

Women Martyrs (Article 92)

Edward F. Gabriele

Lives Given in Love

Lay missionary Jean Donovan, Maryknoll sisters Ita Ford and Maura Clark, and Ursuline sister Dorothy Kazel--the names of these women and their brutal martyrdom are etched into the heart of believers. These missionaries in El Salvador worked among the poorest of people, touching the lives of the poor with the peace that can only spring from faith in Jesus. For their efforts, they were raped and murdered. The age of martyrs has not ended. These women lost their lives because they sought, like Jesus, to heal, to teach the Good News, and to free the captive. The forces of evil cannot tolerate such goodness. As in the early church, memory of these witnesses has stirred others to take their place in the struggle for peace and justice.

MORNING

Call to Prayer

As the light of a new day enters our life, the spirit of God calls us to spread the Gospel. Each day we realize that our commitment in Christ demands that we set our hands to the plow of justice until that final day when the fullness of justice will flower. With Jean Donovan, Dorothy Kazel, Maura Clark, and Ita Ford, we pray for the coming of the day of peace that is heralded by our works for justice in this time and in all places where God's will takes us.

Praise

Foundation of every human hope,
in the original darkness of the abyss,
amid the pangs of your labor of love,
you gave birth to us in your image
to be a people of justice and peace.
This day, your brilliant Son of justice
spreads the light of the Gospel before our eyes,
that we might see again the wondrous vision of your love
and be moved in strength to deeds of mercy and
compassion.
You open our heart to see your poor
and bid us open our hands to feed them
with bread and dignity.
This day you draw us to love you in the poorest of all
and to feed one another as you have fed us.

Reading

There's one thing I know, that I'm supposed to be down here, right now. . . . You can contribute a lot and make a big difference in the world if you realize that the world you're talking about might be very small--maybe one person, or two people. And . . . if you can find a place to serve, you can be happy. (Jean Donovan)

Acclamations

With love we call to mind the witness of martyrs of every time and place. In the spirit of their generosity, we grasp the challenge of Gospel living on this day. In joy we pray: Honor, love, and praise be yours!

- We adore you, God, who has spread before us the Gospel feast of justice and peace for all people, as we pray . . .
- We are grateful for the vocation of mercy and compassion that is given to us in baptism, as we pray . . .
- We honor you, God, whose justice demands that we confront the forces of oppression and evil in every corner of human life, as we pray . . .
- We are filled with joy for the presence of the Spirit of wisdom, in whose birthing we are made bold for the service of others, as we pray . . .

Closing

O God of justice, with Maura Clark, Ita Ford, Dorothy Kazel, and Jean Donovan we celebrate the message

of the Gospel that sets free the captives of our world. Make us living witnesses to the freedom of Christ until that day when the blood of the martyrs will flower with the fullness of your peace. We ask this as all things through Jesus our Messiah forever and ever. Amen.

EVENING

Call to Prayer

As this day draws to a close, we join with the women martyrs of El Salvador to pray for the final scattering of the darkness of oppression in every corner of the world. In our midst is burning the lamp of justice, the living presence of Jesus Christ, who lights our pathways and leads us to serve only the Gospel of peace and justice. The light of Christ warms us with hope and strength to meet with hope the terrors of the night that threaten the poor and the lowly.

Thanksgiving

God of all compassion,
you walked in the garden
and sought out our parents even in their naked fear.
You never allow your people to be alone,
but stand close to us in the terrors of the night.
Jesus, your beloved, walked among us in our poverty,
embraced our fears,
and dispelled them in the glory of the Resurrection.
With the women martyrs of El Salvador,
and with your living witnesses,
Jesus continues to walk among us,
bringing the light of hope
where we are too often held in the darkness of oppression.
This night your Spirit moves among us once again
and beckons us deeper still to new deeds of justice and peace
until that final dawn,
when your truth and mercy shall bring to an end
all forms of despair and suffering.

Reading

Wherever the gift of healing and liberation in however partial a manner reaches the winterized or damaged earth, or peoples crushed by war and injustice, or individual persons weary, harmed, sick, or lost on life's journey, there the new creation in the Spirit is happening. (Elizabeth Johnson)

Intercessions

God's heart always opens to the cries of the poor. Just as Jesus walked among us to bring the mercy of God to the lowly, so too do we offer our needs to God, as we pray: Keep us mindful of your love.

- For all Christians, that our baptism into the ministry of Christ may consecrate us daily for the service of the poor, let us pray . . .
- For every nation, that governments and leaders may make the peace of the Gospel the foundation of every constitution, let us pray . . .
- For all those whose life of justice and peace is a living martyrdom for the raising up of the poor and the enslaved, let us pray . . .
- For the downtrodden and those who are oppressed, that the spirit of God and the work of our hands may set them free, let us pray . . .

Closing

Repeat morning's closing.

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