

LITURGY FOR the Campaign Against Violence to Women in the Church.

Introduction: The 16 days of Activism against violence to women begins 25th November the UN day Against Violence to Women to 10th December which is International Human Rights Day. Our liturgy will focus on the Human rights of Women in Church. The absence of a women's perspective in all fields of Church life, especially at tables of decision making has led the Church to become a bastion of patriarchy straying far from what Jesus desired for his followers. Church structure promotes male supremacy and male control over women and suppress their sexuality and reproductive choices. They characterize women as physically, mentally, emotionally and sexually inferior to men.

We presently have a Church facing a serious crisis of sex abuse allegations where the primary targets have been children and vulnerable adults both men and women. Survivors of sex abuse are left with no hope of justice in the Church because the men in power protect each other;

Women have been socialised to be silent to listen to the male voice and male decision making, and males framing of rules and laws. Patriarchy has created the world we live in today, where the strong exploit the weak, the powerful attack the vulnerable, where wars rage on because men do not see beyond their own selfish interests.

Spiritual power that priests have over people is misused to prey on vulnerable persons under their influence.

The teachings of the Church and the interpretation of scripture from a male perspective have erased the liberation Jesus brought to women.

Jesus taught us to respect and esteem women. He recognized women's worth in a time when patriarchy was very strong. But his message was lost in a Church institution that was established in his name, but not with his values.

Our prayer today will be what Jesus said to the little girl Song: Talitha Koummi – Little Girl Awake <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rji568eas3E>

Silent Pause to reflect on this cartoon:



ALL: Let all women in the Church awake to claim their rights and dignity as persons with full equality to men. God created women equal to man not as man's helper, or to complement man.

Depending on the time you have you can take one or two readings or all the readings for reflection.

Reader 1: Background to the Gospel reading: During her menstrual flow and for several days thereafter, a Jewish woman is considered “Niddah” – she stays separate from her husband and unable to practice the sacred rituals of Judaism. Purification in a miqveh (a ritual bath) following her period restores full status as a wife and member of the Jewish community. So the woman touching Jesus in her unclean state broke Jewish law. How did Jesus respond to her ...

Reader 2: Reading: Luke 8: 43-48:

⁴³ And a woman was there who had been subject to bleeding for twelve years,^[a] but no one could heal her. ⁴⁴ She came up behind him and touched the edge of his cloak, and immediately her bleeding stopped.

⁴⁵ “Who touched me?” Jesus asked.

When they all denied it, Peter said, “Master, the people are crowding and pressing against you.”

⁴⁶ But Jesus said, “Someone touched me; I know that power has gone out from me.”

⁴⁷ Then the woman, seeing that she could not go unnoticed, came trembling and fell at his feet. In the presence of all the people, she told why she had touched him and how she had been instantly healed. ⁴⁸ Then he said to her, “Daughter, your faith has healed you. Go in peace.”

Few Moments of Silence: **Invite anyone to share:** What is the message Jesus gives all women?

Reader 3: Reading: Luke 8: 1-11 *At dawn he appeared again in the temple courts, where all the people gathered around him, and he sat down to teach them. ³ The teachers of the law and the Pharisees brought in a woman caught in adultery. They made her stand before the group ⁴ and said to Jesus, “Teacher, this woman was caught in the act of adultery. ⁵ In the Law Moses commanded us to stone such women. Now what do you say?” ⁶ They were using this question as a trap, in order to have a basis for accusing him.*

But Jesus bent down and started to write on the ground with his finger. ⁷ When they kept on questioning him, he straightened up and said to them, “Let any one of you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her.” ⁸ Again he stooped down and wrote on the ground.

⁹ At this, those who heard began to go away one at a time, the older ones first, until only Jesus was left, with the woman still standing there. ¹⁰ Jesus straightened up and asked her, “Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?”

¹¹ “No one, sir,” she said.

“Then neither do I condemn you,” Jesus declared. “Go now and leave your life of sin.”

Silent reflection: **Share:** What is the message Jesus gives all women?

Reader 4: Letter of St. Paul to the Romans 16: 1-7; 13-15 I commend to you our sister Phoebe, a deacon^{[a][b]} of the church in Cenchreae. ² I ask you to receive her in the Lord in a way worthy of his people and to give her any help she may need from you, for she has been the benefactor of many people, including me.

³ Greet Priscilla^[c] and Aquila, my co-workers in Christ Jesus. ⁴ They risked their lives for me. Not only I but all the churches of the Gentiles are grateful to them.

⁵ Greet also the church that meets at their house. ⁶ Greet Mary, who worked very hard for you.

⁷ Greet Andronicus and Junia, my fellow Jews who have been in prison with me. They are outstanding among^[d] the apostles, and they were in Christ before I was. ¹² Greet Tryphena and Tryphosa, those women who work hard in the Lord.

Greet my dear friend Persis, another woman who has worked very hard in the Lord.

¹³ Greet Rufus, chosen in the Lord, and his mother, who has been a mother to me, too.

¹⁴ Greet Asyncritus, Phlegon, Hermes, Patrobas, Hermas and the other brothers and sisters with them.

¹⁵ Greet Philologus, Julia, Nereus and his sister, and Olympas and all the Lord's people who are with them.

The Word of God.

Sharing: What is the message in this reading for the Catholic Church today?

Reader: Liberative Messages in the Gospels and the feminist interpretation of scripture that empower women is not officially accepted by the Church.

Penitential Rite: We have strayed away from the teachings of Jesus. Let us pray for a change in our own hearts towards the situations of violence done to women in the Church.

Reader 5: God of Life, we ask you to forgive us for remaining silent, not supporting victims of violence, either by direct outreach or indirectly through our activism. God have mercy.

ALL: God have Mercy.

God of love forgive us for blaming women for the violence done to them, or disbelieving their stories, God have mercy.

ALL: God have Mercy.

God of compassion help us to be sensitive to all who suffer from any kind of violence, mental, emotional, psychological or physical, God have mercy.

ALL: God have Mercy.

Reader 6: Creator God we thank you for the creation of humans in your image and likeness. Help us to undo the harm that patriarchy has done to the wellbeing and sense of self of women and vulnerable persons. Give us the courage to stand up to the challenges that

patriarchy poses to peace and harmony in families, in nations, between nations and in our Church. Help us to rid the world of violence, especially to women, children and all vulnerable people. May we always live by your teaching of love and caring. We make our prayer through Jesus our saviour, Amen.

Reader 7: Religion and scriptural interpretation and the way it impacts women's life negatively needs to be examined and critiqued, so that women can aspire to a more just and egalitarian society.

Scriptural interpretation, beginning with the creation story, the 'fall' of Adam and Eve (Gen.3) where Eve is portrayed as temptress, through whom sin entered humanity, the punishment of Eve that every woman bears in her body and sexuality, "I will greatly multiply your pain in childbearing; in pain you shall bring forth children, yet your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you." ([Genesis 3:16](#)) The curse upon Adam. "in toil you shall eat of it all the days of your life; ¹⁸ thorns and thistles it shall bring forth to you; and you shall eat the plants of the field. ¹⁹ In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread. (Gen 3:17-19)" has influenced Catholic cultural perception of man/woman, and the stereotyping of roles. Blaming women for the sins of men.

The scripture readings that are read during wedding liturgies. (Eph.5:22-24) (Prov 31:10-31) (Gen 3:16) encourage only women to love and serve in the home and accept that every sexual act has to be open to children. The teaching that bans contraceptive use and abortion is a double edged sword give to women. The teaching on complementarity, promotes marriage as woman's destiny and goal in life.

Reader 8: Is the Church's Pro-Life teaching really Pro-Life?: A 9 year old girl was pregnant with twins after being raped, allegedly by her stepfather, police reported, "The abuse had gone on since the girl was 6. The abortion was performed March 4, 2009 during the fourth month of pregnancy. Archbishop Don Jose Cardoso Sobrinho of Recife, Brazil, excommunicated the doctor, the child's mother and the medical team involved in the procedure. However, the stepfather was not excommunicated, with Sobrinho saying that, "A graver act than (rape) is [abortion](#), to eliminate an innocent life."¹ This statement is grossly insensitive to the trauma of rape by a 9-year old child pregnant with twins. The pregnancy threatened her own life, yet the life of unborn foetuses was more important to the Archbishop than the life of a living child.

What questions does the above story raise?

Invite participants to make spontaneous prayers of petition for women to tackle the challenges of violence done to women in the Church.

Reader 9. May God bless us with peace, courage, and strength to be prophets, to be comfort, to be strength to bring healing and change for all who suffer violence. **May Sophia accompany us on this journey. Amen.**

Our final song expresses our desire to be present to anyone who is suffering violence, especially women, whose suffering of violence is hidden.

Final Song: Here I am Lord - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TnO5B_G505w

