lack of a treated bednet. The young girl in South Africa who dies of AIDS for lack of an inexpensive medication that prevents transmission from her infected mother. You broke into humanity as a vulnerable infant in an impoverished land. Help us to treat each child as sacredly as we do that child in the manger in Bethlehem.

Silence

Lord, hear our prayer
And ignite our hearts to do your will

Bless and protect the half-million mothers who will die in childbirth this year, the millions who do not get proper prenatal care and the millions who sacrifice their own health caring for their families in the worst of circumstances. As we rejoice in our heritage in Mary, mother of God, help us to be responsive to the lives of all mothers who, like Mary, bear children in the midst of poverty.

Silence

Lord, hear our prayer
And ignite our hearts to do your will

Bless and protect all those suffering from AIDS, malaria, tuberculosis and all the preventable, treatable diseases that kill tens of thousands every day. Inspire the minds of those researching new ways to treat and prevent these diseases and move the hearts of those who have the power to get the medications and means of prevention to those who need them. Your Son healed the sick and commanded his disciples to do the same. Help us claim our own power to heal in your name and to use that power for those who have none.

Silence

Lord, hear our prayer
And ignite our hearts to do your will

Bless and protect the more than 1 billion of your children who do not have clean water to drink or adequate sanitation

to keep them healthy. The family in Paraguay living on top of a trash heap. The young girl in Southern Sudan who is dying of a disease borne by the river water she drinks. As your Son came to be living water for us all, that we might never thirst, help us to bring water that brings life to all your children.

Silence

Lord, hear our prayer
And ignite our hearts to do your will

Bless and protect us all and draw us together in your love as we strive to make real your mission incarnated in the Millennium Development Goals -- to eradicate extreme poverty, achieve universal primary education, promote gender equality and empower women, reduce child mortality, improve maternal health, combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases, and ensure environmental sustainability. Where we are divided, unite us. Help us recognize that together, as one Body, the body of your Son, we have the power to do infinitely more than can be asked or imagined. Help us claim the gift of the opportunity of this moment to be your vehicles of reconciliation on this globe.

We ask these things of you, most holy God, and ask you to make them happen through us. In Jesus name we pray, and for his sake. AMEN.