



LENT FIRST WEEK

Leader: “Come back to the Lord with all your heart; leave the past in ashes, and turn to God with tears and fasting, for He is slow to anger and ready to forgive.” (Joel 2:13)

Song: Select one according to the theme.

Leader: Lent places us at a crossroad and reminds us of the paradox of the Christian life. Jesus’ Passover was humility, suffering and death; but it was also light, glory and life. Lent is a test. We must choose.

Modern slavery, and in particular the trade in women and children for sexual exploitation, is a growing phenomenon. This trade is no longer restricted to Asia, Africa and South America but is also happening in Europe and in Ireland. The illegal nature of trafficking means that it is hard to quantify, but it is estimated that more than 300.000 women are trafficked from Eastern Europe for sexual exploitation each year.

Eva’s Story: Eva heard that there were opportunities for young women to work in Ireland as nannies. Eva lived in Eastern Europe. After the fall of communism she struggled to sustain her family. Her plan was to send money back home.

A recruitment agency provided her with the necessary papers and arranged for a male companion to look after her on the journey and to help her when she arrived in Ireland. She was taken to an apartment directly from the airport and her nightmare began. Her papers were taken from her. Her minder raped her and then made her have sex with his friends. She was not allowed out of the apartment and received no money. Luckily she managed to get the keys of the apartment while her minder was asleep.

Members of the Ruhama Women’s Project spotted her as she wandered the streets of Dublin and helped her out to change her life.

Silent Reflection

Psalm 71 (Verses 1,5,6,7)

In you, O God, I take refuge;
Let me never be put to shame!
In your justice deliver and rescue me;
Incline your ear and save me.

For you, O God, are my hope,
My trust, O God, from my youth.
Upon you I have leaned from my birth;
From my mother’s womb you claimed.

I have been a portent to many;
But you are my strong refuge.
My lips are filled with your praise,
With your glory all the day.

Reflection: After a few minutes of silent reflection, select some words from the Psalm which could express Eva's prayer.

Reading: Jesus Christ met His mother on his way to a painful death suffered in order to deliver human beings from the seductive and destructive powers of evil. Among these powers is the love of material wealth. Yet the global financial system managed by international Banks and financial markets is increasingly based on greed. Treated as the primary meaning of life in today's world, the constant quest for greater wealth is an idol.

The demands of global financial interests threaten to undermine labor standards, environmental protection, social spending, consumer protection and tax laws. More and more people are forced to walk a "via dolorosa" of unemployment, poverty and malnutrition. Globalized greed is directing resources away from basic needs like education and health. Women and children are disproportionately affected by these changes.¹

Reflection: Share your insights from the readings. In what way can you respond to the call for action?

Responsory:

Have mercy on me, O God, in your goodness. –Have...

In the greatness of your compassion, wipe out my offense; -O God...

Glory to the Father, to the Son and to the Holy Spirit...-Have...

Mary is standing beside us, and while holding us she tells us: "Imagine the Magnificat world; picture the heavenly banquet where the children are given good things to eat."

Pause

Together: Mary, Happy Queen of Heaven:
The poor raised up!

Lady of final victory:
The hungry fed.

Symbol of beauty before me.
Increase my faith.²

Final prayer: O God, we pray here today for new hearts and for a new financial system that is more accountable to democratic structures and to the Word of God. We mourn the heavy burden of discrimination and injustice that falls on your daughters throughout the world. We ask for a renewal of basic fairness and pray that the world's money will serve rather than undermine the common good. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

¹ The Economic Way of the Cross, P. 32. -The Religious Working on the World Bank and IMF-

² Mary, Mother of Sorrows, Mother of Defiance, P. 90. Peter Daino –Orbis Books