

Prayer Service

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BACKGROUND

Each year, the World Council of Churches—including the Roman Catholic Church—invites Christians everywhere to pray for the unity of Christians throughout the world. A region of the world is chosen to prepare materials for prayer and worship.

This year, the Church in Indonesia has invited Christians everywhere to reflect on the common theme of “Justice, and only justice, you shall pursue” (Deuteronomy 16:18–20). Scriptures and prayers were chosen to help the worldwide Church reflect on the theme of justice. Justice is an important focus for the people of Indonesia. In recent months and years, they have suffered the aftermath of natural disasters, and they are experiencing corruption in leadership and an uncertain economy.

This prayer service, adapted for children and youth, may be celebrated on any day of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity. Invite parents and leaders of churches in your community to join you in celebrating this prayer. The service may be led by a priest, deacon, or layperson.

PREPARATION

Read ahead of time the outline of the prayer service. Work with students to choose music and readings and to designate those who will serve as musicians, readers, greeters, and so forth.

Give each student an index card or half sheet of paper on which are written the words “Justice, and only justice you shall pursue.” Before the prayer service, brainstorm with the students ways they can commit to pursuing justice. Write their ideas on the board. Invite each student to choose a way he or she will commit to justice and invite all students to write or to draw their choices on their index cards or papers. Explain that they are to bring their cards or papers to the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity prayer service.

INTRODUCTORY RITES

Opening Song

Choose a familiar song or hymn that reflects the theme of justice.

Suggestions include: "God Has Chosen Me" (B. Farrell/OCP Publications), "The Harvest of Justice" (D. Haas/GIA Publications), and "We Are Called" (M. Haugen/GIA Publications).

Sign of the Cross

(Presider leads)

Introduction

(Presider leads, using these or similar words)

Each year, Christian churches all over the world celebrate a very special week of prayer called the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity. We join together to pray that all people who believe in Jesus will spread his Good News of love wherever they go.

This week is planned by churches in different parts of the world. This year, the Christian churches in Indonesia planned the week to focus on the theme of justice. Justice means "treating others fairly, as God treats us, and as we want others to treat us."

In Indonesia, there are many people who are not being treated fairly, who do not have what they need in order to live, and who are in need of justice. And so today we are gathering to pray for them, and for all people in need of justice.

(Allow for a few moments of silent prayer, then offer the following prayer.)

Collect

God of Justice,
your Son, Jesus, showed us the way to act justly.

Help us follow his example
by welcoming the stranger,
by caring for the poor,
by forgiving those who hurt us,
and by thinking of others instead of ourselves.

Today, as we pray for our brothers and sisters in Indonesia and for Christians throughout the world, help us to be one in faith, hope, and love.

We ask this in the name of Jesus, your Son, who is Lord for ever and ever.
Amen.

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LITURGY OF THE WORD

First Reading	Isaiah 32:15-19 or Philippians 4:6-9 (or a reading of your choosing that focuses on justice)
Responsorial Psalm	Sing a setting of Psalm 15 or Psalm 85 known to your school or parish.
Gospel Acclamation	Sing a setting familiar to your school or parish.
Gospel	Matthew 5:38-48 or Luke 4:14-21 (or a Gospel passage of your choosing that focuses on justice)
Homily or Reflection	<i>Tie together the Scriptures and the theme of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity.</i>

INTERCESSIONS

Presider	Jesus Christ calls us to pursue justice in our choices, in our actions, and in our words. Let us turn to him and pray, Lord, hear our prayer.
Reader	May we be content with what we have, and share what we have with all in need. We pray to the Lord . . .
Reader	May we see all people as children of God, and welcome the stranger in our midst. We pray to the Lord . . .
Reader	May we help all victims of violence, and stand up for those who are bullied and mistreated in any way. We pray to the Lord . . .

Reader May our prayers bless our brothers and sisters in Indonesia, and Christians everywhere who are working to spread the Good News in the midst of difficult situations.

We pray to the Lord . . .

Presider Before we came together today, you were each asked to think about and to write down or draw one way you can commit to being a person of justice.

As a sign of your commitment to pursue justice, I invite you to bring your commitment cards forward and to place them *(in the basket/at the foot of the cross/etc.)*.

(You may wish to sing a song about justice or to play quiet instrumental music as all come forward.)

Presider *(Hold up the basket or container, or stand near the commitment cards as you pray the following prayer.)*

God of justice,
 receive our prayers
 and receive our promises
 to pursue justice
 by speaking the truth,
 by forgiving those who have hurt us,
 by caring for those in need,
 and by doing what is right.

For in keeping our promises to pursue justice,
 we help to build your kingdom
 of justice, truth, and love—
 the kingdom in which you are Lord and King,
 now and for ever.
 Amen.

LORD'S PRAYER

Presider United in prayer with Christians throughout the world, we stand before God and together pray, "Our Father . . ."

CONCLUDING RITES

BLESSING AND DISMISSAL

Presider May the God of justice bless the Church in Indonesia
and the family of Christ throughout the world.

All Amen.

Presider May the God of justice keep us true to our promises
to pursue justice and to help build the Kingdom of God.

All Amen.

Presider And may the God of peace and justice bless us + and all
the work of this day with peace.

All Amen.

Presider (if ordained)

Go in peace, glorifying the Lord by your lives.

All Thanks be to God.

OR

Presider (if not ordained)

Let us go in peace to pursue justice today and always.

All Amen.

Closing Song

*Use one of the songs suggested for the Opening
Song, or another song of your choosing that focuses
on the theme of justice.*