

A Day of Prayer -

In Support of the
People of Zimbabwe and All
People Suffering Violence

10th of December 2008
World Human Rights Day

sponsored by
The Carmelite NGO
carmelitengo.org

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The Carmelite NGO

– affiliated to the Department of Public Information of the United Nations

Dear Carmelites and Friends of Zimbabwe,

For some time the news from Zimbabwe has been alarming. Thousands have left the country in search of support for themselves and their families, there is less and less food being produced, the rule of law has broken down and there is a generalized neglect of human rights. At the same time efforts to find a new political structure have been hampered by the tenacious desire of the President to remain in power despite the results of recent elections.

We, the leadership team of the Carmelite NGO, affiliated to the United Nations, feel sure that Carmelites around the world are interested in and concerned about what is happening in Zimbabwe particularly because of the presence and work of the Handmaids of Our Lady of Mount Carmel and of the Carmelite friars there.

By way of supporting the work and aspirations of the Carmelite family and of offering help to a long suffering people we would like to propose a day of prayer and fasting throughout the Carmelite Family as our non-violent and faith oriented response to a very difficult situation. To this end we offer this booklet to all our communities of men and women throughout the world and propose Wednesday the 10th of December 2008, World Human Rights Day, as the day for Carmelites, individually or in community, to observe a day of prayer and fasting for a peaceful and long lasting solution to the situation in Zimbabwe.

We hope that the contents of this booklet may be of assistance to any individual or community that accepts the suggestion to mark this day of prayer and fasting.

May the God of peace light the way for a people who have known great peace in the past and long to live in peace again.

The Carmelite NGO Leadership Team

REFLECTIONS

The theme of our reflections: "How to respond in love to very difficult situations"

Elijah, our spiritual founder, when faced with the idolatry of the King, resisted and because of his fidelity to his calling came to a new experience of God:

He said, "Go out and stand on the mountain before the Lord, for the Lord is about to pass by." Now there was a great wind, so strong that it was splitting mountains and breaking rocks in pieces before the Lord, but the Lord was not in the wind; and after the wind an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake; and after the earthquake a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire; and after the fire a sound of sheer silence.

(1 Kg 19:11-12)



Mary when faced with the scene of her Son's passion and death, stood silently at the foot of the Cross and waited for the promise of his resurrection to be fulfilled:

Meanwhile, standing near the cross of Jesus were his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene.

(Jn 19:25)



Our founders, faced with the reality of the Holy Places being held by the Saracens, found an alternative and very fruitful way of life on Mount Carmel. In order to face the difficulties of life they would put on the armour of God:

Since man's life on earth is a time of trial, and all who would live devotedly in Christ must undergo persecution, and the devil your foe is on the prowl like a roaring lion looking for prey to devour, you must use every care to clothe yourselves in God's armour so that you may be ready to withstand the enemy's ambush.

(Carmelite Rule, Chap.18)

Teresa of Avila, in battling the powers of her day succeeded in keeping her focus:

*When your one desire is the desire to see God,
When your one fear is the fear of losing God,
When your one pain is the pain of not possessing God,
When your one joy is in all that leads you to God,
You will live in deepest peace.*

(Avisos 69)



John of the Cross, in recognizing the challenge of mixed motivations urges us to look for the purest motivations in our pursuit of the good.

If a man resolutely submits to the carrying of this cross, if he decidedly wants to find and endure trial in all things for God, he will discover in all of them great relief and sweetness. A man makes progress only through imitation of Christ, who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. No one goes to the Father but through him. This way is nothing other than a death to our natural selves.

(The Ascent of Mount Carmel. II:7:5)



Th  r  se of the Child Jesus dealt with very small situations that had universal significance. Her interest in the fate of Pranzini, the convicted murderer was a sign of her desire that no one should be lost. She responded in love to the sister who was difficult to love:

It cost me very much to offer myself for this little service because I knew it was not easy to please Sister St. Pierre. She was suffering very much and she did not like it when her helpers were changed. However, I did not want to lose such a beautiful opportunity for exercising charity remembering the words of Jesus: Whatever you do to the least of these you do it to me.

(Story of a Soul, Man. C, Chap.XI)



Titus Brandsma faced the most difficult of all situations by relying on his faith in the closeness of God:

Dear Lord, when looking up to thee, I see thy loving eyes on me; Love overflows my humble heart, knowing what faithful friend thou art. A cup of sorrow I foresee, which I accept for love of thee. Thy painful way I wish to go, the only way to God I know. My soul is full of peace and light: Although in pain, this light shines bright, for here thou keepest to thy breast my longing heart, to find there rest. Leave me here freely all alone, in cell where never sunlight shone. Should no one ever speak to me, this golden silence makes me free. For though alone, I have no fear; Never were thou, O Lord, so near. See Jesus, please abide with me; My deepest peace I find in thee.

(Scheveningen Prison, February 1942)



The mission of the Carmelite NGO is to participate in creating a more peaceful, just and loving world as we minister to the needs of God's people. Our purpose is to care for the spiritual and human needs of the human family and the environment:

Finally, this way of being "in the midst of the people" is a sign and a prophetic witness of new relationships of fraternity and friendship among men and women everywhere. It is a prophetic message of justice and peace in society and among peoples. As an integral part of the Good News, this prophecy must be fulfilled through active commitment to the transformation of sinful systems and structures into grace-filled systems and structures. It is also an expression of "the choice to share in the lives of "the little ones" ("minores") of history, so that we may speak a word of hope and of salvation from their midst - more by our life than by our words."

This option flows naturally from our profession of poverty in a mendicant fraternity, and is in keeping with our allegiance to Christ Jesus, lived out also through allegiance to the poor and to those in whom the face of our Lord is reflected in a preferential way.

(Constitutions 24)



We all want to love and to act in love. John Soreth advises us to love wisely:

God is Wisdom, and he wants to be loved not only fervently, but also wisely; otherwise the spirit of error will easily take advantage of your enthusiasm. If you neglect this advice, that cunning enemy thereby has a most effective means of taking the love of God from your heart by making you progress carelessly and without discretion. There, may your love be strong and persevering, neither giving in to fears nor being worn out by labours.

(From the Exhortation on the Carmelite Rule by Blessed John Soreth)



ACTIONS TO ACCOMPANY OUR DAY OF PRAYER

- A period of fasting
- A period of fasting with a donation to help the poor
- Examine the ways you are violent in your speech, body language, and actions
- Pray each day the Prayer of St. Francis



PRAYER OF INTERCESSION

In unity and peace, let us pray to our Saviour:

On the peoples of the earth ...

Lord, have mercy.

Lord, have mercy.

On the peoples of the earth and those who govern them ...

Lord, have mercy.



Georges Rouault,
Christ aux Bras Levés
(Christ with Upraised Arms
- Benediction)
- Washington Theological
Union Art Collection

On all who are present at this prayer ...

Lord, have mercy.

On those who have done us good and on those who have offended us ...

Lord, have mercy.

On those who live in danger and on those who place people in danger ...

Lord, have mercy.

On those who count on our prayers in spite of our failures ...

Lord, have mercy.

So that all of us might be instruments of peace ...

Lord, have mercy.



PRAYER OF ST. FRANCIS

*Lord, make me an instrument of your peace,
Where there is hatred, let me sow love
Where there is injury, pardon,
Where there is sadness, joy,
Where there is doubt, faith,
And where there is despair, hope.
O divine master, grant that I may not so much seek
To be consoled, as to console,
To be understood, as to understand,
To be loved as to love
For it is in giving that we receive
It is in forgiving that we are pardoned
And it is in dying that we are born
to eternal life.*



PRAYER WITH SYMBOLS

(.....) **The Cross:**

It is by this kind of love that we are saved

(.....) **Water:**

It is in the fresh waters of baptism that we are washed clean and it is in the fresh waters of the earth that our thirst is quenched.

(.....) **A Candle:**

It is by the light of the Risen Lord that we emerge from darkness.

(.....) **A Basket of Food:**

It is by the fruits of the earth and the work of human hands that our children will eat.

(.....) **A Handshake:**

It is with the gentleness of a handshake that we accept those around us as our brothers and sisters, without distinction.

