

‘May Their Voices Never Be Silenced’:

The Spirit of Central Europe Sixty Years After Shoa

(Opening Worship, Lublin, 22 March 2006)

I. Call to Worship

Blessed be our God always, now and for ever, and unto ages of ages.

Reader 1: It was Elie WIESEL, a survivor of a Nazi concentration camp, who said, “The SS hung two Jewish men and a boy before the assembled inhabitants of the camp. The men died quickly but the death of the boy lasted half an hour. ‘Where is God?’ a man behind me asked. And I heard a voice within me answer, ‘Here is God—God is hanging here on this gallows.’”

(Light candle as the next person reads.)

Reader 2: It was Anna FRANK, a victim of the Nazis, who said, “It is really a wonder that I have not dropped all my ideals, because they seem so absurd and impossible to carry out. Yet I keep them, because in spite of everything, I still believe that people really are good at heart. I simply cannot build up my hopes on a foundation consisting of confusion, misery, and death.”

(Light candle as the next person reads.)

Reader 3: It was Corrie TEN BOOM, a Christian imprisoned by the Nazis for rescuing Jews, who said, “I discovered that it is not on our forgiveness any more than our goodness that the world’s healing hinges, but on God’s. When Jesus Christ tells us to love our enemies, he gives, along with the command, the love itself.”



(Light candle as the next person reads.)

Reader 4: It was Pastor Martin NIEMÖLLER, a victim of the Nazis, who said: “First they came for the Communists. And I did not speak out because I was not a Communist. Then they came for the Socialists. And I did not speak out because I was not a Socialist. Then they came for the trade unionists. And I did not speak out because I was not a trade unionist. Then they came for the Jews. And I did not speak out because I was not a Jew. Then they came for me, and there was no one left to speak out for me.”

(Light candle as the next person reads.)

Reader 5: It was on the wall of a cellar in Köln where Jews were hidden that these words were written: “I believe in the sun even when it is not shining. I believe in love even when I do not feel it. I believe in God even when God is silent.”

(Light candle as the next person reads.)

Reader 6: As we remember and pray, hope and believe, wait, and listen, and sing, and renew, may the God of justice and peace be present with us. Come, let us worship our God!

(Light candle in silence.)

II. Act of Praise (Psalm 46)

*God is our refuge and strength,
an ever-present help in trouble.
Therefore we will not fear, though the Earth gives way
and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea,
though its waters roar and foam
and the mountains quake with their surging.
There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God,
the holy place where the Most High dwells.
God is within her, she will not fall;
God will help her at break of day.
Nations are in uproar, kingdoms fall;
God lifts God's voice, the Earth melts.
The Lord Almighty is with us;
the God of Jacob is our fortress.
Come and see the works of the Lord,
the desolations the Lord has brought on the Earth.
God makes wars cease to the ends of the Earth;
God breaks the bow and shatters the spear,
God burns the shields with fire.
"Be still, and know that I am God;
I will be exalted among the nations,
I will be exalted in the Earth."
The Lord Almighty is with us;
the God of Jacob is our fortress.*

III. Confession

What shall we say in Your presence, You who dwell on high? What shall we declare to You, who are in Heaven beyond? For You know things secret as well as revealed. You know the mysteries of the universe and the unconscious thoughts of everyone alive. You search the innermost parts, You watch our motives and our passions. Nothing is concealed from You. Nothing is hidden from Your gaze.

For sins which we ourselves have committed and for sins of omission, for sins of our hands and sins of our hearts, for the hurt we have caused you and our neighbours through ignorance or indifference, O God of Abraham, Have mercy on us.

For failure to see your image in someone who is different, O God of Sarah, Have mercy on us.

For putting our own welfare and social comfort above the basic needs of others, O God of Jacob, Have mercy on us.

For our reluctance to get involved, O God of Rachel, Have mercy on us.

For being grateful that we are in some way superior to another, O God of Leah, Have mercy on us.

For teaching that it is better to receive than to give, O God of Sinai, Have mercy on us.

For the failure of your Church to be light in the darkness, O God of Calvary, Have mercy on us. Amen.

IV. Promise of Forgiveness

(Lamentations 3,22–24 and Amos 5,23–24)

Because of the Lord's great love we are not consumed, for the Lord's compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness. I say to myself, "The Lord is my portion; therefore I will wait for the Lord."

God spoke through the prophet Amos: Take away from me the noise of your songs; to the melody of your harps I will not listen. But let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.

V. Confession of Faith

*We believe in God the Creator,
Whose goodness shows through all creation
with beauty and truth,
Whose patience and generosity exceed all human
expectation,
and Whose glory neither Earth nor the Heavens can contain.
We believe in Christ Jesus, the true Child of God,*

*Who came with a disruption that shook the powers of evil,
though it cost Him his life;
Who from beyond death comes again
to gather His disciples into a community of the free;
Who refused to be intimidated by threats,
or waylaid by any religion.
We believe in the Holy Spirit,
the source and sustainer of abundant life,
Who from the very beginning flows from God,
enhancing the gifts of the Church
in the service of humanity.
We believe in the Church as the universal body of Christ,
in the forgiven people as the sharers of Christ's peace,
in the timeless, mystic fellowship of all God's people,
and in the life that transcends all sorrow and death.*

VI. Illumination (Micah 7,1–7)

What misery is mine! I am like one who gathers summer fruit at the gleaning of the vineyard; there is no cluster of grapes to eat, none of the early figs that I crave.

The godly have been swept from the land; not one upright man remains. All men lie in wait to shed blood; each hunts his brother with a net.

Both hands are skilled in doing evil; the ruler demands gifts, the judge accepts bribes, the powerful dictate what they desire—they all conspire together.

The best of them is like a brier, the most upright worse than a thorn hedge. The day of your watchmen has come, the day God visits you. Now is the time of their confusion.

Do not trust a neighbour; put no confidence in a friend. Even with her who lies in your embrace be careful of your words.

For a son dishonours his father, a daughter rises up against her mother, a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law—a man's enemies are the members of his own household.

But as for me, I watch in hope for the Lord, I wait for God my Saviour; my God will hear me.

VII. Accepting Suffering with Love (BUBER Martin: Tales of the Hasidim)

A teacher called Rabbi SHMELKE and his brother went to visit a respected holy man and wise teacher and asked him, "Our sages said certain words which disturb us, because we do not understand them. They are that people should praise and thank God for suffering just as much as for well-being, and receive it with the same joy. Will you tell us how we are to understand this, teacher?"

The man replied, "Go to the House of Study. There you will find Rabbi ZUSYA smoking his pipe. He will give you the explanation." So they went to the House of Study and asked Rabbi ZUSYA their question. He laughed. "You have hardly come to the right man! Better go and ask someone else, for I have never experienced suffering."

But the two knew that from the day he had been born right up to that very day, Rabbi ZUSYA's life had been a web of need and anguish. Then they knew what it was: to accept suffering with love.

VIII. Intercession

Let us pray for God's ancient people, the Jews, the first to hear God's word—for greater understanding between Christian and Jew, for the removal of our blindness and bitterness of heart, that God will grant us grace to be faithful to God's covenant and to grow in the love of God's name. O Lord, Hear My Prayer!

Lord, remember not only the women and men of goodwill, but also those of ill will. Do not remember all the sufferings they have inflicted upon us; remember the fruits we bear, thanks to this suffering—our comradeship, our loyalty, our humanity, courage, generosity, the greatness of heart, which has grown out of all this. And when they come to judgement, let all the fruits that we have borne be their forgiveness. O Lord, Hear My Prayer!

Eternal Ruler, we thank you for those 'righteous among the nations' who risked their lives, and sometimes gave them up to demonstrate that your love is boundless, active, regenerative; that you care for all

people regardless of who or what we are. We thank you for those who found your image in all humankind. O Lord, Hear My Prayer!

As Christians, we say together the words of the prayer which Jesus of Nazareth taught us: Our Father ...

IX. Dedication (Prayer of Saint Francis of Assisi)

Lord, make us instruments of Thy peace.
Where there is hatred, let us sow love;
Where there is injury, pardon;
Where discord, union;
Where there is doubt, sow faith;
Where despair and darkness, sow hope and light;
Where there is sadness, sow joy!
For Thy mercy and Thy truth's sake. Amen.

X. Blessing (Kaddish)

Magnified and sanctified be God's great name in the world which is created according to God's will. May the Reign of God be established in our life and in our days, and that of all the house of Israel, swiftly and soon. And let us say: Amen.

May God's great name be blessed for ever and ever. Blessed and praised and glorified, exalted and honoured, magnified and lauded be the name of the Holy One, Blessed be God, though high above all blessings, all hymns and psalms which we can utter. And let us say: Amen.

Let there be abundant peace from Heaven for us and for all the people of Israel. And let us say: Amen.

May God who creates shalom—peace and wholeness—in the universe, create peace for all humankind and for all Israel. And let us say: Amen.

Sources of Prayers

GUESS J. Bennett, *Our God on the Gallows*. Cleveland, 2002.

Forms of Prayer for Jewish Worship, RSGB.

Creating Christian Liturgies for Holocaust Memorial Day. London, 2005.

Adaptation of the Apostles' Creed by the Living Faith Lutheran Church.

Church of England: Lent, Holy Week and Easter Services and Prayers.