



Reading the Bible and studying different passages can be eye-opening. Our idea and impression of the book is, I dare say, more conservative than what the book itself is. To bring the most extreme examples of the family into the genealogy, even if they are women, and even if they were wives of other

men, shows surprising tolerance and includes everyone.

Some scholars also suggest that this is the way Matthew shows how people marginalized because of their gender, reputation or race, are included in the Gospel. In fact they not only appear in the genealogy, but they are part of the divine plan aimed at salvation. Therefore Matthew's

gospel seems also to have other tendencies, further than trying to conserve the 'history.' It really involves all people, despite their race, gender or status, in Jesus' family. What can we, today's followers of the Christ, learn from this?

Suggested Reading

DE BEAUVOIR Simone, *The Second Sex*. London, 1972.

The Gospel according to Matthew.

FOUCAULT Michel, *The History of Sexuality I-III*. New York, 1986.

BIRD Phyllis, *Missing Persons and Mistaken Identities. Women and Gender in Ancient Israel*. Minneapolis, 1997.

ARCHER Léonie, *Her Price Is Beyond Rubies. Jewish Women in Greco-Roman Palestine*. Sheffield, 1990.

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Facing God – Facing One Another

This liturgy is adapted from the closing worship of the WSCF conference in Vilnius in April 2005. The theme of the conference was Respecting Human Dignity and Integrity - Theological and Gender Perspectives on Human Rights, with a focus on trafficking. This theme is reflected in the liturgy, recognising each other as dignified beings created in God's image and reflecting on the suffering of Trafficked women and children and praying for them.

LEADER 1 We gather in the name of God, the Creator, the Liberator and the Sustainer.

ALL Amen.

LEADER 2 As we come before God in worship we bring all that we are and all the concerns of our hearts. In this time we come before our loving God with the victims of trafficking on our minds, realising that their mistreatment is a violation of God's image. Remembering that all women and men are created equally in the image of God, let us affirm the image of God in each other.

CHANT *Veni Creator Spiritus*

(Sung 3 times through; then hummed as each person in turn repeats the following, addressing it to the assembled group)

ALL God created humankind. They were created, male and female, in the image of God

LEADER 1

Creator God, you created us in your image
Created us equal, dignified beings
You weep at your people in pain
And despair at the violation of your people

1st READING 2 Samuel 15:1-20

LEADER 1

Creator God, you created us in your image
Created us equal, dignified beings
Created us as your representatives
Created us with responsibilities

2nd READING Matthew 25: 41-45

SONG Suggestion: "Enemy of Apathy"

LEADER 2 Let us pray:

As they face this day, O God,
Find those who are lost, separated from those they love, crossing unknown borders, a long way from

home, not knowing where to turn.

ALL Find them, God who always seeks for the lost, and cover them safely as a hen covers her chickens.

LEADER 1 As they face this day, O God, Be with the victims of trafficking, in the hunger and the despair, in the crowds and in the emptiness, in the violence and the rape.

ALL Be their hope and their strength in crying out and breaking free and open the ears of the world to hear their cries.

LEADER 2 As they face this day, O God, Give them hope of a future, where they are respected, where their gifts and graces are celebrated and where they have no need to live in fear.

ALL Give us the courage to speak out for the victims of trafficking, to use our gifts and graces to bring an end to their oppression.

LEADER 1 As we face this day, O God, Help us to see all your people as being in your image and as our sisters and brothers and let us then cry out with Dinah's brothers: "Why should our sister be treated like a prostitute?"

We pray this in the name of Jesus Christ who counted victims of prostitution among his friends and respected them.(1)

ALL Amen

SONG Suggestion: "Here I Am" (I the Lord of Sea and Sky)

LEADER 2 All these with one accord were devoting themselves to prayer, together with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and his brothers.

LEADER 1 Go forth into the world in peace; be of good courage; hold fast that which is good; render to no one evil for evil; strengthen the faint-hearted; support the weak; help the afflicted; honour everyone and love and serve the Lord. (2)

(1) Adapted from Share Together by Christian Conference Asia, Hong Kong, Uniting Church in Australia, in DUNCAN Geoffrey (ed.), *Wisdom is Calling*. Norwich, 1999, pp. 219-220.

(2) From *Common Worship Further Blessings*, number 15.

<http://cofe.anglican.org/worship/liturgy/commonworship/texts/hc/presed/furtherblessings.html>

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