

Ecumenical Advocacy Days 2011
Development Security and Economic Justice: What's Gender Got To Do With It?
Opening Worship
Friday, March 25, 2011

Call to Worship

Leaders go to center of space where a large central candle (or several candles) are located. As they do this, cantor leads the assembly (still seated) in a short meditative refrain about light. As this is being done they light the candle(s). The leaders then invite all (still seated) to the prayer, recited by different groups of the assembly as noted.

LEADER(s): Let us pray.

WOMEN: Blessed be she who kindles the flames of creation.

MEN: Blessed be he who sparks the imagination.

ALL: **Blessed are those who weave the threads of light throughout the generations, who turn our longing for peace and justice into illumination.**

Leaders then raise their arms in a sweeping gesture to invite all to stand. As the music begins, these leaders exit the stage.

Gathering Procession

Song: Siyahamba / We Are Marching (trad. South African)

Prayer of Wisdom and the Wise Woman

Adapted from "Afterword: To Wisdom" in Women of the Word by Mary Lou Sleevi (South Bend: Ave Maria Press, 1989) and Proverbs 31

Sung Response: May You Cling to Wisdom (Text: Based on Proverbs 4, adapted by Steven C. Warner. Text & Music © 1993, World Library Publications)

LEADER (f): We continue our prayer.

LEADER (f): As it is written,
I call you my sister.

LEADER (m): You are pure and simple ... Wisdom ...
so young and so old.
Renewing all things, you never change.

LEADER (f): You received the Artist's commission

You were present in God's First Word of light.

READER (f): She does good, and not harm, all the days of her life.
She seeks wool and flax, and works with willing hands.

READER (m): She is like the ships of the merchant fleet,
she brings her food from far away.

She rises while it is still night
and provides for her household.

LEADER (f): With sun, moon and stars,
you take precedence.
You who designed them clearly outshine them.
The void never prevails over Wisdom.

SUNG RESPONSE

LEADER (m): You selected God's works:
all your play was creative.

You ambled all over the earth,
delighting with children.

You who radiate rainbows,
Recreate us today, so wrinkled with stress.

We call you who call us, all-pervading pure light,
Alight on THIS MOMENT,
on your people gathered here.

Image of Goodness,
you produce prophets and friends of God.
Cause us to see them.
Cause us to *be them*.
Incite us!
Make stars in our eyes!

Lyrics from your Song
flow into ours ...

SUNG RESPONSE

READER (f): She considers a field and buys it
with the fruit of her hands she plants a vineyard.

LEADER (f): Your brilliance is companionship with God.
It leads to all good things.

Aura of the Power of God,
Imbue imagination.
Inspire ideals.
Emanation of Glory,
Inhabit.
Instill.

READER (m): She girds herself with strength and makes her arms strong.
She perceives what she has made is valuable.
Her lamp does not go out at night.

She opens her hand to the poor,
and reaches out her hands to the needy.

LEADER (f): Spotless Mirror of the Workings of God,
Infiltrate the works of Justice and Peace.
Shine on those who dwell in drear and despair.
Draw up those crushed beneath discrimination's decimation.
Illumine the path where hate and hurt can be transformed by your
Brilliant Spectacle.

Reflection of Eternal Light,
Illumine love,
in us and from us, forever And... RIGHT ... NOW.

SUNG RESPONSE

LEADER (m): Gift of God, you gift God with a prism,
suffusing,
diffusing
the whole Spectrum of Color. Colors of life.

With your vision from heights,
you perceive the harmony of the whole.
You dance with evening stars,
and repeatedly make mornings.

LEADER (f): But when things are in heaven, who can search them out?

READER (f): She makes herself coverings,
Strength and dignity are her clothing,
and she laughs at the time to come.

READER (m): She opens her mouth with ... WISDOM ...
And the teaching of kindness is on her tongue.

SUNG RESPONSE

READER (f): She opens her mouth with WISDOM ...

LEADER (m): You call us to call you.
Open our eyes, widen our view!
You've been down and around – all over time.

READER (m): She opens her mouth with WISDOM ...

READER (f): She reaches out her hands to the needy...

LEADER (m): One hand reaches out,
The other caresses the human tear,
Fragile as a raindrop.
You hold it high to the cross of Jesus,
at the CENTER of your design.

READER (f): She girds herself with strength ...

LEADER (f): Beam us into the Word, Wisdom of Jesus ...

READER (m): She opens her mouth with WISDOM ...

LEADER (f): ...your laser light on the Whole Human Story.
It reaches from end to end, governing all things well.

LEADER (m): Reach us.

LEADER (f): Teach us.

LEADER (m): Settle, unsettling, deep in our days,

LEADER (f): Deepest of all where we're set in our ways.

SUNG RESPONSE

LEADER (m): Enlighten in color.
Encircle the folly of spectator living;
Encompass our gray zones.
Leave us not in the neutrals that go any which way.

READER (m): She rises while it is still night ...
Her lamp does not go out at night. ...
She does not eat the bread of idleness.

READER (f): She opens her mouth with WISDOM ...

LEADER (f): Be the gray in new questions to revision our view.

(at this point the roles reverse and the READERS read the prayer and the LEADERS quote the Scriptures.)

READER (m): And show your serenity in cerulean blues;
Be green as in May, keeping her cool.

LEADER (f): She makes herself coverings;
Strength and dignity are her clothing,
And she LAUGHS at the time to come.

LEADER (m): She opens her mouth with WISDOM ...

LEADER (f): Give her a share in the fruit of her hands,
And let her works praise her at the city gates.

READER (f): I call you, my sister.
We your sisters and brothers,
watch together
as your morning and evening rounds continue.

LEADER (f): She opens her mouth with WISDOM ...

LEADER (m): Give her a share in the fruits of her hands,
And let her works praise her at the city gates.

READER (m): In **our** streets and crossroads,
Keep crying aloud:

READER (f): "To you ... I call!"

READER (m): Your call is to holiness ...

LEADER (m): She opens her mouth with WISDOM ...

READER (f): Your call is to justice.

LEADER (f): Give her a share in the fruits of her hands,
And let her works praise her at the city gates!

READER (m): Your call is as large as the universe.

LEADERS (m+f): Give her a share in the fruits of her hands ...

READERS (m+f): and let her works praise her at the city gates!

LEADER (m): Come in here! ...

LEADER (f): Come in here! ...

READER (m): Come in here! ...

READER (f): Come in here!

LEADERS & READERS TOGETHER: The gate is open!

(After a brief pause the leaders exit the stage.)

Liturgy of Word and Witness

Sung Response: Mary's Canticle by Leon Roberts (Copyright © 1993 by GIA Publications, Inc.)

Dancers take their place to help lead the gesture for Mary's Canticle. Dancers on stage gesture for all to stand.

Refrain is intoned. Verse 1 is sung. All are brought in to repeat the refrain with gesture led by dancers. When done, dancers remain in place (?). Dancers on stage gesture for all to sit. If on or near stage, they may sit on the stage / ground and be attentive to the reading / witness.

Scriptural Vignette: A Woman At the Well

Adapted from "A Woman at a Well" in Women of the Word by Mary Lou Sleevi

(proclaimed by a female lector; instrumental continues in background. Image is projected)

Jesus left Judea and started back to Galilee, but he had to go through Samaria. So he came to a Samaritan city called Sychar, near the plot of ground that Jacob had given to his son Joseph. Jacob's well was there, and Jesus, tired out by his journey, was sitting by the well. It was about noon.

An enduring, endearing feature
of an anonymous woman
was that she didn't apologize for herself.

A woman with a jar came by to draw water.
"Give me a drink," he opened, *that* simply.

He surprised her by speaking,
and she was just as direct:
"How is it you ask me for something to drink?"

Among his countrymen who bypassed the region,
water in the jar of a Samaritan woman
was considered impure.

Her eyes were not downcast,
her look asked, "Who **are** you anyway?"

It is an ongoing personal question.
Pivotal.
It breaks through stiff or safe or shallow

communication.

Jesus, the Outsider,
was the first among equals
to evangelize an outsider, a woman.

One without identity
was among the first persons he told who he was,
in one of his longest conversations
with anyone in the gospels.

The Man-without-a-bucket
offered Living Water.

A skeptic well-acquainted with ways of religion,
she evaded his offer at first.

Warily and wearily,
she brought her real everyday earthy water.
And she stayed with the dialogue,
even pushed it along.

Then he spoke the truth about her lifestyle
and neither turned away.

It was a Turning Point.
She talked, at the juncture, of sacred places.

He went beyond, to spirit and truth ...

... and struck at her core.

"I know the Messiah is coming," she ventured.

"I who speak to you am he."

It was a Consecrating word.
A groundswell broke.

How much welled up inside her!

He drank it all in.

Living Water in return
was perhaps the first water
she had ever been given.

Entrusted, she was trustworthy.
And from where she stood,
displaced,
the greater risk was hers.

She left the water jar ... drawn up.
She ran off to bring back a town.

Unique to this story of a woman with shadows,
repentance is *not* the theme.

She became a first evangelist
through a capacity for belief she could not contain.

But then,
did Jesus *ever* meet a woman
whom he chided for unbelief?

Weariness had been plunged into the Old Well
every day, almost as long as salvation itself.

Anonymity identifies all of us
who are tired from the journey.

There's a well
at a juncture
where there's Jesus.

"Who **are** you anyway?"

"Who are **you** anyway?"

"Give me a drink."

Testimony (5 min)

*Dancers invite all to stand for Verse 2 of Mary's Canticle by choir.
All join in refrain and gesture. Dancers again are seated after this and invite all to be seated.*

Scriptural Vignette: A Woman of Faith and Blood

Adapted from "A Woman of Faith and Blood" in Sisters and Prophets by Mary Lou Sleevi (South Bend: Ave Maria Press. 1993)

(A male lector proclaims this reading. Light instrumental accompanies. Image is projected.)

Jesus reputation spread far and wide. On one particular day, maybe like today, there was a woman who had been suffering from hemorrhages for twelve years. She had heard about Jesus, and said to herself, 'If I but touch his clothes, I will be made well.'

The crowd almost crushed him
on the way to the House of Jairus.

Nerves frayed.

James and John, among the disciples,
barely kept their composure
in that enclosure
of so many Cloaks.

Peter, of course, was hardly unflappable.
When Jesus asked, "Who touched me?"
Peter flared.

He glared.

"You can see how this crowd hems you in!"

Jesus insisted,
"Someone touched me:
I know that power has gone forth from me."

Someone on that Pilgrimage,
This Woman,
pressed and pushed by all that is flapping
around and about her,
takes a deep breath
and stretches herself.

The hand of one who is
not allowed to touch
much
(because of blood flow)
gets through to him.

Audaciously, efficaciously
reaching out to the hem of Jesus' mantle,
she grabs its tassel
of violet thread,
the ancient sign of a Consecrated People.

Hemmed in, the woman holds on.
Maybe not tight or fast.
For the moment, at least,

it is all she can do to simply *hold on*.

Instantly, her bleeding,
worsening hemorrhage of twelve years' duration,
whose treatment had dried up only her savings ... STOPPED.

In its place, "the feeling that she was cured ...
ran through her whole body."

(slight pause)

"Who... touched ... me?"

Wheeling about,
Jesus persisted in looking around.

Her smile hardly hides.
She lays a hand on a cloak
-any old cloak that
is blocking her way.

It is a Magnificent Move.

Her dark veil,
the color of mourning
and prophets,
falls back.

Her drabness of dress
loses some of its gray.

Blood disease
had placed her doubly in jeopardy
because she is woman.

Beginning to tremble as she realized what happened,
the *preemptive prophet* came up front
and told the Truth in Her Eyes
to him and the whole assembly.

(slight pause)

"Daughter," Jesus said directly,
"Your faith! Your faith has saved you!
Go in peace!"

Jesus and
this sick--and, tired -- Woman
walked, stumbling, into their Given Moment,
together in the tag-along life
of all sorts of fringe people,
including believers.

(slight pause)

"Fringe" ... has its benefits.

Testimony (5 min)

Dancers take their places again and gesture for all to stand. Verse 3 of Mary's Canticle by choir. All join in refrain and gesture. Dancers again are seated after this, inviting all to sit.

Scriptural Vignette: Prisca and Aquilla

Adapted from "Priscilla" in Women of the Word by Mary Lou Sleevi

(A female or male lector can proclaim this reading. Light instrumental accompanies.)

Concluding his letter to the Romans, St. Paul writes:
Greet Prisca and Aquila, who are co-workers with me in Christ Jesus.
They risked their necks for my life.

Not only / thank them, but *all* the churches of the Gentiles as well.

Prisca was there
in a time of Transition,
radiating the new Presence of Jesus
through the living Word.

She was a first generation woman of church
whose teaching and preaching gifts
were generated by way of Pentecost.

It was a time of hindsight and foresight.

The city of God was borne earthside
in a Whirlwind of Gifts.
Unwrapped.

They were needed and heeded.

Signs of their veilings blown off
spread with the gospel.
Church had the insight
to recognize and exercise the fact
that women and men are equally gifted.

The roving Good News drew on her skills,
developed by living,
in the art of communication.

She understood education
because Understanding had grasped her:
Taught what it is
to bring forth to light.

Inspired preaching, in wisdom and knowledge,
warmed very early
to that sense of the Spirit.

"Not only I but all the Gentile churches
are grateful to Prisca and Aquila,"
writes Paul.

The missionary pair risked their lives
as they broke holy ground.

A married couple,
they were mentioned several times in Letters and Acts,
usually Prisca first.

She dwelt in transitions.

When she spoke of Jesus unveiling the glory of God
that once had shone briefly on Moses' face,
she was informed, incisive, involved.

Centering on Jesus,

she enlarged the circle of teachers and preachers.

She sought out and brought out
giftedness in others.

That she taught the eloquent Apollos,
who was learned in scripture
but not advanced in the Way,
indicates her renown.

The story of Prisca and Aquila
is an exodus of its own.

Displaced persons,
they were evicted from Rome because they were Jews.

Their ship of life was hardship ...
it came in early.

They learned to travel light
and watch out for each other.
The watchword that came home
was co-responsibility.

The sea is a symbol of journey together,
and later with Paul.

Co-workers these three ...
even making tents.

They cut, in the raw material,
contours of collegiality.

There was time to reflect
in the wide open air,
making a living,
pondering all that had happened
on the way to church.

Did Paul learn to listen
as hands stretched the canvas?

Church lived on the move,
with Prisca and Aquila.

Under an Old Testament sign
of God's dwelling place,
the Good News kept unfolding.

A new generation of Pentecost -
a sense of the right gifts at the right time -
is stirring again.

Church is a Gifted People.
We are young: Dreams are possible.

In the most mobile Spirit,
we are ever in Transition.

More than surviving,
always arriving.

Thanks, Prisca ... And Aquila.

Testimony (5 min)

Dancers take their places again inviting all to stand. Verse 4/5/Coda of Mary's Canticle by choir. All join in refrains and gesture. At end of song, dancers motion for all to sit and depart at conclusion of song.

SERMON

Offering

Song: "Felicidad" by Eduardo de Zayas (Copyright © 1965 by composer. Published by OCP Publications)

Intercessions

SUNG REFRAIN INTONED

READER 1: We pray together for the unity and solidarity of our faith communities.

Our prayer of hope, our prayer in community is that we all strive to remember that we are created in the image and likeness of God.

In this holy image and likeness, we pray that we act respectfully, lovingly, embracing differences and cherishing similarities.

Let us give thanks for the diverse gifts of our faith communities this night.

SUNG RESPONSE

READER 2: We pray together for those in our world who suffer.

Our prayer of hope, our prayer in community is that there is an end to strife and war, an end to oppression, hatred, and fear.

May we recognize the ability within ourselves to speak out, to speak loudly with our brothers and sisters throughout the world who know the sounds of guns, the catastrophe of war, the deprivation of poverty, and the injustice which springs from sexism, sexual abuse, and structures of patriarchy.

Let us hear, respond to, and work with the wounded women, men, and children of earth this night.

SUNG RESPONSE

READER 3: We pray together for world leaders.

Our hope, our prayer in community is that there is a respect for all those whom our leaders represent in their deliberations.

May they continue to work on behalf of all those they represent and make decisions informed on the basis of the common good, especially those who are poor, unemployed, and in need.

Let us remember our brothers and sisters who lead, and those who face economic and political injustice this night.

SUNG RESPONSE

READER 4: We pray together for the people of faith who are gathered together here, and for all our communities of faith.

Our hope, our prayer in community is that there is a desire for ongoing dialogue and a willingness of spirit to engage with our brothers and sisters gathered here, in Congress, and beyond.

May the Spirit of Wisdom mark our activities, our conversations, and lobbying efforts. May God be glorified and God's reign of justice in our world come near as we offer the work of our hands and hearts to God's purpose.

Let us commit to more deeply become friends of God and prophets this night.

SUNG RESPONSE

During this final sung response, the leader for the final prayer steps to the stage.

Final Prayer + Sign of Peace

Adapted from an evening prayer in A Prayer Book for Remembering the Women by J. Frank Henderson and Mary Louise Bringle. (Chicago: Liturgy Training Publications, 2001).

LEADER: How shall we ever find wisdom, loving God,
unless we seek you in the lowly and broken?

How shall we know the power of your wisdom, Mighty One,
unless you raise up women and men as prophets in our midst?

How shall we experience the joy and hope of your wisdom, Eternal One,
unless you dwell with us in this and every moment of time?

Give us, this evening, eyes to see and ears to hear what is around us
always:

the Holy Wisdom which swells and dwells with
your friends and prophets.

We ask this in the name of Jesus, Wisdom's Child, your Son, our brother
who lives and celebrates life with you, and the Holy Spirit, one God forever and ever.

ALL: AMEN.

LEADER: Jesus, after you rose you spoke words of peace to us and promised peace
to all who believe. Grant us this peace in our hearts as we now take some
time to share with those around us a sign of your everlasting peace.

*The leader exits the stage at this time. All share a sign of peace for a minute or so. Dancers make their
way to their places for the closing song.*

Closing Song

Song: Let 'isikia (South African Traditional)

Dancers take their place to dance to Let' isikia. Choir begins.

Announcements

Postlude

Song: Walk With Me by Leon Roberts (Copyright © 1997 by GIA Publications, Inc.)

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Inquiries can be directed to Mr. Marc DelMonico at marc.delmonico@gmail.com