Our collective voice crying loudly for JUSTICE

Call to Prayer (use any instrumental music or gong)
Leader: As one community with one breathe and one spirit, we give praise to

The God of Love who embraces all creatures and seeks a deep communion with us,
The God of Mercy who is immersed in the life of this world sharing with our hopes and pains,
The God of Life who identifies with the poor and the oppressed and who calls us to stand with them.

All: Bless us and strengthen us with Your Holy Spirit as we live and walk humbly with You and with those who seek for justice and peace.

Leader: As we gather this moment in prayer, we bring with us the concerns of the people we serve and journey with. We bring into our circle the concerns of the wounded world we live in. Everyone is invited to share. (e.g. women and children, migrants and refugees, landless peasants, human rights issues, government policies that cause further impoverishment, particular advocacy, etc. After the sharing of concern, the following psalm will be recited.

Psalm: (This psalm was composed by Norma Dollaga, Deaconess, and Philippines at the height of our campaign against corruption)

God of struggling people, You are Movement never deaf nor blind to our needs. As with the Exodus of old, You are raging thunder against oppression. Your heart weeps when people living in poverty are in trouble. You topple the proud and greedy. And reproach those who make unjust rules.

You are in our warm tears provoked by criminal abuse.
You give strength to our clenched fists raised against exploitation.
You resound within our collective voice crying loudly for JUSTICE.
You are our Vision as we dream of a nation from slavery released.

You are Emmanuel, always within and among us.
Where there is JUSTICE and MERCY, there too is your Presence.
Behold our land and people—suffering in deep pain.
We have been deceived and cheated.
Our wealth has been plundered and looted
By leaders and their legions apparently without end.
Corruption has been their shameless way.
They do not know the meaning of honor;
Nor do they blush when caught red-handed in crime.

God of Justice, surely there will be an end to all these.
May you find us faithfully following your way,
Taking the side of the poor and exploited.
Deepen our commitment and strengthen our resolve.
Lead us not into unprincipled compromise
Nor to surrender to crook powers seemingly unbeatable.
You are faithful Ezer (our Savior), ever with the journey of the people.

And so we stand for and struggle with
  *the hungry and weak;*
  *those denied of daily bread;*
  *those robbed of dignity and pride.*
  *those made vulnerable.*
*To call for care and justice.*

*Glory to the Father, and to the Son…*

**Reading:** Matthew 5:1-12 The Beatitudes

**Reflection:** (Excerpts from the reflection on the Word by Fr. Wilfredo Dulay, MJ, Philippines, 2013)

The Gospel has a clear message: Jesus opted to prefer the poor. He refused the way of the powerful. He chose the poor to mediate the saving grace of God. Jesus chose and assumed the place and the perspective of the poor to carry out his mission of redeeming humankind. He gave up power. To redeem the world he chose to be on the side of the victims of the powerful. He chose the way of the poor.

To arrive at the true Christian meaning of opting for the poor – biblically, theologically, and practically –  the link between injustice and poverty must be established and recognized: *injustice is the causal agent of poverty.* In other words, injustice causes poverty. Where there is no injustice, poverty won’t exist.

We Christians, the modern followers of Jesus, have not done enough in this area of conversion to the neighbor, to social justice, to history. We have not yet perceived clearly enough that to know God is to do justice. We have yet to tread the path that will lead us to seek effectively the peace of the Lord in the heart of social struggle (cf Daniel Groody, *Gustavo Gutierrez: Spiritual Writings*, Orbis Books, 2011). *(See the full reflection on page 3)*

**Moments of Silence:** The leader may invite individual reflection

**Intercessory Prayers:** Each one is invited to pray. For each intercession, the response is:
*R/ God of Justice, help us to walk in your footsteps*

**OUR FATHER…**

**Closing Prayer:** O God of our journey, continue to bless us with your courage and discernment that we may never lose our passion to seek justice and peace for the poor of this world. In the midst of persecution and callousness, help us to be resilient in faith as we follow Jesus’ way of being prophetic in this modern world. Amen.

*An appropriate song may be sung*  

**Submitted by JP contacts, Province of The Philippines**
ANNEXE:

As Christians, and as the modern followers of the Lord, we need to have a handle on the complex dynamics of poverty and injustice. A known authority on this matter is the Peruvian Dominican Gustavo Gutierrez - also known as the Father of Liberation Theology - who recently was received in audience by Pope Francis, the occasion perhaps indicative of a changing estimation by the Vatican of Liberation Theology.

Gutierrez’ insights are tremendously useful to clear the mind of unwarranted confusion. In the tradition of St. Thomas, the distinctions he makes between material poverty, voluntary poverty and spiritual are to the point.

**Material or real poverty means privation, or the lack of goods necessary to meet basic human needs.** It means inadequate access to education, health care, public services, living wages, and discrimination because of culture, race or gender. Gutierrez insists that material poverty is evil; it is a subhuman condition in which the majority of humanity lives today, and it poses a major challenge to every Christian conscience and therefore to spirituality and theological reflection. When Jesus said "Blessed are the poor," Gutierrez points out, he does not say, "Blessed is poverty." For Gutierrez standing in solidarity with the poor means taking a stand against inhumane poverty.

**Spiritual poverty is about a radical openness to the will of God, a radical faith in a providential God, and a radical trust in a loving God.** It is also known as spiritual childhood, from which flows the renunciation of material goods. Relinquishing possessions comes from a desire to be more possessed by God alone and to love and serve God more completely.

**Voluntary poverty is a conscious protest against injustice by choosing to live together with those who are materially poor.** Its inspiration comes from the life of Jesus who entered into solidarity with the human condition in order to help human beings overcome the sin that enslaves and impovershishes them. Voluntary poverty affirms that Christ came to live as a poor person not because poverty itself has any intrinsic value but to criticize and challenge those people and systems that oppress the poor and compromise their God-given dignity. It involves more than detachment, because the point is not to love poverty but to love the poor.

The preferential option for the poor is voluntary poverty rooted in our spiritual childhood, the faith in divine providence that recognizes our dependence on God and moves us to detach ourselves from material possessions and renounce them.

To the contention that God is the God of all and should pay equal attention to the rich as to the poor, the response is a no-brainer. If God is indeed a God of justice, of mercy and of love, He/She simply could not condone crime and take the side of the victimizer. God must come to the aid of the victim and the attention that She/He would give to the exploiter, the oppressor, the victimizer would be a reprimand. The rich and the powerful may not complain that God does not pay attention to them. God sends them the poor to remind them of their crimes of exploitation and injustice. **The poor is God’s reprimand to the rich.** And since the poor are multitudes, the rich are, in fact, getting a lot of attention, a multitude of reminders and a serious reprimand. And they better listen.