

## WUCWO Day of Prayer 2010

### Introduction

*WUCWO Day of Prayer 2010 has been prepared by the European Region which was instrumental in the establishment in 1910 of the International Federation of Catholic Women's Leagues, from 1913 known as the International Union of Catholic Women's Leagues, and from 1952 under its present name, World Union of Catholic Women's Organisations. In preparing this Prayer Service WUCWO European Regional Vice President, Maria Giovanna Ruggieri, highlights the priority of eliminating violence against women. The 2008 WUCWO European Regional Conference focused on ending the scourge of trafficking of women. You are invited to use this service on WUCWO Day, May 13, or any other day to unite your thoughts and prayers with women around the world.*

On the way towards Jerusalem for our General Assembly in the Centenary of our foundation, we want to pray for our organisations: may we all open our hearts to the Holy Spirit and be His reliable witnesses.

We also want to pay special attention to all of the women in the world who are victims of any form of violence and to pray for them.

### ***Hymn to Mary, Queen of Peace***

Patroness of the World Union of Catholic Women's Organisations (WUCWO)

Common Meter 86 86

may be sung to the tune used for *Amazing Grace*

Most gracious Mary, Queen of Peace,  
embrace us with your love.  
May our desire sincerely be  
to praise our God above.

Implore for us the Spirit's gifts  
to follow in your way.  
Let wisdom and humility  
guide all we do and say.

In confidence we witness Christ,  
whose truth has set us free.  
May we pursue what leads to peace  
for all humanity.

Hymn composed by Karen M. Hurley, President General, 2006-2010

### **The Story of the Adulterous Woman**

#### **The Word of God: John 8:2-11**

Early in the morning he came again to the temple. All the people came to him and he sat down and began to teach them. The scribes and the Pharisees brought a woman who had been caught in adultery; and making her stand before all of them, they said to him, "Teacher, this woman was caught in the very act of committing adultery. Now in the law Moses commanded us to stone such women. Now what do you say?" They said this to test him, so that they might have some charge to bring against him. Jesus bent down and

wrote with his finger on the ground. When they kept on questioning him, he straightened up and said to them, "Let anyone among you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her." And once again he bent down and wrote on the ground. When they heard it, they went away, one by one, beginning with the elders; and Jesus was left alone with the woman standing before him. Jesus straightened up and said to her, "Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?" She said, "No one, sir." And Jesus said, "Neither do I condemn you. Go your way, and from now on do not sin again."

## Reflection

Let us try to analyse and absorb the encounter of Jesus with the woman who is restored to the fullness of life through dialogue and personal interaction.

- The Master has before him "**a woman caught in adultery**," - a sin considered by men to be typically feminine, sometimes as the gravest transgression that a woman could commit in that society, although we believe that adultery is a grave transgression for both man and woman.
- The woman is alone among a circle of men of law: angry and loquacious. Men who at that moment, as in every epoch, change their religion into an ideology, and use it to affirm themselves in their securities and sins.
- Jesus also is alone and has the woman before Him, two lonely persons, vis-à-vis. On one side "He, sinless" who takes on himself the sin of the world. On the other side, a woman, the sinner.
- The pharisees tried to put Jesus in a difficult position, but the answer and the behaviour of the Master embarrasses them as he reminds them of the impurity of their own lives.
- Jesus does not look for leniency for the accused woman. He does not make moral judgements. He does not even attempt to appeal for mercy. He does not try at all to rationally persuade the interlocutors.
- Jesus transmits a message that is much more eloquent than words. He appeals to the inner self, takes the accusers into the depths of their being so that, in the intimacy of their hearts, they may listen to their own judgements. Something surely happens - considering they all go away in silence, one after the other. Have they found their innermost being? Perhaps they have discovered that sin dwells not only in external transgression, but also in the inward disposition of the heart.
- Who can find oneself still clean once the words and the silence of Jesus questions the intimate truth? Jesus alone is without sin, but he does not throw the stone against her. The woman, reduced to nothingness by these men, now "feels her womanhood", thanks to the attentive and humanising gaze of Jesus. That exposed, naked, defenceless woman, through the mercy of Jesus is restored to the fullness of life.

Once alone, Jesus addresses the woman respectfully and says, "*Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?*" Breaking her silence, the woman answers, "*No one, Sir*". "*Neither do I condemn you*". Jesus does not speak of her sin. He does not consider her past life, but projects the woman and her attention toward the future. He does not let her stagnate in her past sinfulness or even her present shamefulness but allows her to be, right away, the beautiful person she was created to be. The woman is fully re-integrated **in her God-given dignity and greatness**. "*Go, and from this moment sin no more!*"

## **Prayer**

Lord God, lover of every person,  
You who reveal Your richness in the poor,  
who choose the weak to humiliate the strong,  
who choose the foolish to confuse the wise,  
we beg You:

Let the awareness of each person's human dignity  
grow in each of us and in our organizations,  
especially the dignity of the poor and the voiceless,  
of the women who are exploited and humiliated by others.

Help us to become, following your example,  
sensitive to their sufferings and respectful of their **dignity**,  
so that we may become life-giving organizations,  
deeply committed to the acceptance of all humanity  
and to the mission of evangelisation. Amen.

## **Final song: Magnificat**

My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord, my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour;  
he has looked with favour on his lowly servant.  
From this day all generations will call me blessed;  
the Almighty has done great things for me and holy is his name.  
He has mercy on those who fear him,  
from generation to generation.  
He has shown strength with his arm  
and has scattered the proud in their conceit,  
Casting down the mighty from their thrones  
and lifting up the lowly.  
He has filled the hungry with good things  
and sent the rich away empty.  
He has come to the aid of his servant Israel,  
to remember his promise of mercy,  
The promise made to our ancestors,  
to Abraham and his children for ever. Amen.