

Prayer Service for Christian Unity Week

January 18-25, 2015



“Give me a drink . . .”

John 4:7

READER 6: Jesus, sent by God, you have called your disciples to announce the gospel and to be instruments of transformation in this world together.

ALL: Help us - that the vision of a world transformed may fire the imagination of all believers!

READER 7: Holy Spirit, giver of life, may we continually be nourished by your life giving power.

ALL: Through your presence among us, give power to those who are powerless and help us to give a voice to those who are voiceless.

READER 8: Holy Spirit, who leads us to unity, give to the leaders of our faith communities unshakeable zeal in their efforts towards unity.

ALL: Hear our prayers, open new ways for your church to be united.

READER 9: Holy Spirit, who leads us to the whole truth and makes straight that which is crooked, inspire all those who exercise a role in government.

ALL: Grant them the desire to ensure that the needs of the poor, the humble and the weak without voice are a priority; and guard them from all temptation so that their integrity is preserved from all corruption.

READER 10: O God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, one in three persons.

ALL: Be with us and break down the walls which separate us. Bring us together in Christ through your Spirit.

CLOSING PRAYER: *Leader invites group to join hands as she reads:*

O Lord, open my eyes That I may see the need of others,
Open my ears that I may hear their cries,
Open my heart so that they need not be without succour.

Let me not be afraid to defend the weak, because of the anger of the strong,
Nor afraid to defend the poor, because of the anger of the rich.

Show me where love and hope and faith are needed,
And use me to bring them to these places.

Open my eyes and ears that I may, this coming day,
Be able to do some work of peace for you. Amen.



(Shona prayer, Zimbabwe. In: "The Prayers of African Religion", John Mbiti © 1975 SPCK, London, U.K. in the US: Orbis Books, Maryknoll NY, USA, 1975, pp. 148-49.)

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- Revised 2014: EFJ's 2008 Prayer Service for Christian Unity. Source: *The Pontifical Council for Christian Unity and The Commission on Faith and Order of the World Council of Churches.*

- More resources on Christian Unity can be found at the Graymoor Ecumenical & Interreligious Institute website: <http://bit.ly/1uWuUbj>

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Background on the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity

The week of Christian Unity is celebrated from January 18-25 each year which covers the days between the feast of St. Peter and the feast of St. Paul. This week of prayer for Christian Unity was first observed in January of 1908. It is a time when churches around the world express their longing for and commitment to Christian unity. The theme for this year: "Give me a drink," finds its origin in the Gospel of John 4: 1-42.

CALL TO WORSHIP

Let us take a moment to bring our minds and hearts into the awareness that we are in God's presence.

OPENING SONG: "Come to the Water"

(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kEqCgMmV7n0>)

READING: John:4:1-42.

READER 1: A Reading from the Gospel of John

READER 2: Reflection by Fr Thomas Orians, S.A., Associate Director of the Graymoor Ecumenical and Interreligious Institute

"The encounter between Jesus and the Samaritan woman invites us to try water from a different well and also to offer a little of our own. In diversity, we enrich each other. When Jesus says to her, "please give me a drink" it implies an ethical action that recognizes the need for one another in living out the Church's mission. It compels us to change our attitude, to commit ourselves to seek unity in the midst of our diversity, through our openness to a variety of forms of prayer and Christian spirituality.

The Week of Prayer for Christian Unity is a privileged moment for prayer, encounter and dialogue. It is an opportunity to recognize the richness and value that are present in the other, the different, and to ask God for the gift of unity." (Source: Fr Thomas Orians, S.A., Associate Director, Graymoor Ecumenical and Interreligious Institute)

QUIET REFLECTION:

Invite participants to reflection on the following questions. Provide ample time for participants to share their reflections with the larger group.

- How have I offered a drink to someone from a very different background?
- How does Christian unity bring about peace a world plagued with such problems as poverty, war, human trafficking, and climate change?



INTERCESSIONS

Leader: Universal Oneness, You who knows what we need before we ask, we praise you for your creation, for salvation, and for your unceasing compassion for us.

Heal us, heal our churches of their deafness, that together we may more clearly hear the sound of your voice in the silence of the poor, the vulnerable, and the suffering in our communities and world.

We pray for your still-divided church spread through all the world and charged with the proclamation of the Christ, Light of the Nations.

Breathe into us the desire to work without ceasing for that Christian unity and grant that nothing will overcome our search for that unity for which Jesus prayed.

READER 1: Cosmic God, in your love you created us in your image, to be stewards of the earth to be hospitable guests to the strangers in our midst, and to love our sisters and brothers unconditionally.

ALL: Give us your assurance that nothing will separate us from your love.

READER 2: God our Shepherd, you call us from the shadows into your marvelous light. Make us to shine as children of light.

ALL: Shine, Lord, shine. Shine in our lives.

READER 3: God, our universal life force, who takes infinite care of each of us, make us attentive to the needs of others.

ALL: In your loving kindness teach us to take others into our arms, as you have taken us into your arms in Jesus Christ, and strengthen our common witness as Christians in favor of justice, compassion, and a forgiving spirit.

READER 4: Jesus, Word of the God, you have called us to break all forms of guilty silence.

ALL: Give us the courage to uphold all those who in our assembled communities and in your name make heard the voices of those without voice; that a real ecumenism of life might provide relief for those in distress and comfort for those who grieve the premature death of loved ones.

READER 5: Jesus, friend of the poor and of strangers, you have held out your hand to lead all who were far away to your grace and salvation.

ALL: May those who feel like strangers find comfort and signs of your presence in our communities of faith.