



A Service of Prayer and Support for our Brothers and Sisters in Colombia

"I never cease to raise fervent prayers to God for Colombia where for a long time many sons and daughters of this beloved Country have suffered from extortion, kidnapping and the violent loss of their loved ones. I ask the Lord to end this inhuman suffering once and for all and that they may find paths of reconciliation, mutual respect and sincere harmony, thus restoring brotherhood and solidarity, the solid foundations necessary for just progress and the building of lasting peace."

- Pope Benedict XVI in St. Peter's Square, February 3, 2008

Colombia is enduring the worst human rights crisis in the Western Hemisphere today. Since 1985, more than 2.8 million Colombians have been internally displaced, that is, forced from their homes due to the political violence. They are living in refugee-like conditions within Colombia. Through its [*In Solidarity with Colombia Program*](#), Catholic Relief Services (CRS) is supporting initiatives to provide humanitarian assistance for those impacted by the political crisis and to bring about a peaceful solution to a very violent situation.

The following service of prayer and support for the people of Colombia was developed to help parishes and faith groups act in prayer and reflection around the complex issues facing the people of Colombia. It builds on the gospel and the experiences of CRS' Church partners in Colombia and the United States to invite the faithful to learn more about Colombia's crisis and answer the Church's call to global solidarity. CRS hopes that these suggestions and resources will be helpful as your parish or group examines, strengthens, and builds on its current efforts to promote the gospel's message of justice and peace.

The U.S. Catholic Bishops statement *Called to Global Solidarity (1999)* recognizes the many outstanding efforts of U.S. parishes to address the needs of people overseas. Based in the spirit of *Called to Global Solidarity* and Pope John Paul II's apostolic exhortation *Ecclesia in America (1999)*, Catholic Relief Services' programming with Colombia joins the faithful in doing more to challenge the poverty and injustice experienced by our brothers and sisters.

For additional information about the work of CRS - *In Solidarity with Colombia*, visit: <http://crs.org/Colombia/>.

Setting: The prayer community should be oriented toward a centrally placed table where a cross and candle will be laid to invoke meditation. The invocation's use of light makes the service particularly appropriate for an evening or indoor ceremony, but a variety of prayers in the appendix enables the prayer leader to adapt service components to a variety of formats and settings. While the prayer leader guides the community in the opening and closing of the service, community members are invited to participate in reading aloud the different scripture passages and personal testimonies layered throughout the service. Furthermore, the use of song and responsorial psalms invites participants to contribute and share their musical talent in creating an atmosphere for reflection and meditation.

Format

1. Convocation and Opening Prayer
2. Voices from Colombia
3. Meditation (Music/Silence)
4. Magnificat
5. Prayers of the Faithful
6. The Lord's Prayer
7. Sharing of the Peace
8. Final Blessing
9. Closing Song

Convocation

STAND

Song Envía Tú Espíritu/ Send your Spirit *Craig Kingsbury (Gather, 459)* OR
We are the Light of the World Jean A Greif (Gather, 508)

Gather: Comprehensive. Robert J. Batastini & Michael A. Cymbala, GIA Publication, Inc. 1994

Words of Greeting

Invocation (Middle East Council of Churches)

Leader: In the beginning, when it was very dark God said, "Let there be light"

Community: *And there was light*

(A lighted candle will be placed in a central setting)

Leader: In the beginning, when it was very quiet, the Word was with God

Community: *And what God was, the Word was.*

(A Bible will be placed in the setting)

Leader: When the time was right God sent his Son.

Community: *God came among us, and was one of us.*

(A cross will be placed in the setting)

Together: *God, you broke the darkness with light and gave us that light.*

You broke our sinfulness with your Word and gave us that Word.

You showed us how to love through the example of your Son and then gave us that love.

Let us learn how to use your Light, your Word and your Love to heal our world and each other.

Adapted from *Gifts of Many Cultures* Worship Resources for the Global Community
Maren C. Tirabassi & Kathy Wonson Eddy, United Church Press, 1995

AND / OR

Prayer of Saint Francis of Assisi

Catholic and Protestant religious and clergy have been integrally engaged in meeting the needs the Colombian people across the country, working often at risk of their own lives to accompany and aid the victims of this brutal conflict. Adapting the Prayer of St. Francis, Monseñor Pedro Rubiano Sáenz, the Cardinal of Colombia and Archbishop of Bogotá, expresses his hope for peace in the following words, which we may now read in unison.

Lord Jesus Christ,
Make us instruments of your peace,
Where there is hatred, let us sow love,
Where there is injury, let us offer pardon;
Where there is discord, let us build peace.
Oh Divine Lord, You taught us that those
Who work for peace are called the children of God.
Help us to persist in establishing justice and truth
As firm and lasting foundations of peace.
Lord, You offer us peace as a gift and as
A responsibility that we must realize with your help;
Give us the grace to reach out toward peace,
Help us have attitudes of peace,
That our words be words of peace,
That we realize works of peace,
And that we may build the peace that we
And our nations need. Amen.

Viacrucis. Colombian Catholic Conference. National Secretariat for Pastoral Social. 2000

Song

Cambia, Todo Cambia (*Mercedes Sosa*) OR The Harvest of Justice (*David Haas (Gather, 711)*)

SIT

Voices from Colombia – The Church with God Responds

Leader: Listen to real experiences of Colombians and consider some responses, first from God's Word and then for individual reflection.

Each section has a corresponding issue background selection. Groups are encouraged to pick from the following vignettes:

1. *Displaced*
2. *The Church and Ethnic Minorities*
3. *Child Soldiers*
4. *Environmental and Human Degradation: Drugs*

These are taken from testimony given to the US Committee for Refugees and edited from materials developed by Sandra Edwards and the National Social Ministries Secretariat of the Colombian Catholic Church

STAND

Song No Nos Moveran/World Peace Prayer (*Joan Baez (Gather, 732)*)

SIT

Meditation Please be seated after this last song to meditate and listen to music offered by members of the community.

Instrumental Music Piece

STAND

Magnificat: Luke 1:46-55

Read aloud:

Refrain: Proclaim the greatness of God; rejoice in God, my Savior (*Gather, 146*)
My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord, my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,
For God has looked with favor on the lowly servant.

From this day all generations will call me blessed:
The Almighty has done great things for me, and holy is God's name.

God has mercy on those who fear him in every generation.
God has shown the strength of his arm, he has scattered the proud in their conceit.

God has cast down the mighty from their thrones, and has lifted up the lowly.
God has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich he has sent empty away.

God has come to the help of his servant Israel, for he has remembered his promise of
Mercy, the promise he made to our ancestors, to Abraham and his children forever.

Or, sung:

Gospel Acclamation (*Gather, 14*)

My soul gives glory to the Lord, In God my Savior I rejoice.
My lowliness he did regard, exalting me by his own choice
From this day all shall call me bless, for he has done great things for me, of all great
Names his the best, for it is holy, strong is he.

His mercy goes to all who fear, from age to age and to all parts.
His arm of strength to all is near; he scatters those who have proud hearts.
He casts the mighty from their throne and raises those of low degree; he feeds the hungry
As his own, the rich depart in poverty.

He raised his servant Israel, remembering his eternal grace,
As from of old he did foretell to Abraham and his entire race.
Oh Father, Son and Spirit blest, in threefold Name are you adored; to you be every prayer
Addressed, from age to age the only Lord.

Prayers of the Faithful

Our Father: Invitation for all to join in the Lord's Prayer.

Sharing of the Peace

Leader: Peace of the Lord be with you always.

Community: *And also with you.*

Leader: Let us share with one another a sign of peace.

(The community members share a sign of peace.)

Closing:

The Church is called to be a serving presence in society. We as a people of faith demonstrate our commitment to service when we as a Church hold power accountable, advocate for justice, stand with those who are poor and vulnerable, provide sanctuary, and meet human need.

Blessing

Leader: Let us bow our heads to the Lord.
May God, the Father Almighty, bless us and keep us.

Community: *Amen.*

Leader: May Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord graciously smile upon us.

Community: *Amen.*

Leader: May the Holy Spirit, the Lord the givers of life, grant us peace.

Community: *Amen.*

☞☞ *Special appreciation goes to Sandra Edwards for developing the original concept for this service.*

Displaced Peasants

A testimony from Hortensia

"In just a few minutes, I lost everything."

My husband and I were managers of a farm a few kilometers from the town. We had a small house right on the farm. One day in early December, a group of paramilitaries came to the farm at about 5 in the afternoon. They told us all to go outside, then told all the seven men who worked on the farm to stand along the wall of the house. Then the paramilitaries, who weren't even wearing hoods, shot all the men right in front of our eyes. My young daughter became hysterical. She ran towards one of the paramilitaries, grabbed his leg and begged him to stop shooting. My husband was shot several times.

Then they told us that we had an hour to get out of the village, but another one said no, that we had to leave right now. We had to leave my husband's body right there, and weren't allowed to take anything with us. In just a few minutes, I lost everything.

We walked to Villavicencio with a group of others who were also forced to abandon their homes. The police there put us on an airplane to Bogotá...Next, my family was offered a shelter...But I couldn't find work, and when my money ran out, we lost the room and became homeless."

God's Word responds through: Matthew: 2, 13 - 14

The Angel of the Lord suddenly appeared in a dream to Joseph with the command: "Get up, take the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt. Stay there until I tell you otherwise. Herod is searching for the child to destroy him." Joseph got up and took the child and his mother and left that night for Egypt.

Leader: The Word of the Lord

Community: *Thanks be to God*

Reflection:

The Holy Family had to run, to abandon their land and belongings in order to find safety because armed men wanted to kill them. What help did the Egyptians offer the blessed family when they were forcibly displaced to settle in a foreign land? What can we do in solidarity with the displaced in Colombia who are trying to maintain the dignity of their families in the midst of crisis?

Pause for silence.

Responsorial: They who do justice will live in the presence of God. (Psalm 15)

Reader: Who show no condition in sharing the gifts of their treasure, who live not off the poor: They will stand firm forever.

Responsorial: *They who do justice will live in the presence of God.*

The Church and Ethnic Minorities

A testimony from Father Albeiro:

I am a Roman Catholic priest who lives and works in a region on the Pacific Coast. It is a region of mostly Black and Indigenous communities. It is a region that was ignored by both the government and the armed groups until it was designated to be the site of a national mega-project for hydro-electricity. There are now many competing economic interests in the region.

We live on a river and there are many in our communities who are dependent on the waterways for food and supplies. The paramilitaries blocked the waterways for many months, trying to intercept supplies to the guerrillas. Our Diocesan members were without food. A seminarian working with us went down the river accompanied by community members to deliver food to various communities. The boat was stopped by paramilitaries and documents requested. One of the paramilitaries was rough with a community member; the seminarian interceded to protect the community member. This seminarian, a friend of mine, was young and full of a sense of justice. He was shot in the head by the paramilitary.

I say to all the armed groups invading our lives – who gave you the right to decide our destiny? Who are you to determine our future; the future of our children? This must end.

God's Word in John 15:12-16 declares:

My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends. And you are my friends if you follow me. I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you. I tell you the truth, no servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him.

Leader: The Word of the Lord

Community: *Thanks be to God*

Reflection:

The young seminarian felt the love (agape) Jesus talks about, and shared it with others without restraint. To 'lay down one's life', infers not only a physical death, but also a lifelong motivation of service to one another, as well as God. And we as a church, how do we respond? One way is to accept the moral challenge and respond to suffering and injustice as one human family. The church demonstrates its solidarity when it refuses to be silent and instead speaks the truth even in times of danger. How are we affected by the atrocities of violence and war in other lands? What response can there be to this testimony of injustice and many others around our world?

Pause for silence.

Responsorial: They who do justice will live in the presence of God. (Psalm 15)

Reader: Those who walk blamelessly and live their lives doing justice, who keep the truth in their heart, and slander not with their tongue.

Responsorial: *They who do justice will live in the presence of God.*

Child Soldiers

Testimony regarding the plight of child soldiers:

Juan Fredy knows how to fire an AK-47 assault rifle, dig trenches, and guard kidnap victims. But the short, skinny 13-year-old with big ears and a penetrating stare, a deserter from Colombia's largest leftist guerrilla band, cannot read or write his name. Juan recalls how: "When I said 'Let me out,' they said I'd have to stay until the day I died."

"The first time you pick up a weapon you feel proud, you feel important. When you're a kid, you don't belong anywhere, but when you're a guerrilla, people treat you better," says 16-year-old Lusía. Though some said they joined voluntarily, several claimed they were pressed into service. One 16-year-old from an Indian tribe in eastern Vichada province said: "Guerrillas stopped the car I was riding in with my uncle, tied me up and dragged me away, saying, 'you're a big boy now.'"

"Everyone hears the same stories, the guerrillas or the paramilitaries will come and take you away by force," Giseth, 15, says playing with her ponytail. "You think about whether it might happen. You think about it all the time."

God's Word through Proverbs (22:6; 23:22-23)

Train children in the way that they should go, and they will not swerve from the path.

Injure not the poor because they are poor, nor crush the needy at the gate; for the Lord will defend their cause, and will plunder the lives of those who plunder them.

Reflection:

Children need to be children, but in Colombia thousands of children from families crushed by poverty are forced into conflict, robbed of their childhood and their dignity. What should we do to protect children? Is it possible for Colombia to obtain the peace that it desires when half the country lives in poverty and children lack basic necessities for them to safeguard their human dignity?

Pause of silence.

Responsorial: They who do justice will live in the presence of God. (Psalm 15)

Reader: Who harm not another, nor take up reproach with their neighbor, who hate the sight of the wicked, but honor the people of God.

Responsorial: *They who do justice will live in the presence of God.*

Human and Environmental Degradation of the Drug War

Testimony from a community representative of Putumayo:

From the deepest recesses of our Putumayan jungle, men, women and children are all calling for peace. But peace has been thwarted by state abandonment, which has inhibited the development of our communities.

As rebel, paramilitary and government troops escalate the battle for the control of the region fumigation of the illicit crops is also ironically destroying federal and locally supported alternative crop and livestock development. Unable to grow crops and facing a plague of illnesses due to the fumigation, we are forced to abandon our homes, and search for food and safety.

While the cultivation of illicit crops became an integral part of our survival, we also realized that it had become a fundamental component of the violence in our lives. We say 'No' to state corruption; 'No' to the violent eradication of crops; 'NO' to the indifference of people who distance themselves from our problem; 'NO' to the 'narco-mentality' of our society, that fails to recognize the underlying social concerns fueling the drug trade.

God's Word through Matthew (7:1 -4)

If you want to avoid judgment, stop passing judgment. Your verdict on another will be the verdict passed on you. The measure with which you measure will be used to measure you. Why look at the speck in your brother's eye when there is a plank in your own? How can you say to your brother, "Let me take the speck out of your eye," while all the time the plank remains in your own?"

Leader: The Word of the Lord

Community: *Thanks be to God*

Reflection:

Those who would pass judgment on the people living in coca producing regions must recognize how society's failure to address underlying issues has contributed to the drug trade. The lack of effective policies to address poverty in developing countries and addiction in wealthy nations perpetuate the underlying causes for the drug trade's supply and demand. The Church cannot be indifferent to the problems and tragedies of humanity.

How can we as a Church denounce injustice that opposes human dignity and deliver hope and support to those who would promote a new peace from this conflict?

Responsorial: They who do justice will live in the presence of God. (Psalm 15)

Reader: Who show no condition in sharing the gifts of their treasure, who live not off the poor: They will stand firm forever.

Responsorial: *They who do justice will live in the presence of God.*

Appendix of Additional Prayers

***Confession** (Sri Lanka) read in unison

Eternal God, we confess to you our sinfulness.

*You made the world a paradise but we have turned our lands
into places of tears and unhappiness.*

People are fighting with each other - brother against brother, sister against sister.

*The holocaust of chauvinism sweeps through countries devouring humanity
terrorizing us into submission.*

Liberating One

*free us from all bondage so that our faith in you will make us free
to create with courage a new world –
new societies.*

Canto Penitencial: (Conferencia Episcopal Colombiana)

Perdón, Señor, de tu pueblo ten piedad

Perdón, Señor, enseñaos a perdonar

Por el pecado del mundo,

Padre, ten piedad

Por tanta desigualdad en la repartición del pan y por nuestra indiferencia,

Padre ten piedad

Ante el dolor de quien sufre sin amor, techo ni hogar por la sangre derramada,

Padre ten piedad

Por tantos odios y guerras,

Padre ten piedad

Por las crudas divisiones que des truyen la unidad.

***Assurance of Pardon** (United Congregational Church of Southern Africa)

Leader: Christ is our peace; those who are divided he has made one.

He has broken down the barriers of separation by his death
and he has built us up into one body, with God.

To whomsoever repents and believes, he has promised reconciliation.

So, live as people reconciled. Amen

***Affirmation of Peace and Justice** (Indonesia)

Community: *I believe in God, who is love and who has given the earth to all people. I
believe in Jesus Christ, who came to heal us, and to free us from all forms
of oppression. I believe in the Spirit of God, who works in and through all
who are turned towards the truth. I believe in the community of faith,
which is called to be at the service of all people. I believe in God's
promise to finally destroy the power of sin in us all, and to establish the
kingdom of justice and peace for all humankind.*

Reader 1: I do not believe in the right of the strongest, nor the force of arms, nor the power of oppression.

Reader 2: I believe in human rights, in the solidarity of all people, in the power of non-violence.

Reader 1: I do not believe in racism, in the power that comes from wealth and privilege, or in any established order that enslaves.

Reader 2: I believe that all men and women are equally human, that order based on violence and injustice is not order.

Reader 1: I do not believe that war and hunger are inevitable and peace unattainable.

Reader 2: I believe in the beauty of simplicity, in love with open hands, in peace on earth.

Community: *I do not believe that suffering need be in vain, that death is the end, that the disfigurement of our world is what God intended. But I dare to believe, always and in spite of everything, in God's power to transform and transfigure, fulfilling the promise of a new heaven and a new earth where justice and peace will flourish.*

Song and Offering Ashes, Tom Conry

****Prayer*** (read in unison)

For peace in your country

For the victims of violence everywhere

For those struggling for peace and justice

For churches in conflict situations

For a world without war and violence

Lead me from death to life, from falsehood to truth,

Lead me from despair to hope, from fear to trust.

Lead me from hate to love, from war to peace,

Let peace fill our beings, our world and our universe. Amen

*Adapted from *Gifts of Many Cultures* Worship Resources for the Global Community

Maren C. Tirabassi & Kathy Wonson Eddy, United Church Press, 1995