CALL TO PRAYER

Leader: As we come together, settle into stillness. Slowly, ever so slowly, center your minds and hearts. Take a deep breath.

Breathe in the energy, the wisdom, and the goodness that dwells within your very being.
Breathe in the energy, the wisdom, and the goodness of the person sitting to your left.
Breathe in the energy, the wisdom, and the goodness of the person sitting to your right.
Breathe in the energy, the wisdom, and the goodness permeating your sacred circle.
Breathe in the woundedness, the confusion, the fear, and the despair of all those fleeing war, persecution, violence, and hatred. Breathe into their crushed spirits, a healing hope.

(Pause for a moment of silence.)

Reader 1: We are all part of the world’s fabric, a world embroidered with beauty that may be seen in one another and in the tapestry of creation. As ambassadors of conscience, we are called to be agents of change, to educate and influence policymakers, and to achieve a more just world.

Reader 2: Throughout history, daily storms of injustice sweep through our world, obscuring its beauty and sowing seeds of violence, hatred, mistrust, and hopelessness. Today, we are mindful of the growing tide of refugees fleeing war, persecution, violence, and hunger.

Our migrant sisters and brothers like the Holy Family, are being forced to leave their homes and to escape Herod’s law of the land. They walk miles and miles, knocking on doors, seeking respite and acceptance. Just as Mary and Joseph journeyed from one region to another to protect their infant Son, God’s people of yesterday and today continue to journey across the landscape of our world in search of refuge, stability, and a better life. How does God want us to treat the strangers among us?
PRIVATE AND COMMUNAL REFLECTION

Leader: Invite participants to pause for a moment of silence and reflect privately or collectively on the following questions:

• Think of a time when you felt unwelcome—perhaps looked down upon because of the color of your skin, gender, disability, religion, or beliefs. Were you dishonored because of your appearance or the way you spoke? How did you feel? Did you fear that your life was in danger? Did anyone take notice of your anguish?

• Think of a time when you experienced real hunger, hunger for food, hunger for companionship, or hunger for justice. In what way was your hunger satisfied? How did your experience of hunger make you more sensitive to those who are deprived of their basic human rights?

• Think of a time when you might not have welcomed another. Was it an expectant mother from Syria who makes her home on the streets? Was it a homeless man from Cameroon who sat next to you on the bus reeking of alcohol and perspiration? Was it the young day laborer from Honduras with little understanding of the English language who begged for food? Or was it an indigenous activist like Maxima Acuña de Chaupe who withstood violent eviction attempts, beatings, and a legal battle to protect her land from being turned into an open-pit gold mine? What is it about this person that makes you numb and keeps you from welcoming the stranger in your midst?

Reader 3: Pope Francis continues to invite all believers to open their hearts to God and to overcome a “globalization of indifference that is threatening to spread a feeling of distress and powerlessness and causing individuals and communities to withdraw into themselves, closing the door through which God comes into the world.” As a way of overcoming indifference, he urges us to engage in what Benedict XVI called a formation of the heart; a heart which lets itself be pierced by the Spirit so as to bring love along the roads that lead to our brothers and sisters, and, ultimately, a poor heart, one which realizes its own poverty and gives itself freely for others. With Pope Francis, let us recommit to living a life that is not closed, indifferent, or prey to the globalization of indifference (Pope Francis, Message for Lent 2015).
COLLECTIVE PRAYER

Left: Today … I will commit to exploring ways to “strengthen the conviction that we are one single family, that there are no frontiers or barriers, political or social, behind which we can hide, still less is there room for the globalization of indifference.” I will regain the conviction that we need one another, that we have a shared responsibility for others and the world (Laudato Si’ 91).

Right: Today … I will make more of an attempt to rescue the abandoned and forgotten of this earth. I will dare to respond to Pope Francis’s call to welcome refugees fleeing war, persecution, human trafficking, violence, and hunger.

Left: Today … I will open my eyes to the needs of society’s forgotten and work to welcome the unwelcomed and become an island of mercy in the midst of the sea of indifference. I will bring comfort to those who are alone and afraid, those who have been torn apart from their families by violence.

All: Today… I will recommit to working for the abolition of human trafficking and pursue the recognition and protection of the rights of women and children. I will show special care for “indigenous communities and their cultural traditions, that are not merely one minority among others, but the principal dialogue partners, especially when large projects affecting their land are proposed” (Laudato Si’ 146).

Right: Today… I will take up ancient lessons found in the Gospels and in different religious traditions: the conviction that “less is more,” to stop and appreciate the small things, to be grateful for the opportunities which life affords me, to be spiritually detached from what I possess, and not to succumb to sadness for what I lack (Laudato Si’ 222).

Left: Today… I will examine my life and acknowledge the ways in which I have harmed God’s creation through my actions and my failure to act. I will live in peace with my God, my neighbor, and myself. I will bring peace to my patch of this earth. I will plant a seed of justice in this global village, in my city, in my neighborhood, in my community, in my family, and in my heart. (Laudato Si’ 218).

All: Today… I will practice love, not to miss out on a kind word, a smile, or any small gesture which sows peace and friendship. I will choose my words wisely, and be mindful that harsh words are as painful as a blow to the stomach and can crush a person’s spirit. Speaking harshly against others is “an act of terrorism, akin to dropping a bomb to destroy people and then clearing out to save ourselves” (Pope Francis, Morning Mediation in the Chapel of the Domus Sanctae Marthae, September 4, 2015).
Right: Today … I will disarm myself of rage by extending my hand in help and forgiveness. I will love my enemies. I will pray for them. I will try to see our differences from their point of view. I will have a forgiving heart toward those who inflict pain and injustice on others, the war makers, the human traffickers and the pimps, the torturers, and the greedy. I will remember that they, too, are made in God’s image.

Left: Today… I will be mindful that the gravity of the world’s cultural and ecological crisis must be translated into new consumer habits, new ecological sensitivity, and renewed efforts to protect the environment. I will do my part to protect the world and not prey on it, to sow beauty, not pollution and destruction. I will encourage ways to avoid using plastic and paper, reducing water consumption, separating refuse, cooking only what can reasonably be consumed, showing care for other living beings, using public transport or car-pooling, planting trees, turning off unnecessary lights, or any number of other practices (Laudato Si’ 211).

Right: Today … I will believe that world peace is possible. I will remember that hope is the most important gift I can give my world. I will praise you, my God, and remember that our common home is like a sister with whom we share our life and a beautiful mother who opens her arms to embrace us.

All: Today and every day … I will refuse to wear indifference in my thoughts, words, and actions. I will seek to promote what Pope Francis calls “a united response to the question of migration,” to welcome the stranger in my midst, and to make obsolete this “new slave trade” that is being facilitated by growing numbers of wars and human traffickers. Amen.

Leader:
God, make our hearts like yours.
In this way, we will receive a heart
Which is firm and merciful, attentive and generous,
A heart which is not closed, or indifferent or prey
To the globalization of indifference.
- Pope Francis, Morning Mediation in the Chapel of the Domus Sanctae Marthae, September 4, 2015).