



Lent Fifth Week

Leader:

Preserve me, O God, I take refuge in you. I say to you, you are my God.
My happiness lies in you alone. Psalm 16

Song:

Your choice

Leader:

Lent calls us to discipleship. Lent calls us to follow Jesus and to make our own the values of the Gospel. When we take up the cross of Jesus, we must seek ways to free our sisters and brothers held in bondage. What can I do this Lenten season to bring hope to the lives of those who are oppressed and violated?

Siri's Story

In Thailand commercial sex industry is big business. Thousand of young girls are sold into slavery by their own parents. The parents often are told that their daughters will be employed in factories or in the homes of the wealthy as cooks or maids. One of the young girls in this situation is named Siri, who was sold into debt bondage at age 15. The very first night in her new place, Siri was shocked to learn that she would be required to have sex with at least 15 men each night. She felt a terrible soreness in her body. Her spirit was torn apart as she came to realize the dark future ahead of her. She prays daily to be spared of HIV. Adapted from *No Room at the Table*, Donald H. Dunson, Orbis Books

Psalm 16 (pray antiphonally)

Keep me, O God, for in you I take refuge;
I say to the Lord, "My Lord, are you.
Apart from you I have no good."

O Lord, my allotted portion and my cup,
You it is who hold fast my lot.
I set the Lord ever before me;
with him at my right hand I shall not be disturbed.

Because you will not abandon my soul to the nether world,
nor will you suffer your faithful one to undergo corruption.

You will show me the path of life,
fullness of joys in your presence,
the delights at your right hand forever.

Reflection:

How could this psalm bring hope to Siri?
How would you pray this psalm if you were Siri?
What efforts can we make during this Lenten season to bring hope to Siri and others in similar situations?

Pray together:

God, you call us to service and to continue your saving work on earth. May your love never abandon us and may we never abandon our sisters and brothers in their time of need. Convert our hearts and turn us to you.

Reading:

In the United States the gap between the rich and the poor continues to grow. More and more working people are feeling insecure economically. We are even seeing the return of sweatshop labor in U. S. industry. Itinerant farm workers and those who work for less than minimum wage struggle to survive.

Transnational corporations are increasing their profits and paying inordinate executive salaries. Large numbers of workers are being laid off. Small and medium sized businesses are being displaced. As consumers looking for inexpensive products, we ourselves may seem to benefit from this exploitation of our sisters and brothers.

As people of faith we must insist that the products we purchase not come from the hands of workers whose rights are violated and who are treated unfairly in the workplace. Adapted from *Economic Way of the Cross*

Psalm 43 (pray antiphonally)

Do me justice, O God,
and fight my fight against a faithless people.
From the deceitful and cunning rescue me, O God.

For you, O God, are my strength.
Why do you keep me so far away?
Why must I go about in mourning with the enemy oppressing me?

Send forth your light and your fidelity;
they shall lead me on and bring me to your mountain, to your dwelling place.

Reflection:

We are all harmed by injustice.
Can I, during this Lenten season, resolve to stand in solidarity with my brothers and sisters in oppressive work conditions by not purchasing products that come from the hands of coerced and degraded workers?
What will I do to be more aware of those conditions and to know which stores I should avoid?

Sharing:

Share in whatever manner you are comfortable.

Pray Together:

God of justice, revealed in a carpenter's son, we pray today for all who labor and for all who are charged with protecting their dignity. Forgive us, God, for our own unfair treatment of others and for benefiting from the oppression of other. We seek a renewed commitment, in our government and in our own hearts, to the rights of all workers and to the protection of international labor standards everywhere. We pray in the name of Jesus who always acted with justice and love. Amen. Adapted from *Economic Way of the Cross*