

Vigil on debt - The time is now

This vigil focuses on debt, and is centred around the Lord's Prayer. It includes five sections of readings, quotes and responses.

Greeting and welcome

Introduction

Leader:

We gather here to celebrate the successes of the campaign against unpayable third world debt. We celebrate – because some children in Africa who used to miss out on education can now go to school. We celebrate – because some people who would have missed out on basic health care can now see a doctor. Worldwide campaigning on debt has made a difference.

But we also gather to reflect because there is still more to do. People who live in poverty are being kept there by both the unpayable debts of their country **and** unjust global trade rules. The time is now – we can make a difference.

So we gather to pray – for the gifts of courage and strength to go on campaigning on these issues and for the wisdom and clarity to speak out with conviction, with understanding and with compassion.

We have gathered together to keep vigil, to watch, to look anew at our world and to ponder deeply the part we have been called to play.

When Jesus was asked, how do we pray, he answered with these words:

Our Father, who art in heaven

Hallowed be thy name.

Thy Kingdom come.

Thy will be done, on earth

As it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread

And forgive us our trespasses,

As we forgive those who trespass against us.

Lead us not into temptation,

But deliver us from evil,

For thine is the Kingdom,

The power and the glory,

For ever and ever,

Amen.

Stage One

Leader: Let's say together the first ten words of the Lord's Prayer and then pause for a moment to feel those words in our hearts:

All: Our father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name.

Symbolic action

A flowering plant is placed on display as a symbol of creation. The person who places the flower says: "*Our Father, who art in heaven.*"

And all reply: Hallowed be thy name.

Reader:

The time is now!

"It is time to face the fact that our world now produces enough food to feed everyone but yet still a quarter of our children are so malnourished that their growth is stunted and six million under fives die each year, because of hunger."

John Madeley, Hungry for Trade

Leader: Jesus said: I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.

All: Amen

Hymn, song or music

Stage Two

Leader: Let us say together the next three words of the Lord's Prayer and then pause for a moment to feel those words in our hearts:

All: Thy kingdom come.

Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven

Leader: Let's listen now, to these words from Luke's Gospel, words that remind us of the mission of Jesus and help us to understand what we ourselves are called to do.

Reader

Luke 4, verses 17-19

Jesus stood up to read, and they handed him the scroll of the prophet Isaiah. Unrolling the scroll he found the place where it is written, "The spirit of the Lord is on me, for he has anointed me to bring good news to the afflicted. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to captives, sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim a year of favour from the Lord." He then rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the assistant and sat down.

Symbolic action

A globe is placed on display as a symbol of the universality and inclusiveness of the Kingdom of God. The person who places the globe says: "*Thy kingdom come.*"

All: Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.

Reader:

The time is now.

It is time to overcome the injustices of unpayable third world debt. Zambia's debt, despite all the rhetoric and promises made so far, is in fact increasing, not decreasing.

Reader:

The time is now.

“Solidarity” is a word whose roots lie in early nineteenth century France. It meant the solidarity of the French against such enemies as the English. We Christians aspire to an unimaginable solidarity that is not against anyone. It is not based on exclusion, of an “us” against “them”. The Kingdom is solidarity without exclusion, offering us an identity beyond our present understanding. Until the Kingdom, we are incomplete people. It is not only the poor, the powerless and the voiceless who lack full identity. We do, too, until we are one with them.

Timothy Radcliffe OP

Leader: Jesus said: “I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.”

All: Amen

Hymn, song or music

Stage Three

Leader:

Let us say together the next few words of the Lord’s Prayer and then pause for a moment to feel those words in our hearts:

All: Give us this day our daily bread.

Leader:

We will now listen to a reading from St Matthew’s Gospel.

Reader

Matthew 5:1-12

Seeing the crowds, Jesus went onto the mountain. And when he was seated, his disciples came to him. Then he began to speak. This is what he taught them: "How blessed are the poor in spirit, the kingdom of heaven is theirs. Blessed are the gentle: they shall have the earth as inheritance. Blessed are those who mourn, they shall be comforted. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for uprightness: they shall have their fill. Blessed are the merciful: they shall have mercy shown them. Blessed are the pure in heart: they shall see God. Blessed are the peacemakers: they shall be recognised as children of God. Blessed are those who are persecuted in the cause of uprightness, the kingdom of heaven is theirs. Blessed are you when people abuse you, and persecute you and speak all kinds of calumny against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward will be great in heaven; this is how they persecuted the prophets before you."

Symbolic action

Food is placed on display, including bread, rice and other staple foods from around the world. The person who places the food says: “*Give us this day our daily bread.*”

All: Give us this day our daily bread.

Reader 1:

The time is now.

“It is time to recognise that food is more than a commodity that is sold and bought”. Food is a unique and bonding resource that should be shared at every level: family, community, national and international.

Yet almost 800 million people are estimated to be chronically short of food. And for around 2,000 million others, living on the equivalent of less than two dollars a day, food shortages are common. The imperative of every man, woman and child – having enough food to eat – is a sentiment that unites people throughout the world. It is a deeply held religious, humanitarian and moral concern that is stressed in all the world’s major religions. “Give us today our daily bread’ is part of the prayer that is central to the Christian faith. Giving alms to the poor and fasting in Ramadan are central to Islam. The alleviation of suffering is a vital precept of Buddhism. In the Sikh religion, feeding people is seen as a religious duty. And it was a Hindu, Mahatma Gandhi, who reminded the world that a “starving man sees God only in a loaf of bread.”

John Madeley, Food for All, 2002

Reader 2:

The time is now.

“The hungry nations of the world cry out to the peoples blessed with abundance. And the Church, cut to the quick by this cry, asks each and every person to hear the pleas of his brothers and sisters and answer it lovingly.”

Pope Paul VI, Populorum Progressio

Reader 3:

The time *is* now. It is time to challenge policies and trade rules which have led to farmers growing cash crops which will be exported to countries such as ours, instead of those which would feed themselves and their families. It is time to live simply, so that others may simply live.

Leader:

Jesus said: “I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.”

All: Amen

Hymn, song or music

Stage Four

Leader:

Let us say together the next part of the Lord’s Prayer and then pause for a moment to feel those words in our hearts:

All:

And forgive us our trespasses

As we forgive those who trespass against us

Leader

We will hear some teaching on debt from the books of Leviticus and Deuteronomy.

Reader 1:

“If one of your countrymen becomes poor and is unable to support himself among you, help him... Do not take interest of any kind from him, but fear your God, so that your countryman may continue to live among you. You must not lend him money at interest or sell him food at a profit.”

Leviticus 25:35-37

Reader 2:

“When you make a loan of any kind to your neighbour, do not go into his house to get what he is offering as a pledge. Stay outside and let the man to whom you are making the loan bring the pledge to you. If the man is poor, do not go to sleep with his pledge in your possession. Return his cloak to him by sunset so that he may sleep in it.”

Deuteronomy 24:10-13

Symbolic action

A chain is presented to represent the chain of debt and added to the display. The person who places the chain says: “*Forgive us our trespasses*”

All: As we forgive those who trespass against us

Leader:

In some translations of the Gospels, the word “trespasses” is replaced by “debts”. Let us, in silence, ponder these words for a few moments. Do we ask for forgiveness of our sins, our trespasses, our debts, sincerely and often enough? Do we even acknowledge that we have something that we need to seek forgiveness for? Do we need to change the way we live, or the structures and systems that we live by?

Reader 1:

The time is now! Time to acknowledge that we all – still – have a part to play. It is time to remember the biblical principles of debt cancellation and do what we can to change sinful global systems.

Reader 2:

The time is now! It is time to act to free ourselves and other members of our global family from the systems that keep us all enslaved.

Leader:

Jesus said: “I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.”

All: Amen

Hymn, song or music

Stage Five

Leader:

We will say together the next few words of the Lord's Prayer and then pause for a moment to feel those words in our hearts:

Leader:

Lead us not into temptation
But deliver us from evil

All:

**Lead us not into temptation
But deliver us from evil**

Leader:

This reading from the Gospel of Matthew reminds us to choose our priorities in life carefully, and set our hearts on what is really important.

Reader:

Matthew 6:19 – 21, 24

"Do not store up treasures for yourselves on earth, where moth and woodworm destroy them and thieves can break in and steal. But store up treasures for yourselves in heaven, where neither moth nor woodworm destroys them and thieves cannot break in and steal. For wherever your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

No one can be the slave to two masters: he will either hate the first and love the second, or be attached to the first and despise the second. You cannot be the slave both of God and of money."

Symbolic action

A lighted candle is presented and added to display. The person who sets down the candle says: "*Lead us not into temptation*"

All: But deliver us from evil.

Leader:

Let's pause for a moment to consider what our greatest temptations are. (*Pause*). Whatever they are, they are probably fuelled by the consumerist society in which we live. Are we lured by designer labels or by expensive brand names? Or do we go out of our way to buy goods that are fairly traded, where we can be sure that the producers of those goods have been fairly treated?

Reader 1:

The time is now.

"People often wonder why, in a society that has everything going for it economically, there is so much self-boredom, fear and potential violence in relationships. May it not be that the heart is for love and meaning? Lesser blessings may absorb and fascinate us, but if we are treated as passive fodder for the consumer markets, where is the human heart going to be challenged or expanded? ... Riches lure us into a kingdom that is too small for the human heart."

Thomas Cullinan OSB, Turn the Tables, CAFOD 2003

Reader:

The time is now.

“In Scripture, prophecy was not disengaged criticism... It was rather a demand from God, usually an unwelcome and painful demand, to lay bare the truth of the present, to energise creative alternatives, to insist that God will fulfil his story and warn that he will not do as we expect.”

Thomas Cullinan OSB, Turn the Tables, CAFOD 2003

Leader:

It is time to embrace our global family, to seek creative alternatives and to celebrate the modern-day prophets who witness to truth.

You will be invited to add names of people who have inspired you, including local figures and campaigners.

Leader:

Let us pray together:

Living God,
We believe in a world made new,
Where mourning is turned into dancing,
And slaves are set free.
We believe in a world where all are heard
And rivers flow where each may drink,
A world where
The harvest becomes
A banquet for all.
God of all creation,
You have blessed us
With a world of beauty.
You have gifted us a place of plenty
Where no one stands outside
Your loving care.
Open our hearts and
Teach us your compassion.
Open our minds and
Grant us the courage
To stay true to your will.
Give us the strength
To cast off the shackles
that bind us
To wealth and possessions.
Guide us as we work for your kingdom,
Lead us and move us
to become a people
Clothed with joy.
Amen.

Leader:

For thine *is* the kingdom, the power and the glory, for ever and ever, Amen

All: For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory, for ever and ever, Amen.

Closing hymn, song or music. ©Linda Jones