



PRAYER GATHERING for DECEMBER 5, 2020

Opening/ Introduction



"On the evening of December 2, 1980, Maryknoll Sisters Maura Clarke, Ita Ford, Ursuline Sister Dorothy Kazel, and Lay Missionary Jean Donovan were abducted, raped, and brutally murdered while returning from the airport in San Salvador. Each of the Churchwomen had made an intentional choice to remain in El Salvador despite the growing violence toward the economically poor and the Church.

Their murders were part of a growing number of violent attacks on the Catholic Church in response to its vocal advocacy for the poor and marginalized.

During the years that followed, Church leaders, ministers, and over 75,000 innocent civilians were killed during the country's violent civil war.

Maura, Ita, Dorothy, and Jean dedicated their lives to journeying with the children and families who had fallen victim to the escalating violence and oppression that eventually brought about the civil war."

Here are some of the thoughts and words of the women:

S. Ita Ford:



"I hope that you come to find that which gives life a deep meaning for you. Something worth living for – maybe even worth dying for ... something that enables you to keep moving ahead.

I can't tell you what it might be – that's for you to find, to choose, to love."

S. Maura Clarke:



"I don't know what tomorrow will bring. I am at peace here and searching — trying to learn what the Lord is asking. At this point, I would hope to be able to go on, God willing

This seems what he is asking of me at this moment."



S. Dorothy Kazel



In El Salvador since 1974, Dorothy was slated to return to the US in June 1980.

However, she did not want to leave and was granted an extension. But she was not without fear.

"Perhaps the murders of an Italian priest and two teenage boys from the parish were intended as a warning to leave"

Jean Donovan



Jean Donovan, the youngest of the four women, was engaged to be married.

She was weighing the pleas of those who loved her to return home to safety.

"But, she wrote, the Salvadoran children – the poor, bruised victims of this insanity ... they keep me here."

She wrote these thoughts two weeks before she died.

Reflection

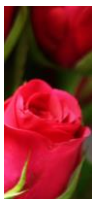
Mission > *Sacrifice,
Commitment to the poor,
Courage,
Hope.*

The memories of these four women call us to Incarnate the Love of God here and now ... so that the world may believe that no matter what the appearance, no matter what the powers of the world try to prove, Love always trumps fear.

The grain of wheat that is planted in the good ground of the love of God bears fruit that will last.

"Our Sisters were killed because they lived as the Gospel of Jesus directed them to live. Ita, Maura, Dorothy, and Jean were committed to the Gospel ... and thus gave their lives in love with and for the poor.

That and that alone is why they died."



Loving God, we have degraded your people and this precious earth you have given us.

And so we pray with this as our Response to the petitions:

➤ "God, make us people of love, people of peace, people of hope"



God, our Redeemer, our world is broken by injustice, fear, and lack of compassion for others among us.

For our sins, we pray:

➤ *God, make us people of love, people of peace, people of hope*

God, ever faithful, for the times we fall short from fear, despair, or lack of love...

For our sins, we pray:

➤ *God, make us people of love, people of peace, people of hope*

Loving God, free us from all the bonds of sin. Make us a free and hope-filled people sowing the seeds of your love and justice in the world.

And may we continue always to pray:

➤ *God, make us people of love, people of peace, people of hope...*

Across the world, communities remember Maura, Ita, Jean, and Dorothy.

We stand with these communities in lifting up the courage and commitment of these women.

Our prayer today is that their legacy can continue to inspire people across the world to be a people of solidarity who are willing to stand up against all injustices.

Closing piece:

"Gabriel's Oboe" by Ennio Morricone from "The Mission"