



# The Picture of Compassion: A CRS Prayer Service

## Introduction and Opening Prayer

**Prayer Leader:** Close your eyes for a moment and try to picture 33 million people - the population of the states of Texas, Virginia, and Montana combined. They live in big cities like New York, and small rural villages in Vietnam. They are male and female, young and old, Where can one begin to visualize so many faces, so many stories, and so much personality? But that is the picture of global HIV today. Thirty-three million people are living with HIV worldwide. More than half live in Africa, where hunger walks the same path as HIV. And many live in this community as well, where AIDS continues to find victims. Today we pray and we remember and we resolve to respond with a picture of compassion, imagining a world free of HIV.

Let us focus our hearts and minds with this prayer from Zambia:

*Oh God, you are the creator of all. Today we your creatures prostrate ourselves before you in supplication. We have no strength. You who have created us have all power. We bring you our seed and all our implements, that you may bless them and bless us also, so that we may make good use of them by the power, which comes from you, our Creator.*

All: Amen.

## Psalm 31

**Prayer Leader:** Divide those gathered into two groups, A and B, and alternate the reading of the psalm.

A

B

Be merciful to me, O LORD, for I am in distress;  
my eyes grow weak with sorrow,  
my soul and my body with grief.

I am forgotten by them as though I were dead;  
I have become like broken pottery.

But I trust in you, O LORD;  
I say, "You are my God."

Let your face shine on your servant;  
save me in your unfailing love. Let me not be put to  
shame, O LORD, for I have cried out to you;

In my alarm I said, "I am cut off from your sight!"  
Yet you heard my cry for mercy when I called  
to you for help.

Because of all my enemies, I am the utter  
contempt of my neighbors; I am a dread to my  
friends -- those who see me on the street flee from  
me.

For I hear the slander of many; there is terror on  
every side; they conspire against me and plot to  
take my life.

My times are in your hands; deliver me from my  
enemies and from those who pursue me.

Praise be to the LORD,  
who showed wonderful love to me  
when I was in a besieged city.

Love the LORD, all saints! Be strong and take  
heart, all you who hope in the LORD.

**Reader:** A reading from the Gospel of Luke ... (Luke 12:22-34)

**Reflection on the Scripture** – (optional) *Consider inviting a speaker to talk about HIV and AIDS both globally and locally. Or consider a time of quiet reflection with music, or a sharing of stories from people are living with HIV or provide care and support for those living with HIV or have lost loved ones to AIDS..*

**Intercessions:**

**Reader:** We bring our prayers before a God who knows our prayers before we pray them, who in listening to our intercessions helps us to acknowledge the desires of our own hearts.

**The response is: Bless us with compassionate hearts.**

God of compassion, many step away from people with HIV out of ignorance, or fear or denial. Help us to step toward our brothers and sisters who have HIV, those who are an ocean away and those on the sidewalks down which we walk. Help us stand in solidarity with their suffering, in recognition of their worth. We pray...

**Bless us with compassionate hearts.**

God of the poor, AIDS does not discriminate by race or religion or economic class. But people do. Help us to respond to the cry of the poor for HIV medications and health care, for food, for education, for communities of support. We pray...

**Bless us with compassionate hearts**

God of the orphan, there are villages in Africa where most of the adults have died due to AIDS; only their children remain. Help us to create a global village that will raise these children in love and hope into a secure future. We pray...

**Bless us with compassionate hearts**

God of justice, our nation has the power to fund a large percentage of the efforts that will slow the spread of HIV, both here at home and abroad. Strengthen our call for a U.S. response that is wise and immediate and generous. We pray...

**Bless us with compassionate hearts**

God of our inmost hurts and heartbreaks, AIDS reaches us where we live. Be with us as we call to mind the people we have loved, known or encountered who are living with HIV or who have died from AIDS.... *(Give people a moment to reflect quietly or invite them to name people they are praying for)....*We pray...

**Bless us with compassionate hearts**

**Prayer Leader:** We have brought our prayers for healing and compassion before God. Let us go forth as compassionate healers into a world that awaits the full Reign of God. We pray this in Jesus' name....

**All: Amen**