

World AIDS Day Prayer Service 2008

Introduction

Every eleven seconds: Somewhere in our world a person dies of AIDS-related causes every eleven seconds.

AIDS is the greatest threat to human health that the world has ever known. In addition to the physical suffering it causes, it burdens its victims with great stigma. It often robs them of family, social networks, and ways to make a living. It makes orphans of innocent children. It disproportionately affects the poorest and most vulnerable people. And somewhere in our world, a person dies of AIDS-related causes every eleven seconds. Every eleven seconds...

Despite the promises of world leaders to provide services to curb the rates of infection and bring down the death rates, the spread of HIV/AIDS is quickening. Leadership borne of compassion and solidarity is needed, now more than ever, to address this global pandemic.

In democratic societies, we need to hold our leaders accountable. Promises made must be promises kept. In communities of faith, we must call for compassionate action, and be witnesses to compassion in our own lives. Our brothers and sisters with HIV/AIDS are counting on us for leadership, solidarity and support.

On World AIDS Day, we recommit ourselves to pray for those who are living with and dying from HIV/AIDS. We recommit ourselves to be leaders who advocate for their rights and respond with compassion to their needs. These are the demands of solidarity that we wholeheartedly embrace, because every eleven seconds...somewhere in our world, a person dies of AIDS-related causes.

Every eleven seconds...

Call to Prayer

God of Compassion, you are with us here and with all who are infected or affected by HIV/AIDS. You beckon us to be with the lonely, to touch and heal those who suffer. Stay with us and strengthen us so we may learn to live with passion and compassion.

Opening Song

Spirit of Life by Carolyn McDade or another appropriate song.

World AIDS Day
December 1



**Stop AIDS.
Keep the Promise.**



Photo credit: Mike DuBoise UMMS

1st Reading

Mark 14:3-9

While Jesus was in Bethany reclining at table in the house of Simon, who was afflicted with leprosy, a woman entered carrying an alabaster jar of perfume made from expensive aromatic nard. After breaking the jar, she began to pour the perfume on his head.

Some said to themselves indignantly, "What is the point of this extravagant waste of perfume? It could have been sold for over three hundred silver pieces, and the money given to those in need." They were infuriated with her.

But Jesus said, "Let her alone. Why do you criticize her? She has done me a kindness. You will always have poor people among you, but you will not always have me. She has done what she could. She has anointed my body and is preparing it for burial. The truth is, wherever the Good News is proclaimed throughout the world, what she has done will be told in her memory."

(Translation from *The Inclusive New Testament*)

Silent Reflection

2nd Reading

A Letter to a friend with AIDS

Dear Edward,

There were no easy good-byes when I left Atlanta. But it was especially hard leaving you the last time we visited, especially difficult walking out of your hospital room filled with all the flowers and pictures and other gifts from people who love you and who wish they could give you more. It was hard to hug you that last time while wondering how many more chances we'll have to do that. I know how strong you are - and I don't mean the kind of strength that people refer to when they say, in awed tones, "You're so *strong*" to people they perceive to be battling valiantly in the face of great adversity. I think that can be so distancing. It requires the other person to be so independent, so perfect, so superhuman. In you, I see strength in your connectedness, both within yourself and with others in your large and incredible community of friends. I see strength in your passion -for your music, your friends, your play, for the things and people you care about. I see strength in your creativity - your desire to write and paint and give shape to what is within you. I see strength in your willingness to let others share this journey with you - knowing that we can't quite feel your pain the same way you do or take it away but wanting to hold you and be held by you in the process. Marge Piercy writes about strength as something that is not intrinsic in us but rather moves us as one moves a sail. I have seen strength move you.

You live strongly. You love strongly. You create strongly. You touch strongly. And I pray that the strength that moves you and those you touch may sustain you in these days.

When I heard your voice yesterday, I ached over the distance between us. You - and Ray too - were significant in making Atlanta home for me, and I miss being at home

with you, at least at a closer range! Your voice prompted an overwhelming longing for home - for the chance to touch the faces of my family there.

In working on my book lately, I've been living with the woman who anoints Jesus' head. I'm struck by the power of her gift, by the way she touches beyond the borders that her society considers acceptable, by Jesus' receptivity to her - how he allows himself to be cared for (strength moves him too!). And I wish I had an oil that would heal you, would prepare you for the days to come. I wish I were close enough to touch you, to hold you, to share a meal with you. I wish that, like the woman who touched Jesus, I had something powerful and precious to give you. And I pray that somewhere in these words may be found a bit of oil to heal some wounds, and that somewhere in our connectedness lies a touch that spans the present distance.

I love you, Edward.
Jan L. Richardson

Sacred Journeys: A Woman's Book of Daily Prayer,
Jan L. Richardson, Upper Room Books.

Silent Reflection

Intercessions Our response to the intercessions is
Bless us with compassionate hearts.

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

Bless us with compassionate hearts.

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

Bless us with compassionate hearts.

God of the orphan, in our world there are many children whose parents have died of AIDS. Help us to create a global village that will lovingly embrace these children and give them the gift of hope in a secure future. We pray...



Bless us with compassionate hearts.

God of justice, our nation has the ability to lead efforts that will slow the spread of global HIV/AIDS. Strengthen our call for a U.S. response that is immediate and generous. We pray...

Bless us with compassionate hearts.

God of our inmost hurts and heartbreaks, AIDS reaches us wherever we live. Be with us as we call to mind the people we have loved, known and encountered who have died from AIDS (pray for them by name or in silence). We also remember all people everywhere who are living with HIV/AIDS, and their caregivers, families and friends. We pray...

Bless us with compassionate hearts.

Please add your own intentions....

Bless us with compassionate hearts.

*(Intercessions adapted from Responding to Global HIV/AIDS:
The Picture of Compassion from Catholic Relief Services.)*

Closing Prayer

God of all compassion, comfort your sons and daughters who live with HIV/AIDS.
Spread over us all your quilt of mercy, love and peace.

Open our eyes to your presence reflected in their faces.
Open our ears to your truth echoing in their hearts.

Give us the compassion to weep with the grieving, to walk with the lonely, to stand with the depressed.

May our love mirror your love for those who live in fear,
who live under stress and who suffer rejection.

Mothering, fathering God, grant rest to those who have died
and hope to all who live with HIV/AIDS.

God of life, help us to find the cure now and help us to build a world in which no one dies
alone and where everyone lives accepted, wanted and loved.

*(Adapted from the Maryknoll AIDS Task Force Prayer, provided by the
Maryknoll Sisters of the San Salvador Diocesan HIV/AIDS programme.)*

Closing Song *Passionate God* by Colleen Fulmer, or another appropriate song.

Suggested Follow-up Actions

Get involved! Sign the Stop AIDS Leadership Pledge at <http://worldaidscampaign.org/en/Get-Involved/Stop-AIDS-Leadership-Pledge2/Stop-AIDS-Leadership-Pledge>

Take time each day during Advent to reflect, with Christians from around the world, on the pain, hope and love made starkly visible in the HIV/AIDS pandemic using the *Keep The Promise Advent Calendar*. http://www.e-alliance.ch/hivaids_adventcal.jsp



Recommended actions from IHM Resources, read: [World AIDS Day Packet](#).