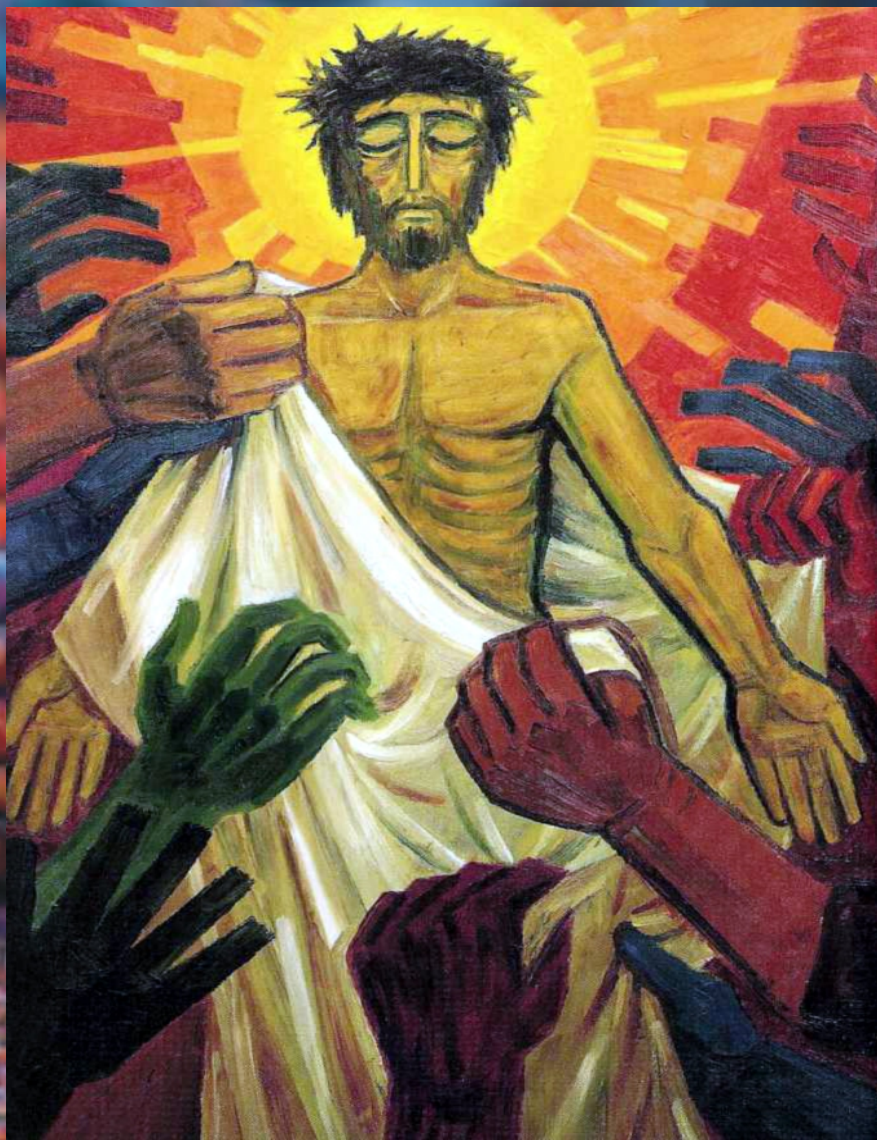


# Dalit Liberation Sunday

10 November 2019

Theme : Resist Caste : "If one suffers all suffer together."

( 1 Corinthians 12 : 26)



**NATIONAL COUNCIL OF  
CHURCHES IN INDIA**

Dalit and Tribal / Adivasi Concerns



**CATHOLIC BISHOP'S  
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Office for SC/BC

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## Foreword

Resist Caste' is a call and reminder this year to unite in one voice to denounce the evil of stratified hegemonic discrimination in society – caste.

As the National Council of Churches India we have denounced caste and do persist in that stand. We have and are working toward abolition of caste in Society.

We have identified the practice of caste as sin, and untouchability as crime. We have proclaimed that 'No one can serve Christ and caste'.

The call this year is to resist all manifestations of caste both in Society, and consequently in church, remembering that 'if one part suffers all suffer together'.

Dalit Liberation Sunday organised jointly every year by the NCCI through its program on Dalit and Tribal/ Adivasi Concerns and the CBCI Office for SC/ BC is a stark reminder that our hands are not clean and/ or we have not done enough.

Let us therefore join together and call the bluff. Let us resist caste that has invaded us ideologically and at times institutionalised in our working systems and patterns.

Resist caste: “If one suffers all suffer together”. . .

**Rev. Asir Ebenezer**

**General Secretary**

National Council of Churches in India

## Introduction

The contemporary situation of the Dalit Christians in India remains hostile. Unfortunately, it has never had a promising representation from their own community addressing their issues on any front. Today, the mandate for all Christians is about resisting or opposing caste. This is the only way possible for all to survive together according to the promise of God, and to realize the Kin-dom values. Our concern for justice, fairness and a peace oriented society should be inclusive of the Dalits who continues to live in the periphery of our minds, both metaphorically and existentially. Caste today is further reinforced by dominant ideologies besides cultural underpinnings. This has led to the de-affirmation of the life and identities of the Dalits. Life denying practices of caste have infiltrated into every aspects of our life, including churches and the very fabric of our society continues to bleed due to caste.

The Dalit Christians who form the marginalized communities are followers of a different religious tradition other than the dominant brahminical one. On the bases of this, they are considered anti-nationals, refugees, traitors, foreigners. They have been lynched in the name of religion and for consuming food, according to their choice and they struggle to prove their bonding towards their own country and land due to such stereotypes. During such a time as this, only a caste resisting and denying community coming together can stir an effective change of such casteist minded masses. The time has come to rise against such fascist ideological loops created by the hierarchical ones in power and positions.

The Caste based discrimination is a discrimination against human beings' freedom to choose and desire or to follow a particular religious tradition as enshrined in the Indian Constitution. The theme of this year's Dalit Liberation Sunday points towards an understanding that we are one as human beings, beautifully created in the image of God. Therefore if a community suffers on the basis of their caste identity then with them everyone suffers equally because the image of God which we respect and see in another human is vandalized to the very extent that we no longer view our fellow human being in the same image of God.



This induces us to a situation that God's image resides in the other person and start discriminating and siding away from them on the basis of their caste identity. Discrimination on the basis of one's identity is condemning God's creation.

The theme "**Resist Caste: If one suffers all suffer together**"(*1 Corinthians 12: 26*) call the churches/institutions to unite and denounce caste as an aberration of the very fabric of society. We take this opportunity to invite you to observe Dalit liberation Sunday on 10<sup>th</sup> November 2019 in your church/ local parish/ institution. However, if you already have some programs on 10<sup>th</sup> November, you may think of observing 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.

**Pradip Bansrior**

Executive Secretary

Dalit and Tribal/ Adivasi Concerns

National Council of Churches in India

## ORDER OF WORSHIP

**Theme: Resist Caste: “If one suffers all suffer together”**

*( 1 Corinthians 12:26)*

### Call to Worship

Come children of God, come to our Creator God  
Come to the One in whose image and likeness we have been created,  
The Creator God in Jesus Christ invites us to his fellowship,  
Transcending, and embracing us mercifully as one in his body  
Come let us experience the Spirit, indwelling in us  
Renewing, and recreating us, and the whole of creation  
Come let us sing praises to the one Triune God  
For, the name of God is worthy to be praised.  
Whose saving Grace brought a people from captivity into a land of  
promise, whose enduring  
Love still leads us from place of captivity into a promise of peace,  
forgiveness and eternal love.

### Opening Prayer

Here we are God of Justice, your children meeting together in your holy presence. We welcome each other in your name, and we welcome you into our presence. Reveal unto us, your ways, in our prayer, singing, affirmation and in the understanding of your Holy word. Help us take the responsibility you entrust us through your words, to love each other and to say No to all that hinders us from being like you. Speak to us, encourage us, and enfold us as we worship you. Help us discern your will so that your will be done on earth as it is your kingdom. Whisper unto us the promise of a new beginning and a new relationship through your holy word this day. In Jesus' name we pray.

**Hymn : Christ from whom all blessings flow** (*Key: F Major ; Time: 4/4*)

Christ, from whom all blessings flow,  
perfecting the saints below,  
hear us, who your nature share,  
who your mystic body are.

Join us, in one spirit join,  
grant us still your help divine;  
still for more on you we call,  
you, O Christ, fill all in all.

Move, and animate, and guide:  
various gifts to each divide;  
placed according to your will,  
let us all our work fulfil;

Freely may we all agree,  
touched with loving sympathy;  
kindly for each other care;  
every member feel its share.

Love, like death, has all destroyed,  
rendered all distinctions void;  
names, and sects, and parties fall;  
you, O Christ, are all in all.

### **Prayer of Confession**

Merciful God, we confess that we have not been able to love you the way you have loved us because, through our practices and perpetuation of caste we have not loved the other as ourselves. We have negated others we think are different from us.

We confess that we have sinned against you by practicing caste. We have considered ourselves superior than the other. We have through the affirmation of caste negated your teaching of having been created in the image and likeness of you.

We confess that our actions have led to the flourishing of caste. We created borders and divisions in the body of Christ and forgot that 'if one part suffers all suffer together. Through our practices of caste we have led to your body being dismembered and scarred.

We confess that we have failed to recognize caste as an institutionalized sin and therefore evil. We have failed to resist it and perpetuated caste in the society and in the church as well. Thereby we have turned away from your commands to love you and to love our neighbours.

“Have mercy on us, O God, according to your unfailing love; according to your great compassion blot out our sins” of practicing caste. Wash away all our iniquity and cleanse us from our sins. For we know our transgressions, and our sins are always before us. Against you, you only, have we sinned and done what is evil in your sight.

### **Absolution**

“People who conceal their sins will not prosper, but if they confess and turn from them, they will receive mercy.” May God ensure us with the values of love, the courage to call sin a sin and the perseverance to resist all forms of manifestation of caste in our society and in the Church.

**Scriptures:** 1 Corinthians 12: 26; 1 John 4:20; James 2:1-4; Galatians 3:28; Colossians 2:16

### **Reflection:**

In this text, Apostle Paul stresses on unity and oneness which according to him, is made possible by the affirmation of each person as person and by desiring the well being of the other. He theologically grounds this in verse 12 through the use of the metaphor of the body. “For even as the body is one and yet has many members, and all the members of the body, though they are many, are one body, so also is Christ.” We are all aware that caste has been one of the most divisive components of human unity and solidarity as Christians and as members of the society. In many different ways, we have been perpetuating caste. Therefore our hands are not clean. We have victimized the body of Christ by dividing ourselves and falling victim to caste prejudices. But the mandate to resist caste is an imperative for Christians. Verse 13 says “For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.” The fact that we were baptised by the spirit implies that we belong to Christ and by virtue of that we belong to each other. This belongingness renders the importance of relationality and interdependence amongst all the believers and the larger *oikos*. The practices of relationality renders us towards the seeking of unity and oneness. This instantiates within us to consciously resist all acts that leads to the breaking of this relationship.

Paul then goes on to say in verse 12:26 that “And if one members suffer, all the members suffer with it; if one is honoured, all the members rejoice with it.” Paul's text reminds us that we are indispensable to each other, therefore the “look” of the other should compel us to respond to the other with love and compassion. In other words we should experience the “divine epiphany” the manifestation of God every time we see the other. This relationship that he underscores is one that is centered on mutual care. The underlying meanderings of mutual care indicates that we are to resist Caste. The practices of caste is anathema to the mutual care of each member, it distorts the relationship amongst the believers and the desiring of unity and oneness as the common good.

The impulse towards mutual living and relationality can be made possible through our acknowledgement of caste as sin and therefore a crime. Only when we can name the sin, we will be able to identify those Christian virtues that render us towards affirmation of each individual and a recasting of Christian oneness as a fundamental Christian *telos*. A commitment to oneness and unity invokes reorganizing the structures and institutions of social existence in a way that affirms the body of Christ. This also means critiquing practices of the self and the institutions that negates the life of the members of our society and the church.

### **Affirmation of Faith**

We believe in God, who created everything with uniqueness and beauty and who ordained all as equals, who lives among us, who struggles along with us in our daily living for justice and peace. We believe in Jesus Christ, who values persons over systems, who affirms the value of persons over things, who rejects any custom or system that marginalizes people, who associates, and shares table with the poor without any discrimination, who administers and advocates equality and justice, who delivers the powerless and reforms society. We believe in the Holy Spirit, who is working among us to bring peace, justice and reconciliation to the whole cosmos. We believe in one universal Church and one baptism and the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins and the world to come.



## Intercessory Prayer

**Leader:** *There is no prayer our Creator is unable to hear; God is all-knowing and all-seeing. God also has all power over all things, so God is not limited in what we do in response. Our actions and attitudes can influence God's decisions on granting our requests in prayer. Let us all intercede.*

**Leader:** Lord, at this moment, we pray for your strength and courage upon us, and the wisdom to discern and distinguish between good and evil. Infuse us with your grace to practice what you have asked us to do-to love each other and live in unity. Lord, in your mercy.

**Congregation: Hear our prayer.**

**Leader:** Lord, this moment, we remember the victims of caste practices. We remember with horror the death of Rohit Vemula, Mukesh Vaniya, Kevin Joseph and the many other victims of caste practices and prejudices. Help us to understand the sanctity and sacredness of life. Help us realize that we are all created in your image and deserves the dignity to live as human beings, as children of God and sing praises to you in gladness. Lord, in your mercy.

**Congregation: Hear our prayer.**

**Leader:** Lord, we remember our co-brothers and sisters forced into jobs that are discriminating and life threatening. We particularly remember those engaged in manual scavenging, working in quarries as bonded labourers and those who are forced into prostitution. We pray that you will deliver these people from their painful circumstances, and a sense upon us to recognize that these practices are a crime both in front of you and the law of the nation. Lord, in your mercy.

**Congregation: Hear our prayer.**

**Leader:** Lord, at this time we also pray for the churches. Help the churches to realize its prophetic and witnessing role. We pray that the churches will exercise the evil of caste from its very life and practices and engage in a public witness that is liberating. As members of your body, help us to get angry with the sin of caste and the perseverance to resist caste in all its form both in the church and in the society. Lord, in your mercy.

**Congregation: Hear our prayer**

## **Closing Hymn:**

### **Where Charity and Love Prevail** (*Tune name : St. Peter*)

Where charity and love prevail,  
there God is ever found;  
Brought here together by Christ's love,  
by love are we thus bound.

With grateful joy and holy fear  
God's charity we learn;  
Let us with heart and mind and soul  
now love God in return.

Forgive we now each other's faults  
as we our faults confess;  
And let us love each other well  
in Christian holiness.

Let strife among us be unknown,  
let all contention cease;  
Be God's the glory that we seek,  
be ours God's holy peace.

Let us recall that in our midst  
dwells God's begotten Son;  
As members of his body joined,  
we are in Christ made one.

No race or creed can love exclude,  
if honored be God's name;  
Our family embraces all  
whose Father is the same.

## **Lord's Prayer**

Our God, who is ever present in the struggles, pains and sufferings of the people, Hallowed be your name. Your Kingdom of Love and Freedom come. Your will 'to do justice and righteousness' be done on earth, As it is in heaven. Give us this day courage to stand for what is right, to demand for an equal share of your wealth for all. Forgive us our servitude to the status quo, and give us the will to become agents of change. Lead us not into an attitude of complicity, but deliver us

from the danger of becoming docile. For to you belongs the power to judge and the power to liberate, forever and ever. Amen.

### **Benediction**

May God of justice, love and fairness help us resist and shed the evil practice of caste. May the Creator God who responds to the cries of the oppressed, the Compassionate Christ who is committed to the reign of God, and the Holy Spirit who equips persons to be disciples of Jesus Christ, be with us this day and forever. Amen.

### **Order of Worship Prepared by : NCCI Team**

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### **Dalit Liberation Sunday Themes (2007-2019)**

- 2007** : Put away Violence and Oppression, Execute Justice and Righteousness (*Ezekiel 45:12*)
- 2008** : Seek Justice, rescue the oppressed (*Isaiah 1:17*)
- 2009** : Crossing boundaries and building bridges: Overcoming prejudices (*Matthew 15:28*)
- 2010** : Will not God bring justice to people who cry out to God day and night? (*Luke 18:7*)
- 2011** : Our God with struggling people (*Exodus 3:7-8*)
- 2012** : Break the barriers; build the world of equality
- 2013** : “Celebrating Faith by Witnessing” (*Deuteronomy 1:13-18*)
- 2014** : “Dalit Culture, Dalit history, Dalit pathos: Regaining the lost identity in Christ”
- 2015** : “Climate, Caste and Care for the Earth”
- 2016** : “Administer Justice Daily! Deliver the Oppressed (*Jeremiah 21:12*)
- 2017** : Religious Freedom of Dalits
- 2018** : As for Me and My household. We will serve the Lord (*Joshua 24:15*)
- 2019** : Resist Caste: If one suffers all suffer together (*1Corinthians 12:26*)

## **“ No one can serve Christ and caste! ”**

An AFFIRMATION OF FAITH from the  
**National Ecumenical Conference on Justice for Dalits,**  
*Convened by NCCI in partnership with WCC,*  
*New Delhi, 22-24 October 2010*

The Church is called to denounce and resist the 'spiritual forces of evil' (Ephesians 6:12) and repent and realize the kingdom of god (mark 1:15). Today caste divisions, caste discrimination and caste violence have saturated the country and divided the church. In this moment of time we are prompted by the spirit to repent from our complicity with caste mentality and dismantle its mechanisms, to reconcile all the victims of the systems, to restore the fullness of life granted to all the children of god and release the power of inherent dignity that has been gifted to all human beings. Dalits are the worst victims of the caste system.

Caste has fragmented us at all levels. Our tables are divided, our communities are divided, and our cemeteries are divided. Dalits bear the inflictions and injuries of such division. We are ashamed that as Christians we are unable to testify to the oneness of life as members of the body of Christ.

Caste discrimination has corroded our inner being and has borne its bitter outward fruits. It has robbed Dalits of their self-esteem; denied them access to places of worship and sources of water for survival; and curtailed their opportunities for education and employment. We are ashamed that we as Christians have Spawned such weeds of discrimination when we had opportunities to sow seeds of acceptance, integrity and justice.

Caste violence has broken the body and bruised the soul. Dalit children are shunned, stunted and have their childhood shattered. Dalit women are beaten, raped, and murdered. Dalit men are dispossessed, locked up, and lynched. The evil confluence of caste, class and patriarchy has distorted human dignity and destroyed human bodies. We are ashamed that we as Christians have remained silent while our brothers and sisters have been violated and killed. Yet though Dalits have been crushed they have not been Extinguished, Though they have been brutalized they have not

despaired. Dalits resilience and resistance in the face of caste division, discrimination and violence invites the church to join in solidarity to denounce and resist the 'spiritual forces of evil' even as we must repent and recommit ourselves to the good news that the kingdom of god is at hand.

As Christian we claim to reflect the mind of Christ but we are vested in the logic of caste. Jesus says “*no one can serve two masters, for as slave will either love the one and hate the other, or be devoted to one and despise the other*” (Matthew 6:24). In a context of division, Caste Discrimination and caste Violence we announce from the rooftop: **“No one can serve Christ and caste!”** We also confess that in our Caste-infested world “we have decided to follow Christ.” Empowered by a deep faith in God, Who binds us into communion, who frees us for justice and who heals us towards wholeness, we join together to live faithfully as disciples of Christ in India today. This involves public confession of our complicity in the sin of casteism, reaffirmation of our faith in a God of justice and a radical commitment to solidarity with those crushed under the weight of the caste system.

### **Our Confession**

*“We have become like rubbish of the world, the dregs of all things to this very day.” (1 Cor 4 :13b)*

### **We Confess:**

Our complicity in sharing in the mind set of caste and perpetuating the workings of evil caste system

Our individual indifference and collective silence in the face of caste division, discrimination and violence

Our willingness to let our theological and material resources be captured by the dominant caste and class communities

Our unwillingness to allow the abundance of social, cultural, political and economic resources given by God to be utilized for the empowerment of Dalits.



## **Our Reaffirmation**

*“The Lord works vindication and justice for all who are oppressed...” (Psalm 103:6)*

### **We Reaffirm :**

Faith in the God of justice who works for abundant life for all human beings. This calls us to name casteism as sin, apostasy and rebellion against God. Caste discrimination is unbelief in God and a crime against humans beings.

Love for God in 'the word made flesh' who links the wounded body of Jesus to 'the broken ones.' This calls us takes sides with the Dalits struggling for freedom and wholeness. Casteism is a rejection of Christ, who is the way, the truth and the life. Caste discrimination is the extended wounding of Christ among us as the least and crushed ones.

The communion of the Holy Spirit that brings healings with reconciliation for Dalits and contrition with reconciliation Among Dominant communities. Casteism is a grievance against the Holy Spirit. Caste discrimination manifests signs of enemies of the holy Spirit, Whose greatest gift is love.(1 Cor.13:13)

The historical working of God, the liberator, accompanier and advocate, who never fails Dalits, at times through the witness of the Church that protects, supports and nurtures the broken ones. This calls us to deepen our solidarity and further our commitment to God's mission of liberation of Dalits.

Hope that the reign of God will come on earth as it is in heaven. This calls us to commit to break all walls of separation trusting in the power of spirit to make all things new in the way of Jesus and for the glory of God.

## **Our Commitment**

*“You will know them by their fruits, are grapes gathered from thrones of figs from thistles, in the same way every good tree bears good fruit but the bad tree bears bad fruit...thus you will know them by their fruit.” (Matt 7:16, 17)*

## **We Commit:**

To be faithful to Jesus Christ and to realize that being born again means to be born against caste.

To put our energies and resources to work to end caste division, caste discrimination and caste violence in our churches and society.

To make our churches courageous and concrete witness to the body of Christ free of caste division, caste discrimination and caste violence.

To our churches serving as zero tolerance zones for casteism and caste based discrimination and our churches developing policies on social inclusion. That also involves that our institutions become sites that practice preferential option for Dalits in admission, employment and in perspective.

To designating Lent 2011 as a time of purging caste from our churches. This will be an occasion for developing resources, both theological and liturgical, for use in Sunday Schools, Youth Groups, Women's and Men's fellowships and pastors and bishops retreats with the specific mandate to root out casteism in our mind set and caste discrimination in our way of life.

To do all humanly possible with God as our Helper to save Dalits under attack from the regimes of casteism let loose in our nation. As Living members of the body of Christ we will “watch and Pray” to prevent Dalit attacks, rapes and murders. Each local congregation and institution will join in God's mission to be defenders of the Dalit right to live in security without fear and be prompters of the Dalit right to live in freedom with justice in our caste violence prone society.



## **NATIONAL COUNCIL OF CHURCHES IN INDIA**

### **DALIT AND TRIBAL / ADIVASI CONCERNS**

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