

*World Day of Prayer for Women's Ordination*  
*March 25, 2020*  
*Women's Ordination Worldwide*

**Introductions, welcome, and general overview**

**Leader:** Today is the 26<sup>th</sup> Annual World Day of Prayer for Women's Ordination. This is a day of concerted global action held each year on March 25<sup>th</sup>, the Feast of the Annunciation, to draw attention to women's ordination in an inclusive and accountable catholic church. We celebrate the power of the Divine Presence in the many forms in which God comes to us. We pray in solidarity with women all over the world taking action for equality.

This year, as our world and our lives face unprecedented disruption, we feel vulnerable and powerless in the face of the coronavirus pandemic. We pray for all who have contracted the virus, for all who feel anxious, those who are isolated, and for all health care and emergency service care givers.

Let us silently identify one thing for which we are grateful...we begin by grounding ourselves with a few minutes of silent reflection.

*Silence will end when singing bowl is rung.*

**Prayer for Vocations**

**Leader:** Ever present God; open the hearts and minds of all people,

and inspire us to use the unique gifts you have given us for loving service to each other.

We pray, especially now,  
for those women whose gifts are best suited to serve your Church as ordained priests.

Empower them with courage as they answer your call and  
strengthen them for humble service, great compassion and insightful wisdom.

Support them through their ministries and  
enlighten the leadership of your Church to practice the equality that Jesus modeled to  
embrace all women and men whom you have gifted for sacramental service.

Strengthen your Holy Spirit within those you have chosen for priestly ministry. May they  
answer your call and follow you with generous hearts.

We ask this in the name of Jesus, who called Mary Magdalene and Phoebe – as well as Peter  
and Paul – to be ministers in the early Christian communities. And to this we say: **Amen.**

## **Litany**

**Leader:** As we listen to the words of women around the world, let us realize we are one echoing a

common message. *(Individual readers have been assigned to each quote.)*

We are here today to ask you for nothing.  
Our dignity and equality are God given.  
They are not yours to give.

*Ursula Halligan, Ireland*

I have fought for equality all my life.

I do not understand how women are deemed less capable than men of representing Christ as his ministers. Uniting local groups is so important under this one message of dignity and equality, as women must realize they have the power to change things, not the hierarchy.

*Sister Mary John Mananzan O.S.B., the Philippines*

Who shall hold the bishops accountable? Hasn't the sex abuse scandal taught us that no man should be imbued with too much power and autonomy?

The church is shored up by women all over the world, and it is these women that they must listen to, in order to heal our beloved church.

It is unwise to keep doing the same thing while expecting different results.

*Sister Mumbi Kigutha, Kenya*

A profound ecclesial renewal will put an end to the discrimination suffered by women in the Church, and that will go so far as to make it a community of equals.

Just as Jesus wanted.

*Pepa Torres, Spain*

The issue is nothing less than the full dignity and equality of women in the church, rooted in our baptism, for baptism is the sacramental foundation of the church and all its members.

Just as reformers and prophets of the past were reviled and excommunicated, so are those who give witness in our day against the exclusion of baptized women from ordained ministry.

*"Sylvia," U.S.A.*

Within the church, not much has changed. We have leadership training for women but there are no places for women to exercise this leadership. Doors have been opened for women to contribute their services in pastoral work, as community leaders, as eucharistic ministers, lectors, cantors, ushers and leaders...

We call for equality in the Catholic Church, apart from seeking changes in the policies, practices and structures of the church, so that women can participate fully in the life and leadership of the church.

*Astrid Lobo Gajiwala, India*

Even if this isn't your issue, or you are not Catholic, or you gave up on the Church a long time ago, the inequality in the Catholic Church hurts women, especially in developing countries. By condoning the idea that women can't be leaders in the Church, the hierarchy in effect lowers the status of women in societies, and this inequality has been proven to keep women, and their families, poorer. By excluding women from ordained leadership and decision-making, the hierarchy promotes the idea throughout the world that women are second-class citizens. Pope Francis is doing many good things in making the hierarchy more accountable and in addressing climate change and social justice issues. But he continues to have a 'blind spot' when it comes to women!

*Mary Ellen Chown, Canada*

Throughout Church history, Mary is held up as the Churchman's idea for women – silent, submissive, and obedient. This narrow version of a role model is unhelpful to women and is not true to the person of Mary. '2.0' signified the need for a Church reboot so that positive change can happen. Leader Barbara Stratman points out: "2.0 stands for a new beginning. Reset everything to zero. We are no longer like that."

The men of our church like to sing their praise to women.  
Paradoxically, men are the sole determiners of our participation in our church.  
As of now, only one woman is tolerated among them: Mary.  
On her pedestal. She stands there. Reduced to silence.  
We want to take Mary off her pedestal and into our midst, as a sister facing our direction.  
We will act!

*The women and men signing the letter to Pope Francis from 'Maria 2.0' Germany*

The Catholic Church, at this point, has reached a situation where there is such a systemic dysfunction within it that the change has to be root and branch – it can't be tinkered with around the edges. If those good priests and good men in the church – and there are many – cannot change it from the inside, then the only way to change it is with pressure and challenge from the Catholic laity.

*Marie Collins, Ireland*

**Musical Reflection:** The 23<sup>rd</sup> Psalm by Bobby McFerrin

*The Lord is my Shepherd, I have all I need, She makes me lie down in green meadows, Beside the still waters, She will lead.*

*She restores my soul, She rights my wrongs, She leads me in a path of good things, And fills my heart with songs.*

*Even though I walk through a dark and dreary land, There is nothing that can shake me, She has said She won't forsake me, I'm in her hand.*

*She sets a table before me, in the presence of my foes, She anoints my head with oil, And my cup overflows.*

*Surely, surely goodness and kindness will follow me, All the days of my life, And I will live in her house, Forever, forever and ever.*

*Glory be to our Mother, and Daughter,  
And to the Holy of Holies  
As it was in the beginning,  
Is now and ever shall be  
World without end. Amen.*

**Magnificat to the God of Dawn** by Joyce Rupp

**Leader:**

My being proclaims the wonders of light as it slowly penetrates the ebbing darkness  
And my spirit bows to the beauty of the One who gives life to all that has existence  
Oh, vibrant green stems of life sing out your praise to the Heart who draws you forth  
Bird songs rejoicing in the breath of dawn, warble your joy in view of the morning star  
Dew drops radiant upon the wetness of grass give glory to the Wise Creator who sustains  
you

Flower gardens, rushing streams, silent deserts, sing, sing, for the Dancer who rejoices in  
your midst

Peoples of the planet, creatures of the universe, play before the Enlivener who delights in  
you

And my soul, my soul, rise up and greet this day with gratitude, in a stance of humble  
remembering

For all I am, and all I am called to be, is held in the hands of a Creator who daily loves me  
into life.

And to this we say "**Amen**"

## **Intercessory Prayer**

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 "Spirit, empower us!"

**ALL: Spirit empower us!**

For the many ways God calls us to serve and minister to one another, including as priests, we pray in gratitude... **ALL: Spirit, empower us!**

We give thanks for the Spirit rising all over the world in the women and men who have taken to the streets to call the Church to a new future of equality and justice. May many more prophets be raised up among us, we pray in gratitude... **ALL: Spirit, empower 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... **ALL: Spirit, empower us!**

For the wisdom to trust that "what has always been this way" can still change into something new, we pray in hope... **ALL: Spirit, empower us!**

**Final Prayer: Continue** by Maya Angelou  
*All will respond with the word "Continue"*

My wish for you is that you continue

***Continue***

To be who and how you are; to astonish a mean world with your acts of kindness

***Continue***

To allow humor to lighten the burden of your tender heart

***Continue***

In a society dark with cruelty – to let the people hear the grandeur of God in the peals of your laughter

***Continue***

To let your eloquence elevate the people to heights they had only imagined

***Continue***

To remind the people that each is as good as the other and that no one is beneath nor above you

***Continue***

To remember your own young years and look with favor upon the lost and the least and the lonely

***Continue***

To put the mantle of your protection around the bodies of the young and defenseless

***Continue***

To take the hand of the despised and diseased and walk proudly with them in the high street. Some might see you and be encouraged to do likewise

***Continue***

To plant a public kiss of concern on the cheek of the sick and the aged and infirm and count that as a natural action to be expected

***Continue***

To let gratitude be the pillow upon which you kneel to say your nightly prayer and let faith be the bridge you build to overcome evil and welcome good

***Continue***

To ignore no vision which comes to enlarge your range and increase your spirit

***Continue***

To dare to love deeply and risk everything for the good thing

***Continue***

To float happily in the sea of infinite substance which set aside riches for you before you had a name

***Continue***

And by doing so you and your work will be able to continue eternally.