

Service Notes

List of items used in this service:

- *a Bible*
- *a cross*
- *a candle*
- *a blue cloth*
- *water in a vessel to pour*
- *a bowl to catch poured water*
- *shells (14 or more)*
- *sand*
- *a variety of smooth stones and sea glass*
- *sound or music evocative of water*

National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women

December 6 Service 2013

Written and distributed by the Women's Inter-Church Council of Canada



Heal Us, Strengthen Us and Renew Us

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National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women

Friday December 6, 2013

Introduction

Reader 1: Canada: from sea to sea to sea, vast in its images, vast in its resources - human and natural - unlimited in its power to sustain, forgive, to heal and to renew.

On this National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women, we wish to remember, in an ecumenical spirit, all the women who have died because of human brutality, remembering especially the 14 young women at l'Ecole Polytechnique in Montreal who were singled out for their gender and were murdered.

Sadly, we recall the tragedy of violence, pray for justice and search in faith for new hope in our ever changing world.

We turn our eyes to the sea as we yearn for this renewal - the sea, often turbulent, dangerous and destructive, but also calming, soothing and refreshing; the sea, capable of slowing us down so that we may see the extraordinary in the ordinary and discover the hidden treasures molded by adversity, strengthened by endurance and scattered along the shorelines of our lives. These treasures encourage us to ponder, reflect and renew our energies to create a more just and peaceful world where violence cannot rob us of our humanity.

Call to Prayer

(While this call to prayer is read, peaceful water-inspired background music is played. Water is poured slowly from a small pitcher into a pottery bowl.)

Reader 2: Be still within and without. Focus on the sacred space that you see before you. Notice the cross, bible and candle, symbols of our faith: the blue cloth symbol of the sea; water symbol of life, endurance and renewal; and the variety of shells, stones and glass polished by the water.

Centre yourself within God, the source of all life.

ples. You are nourished physically as well as spiritually. Jesus' example of humility shows us how we ought to treat victims and aggressors. By caring for others you affirm your faith in him. Through Jesus you will find ways to bring peace to individuals, the community and the world.

Today's message is a message of hope. By trusting in Jesus the disciples were successful in their fishing. Jesus' message to try something different invites us to step out in faith.

We will now observe a two minute silence in remembrance of the victims of violence.

After their encounter, Jesus said, "Come, follow me."

Closing Prayer

Reader 7: We remember God's presence as we pray. We pray to be sensitive, to recognize victims of violence in our communities. We pray to have the courage to take action; to create safe spaces; to maintain awareness; to teach children and youth alternatives to violence; to help organizations that help women and to monitor the media. We want to become active for peace and social justice. As we reflect on these images of the sea, we pray to be renewed and recommitted to ending violence against women.

Sharing of Peace

Reader 8: Let us pray:

Give us, O God, the courage to follow your Spirit which is not timid.

We now extend to each other the sign of peace.

CLOSING HYMN: *Where the Healing Waters Flow*

Words: Ina D. Ogdon Music: Peter P. Bilhorn
or another hymn

After these things Jesus showed himself again to the disciples by the Sea of Tiberias; and he showed himself in this way. Gathered there together were Simon Peter, Thomas called the Twin, Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two others of his disciples. Simon Peter said to them, "I am going fishing." They said to him, "We will go with you." They went out and got into the boat, but that night they caught nothing. Just after daybreak, Jesus stood on the beach; but the disciples did not know that it was Jesus. Jesus said to them, "Children, you have no fish, have you?" They answered him, "No." He said to them, "Cast the net to the right side of the boat, and you will find some." So they cast it, and now they were not able to haul it in because there were so many fish. That disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, "It is the Lord!" When Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he put on some clothes, for he was naked, and jumped into the sea. But the other disciples came in the boat, dragging the net full of fish, for they were not far from the land, only about a hundred yards off.

When they had gone ashore, they saw a charcoal fire there, with fish on it, and bread.

Reflection

We all know the story that when you put a conch shell to your ear you can hear the sound of the ocean. Imagine the sound of the ocean. I invite you to close your eyes and imagine that you are there on the boat with the disciples in the Sea of Tiberius. *(Pause.)* As day is breaking, you notice a man on the shore, his feet planted firmly in the sand.

The sound of the waves is soothing but they rock the boat beneath you. You are discouraged from pulling in an empty net all night. You do not recognize the man on the shore, but there is something compelling about him that makes you want to listen. The message he has for you is to try something different, to cast your net on the other side of the boat.

The man invites you to a meal. Just imagine your joy when you now open your eyes and you recognize Jesus. (This was the third time that Jesus appeared to the disciples after he was raised from the dead.) He serves you with humility, as he did when he washed the feet of the disci-

Reader 3: We gather together as people of God to remember all women who are affected by violence in their own homes and communities.

All: *Compassionate God, who feels our pain, help us to see into the hearts of others who are broken and hurting. Help us to reach out to them in unconditional love.*

Reader 4: *My Beautiful Shell*

(Inspired by My Beautiful Broken Shell - Words of Hope to Refresh the Soul by Carol Hamblet Adams)

I have come to the peace and calm of the seashore to refresh my spirit and refuel my tired soul. I walk to the beach and collect a few shells as I feel the sand beneath my toes. I walk by a broken shell, but decide to leave it, preferring instead to collect only the most perfect ones.

Then suddenly I stop. Spinning on the spot, I gently bend and lift the broken shell into my hand, realizing that this shell represents those whose souls and bodies are hurting, those who have lost loved ones, those who are frightened or alone, those who have unfulfilled dreams. This shell weathered the pounding surf, just as we weather turbulent times.

I now invite each of you to choose and hold a clam shell.

(Pause.)

Jesus, help us to see our own beauty like that of the shells and remind us that each beautiful line and color was put there by you. Help us to appreciate our shell collections each and every day.

These broken shells represent our pain, struggle and tears, but the shells also represent faith, courage and strength and this makes them beautiful. Their imperfect beauty reminds us of the constancy of our own resilience.

Thank you, Jesus, for bearing us out of our own crashing

surf and for giving us the courage to discover our own strength. Thank you, Jesus, for giving us guidance to find our way to shore. We are reminded that we depend on you in times of need.

Thank you, Jesus, for hope in times of despair, for patience in times of suffering.

Jesus, help us to be whole. May we allow ourselves to receive support and encouragement along the way. Let us remember to laugh and marvel at life. Help us reach out to those who are in need of help and encouragement. Help us to love them and to learn from them as well.

Thank you, Jesus, for embracing us as we are, for sending us caring loved ones and for holding us in the palm of your hand to keep us away from the crashing surf.

Petitions

Reader 5: We turn our eyes to the waters and pray to God that the soothing ocean will heal us, strengthen us and renew us.

Each voice will read the petition and place a shell on the sand. Additional spontaneous petitions and shells may be placed if desired.

Voice 1: This shell is to remember all the women, children, families and friends touched by violent outbursts in educational institutions around the world.

Response (All): God of Peace, heal us, strengthen us and renew us.

Voice 2: This shell is for women and youth trapped in the confines of human trafficking. **R.**

Voice 3: This shell is for those who are affected by war around the world, where freedom and life without fear of death and persecution is denied. **R.**

Voice 4: This shell is for our Aboriginal sisters who are missing or murdered, or have experienced deep trauma or violence. **R.**

Response (All): God of Peace, heal us, strengthen us and renew us.

Voice 5: This shell is for women who have experienced domestic violence. **R.**

Voice 6: This shell is for women immigrants who come seeking refuge from violence only to be re-exposed. **R.**

Voice 7: This shell is for women and children who have been forced to flee their homes for women's shelters, unsure of what the future may bring. **R.**

Voice 8: This shell is for role models - parents, family, friends and community members—that they may show a path toward peace and non-violent action. **R.**

Voice 9: This shell is for children who have suffered emotional abuse due to bullying in schools. **R.**

Voice 10: This shell is for those who have committed any act of violence that they may experience healing. **R.**

Voice 11: This shell is for women who have experienced loss through violence. **R.**

Voice 12: This shell is for women who suffer from the stigma of mental or physical illness. **R.**

Voice 13: This shell is for those in positions of authority, politicians, policy makers, teachers, parents and clergy. May they be instruments of change. **R.**

Voice 14: This shell is for educational and working institutions, that they may integrate peer mediation, conflict resolution and non-violent strategies into their lines of communication. **R.**

HYMN: *Jesus, You Have Come to the Lakeshore* by Cesareo Gabarain or another hymn.