

Dalit Liberation Sunday

12 November 2017

RELIGIOUS FREEDOM OF DALITS



NATIONAL COUNCIL OF CHURCHES IN INDIA

Dalit and Tribal / Adivasi Concerns

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NATIONAL COUNCIL OF CHURCHES IN INDIA
Dalit and Tribal / Adivasi Concerns



CATHOLIC BISHOPS CONFERENCE OF INDIA
Office for SC / BC

Respected Ecumenical Leaders,

Warm greetings from National Council of Churches in India!

Dalit Liberation Sunday has become an important feature in the calendar of Indian Churches and Ecumenical movements. Over the years, there has been a positive response in sensitizing the local congregations towards concerns of Dalits, for no longer caste issue is visualized as a sociological issue or an issue outside the purview of church but more seen as an issue challenging the core of our faith and gospel. Dalit Liberation Sunday is a joint programme of National Council of Churches in India (NCCI) and Catholic Bishop's Conference of India (CBCI), aiming at the empowerment of the local congregations for Dalit liberation. Dalit Liberation Sunday is observed by the member churches of NCCI and the churches under CBCI in their local congregations across India.

The theme for this year's Dalit Liberation Sunday is "Religious Freedom of Dalits". We take this opportunity to invite you to observe Dalit Liberation Sunday on 12th November 2017 in your church/local parish/institution in a creative way and rededicate our commitment to the Gospel by accompanying the unaccompanied. However, if you already have some programme on 12 November 2017, you may think of celebrating this Special day on later Sundays. Herewith we are sending you hard copies of posters and a special order of worship for the day. You may take the freedom to use the entire worship order and translate it in your vernacular language or adapt parts of it.

We would appreciate if you send a brief report along with a few photographs of the observance to the undersigned.

Thanking you in anticipation.

With regards,

In Christ,



Pradip Bansrior

Executive Secretary

Dalit and Tribal/ Adivasi Concerns, NCCI

FOREWORD

As Christians, every Sunday is a special day because it is the Lord's Day. It affirms our faith that Jesus Christ, who was crucified and buried, rose again from the grave. The Lord's Day asserts that Jesus has overcome the forces of evil and death. Evil stands for the injustice of all systems and structures - social, economic, technological, cultural and religious, as well as of individual views and ways of life. Death represents all the discrimination, exploitation, oppression and murder that innocent, the weak, the marginalized and the just suffer, because of those systems, structures and life-styles. The resurrection proclaims that neither death, nor any structure, system or individual can destroy God's vision and mission of bringing in a world of justice, love and peace, of the realization of the reign of God.

However as we gather as Christian Communities, it is urgent that we focus on concerns of injustice and powers and principalities of evil against whom we as Christians have to stand up. It constitutes an essential part of our worship: bringing our intercessions before God for those who are survivors and victims of structural, symbolic and physical-psychological violence, as well as committing ourselves to the values and principles of the reign of God. It is therefore important that we address the problems of our Dalit brothers and sisters by observing Dalit Liberation Sunday. The theme for this year's Dalit Liberation Sunday is "Religious Freedom of Dalits."

One crucial element in observing Dalit Liberation Sunday is identification with our Dalit brothers and sisters. The liturgy expresses the sufferings, the frustrations, the struggles, the perseverance and hope of our Dalit kindred. Unless we identify with and express our solidarity with them, this liturgy would become a mere superficial Sunday worship routine. For our dalit brothers and sisters, this liturgy expresses dependence upon God and the worshipping community for "com-passion" and liberation. One specific concern for Dalits is religious freedom.

One is well aware that the very year when India officially got its new constitution, the Presidential Order of August 10, 1950 declared that only Hindu Dalits would be eligible for affirmative action. Subsequently Sikh and Buddhist Dalits were also granted affirmative action benefits. Therefore it is now primarily Muslim and Christian Dalits who are debarred from receiving such rights. In the background of the ghar wapsi (home return) campaign of Hindu fundamentalists, Christian and Muslim Dalits are told that if you want to enjoy such rights, you have to give up 'foreign' religious faiths and turn to Hinduism, which they claim is the original religious home of Dalits. "How can we sing the Lord's Song in such an oppressive land?" is the lament of Christian and Muslim Dalits.

May this liturgy on Dalit Liberation Sunday lead us to affirm and strengthen the religious freedom of Dalits!

Rev. Dr. Roger Gaikwad
General Secretary
National Council of Churches in India

INTRODUCTION

"We are Christians in faith and we are Indian in citizenship and we are Hindus in culture"

- Fr. Ignatius

India has always been a democratic, secular, and plural country. However, in recent years, religious minorities have witnessed a deterioration of their rights. Many Christians in India suffer under attacks, violence and discrimination of their rights of religious freedom. The report states that religious minority communities and Dalits face not only discrimination but also persecution in India where hate crimes, social boycotts and forced conversions have escalated dramatically since 2014. The Indian government, at both the national and state levels-often ignores its constitutional commitments to protect the rights of religious minorities. National and state laws are used to violate the religious freedom of minority communities; however, very little is known about the laws. Violence against religious minorities, discrimination, and forced conversions with increased instances of harassment and intimidation of religious minorities are not new phenomena in India, as they have occurred under both the Congress Party and Bharatiya Janta Party governments. The victory of India's right-wing BJP in May 2014, concerns have been mounting about the fate of religious minorities in India. As feared by many faith communities across India, desecrations of places of worship, assaults, and forced conversions led by radical Hindu nationalist movements have escalated dramatically under the BJP led government. India faces serious challenges to both its pluralistic traditions and its religious minorities.

The Indian Supreme Court judgment, in which it was written: "If a person purposely undertakes the conversion of another person to his religion, as distinguished from his effort to transmit or spread the tenets of his religion, that would impinge on the 'freedom of conscience' guaranteed to all the citizens of the country alike". It

allows state governments to determine which conversions are valid, and which are not, and in this regard it is the Hindu majority which receives clear preferential treatment. Ironically the laws are not enforced when the religious minorities are converted to Hinduism, which instead is interpreted as reconversion, taking place in Ghar-Wapsi or “homecoming” ceremonies. Meanwhile, although discrimination due to caste is prohibited in the constitution, the caste system, which is discriminatory at its root, remains, as a “fundamental part of Hinduism”. Dalits face discrimination and persecution due to a combination of overly broad or ill-defined laws, an inefficient criminal justice system, and a lack of jurisprudential consistency. Regardless of constitutional freedom and protection, Dalits in India suffer from religious alienation. This ostracisation of the community is drawn from an antiquated belief that stigmatises them and exalts their isolation as purification. Religious freedom in India will never be achieved unless the country is willing to make substantial amendments to its constitution and legal framework.

Pradip Bansrior
Executive Secretary
Dalit and Tribal/ Adivasi Concerns
National Council of Churches in India

ORDER OF WORSHIP

Theme: Religious Freedom of Dalits

Invocation

Leader: Come, O God! Constrained by restrictions we look at you; with aspirations we seek you; and with hope we long for you.

All: Come, O God, Come!

Leader: God, our creator, you made us in your own image. However our images have been smeared and distorted. We, your children are humiliated and weakened!

All: Come and renew us!

Leader: God of Equality, we look for a just new world. Give us your wisdom to bring reconciliation among fellow beings.

All: O Spirit of God, come and reconcile us!

Leader: God of the poor, we are shackled for our thoughts, crucified for our voice of dissent, and been isolated in the name of religion

All: Come, O God! Liberate us to express our joy and life in you!

Call to Worship

Come people of God from all corners of the earth!

Come children of God with all your aspirations!

We live in a land of plurality, affirming oneness amidst differences.

Come, let us worship God through our many-ness by reclaiming togetherness!

Opening Prayer

God of justice, our lives is harassed, our dignity is tarnished, our rights are denied. In this world of strife and sorrow we seek your divine spirit that enables us to express our faith in our own way. Give us the freedom to choose, celebrate and worshipas creatures made in

your image. Give us a spirit of understanding so that we can claim our right to worship you. Give us the courage and power to profess our faith in a dignified and responsible way. We seek your divine presence with us throughout this worship so that our lives become blessed. Amen

Hymn

Rescue the perishing, care for the dying,
snatch them in pity from sin and the grave;
weep o'er the erring one, lift up the fallen,
tell them of Jesus, the mighty to save.

Refrain

Rescue the perishing,
care for the dying;
Jesus is merciful,
Jesus will save.

Though they are slighting Him, still He is waiting,
waiting the penitent child to receive;
plead with them earnestly, plead with them gently.
He will forgive if they only believe. *[Refrain]*

Down in the human heart, crushed by the tempter,
feelings lie buried that grace can restore;
touched by a loving heart, wakened by kindness,
chords that are broken will vibrate once more. *[Refrain]*

Rescue the perishing, duty demands it.
Strength for thy labour the Lord will provide;
back to the narrow way patiently win them,
tell the poor wanderer a Saviour has died. *[Refrain]*

Enactment

Person 1: Hey bro, don't send our Dalit children to School

Person 2: Why bro?

Person 1: The deaths of the Dalit Children for studies are more than the other causes.

Person 2: what do you say bro?

Person 1: Yea, religion is blocking the educational rights of individuals in the name of caste.

Person 2: What is happening?

Person 1: see let me tell about two incidents... one is about a Phd student Rohit Vemula, who is a Dalit. He thought he had the best of education, but the society around him treated him with suspicion because of his identity and pressurised him to take a decision to end his life. Rohit's letter to the Education Minister, complaining about degraded student politics, had led to Vemula's suspension and ultimate suicide. Being a PhD student at the University of Hyderabad and author of the book "Caste is Not a Rumor", Rohith was a student activist of the Ambedkar Students' Association (ASA) who committed suicide on 17 January 2016. His death occurred after a controversy which extended over several months starting in July 2015. In July 2015, the University reportedly stopped paying him a fellowship of ₹ 25,000 per month after he was found "raising issues under the banner of Ambedkar Students Association (ASA)" as part of institute's disciplinary inquiry. How pathetic it is that our Dalit identity is been systematically destroyed by the dominant and Rohit becoming an easy prey of "institutional murder."

Person 2: oh, it is very pathetic indeed, too bad on the part of the oppressor!

Person 1: if that is the case with those who are highly intelligent Dalits who got into the institution, there is another case which proves that even to go in for studies, a Dalit has no freedom to choose his/her own

academic career or allowed even to get into that structural frame. It is about the tragic suicide of Anitha, a young girl who came to represent the discontent and anguish of Tamil Nadu against the National Eligibility Cum Entrance Test (NEET), which makes the silence of death too rarefied to gauge the profound meaning of the tragedy. The death of a promising Dalit woman, sired by a marginalisation that compelled her to kill herself, speaks most unkindly of a world where voice needs death to carry meaning.

In quiet death, Anitha has left us with a deafening indictment of caste, education, and what it means to be a nation. One now awaits being told, as after the death of Rohith Vemula, that it is grief that took Anitha, that activism has become a 'Blue Whale Challenge.' But Anitha's grief is political sorrow, created not by biology but structural inequality, an education policy whose exclusion is purposeful, and corrosive ideas of excellence. A republic that treats this death silently does it the greatest injustice. It is, as Anitha would testify, a broken republic.

The daughter of a labourer, a coolie, from Tiruchi, Tamil Nadu, Anitha, all of 17, wanted to study medicine. In an impassioned interview, she says, "It is...my ambition. I want to work for the society as a doctor. My dear friends, could you please help me for studying medicine?" With four other siblings and one earning member, her father, in the family, Anitha conquered her fatal accident of birth to secure 1,176 marks out of 1,200, including perfect scores in physics and mathematics, and thence a remarkable cut-off score of 196.75 out of 200. She mentions this with exultant pride -- "I am the only student scoring (such) marks in the district."

However warranted the pride, it was to be ominously short-lived. In the tussle between Tamil Nadu and the Central government on the NEET, the Centre emerged triumphantly. In May, 2013, the NEET was conducted for the first time, dislodging the All India Pre Medical Test (AIPMT) and threatening the state educational boards of Tamil Nadu,

Kerala, and Andhra Pradesh, where it consequently met virulent opposition. In July, 2013, the Supreme Court declared the NEET unconstitutional. As recently as February, 2016, former chief minister (Late) J Jayalithaa wrote to Prime Minister Narendra Modi forewarning the Centre of Tamil Nadu's opposition to purported attempts to reintroduce the NEET in the state, dubbing it an infringement of federalism and an inegalitarian measure towards the students of Tamil Nadu who could not, given their academic training in the state, fare as well as students of the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) on a national eligibility examination. How can our Dalit friends raise to their dreams when all their efforts are systematically destroyed.

Person 2: Let us work for their emancipation, especially for their social and religious freedom. Come let us pray for them.

Affirmation of Faith

We believe in the Creator God whose word and breath fills all emptiness. God is lovingly and beautifully present in all creation including humans of all races and regions. This God grants freedom to all to give expression to the divine image within them.

We believe in Jesus who was born in a society dominated by political, economic and religious powers which regimented the lives of people. They were not given freedom and space to enjoy the fullness of life. We see and experience in Jesus the blessings of God's love and freedom for choosing another way of life, which grants dignity to all, and releases channels of love, justice and peace.

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the giver of life, who is at work in all creation; who has inspired the Scriptures and makes God known; who transforms hearts and minds and gathers us into the community of God; and who empowers Dalits as they struggle against injustices.

We believe that the Creator, Liberator and Transforming God work through the witness and life of communities of God's people. God protects supports and nurtures the broken ones.

We believe that God calls us to deepen our commitment to God's mission of liberation of Dalits from all bondages and facilitating their freedom, including freedom of religion.

We believe that light is better than darkness, sharing is better than possessing, truth is better than deceit, mercy is better than indifference, love is better than revenge, and God is stronger than earthly dominating powers. This hope which exists in the reign of God will come as it is in heaven, and will be forever and ever. Amen.

Scripture Luke 14:12-24

Sermon Jesus' *Ghar Vapasi* - An Invitation to the Religious Freedom of Dalits

We live in a pluralistic country with religious freedom only in papers because of the attitude of the government which calls for Ghar-Vapasi with no freedom of will. The Dalits are targeted mostly in this regard and it calls for all natives to return to their mother religion. This is a threat to the very Dalit identity and their survival. The mother religion was despised by most of the Dalit, the oppressed and the alienated mass of India because of the oppressive doctrine, structure and even Gods present in the brahminichindu religion.

It is in this context, we are meditating on the religious freedom of the Dalits. We venture into this passage, to re-read it to find new meaning to our present context. Here in this passage, Jesus gives a call for Ghar-Vapasi which is entirely redemptive and is according to the free will of the individuals, unlike the claims of the hindu fundamentalist government's call which violates human dignity and free-will.

In **Luke 14: 12-14** we see Jesus giving importance to the Kingdom of God values and to the priorities it is pregnant with. In the Israelite tradition the people who are poor, crippled, lame and the blind are forbidden to serve as priests and are not even given entry into God's house (Lev.21:17-23), like what the hindu brahminical religion did to the Dalits of our country. But Jesus asks the host of the banquet to invite and to identify with the Dalits of Palestine so that he would be rewarded in the eschatological Kingdom of God. This sets the tone for Jesus' great banquet parable which follows.

The excluded people group of the law find peace with God in and through Jesus Christ. Jesus' emphasis here is that the wealth acquired by an individual cannot be claimed to be one's own, but that too belongs to someone else's labour and toil. So here Jesus asserts the social (not religious) belongingness of each other which talks much about the inclusive claims of God in and through Jesus. Thus the lost dignity of the poor and the social outcasts are regained. Jesus called the host to do that to reverse the fortunes of the social outcasts with this doing. That reflects the very being of God which includes the outcasts and alienated people mass into God's redeeming plan. It is not for a religion Jesus called people to be part of, but a call for a participation in the kingdom of God without any social or religious barriers which oppresses.

The **Vs.15-24** of this chapter and also in the 13th Chapter itself, Luke talks about the reversal of fortunes. The word "many" in vs.16 refers to those who claimed to be the people of the kingdom of God. But for them it's a reversal which Jesus said, and they denied the invitation. But those alienated groups which did not realize the invitation, accepted to take part in the banquet when they were welcomed, but the others rejected it. It talks about the life priorities of the 'many' who are invited to the banquet. They actually denied the kingdom values which is expected of them. The call of the master of the banquet is to as many as they could find on the streets includes the despised and the alienated masses of the society. Those Dalits were also considered to

be the sinners, the unfit and the unlawful who are destined to be eternally punished, but they became the prime members of the kingdom of God. The eschatological understanding about the kingdom of God is thus broken down and the kingdom of God is presented as a continuous participation in this world and also in the eschatological expectation which is made true by Jesus. The preoccupied deeds, the pride and ego with which they lived a life of self-contented living, the self-centred attitude with no concern for the Dalits around them, the uninterested responses and attachment into the worldly relationships mark them to be denied of the privileges which the kingdom of God offers and had made themselves to be unfit for the kingdom of God.

So the coming of the kingdom of God will result in such reversals. "Many of those who presume that they will be included will find themselves excluded, and their place which they considered guaranteed will be taken by the outcasts or the Dalits. The future will not be a continuation of the present but a reversal of its exclusionary and discriminatory social codes". The acceptance in the kingdom of God is provided for those who did not practice any social discrimination, but those who want to dwell in their own personal and social standings will rather lose their positions in the kingdom of God.

What do we infer from this passage? What does God wants us to do? What models does we draw from Jesus' Gar-Vapsi initiative to emancipate the Dalits in an egalitarian social order?

To "touch" the Dalits to be affirmed of being part of God's kingdom

Jesus' intensified look and His caring touch with love seems to foresee God's transformation in and through His own life. This we see throughout the ministry of Jesus in His earthly life. These were an affirmative action by Jesus to these marginalized masses of their identity. Thus the ministry of Jesus is a ministry of restoration where

the human dignity and social recognition of these alienated oppressed mass, which is lost, is regained and restored. Not because Jesus wanted to favour the Dalits with empathy, but because He had seen the Dalits as equals created in God's own image and as part of God's kingdom.

The new discovery of their social identity is affirmed only when they are touched by their oppressors. It does not mean literally a touch and care always, but also the true passion to make sure of them as the people who belong to the kingdom of God by "touching" Dalit lives. It should be understood then that the others are to "touch" Dalits, not to give identity to the Dalits, but to gain identity for themselves as people who belongs to the kingdom of God. Since Dalits because of their experience of pains, oppression and suffering identify themselves with the cross of Christ, and so become the people of the kingdom already in and through Jesus' resurrection, the others who are not yet affirmed of it are to "touch" the Dalits to get that affirmation.

This banquet for the kingdom of God is not the ruling class and others who finds their way into the kingdom of God; rather it is the poor, the crippled, the lame and the blind. The future will not be a continuation of the present but a reversal of its exclusionary and discriminatory social codes. That is the fact why the people were amazed at Jesus when they saw Jesus as a caring and loving person who touches them and associating with the oppressed masses. It is pathetic that the church left that mission of the counterculture of Jesus. Only when the Church takes up that model, will it be able to be an effective instrument of God in this world of oppression and alienation as an instrument of transformation and emancipation.

To propagate the Kingdom Values for an egalitarian Gar-Vapsi

Jesus' teaching for an egalitarian Gar-Vapsi and sharing with these dehumanized and marginalized masses of His day challenged the

then-existing religious ideology, but for a transformed religion, which is the kingdom of God. That is the religious identity which God wants the church to manifest in this world which could convert them into full fledged human beings. Jesus began to own all the oppressed masses. This in turn will restore for them a sense of “inherent equality” before God their creator spirit. The kingdom values have this universal motif. The kingdom of God values include all the people without alienating any one from it. All are given equal status and dignity where everyone in it is treated equally. Thus this would bring a holistic liberation for the oppressed masses. It is not the propagation of the Christian religion, though it might give such a colour, but a true propagation of the kingdom values which ultimately would give birth to an egalitarian society.

The Kingdom values always say that there will be people in the kingdom of God from all the directions, all classes and all levels. It is also with no demands, but an open invitation to be part of it with the decision made with free will. It is where the oppressed and alienated Dalit mass who were told to be dining with the so called chosen people according to the Jewish expectations. The Kingdom of God is the proposal of reversing the whole oppressive social system; and it did reverse the whole system and is still an emancipating model.

Conclusion

It is not because of Jesus' rejection by the rich and elite, He went down to the poor; but the very being of God which manifested in His own self, urged Jesus' to associate with the poor, sick, the needy, tax collectors and sinners. This banquet for the kingdom of God is not the ruling class and others who finds their way into it; rather it is the 'Dalits of Palestine', the poor, the crippled, the lame and the blind who finds themselves in it. The action which Jesus took was constructing an alternative order and bringing liberation to the oppressed. In that way Jesus attempted to create and consolidate a messianic community, which has no divisions and oppressions, consisting of all

these people into that Kingdom of God. Jesus identified that messianic vocation, not with royal ideology, but rather with resistance ideology and prophetic solidarity with the religiously ostracised poor and despised. When the church take up that messianic vocation of Jesus as its mission, Jesus' Gar-Vapsi will be find an egalitarian community of people who live out the values of the kingdom of God.

While we speak against the oppressive structures, *to identify the Kingdom of God in the Dalit experiences with the Dalits and to propagate the kingdom values for an egalitarian Gar-Vapsi in our social world* are the step forward towards the religious freedom of Dalits. May the Church become Gar-Vapsi for the Dalits to live-out the egalitarian values of the Kingdom of God with free will. May the Holy Spirit be our Church's acquaintance to be the channel of transformation and emancipation of the Dalits in their struggle towards religious freedom.

Confession

(A mirror may be kept in front of the altar or the entrance to the worship hall with a caption “Examine Yourself: Am I free? Am I respecting my neighbour's freedom?”).

Leader: Merciful God and Giver of Life! You plant each of us like seeds in the same field to be nourished and nurtured despite our differences in religion, class, caste and gender. We sway in the wind and are refreshed by the rain. Yet, we deprive others in the churches and society of that same opportunity of living and growing together.

All: Merciful and Gracious God, pardon us.

Leader: When we attempt to uproot those whom we believe do not belong in our part of the field,

All: Merciful and Gracious God, pardon us.

Leader: When we label others as good or bad rather than accept them for who they are,

All: Merciful and Gracious God, pardon us.

Leader: When we are reluctant to acknowledge that we ourselves are a mixture of weeds and wheat,

All: Merciful and Gracious God, pardon us.

Leader: When we are afraid to look into the fields of our own lives to see what is growing there,

All: Merciful and Gracious God, pardon us.

Leader: O God, you know us inside and out, through and through.

All: You search us out and lay your hand upon us.

Leader: You know what we are going to say even before we speak.

All: So we pray that you will help us to reach out to the uprooted and rejected, the lonely and the outcaste, and to develop and grow the good in ourselves, in others and in the world. In Jesus' name. **Amen**

Absolution

The Gracious one will enrich you with divine grace, and nourish you with blessing;

The Protector defends you in oppression and will keep you from the evil of not accepting others;

The Merciful God accepts your prayers, and absolves you from your offences of injustice, dehumanisation and hatred, for the sake of Jesus Christ, our Saviour. **Amen**

Offertory Song

Just as I am, without one plea,
but that thy blood was shed for me,
and that thou bidd'st me come to thee,
O Lamb of God, I come, I come.

Just as I am, and waiting not
to rid my soul of one dark blot,
to thee, whose blood can cleanse each spot,
O Lamb of God, I come, I come.

Just as I am, though tossed about
with many a conflict, many a doubt,
fightings and fears within, without,
O Lamb of God, I come, I come.

Just as I am, thou wilt receive,
wilt welcome, pardon, cleanse, relieve;
because thy promise I believe,
O Lamb of God, I come, I come.

Intercessory prayers

(Pray in silence after each voice, remembering people in the voices)

Voice 1

I am a Dalit, I stand here speaking to you. Somewhere someone is being killed or raped, humiliated or outraged, just because she or he was born as a Dalit. The 'not so changing' statistics of National Crime Records Bureau say that a Dalit is assaulted every two hours in India. Two Dalits are killed every 24 hours. Two Dalit houses are burnt down. There would be no dearth of breaking news or good TRP ratings. In an era where violence incites more sensationalism than a porn video, commercialising Dalit atrocities will only be beneficial. Ambedkar believed that true liberation for the Dalits was not possible without religious change. So, in this link between religion and social emancipation Dalit communities are not to be just a fragment of Brahminical schema. This suggests the possibility of retrieving liberative elements from the world-views of the Dalits themselves while claiming freedom in religion, caste and culture. Our cries have been silenced and no one raises their voice for us. Will you?

(Pray in silence)

Voice 2

I am a Dalit girl. I face discrimination every day for being a Dalit. I wanted to empower my family living under the dominant structures of religious hegemonic system and socio-economic poverty through my education. I struggled a lot to study and get good marks in my State Board exams. Even though I got better marks in my examinations, the educational policy of the government hindered my dreams. I have always felt that the higher caste people and the government have forgotten the fact that all of us live in the same country which talks about secularism, democracy, equality and justice. Many of my sisters and brother have been denied opportunities to fulfil our dreams. For having been born a Dalit do I need to forego my dreams and continue the jobs of our parents? Will not our dreams ever come true? Who will fight for us?

(Pray in silence)

Voice 3

I am a Dalit Christian who is struggling for my entire life with two identities: as one belonging to a scheduled caste and as a Christian. I have struggled to avail fee concession and scholarship. We do not have any other option because I belong to a poor agricultural labourer family, and my parents have cannot afford paying money for my education. Therefore my parents have advised us to say without guilt, "I'm a Scheduled Caste person" in my school. But I have been really reluctant and at the same time I have not had the opportunity to celebrate my faith when I was undergoing these kinds of struggles. Such a situation has compelled me to ask, "Why was I born as a Dalit Christian in this caste-based society?" I still have the guilty feeling that I am not able to celebrate my own faith in life and economically uplift my family.

(Pray in silence)

Lord's Prayer

God our Parent who lives with us here in this world, Your name is everywhere and anytime to be worshipped and praised. We realize

your reign is established in our lives. As you have established your reign in the world above us, we yearn for your justice, love and liberty to be established here in this earth. Give us our everyday meal for strength to live in this world. Forgive us and accept us, as we forgive our neighbours and accept them as they are. Lead us not into enticement, but lead us into the fullness of life along with everyone. For yours are all lives, as well as Love, Goodness Justice and Sovereignty constantly till the end. **Amen**

Benediction

May the omnipotent God guard you from all harm!

May the Omnipresent Immanuel God help you to experience love to show others!

May the Omniscient Spirit of God walk with you in the life for Justice, Love and Peace! **Amen**

Sending Forth

We take up our lights to bring light everywhere,
Send us into the world to love and serve each other
Thanks be to God our liberator. **Amen**

Worship Order Prepared by

Gurukul Lutheran Theological College Team

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