



Voices Raised in Hope

WORLD DAY OF PRAYER
FOR WOMEN'S ORDINATION

March 25, 2019

We speak our names aloud and say which country and group we are from. The others on the call reply welcome (name). *(Or if gathering in person, go around circle and introduce yourselves.)*

Leader: We meet on this World Day of Prayer for Women's Ordination to pray for all who seek to follow God's call on their lives, but are frustrated by the Church hierarchy. We spend a moment remembering those who have gone before us, those who have raised their voices, and give thanks for them and their gifts. We imagine in our minds those women who model priesthood for us, giving us hope. We will take a few minutes of silence to savor their presence.

(About 3 minutes of silence)

End silence with bell/singing bowl

Leader: Mary used her voice to pray for wisdom. With her, we join our voices to pray for wisdom for all those whose vocation journeys are frustrated:

*Leader to say verse in BOLD and others to respond. We pause briefly at the **

Before I ventured forth,

even while I was very young, *

I sought wisdom openly in my prayer.

In the forecourts of the temple I asked for her, *

and I will seek her to the end.

From first blossom to early fruit, *

she has been the delight of my heart.

As diligently from my youth have I pursued her.

I inclined my ear a little and received her; *

I found for myself much wisdom and became adept in her.

To the one who gives me wisdom will I give glory, *

for I have resolved to live according to her way.

From the beginning I gained courage from her, *

therefore I will not be forsaken.

In my inmost being I have been stirred to seek her, *

therefore have I gained a good possession.

As my reward the Almighty has given me the gift of language, *

and with it will I offer praise to God.

Glory be to our God, Mother, Father, Son, Sophia-wisdom

As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end, Amen.

SONG: Canticle of Mary by Lori True

CHORUS: Magnificat, magnificat anima mea dominum.

I sing with all my heart, my spirit leaps for joy.
Who am I that you should honor me?
By your saving grace, all will call me blest,
And proclaim the greatness of your name!

How great your gifts to us, how wonderful your works,
With your pow'r you strengthen all the weak.
Your mercy will endure; steadfast is your love,
All the faithful follow and believe.

You scatter all the proud, the rich you send away.
All the mighty vanish in your sight.
You fill each hungry heart, raising up the least.
You are hope to all who are in need.

You rescue all the poor, your servant Israel.
You preserve the promise long foretold.
You keep your saving word; faithful is your name.
Every generation sings your praise!

(For background, not for reading aloud) The father of Denise Levertov was raised as a Jew but converted to the Church of England. He became an Anglican minister, and must have been very influential on Levertov. She decided she would become a writer at the age of five, and published her first poem at the age of seventeen, having received two pages of advice from T.S. Eliot five years before. She moved from England to America when she was twenty-five, after writing her first book and serving as a civilian nurse in World War II. The themes of her poetry are nature, love, protest, and in this case, faith. Her lack of formal education makes her poetry easy to understand and to the point.

Here she describes the Annunciation, and the many feelings Mary must have felt when given the good news. Her courage is evident as she took on the difficult task. Also, she speaks of how completely ordinary both Jesus and Mary were, like us in every way but sin. This gives us hope that all of us can be like them, ever faithful to God. As she said, we often try to turn away from our destiny, but like Mary we must take up the strength and choose light instead of storm, the narrow path instead of the wide road. Hard these choices might be, and weary the travellers, but only this way can one achieve everlasting joy.

"Annunciation," by Denise Levertov

We know the scene: the room, variously furnished,
almost always a lectern, a book; always
the tall lily.

Arrived on solemn grandeur of great wings,
the angelic ambassador, standing or hovering,
whom she acknowledges, a guest.
But we are told of meek obedience. No one
mentions
courage.
The engendering Spirit
did not enter without consent.
God waited.
She was free
to accept or to refuse, choice
integral to humanness.

Aren't there annunciations
of one sort or another
in most lives?
Some unwillingly
undertake great destinies,
enact them in sullen pride,
uncomprehending.

More often
those moments
when roads of light and storm
open from darkness in a man or woman,
are turned away from
in dread, in a wave of weakness, in despair
and with relief.

Ordinary lives continue.
God does not smite them.
But the gates close, the pathway vanishes.

She had been a child who played, ate, slept
like any other child – but unlike others,
wept only for pity, laughed
in joy not triumph.
Compassion and intelligence
fused in her, indivisible.

Called to a destiny more momentous
than any in all of Time,
she did not quail,
only asked
a simple, 'How can this be?'
and gravely, courteously,
took to heart the angel's reply,
perceiving instantly
the astounding ministry she was offered:
to bear in her womb

Infinite weight and lightness; to carry
in hidden, finite inwardness,
nine months of Eternity; to contain
in slender vase of being,
the sum of power –
in narrow flesh,
the sum of light.
Then bring to birth,
push out into air, a Man-child
needing, like any other,
milk and love –
but who was God.

*(About 3 minutes of silence -
end silence with bell/singing bowl)*

Leader: God waited in the silence for Mary's consent, and God waits for us, too, and our courage to walk a path of infinite weight and lightness. Let us pray together in gratitude for the annunciations in our own lives. Our response will be "Holy Wisdom, you are with us."

For the many ways God calls us to serve and minister to one another, including as priests, we pray in gratitude....**Holy Wisdom, you are with us.**

For the courage of prophetic women like sisters Teresa Kane and Veronica Openibo, who speak truth to power, we pray in gratitude...**Holy Wisdom, you are with us.**

For the softening of hearts hardened by clericalism and the opening of eyes to see the truth of women's vocations, we pray in hope...**Holy Wisdom, you are with us.**

For the wisdom to trust that "what has always been this way" can still change into something new, we pray in hope...**Holy Wisdom, you are with us.**

For what else shall we pray?

Final prayer: Jan Richardson, "Rough Translations"
From Circle of Grace

(All read together)

Hope nonetheless.

Hope despite.

Hope regardless.

Hope still.

Hope where we had ceased to hope.

Hope amid what threatens hope.

Hope with those who feed our hope.

Hope beyond what we had hoped.

Hope that draws us past our limits.

Hope that defies expectations.

Hope that questions what we have known.

Hope that makes a way where there is none.

Hope that takes us past our fear.

Hope that calls us into life.

Hope that holds us beyond death.

Hope that blesses those to come.

Amen.