Prayer Service for World AIDS Day

**SETTING:** Ritual center with quilt or patchwork piece; small squares of paper; felt tip pens and crayons; an icon of Mother of God, Light in All darkness—or any suitable Madonna-like icon; a candle.

**OPENING:**
HIV/AIDS is not just a health issue but also a development and security crisis that impacts every facet of human survival especially in the poorest countries. Since 1981 when HIV/AIDS was clinically recognized, more than 25 million people have died and more than 8,500 die every day, 90 percent of them in the developing world.

According to estimates by the World Health Organization (WHO) and UNAIDS, 33.2 million people were living with HIV at the end of 2007. Some 2.5 million people became newly infected in 2007, and 2.1 million died of AIDS, including 330,000 children. Two thirds of HIV infections are in sub-Saharan Africa. Africa has 11.6 million AIDS orphans.

Entire societies are collapsing as productive generations are decimated and the education, agriculture and business sectors are suffering from the loss of human capital.

-World Health Organization, 2008

**CALL TO PRAYER:** (ALL)
God of all compassion, comfort your sons and daughters who live with AIDS. Spread over us all your quilt of mercy, love and peace.

Open our eyes to your presence reflected in their faces. Open our ears to your truth echoing in their hearts. Give us the strength to weep with the grieving, To walk with the lonely, To stand with the depressed.

May our love mirror your love for those who live in fear, Who live under stress and Who suffer rejection. Mothering, Fathering God, Grant rest to those who have died And hope to all who live with HIV.

God of life, help us to find the cure now And help us to build a world In which no one dies alone And where everyone lives accepted, wanted and loved.

--The Maryknoll AIDS Task Force

**RITUAL ACTION:**
The leader now invites all to write on one of the squares of paper the first name(s) of people who have died of AIDS or who are living with HIV/AIDS. (If participants do not know someone personally, they may write the name of a general group, such as “children with HIV/AIDS.”) Ask the gathering to come to the ritual table and place their square of paper on or around the table so that the combined squares resemble the pieces of a quilt. You may wish to play some instrumental music while this is being done.

**REFLECTION OR SONG:**

Listen to the song, “Patchwork Quilt” recorded by Sweet Honey in the Rock (In This Land; lyrics and music by Michelle Lanchester). If you don’t have access to this music, have someone recite the lyrics aloud.

They unfolded your lives one by one
They laid out your patchwork under the sun
And people gathered from miles around
To witness your quilt spread on the ground.

Refrain:
And then they called out your name (3x)
Oh and you will live forever.
You know that I’ll be loving you just like a patchwork quilt.

Well, there were men and women, mothers and fathers
Sisters and brothers, daughters and sons
And children and babies, and lovers and friends
They all lay before me sewn into one.

Your lives had meaning, your lives had joy
You touched so many people,
Many more than you will know
And you wrapped yourselves around me
As I walked down these rows
You’re letting me feel your beautiful souls

Refrain:
I feel the warmth of your lives (2x)
Oh and you will live forever.
You know that I’ll be loving you just like a patchwork quilt.
Prayer Service for World AIDS Day (continued)

My heart spills over, flowing with tears
I cry for your suffering and for your shortened years
And I’ll take you with me as I walk away
Remembering you who have died with AIDS.

Refrain:
Yes, I remember your names (2x)
Oh, and you will live forever
You know that I’ll be loving you
Just like a patchwork quilt
I’ll be loving you like a patchwork quilt.

READINGS:
Infectious diseases—including HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, and malaria—are responsible for almost half of all deaths in developing countries. These three diseases cause more than 300 million illnesses and 5 million deaths each year.
World Health Organization: Report on HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis, and Malaria

It is estimated that nearly 2 million children are living with HIV/AIDS. Africa has 11.6 million AIDS orphans who face the risk of malnutrition, social displacement, reduced prospects for education, and forced conscription into military service or into armed militias.

We urge increased funding for medicines and treatment, research, basic healthcare delivery systems, and care for those living with HIV/AIDS, as well as appropriate educational programs that provide accurate information about the transmission of the disease and promote responsible sexual behavior. We also urge the international community—and major pharmaceutical companies—to respond more effectively to the needs of AIDS patients in poor countries, so that these men and women, tried in body and soul, may have access to the medicines they need.
A Call to Solidarity with Africa, a Statement of the U.S. Catholic Bishops, November 14, 2001

The HIV/AIDS epidemic is undoubtedly one of the major catastrophes of our time, especially in Africa. It is not only a health problem, since the disease has tragic consequences for the social, economic and political life of peoples . . . In this regard, it seems appropriate to recall what the Second Vatican Council emphasized regarding the common destination of the world’s goods, which I mentioned in my Encyclical Centesimus Annus: “Of its nature private property also has a social function which is based on the law of the common purpose of goods” (Gaudium et Spes, 7, 1; cf. Centesimus Annus, 30). On account of this social mortgage, included in international law by the affirmation, among other things, of every individual’s right to health, I ask the rich countries to respond to the needs of HIV/AIDS patients in poorer countries with all available means, so that those men and women afflicted in body and soul will be able to have access to the medicines they need to treat themselves.
Message of Pope John Paul II to the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Mr. Kofi Annan, June 26, 2001

LEADER:
Invite the gathering to reflect in silence on what they have just heard, as well as the “quilt” of names spread out before them. You may wish to play music such as “Lover of Us All” during this time.

After the period of silent reflection, invite anyone who wishes to share their reflections.

CLOSING PRAYER: (ALL)
Invite all to join hands and pray the closing prayer to the “Mother of God, Light in All Darkness.”

Mother of God, Light in All Darkness,
Shelter Him our flame of hope with your tender hands.
And in our times of dread and nightmares,
Let Him be our dream of comfort.
And in our times of physical pain and suffering,
Let Him be our healer.
And in our times of separation from God and one another, Let Him be our communion. Amen.