

In A Time of Community Distress



(Based on Psalm 102)

Leader: We gather to pray for understanding, peace and justice in our communities. We see fear, racism and violence in our souls and in our communities. But in a dark time, we choose hope, calling on our God to send us mercy, as He sent manna to those lost in the wilderness.

Reader One: From Psalm 102, we pray: "Lord hear my prayer, let my cry come to you. Do not hide your face from me in the day of my distress."

Reader Two: "My days vanish like smoke. . . My heart is withered, dried up. . . all day long my enemies taunt me; in their rage, they make my name a curse."

Reader Three: "My days are like a lengthening shadow, I wither like the grass."

Leader: Let us pray that mercy rains down on all of us.

Reader Four: We pray that all in our communities recognize the value of every human life and the dignity of every individual.

All: Rain down your mercy, O Lord, and hear us in our time of distress.

Reader Five: We pray that we may all take the time to understand and reflect on the roots of the fear, distrust and violence in our land.

All: Rain down your mercy, O Lord, and hear us in our time of distress.

Reader Six: We pray that you give us the grace to move beyond our fear and misunderstanding to a more informed and insightful awareness of the differences in our communities.

All: Rain down your mercy, O Lord, and hear us in our time of distress.

PRAYER SERVICE

Reader Five: We pray that we all gain a deeper sense of Your compassionate sense of justice.

All: Rain down your mercy, O Lord, and hear us in our time of distress.

Reader Six: We pray that with your help we can form new bonds of community.

Leader: May your mercy come upon us, O Lord, as we mourn for those who have been lost to violence and as we struggle to comprehend the tragedies we see in so many communities. We grieve for those who are lost in fear and cannot see You in every human being. May we hold to the hope that, with your grace, through pain and struggle, we can create more just and peaceful communities.

All: In spirit and words of Psalm 102 we pray:
You will again show mercy to Zion;
Now is the time for pity;
The appointed time has come.
The Lord will heed the lowly,
And not scorn their prayer.
May the children of your servants live on;
May their descendants live
In your presence and your peace.



Leader: Let us say Amen and go to live out the challenge we are given in these days, trusting the mercy of God will be upon us all.

All: Amen.

Love Thy Neighbor As Thyself
Committee of African American Catholics of the
U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2001

One cannot talk about the race problem in America without economics. Poverty and racism are closely related issues in this country because opportunity is divided between White and Black in America. And Catholics, like others, still choose to flee the city for reasons of security and the good life. Problems resulting from poverty are profound and these tend to register alarm and indifference to the agonies of the minorities left behind.

The Church remains a principal source of healing and hope for people with the race issue. We continue to need from the church prophets and agents of reconciliation, individuals and groups, laity and clergy who make it their responsibility to bring people together despite stubborn differences and the conflicts that seem to guarantee walls of separation. This task has been the heart of the Christian mission in our society. Issues of race are the most urgent business of Church today to aid in annihilating stereotypes and nurturing mutual respect. Ultimately, our Christian faith is about building bridges, not walls.