



Praying Without Borders: A Day of Reflection on Global Solidarity

This retreat framework is based on the book Prayer Without Borders, Celebrating Global Wisdom, ©2004, Catholic Relief Services. Permission is granted to reprint handouts for one-time use.

Opening Prayer:

The prayer **To Have Hope (Handout 1)** is can be read by one or several readers. It has an audience response.

Introduction:

Facilitator: In this retreat we have an opportunity to reflect deeply on prayers and wisdom stories from the developing world. Most are written by people who are working for peace and justice in their countries. All serve as an invitation to stand on common ground with those who struggle with poverty, conflict and oppression.

But how do we stand in solidarity with people we have never met? How can we relate to people in countries we may never visit? How do we reduce a distance marked not only by miles, but by different languages, customs and religious beliefs?

As people of faith we know that prayer and stories can draw us into relationships that cross borders of time, distance and difference. Our oldest prayers and our ancient scriptures continue to resonate with us despite the gulf of years and cultures and miles. Our acts of worship bring us into unity with people engaged in similar gatherings throughout the world. Our universal longing for peace and justice in an ever more interconnected world rises as a united cry to a God who we believe hears us all, and loves us all completely.

Today, we will use a variety of forms including communal prayer, storytelling, visual arts and quiet reflection to try to see the world as others see it, and to look for opportunities to stand on common ground. The pieces we will use come from Catholic Relief Services' book *Prayer Without Borders, Celebrating Global Wisdom*, published in 2004.

“Blessed Are” Prayer Banners– 45 min

- Divide into eight small groups with three to six people in each.
- Provide each group with a stanza of “Blessed Are” (Handout 2). Invite the groups to read and discuss their stanza for about 10 minutes. Put the questions below on flip chart paper to aid the discussion.
 - Who comes to mind when you read this stanza?
 - Have you ever personally met someone who meets this description?
 - What are the challenges of the people described in your stanza, and what are their strengths?
 - How do the people of your stanza contribute to the Reign of God? How will the world change as a result of their contribution?
- Have groups secure the stanza on a piece of poster board and illustrate their board with drawings, colors, or photos and images from magazines. (10 minutes)
- Post them on the wall or on chairs in order. Have each group share briefly (1-2 minutes) some of the insights from their discussion and their work. (20 min total) Close by saying the prayer again, having each group read their stanza in order.

Wisdom Stories: (45 to 75 min)

(The length of this activities depends on the number of groups.)

Divide into three to five groups. Provide each group with a copy of one of the following stories found in *Prayer Without Borders*. Give them time to read the story aloud in their small groups and determine how to tell the story dramatically in 3-5 minutes. (about 10-15 minutes in all to read and prepare)

The Lion's Whisker (p. 10)

The Marks of the Nails (p 41)

Strength – (p 72)

The Sound of Justice (98)

Thy Wisdom is Indeed Great (story on page 57)

Share the dramas with the large group. After each story have the entire group discuss for 3-5 minutes:

- What was true in this story?
- What was going on inside you while you watched?
- Was there anything that left you feeling uncomfortable?

Break

In My Prayer (30 minutes)

Introduction: The prayer we're about to share started out as a brief prayer featured on the cardboard rice bowls that Catholic Relief Services distributes to collect coins as part of its Lenten Operation Rice Bowl program. When Attique Swati, who works for CRS in Pakistan, saw the prayer, he expanded it to include images and stories of Pakistani women. In Attique's country, women and girls are among the most vulnerable members of society, facing early childhood marriages, exclusion from schooling, domestic violence and limited access to health care.

As the prayer is read, imagine the women that Attique is describing. Call to mind an image and sit with it a moment.

Read the Prayer (handout 3)

After the prayer:

Facilitator: Stay with Attique's prayer for a moment. What if you prayed a similar prayer based on the community you live in? Who would you pray to become?

Quietly call to mind people within the circle of your life, people in your reach but whom you have never reached before – people that cry out to be known, understood, and loved. Imagine their faces, let their stories fill your mind.

On the paper you have received, write your own stanza:

In my prayer make me (describe a person in your community)_____

That I may understand: _____

Place these statements on flip chart paper for people to copy on their own paper.

Depending on the size of the group these can be shared in small groups or large

Wrap Up Discussion (large group or small) – 15-20 minutes

Given what you have heard and prayed today, what are people in the developing world praying for? Or, given the stories that you told, what do they value?

What did you hear today that matches your experience, that resonated with things that you pray for or things you value?

Did you encounter anything today that don't match your experience? Prayers or situations that you couldn't personally relate to?

Given what you've experienced today, what does the word solidarity mean to you?

What are concrete ways that you can put yourself in solidarity with people who society usually looks down upon, ignores or judges harshly?

Closing Prayer

- Scripture: Matthew 5: 1-16

Invite a participant to proclaim the Scripture

- Facilitator at this point might take a few moments to wrap up the retreat, recalling the work that people did, pointing out insights that were shared, reinforcing the call to solidarity and further extending the invitation to join the world in its prayer for peace and justice.

- Candle Light commissioning

Provide everyone with a candle and send the light around the room.

Group reads the prayer **Light a Holy Fire – (Handout 4)**. You can split the group in two and read this A – B style.

- Closing song: “Marching in the Light of God”, which can be found in several languages including Spanish and Zulu, would be a great choice here. Another option is “This Little Light of Mine.”



Catholic Relief Services • 209 West Fayette St. • Baltimore, MD 21201-3443
Phone: (800) 235-2772 • FAX (410) 234-3183 • www.catholicrelief.org



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Facilitator's Notes

*The day of reflection outlined here runs about three to three-and-a-half hours. It is ideal for a group of 20 to 30 people and is best used with older teens or adults. The aim is to provide an experience of global solidarity by introducing participants to the spiritual wisdom of people who are working for peace and justice in developing countries. The retreat is a companion to the book *Prayer Without Borders, Celebrating Global Wisdom*, published by Catholic Relief Services © 2004. The prayers and stories used in the retreat can all be found in the book (page numbers are provided). Reproducible handouts are provided for prayers for which CRS has received permission for multiple uses. It is within the realm of fair use to make photocopies of other pieces suggested here for one-time use.*

*Note: Additional copies of *Prayer Without Borders* can be ordered through SERRV International by calling 800-685-7572. If you plan to provide the book to retreat participants, or sell copies afterward, a discount is offered for purchases of 20 books or more.*

While instructions for facilitating each activity can be found above, what follows are supplies and some additional notes for each activity.

Arranging the space:

You will need space for both small group work, large group discussion and presentations. Depending on the size of the group and the room, you might want to have round tables. One exercise requires eight groups. You might want to have a CD of world music available to play before and after, as well as during some activities such as the “Blessed Are” prayer banner activity.

Opening Prayer: To Have Hope

An adaptation of the prayer found on p. 7 of *Prayer Without Borders* is included here. You can either provide all participants a copy, or simply instruct them that when they hear the phrase “we believe that...” their response is: “to have hope.”

Introduction

These paragraphs can be used to provide participants with the context for the retreat. Use as is or adapt as you like.

“Blessed Are” prayer banners

This activity requires eight groups of 2 or more. If you have a really small group (under 10), you might have the participants work in groups of two, and provide them with two stanzas.

Supplies needed:

- “Blessed Are” prayer (handout 2). Cut the stanzas apart and provide one for each group. Also make a copy of the entire prayer for each participant.
- Eight sheets of poster board or flip chart paper.
- Markers, some pencils as needed

- Optional: Magazine pages with images from developing countries, or appropriate photos downloaded from the internet that can be used in collages.
- Tape for hanging posters

Storytelling Activity

This activity requires a copy of *Prayer Without Borders*. Provide groups with a copy of one of the stories listed above. Each story should take about three to five minutes to read aloud. Sketches are best acted out as one of the group members reads the story aloud. This will keep the sketches within a similar time frame and leave sufficient time for a brief large-group discussion after each story.

In My Prayer

Supplies:

Pencils/pens

Half sheets of paper (enough for one for everyone)

Flip Chart paper on which is written

In my prayer make me :

That I may understand:

Notes: Have either one person or a few read this prayer reverently, with feeling, pausing after each stanza for the group to visualize the women that are mentioned.

After the prayer is read and after some time for quiet reflection, uncover the flip chart statements and distribute half-sheets and pens.

Discussion

This final discussion provides the participants time to process the experiences they have had so far. Ultimately, has this experience brought out any revelations or changes for them? How has it informed their concept of “solidarity?” The questions above will get you started. Others may come to mind.

Closing Prayer

Supplies:

Bible

A small table with cloth and lit candle

Candles for all

Matches

Copies of the prayer for all



Opening Prayer: To Have Hope

Handout 1

Reader: We believe that:

All: To have hope

*Reader: Is to believe that history continues open
To the dream of God and to human creativity.*

We believe that:

All: To have hope

*Reader: Is to continue affirming that it is possible to dream a different world,
Without hunger, without injustice, without discrimination.*

We believe that:

All: To have hope

*Reader: Is to be a courier of God and a courier of men and women of good will,
Tearing down walls, destroying borders, building bridges.*

We believe that:

All: To have hope

*Reader: Is to believe in the revolutionary potential of faith,
Is to leave the door open so that the Spirit can enter and make all things anew.*

We believe that:

All: To have hope

Reader: Is to believe that life wins over death.

We believe that:

All: To have hope

Reader: Is to begin again as many times as necessary.

We believe that:

All: To have hope

Reader: Is to believe that hope is not the last thing that dies.

We believe that:

All: To have hope

Is to believe that hope cannot die, that hope no longer dies.

We believe that:

All: To have hope

Reader: Is to live.

All: Amen

By the Missionary Sisters of St. Charles Borromeo – Scalabrinians – in Honduras
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Praying Without Borders, A Day of Reflection *Catholic Relief Services*

Blessed Are

Handout 2

*Blessed are those who are on the move,
transforming exodus and flight in energy for a new search.
From the victims will come the protagonists of history.*

*Blessed are those who, forced to wander without direction,
with wisdom learn and teach the lessons of the road.
They will be the architects of a new time.*

*Blessed are those who suffer pain, nostalgia and loneliness,
yet know how to make of every arrival a new beginning.
They shall act with faith, hope and life.*

*Blessed are those who open borders
and mix the anthems, flags, races and creeds.
Without discrimination, they make the world everyone's home*

*Blessed the wayfarers of all roads
in the tears, sweat and the work of their hands.
They prepare a tomorrow of justice and right.*

*Blessed are those who open the door to pilgrims,
making solidarity the passport to our common homeland.
They are constructing a new citizenship.*

*Blessed are those who foment encounters and re-encounters,
sowing peace.
They will harvest flowers and stars in the new heaven and the new earth.*

*Blessed are the excluded, without opportunities and without voice.
They will be the first guests in the great banquet,
where bread will not be lacking on anyone's table.*

Fr. José Alfredo Goncalves, Brazil

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- 1. Blessed are those who are on the move,
transforming exodus and flight in energy for a new search.
From the victims will come the protagonists of history.*

- 2. Blessed are those who, forced to wander
without direction, with wisdom learn
and teach the lessons of the road.
They will be the architects of a new time.*

- 3. Blessed are those who suffer pain,
nostalgia and loneliness,
yet know how to make of every arrival a new beginning.
They shall act with faith, hope and life.*

- 4. Blessed are those who open borders
and mix the anthems, flags, races and creeds.
Without discrimination, they make the world
everyone's home.*

- 5. Blessed are the wayfarers of all roads
in the tears, sweat and the work of their hands.
They prepare a tomorrow of justice and right.*

6. *Blessed are those who open the door to pilgrims,
making solidarity the passport to our common homeland.
They are constructing a new citizenship.*

7. *Blessed are those who foment encounters
and re-encounters, sowing peace.
They will harvest flowers and stars in the new heaven
and the new earth.*

8. *Blessed are the excluded, without opportunities
and without voice.
They will be the first guests in the great banquet,
where bread will not be lacking on anyone's table.*

Fr. José Alfredo Goncalves, Brazil

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In My Prayer

In my prayer,
make me a baby girl
who when born is considered to be a burden or curse on the family –
that I may know what it is to feel unwanted.

In my prayer,
make me a girl whose brothers are the only ones sent to school –
that I may understand:
before our creator we are equal; still one is deprived.

In my prayer,
make me a young girl who is not married –
that I may know the fear
of how property will hinder my choice for marriage.

In my prayer,
make me a young girl married in a family exchange –
that I may experience how miserable it is
to marry a person of double or triple my age.

In my prayer,
make me a widow who has no source of earning –
that I may understand:
without any source of income, how can I bring sweets for my children?

In my fast, make me an empty bowl –
that you may fill the hollow space in me with love.

In my almsgiving, make me a grain of rice –
that in the company of others, my gifts may feed a starving world.

O our Lord, give me strength –
that I can share the sadness of my fellow beings
and bring a light of hope for them.

Amen

Attique Swati, Pakistan

From *Prayer Without Borders, Celebrating Global Wisdom*, © 2004, Catholic Relief Services

Light a Holy Fire

Receive this holy fire.

Make your lives like this fire.

A holy life that is seen.

A life of God that is seen.

A life that has no end.

A life that darkness does not overcome.

May this light of God in you grow.

Light a fire that is worthy of your heads.

Light a fire that is worthy of your children.

Light a fire that is worthy of your fathers.

Light a fire that is worthy of your mothers.

Light a fire that is worthy of God.

Now go in peace.

May the Almighty protect you today and all days.

Amen

-- A prayer from Tanzania

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