January 2008 - GS Justice Peace prayer network:
The following prayer was prepared by Sr Magdalena Fransiscus for the European regional JP workshop in December 2007. The content is derived from the declaration of religious from 26 countries who met in Rome last October. You can adapt for your situation.

Musical Background:

In this week dedicated to women victims of violence we wish to reflect and pray for all the persons victimized all over the world.

Each person brings something which symbolizes the violence committed against women in her country. She then silently places this on the mat or carpet on which there is a statue of the shepherdess, a cross and a loom…

How do we react in the face of violence? With violence too? With passivity? By non-violence? I take a little time to look within myself to see my usual reaction.

Silence

Let us look at the attitude of Jesus … on his attitude depends the life of a woman…a woman who in this patriarchal society had a status inferior to men who are considered the masters.

Jesus went to the Mount of Olives. At daybreak he returned to the Temple and as all the people came to him, he sat down and began to teach them. The scribes and Pharisees brought a woman along who had been caught committing adultery, and making her stand in front of everybody, they said to Jesus, “Master, this woman was caught in the act of adultery, Moses has ordered us in the law to condemn women like this to death by stoning. What have you to say?” But Jesus bent down and started writing on the ground with his finger.

Jesus bent down without losing his dignity to be in solidarity with the victim…

Jesus looked up and said, “Woman, where are they?”

Jesus reflects on his response … he breaks the logic of vociferous words by silence.

Jesus stands up and tells the group: “He who has not sinned among you, let him cast the first stone.”
Jesus breaks the logic of “victim-executioner.” The executioner in his aggression has lost all sense of culpability and the victim is made so guilty that she loses all sense of fighting back. Jesus challenged each in his/her conscience to awaken their sense of guilt.

**Bending down again… he wrote on the ground once more.**

Jesus stoops again … he puts his confidence in the human conscience … He wants both the men and the woman to grow from this test.

And Jesus is left alone … He believes in the openness of even the most hardened heart.

Jesus stands and asks the woman: “Woman, where are they?”

Jesus now turns towards the woman to look at her and speak to her heart to heart. He does not make her guilty.

“Has no one condemned you?” “No one, Lord.” “Neither do I condemn you, go and don’t sin any more.”

Jesus in putting his finger on the passivity of the woman, wakens her fighting spirit: “Go and take your life in hand, don’t let yourself be led…”

By his attitude, Jesus has shattered the logic of conflict developed by his enemies. In challenging their conscience, he has delivered them from their logic of death.

**Musical Background:**

During the silence I regard all the situations of violence I can recall…then I listen to the words of Jesus … What do they call to mind? When I feel ready, I write on the cardboard before me a word which would enable one to get out of the spiral of violence, I then place it on the loom.

**Song/chant:**

“In our darkness you kindle the fire that never dies, that never dies.”

I take time to read all the words before me … pathways to get out of violence … ways to build or re-build a person … and I listen to this:

**Women Weavers**

God is sitting and weeping.
The marvelous tapestry of creation
She had woven with such great joy
is mutilated, ripped and torn into tatters
its beauty devastated by violence.

God is seated and weeping.
But look
she gathers the pieces to weave anew
she gathers the shreds of our sorrows,
    the pain, the tears, the frustrations
caused by cruelty, by crushing ignorance
    rape and carnage.
    She gathers
the tatters of crushing hard work
of pleas and initiatives for peace
of protests against injustice.
All these things seemingly so weak and small
Words and actions offered in sacrifice
    in hope, faith and love.

God is sitting, weaving
    with patience, with persistence
and a smile radiates like a rainbow
on her face bathed with tears
She invites us not only to continue
offering her the rags and tatters of our sufferings
    and our work
But much more, to take our place
beside her, before the loom of gladness
    and weave with her
the tapestry of a new creation.

Music:

We now take time for prayer of intercession for all victims of violence all over the world with the declaration of religious from 26 countries who met in Rome last October to fight against human trafficking that generates so much violence.

KYRIE ELEISON (3x)

To Victims:
    We say to you who have been trafficked especially women and children – We stand with you, you are not alone. We will fight with you to release you from your bondage. In solidarity with you, we will confront the traffickers. We challenge unjust systems and those who exploit you. Do not give up hope.

KYRIE ELEISON (3x)

To Traffickers:
    We, the women religious from across the world say to you traffickers: Stop the exploitation! Look at the children, women, and men you are destroying with your physical and psychological abuse. By violating their fundamental human rights you damage, deny and destroy their identities, names and status. We condemn these actions as well as the subtle ways you use to exploit them.

KYRIE ELEISON (3x)
To Demanders and Exploiters:

We call on you who exploit women, children and men for commercial sex or forced labor to stop buying human beings, for without your demand the evil of human trafficking would not exist. We call on you to realize that all women, children and men have equal rights and dignity and that in your demand you cause irreparable harm and lose your own dignity.

KYRIE ELEISON (3x)

To Governments:

We acknowledge that many governments have laws against trafficking and call for an increased enforcement of these laws. We further call on the governments of the world to address the issues of economic inequality, poverty and corruption which lead to the destruction of so many lives. The physical, emotional, spiritual and psychological torture of millions of people, hidden in back streets, ghettos, hotels and parlors all over the world is criminal activity. We urge governments to create and implement policies and strong legislation which criminalize the exploiters. Good governance demands that traffickers do not benefit from the vulnerability of others.

KYRIE ELEISON (3x)

To All Religious Leaders:

We appreciate all the religious leaders who have supported us in the fight against trafficking in persons. We call on all religious leaders to end religious practices and customs that discriminate against women and girls, and hence contribute to the attitude of gender inequality underlying the growth of human trafficking in our world today.

We urge all religious leaders to denounce injustice and violence against women, children and men who are exploited or used in the sale of organs. We encourage you to relentlessly use your pastoral responsibility to defend and promote the human dignity of persons exploited by these forms of slavery.

KYRIE ELEISON (3x)

To People of Good Will:

We urge people of good will to open your hearts to the victims and to act to change the root causes of human trafficking – poverty, gender inequality, discrimination, greed and corruption. Each small action of restoring dignity to another person furthers the dignity of each one of us. Our hope rests in a vision of humanity which honors the principle that no woman, child or man is a commodity for sale. Relying on the love of God, we ask you to join us in our prayers and our actions to eradicate this social and moral evil.

KYRIE ELEISON (3x)

Silently, each one gets back her symbol and gives it to another, asking the other to keep in prayer whoever she is anxious about.

During this time, the following is chanted:

“Confitemini domino quoniam bonus confitemini domino alleluia.”