



## Praying with Aung San Suu Kyi – a woman in journey towards Peace with Justice



In November 2015, the world witnessed a miracle. When the Middle East was burning with hatred and as thousands of migrants were flowing into Europe, as Europe was paralyzed by the violence in the streets of Paris, a miracle was happening in far off Myanmar. A fragile woman of 70 years, Aung San Suu Kyi was winning a landslide majority. For 60 years, this country was suffocated with dictatorship. Civil unrest, conflict and displacement killed thousands, displaced millions. Aung San Suu Kyi was under house arrest for 15 years.

Her victory was the ‘Mandela moment’ of 21<sup>st</sup> century. Like Mandela, she was under arrest. Her long incarceration did not bring bitterness. Her personality and her pursuit of truth and justice has proved once again the power of non-violence. This is a pivotal moment in history. Women power of non-violence and nurturing forgiveness has challenged the patriarchal violence perpetrated on humanity.

Like Mandela, her actions and words have already brought greater peace. Her faith in truth have brought her victory against an army which is 500,000 in Myanmar. Her actions behalf of justice have opened the doors to the poor, bringing in a hope of a peaceful transition of power, in total contrast to wars elsewhere. Today we pray with this fragile woman whose faith in the ‘power of empty hands’ may continue to inspire us.

**Opening Prayer :** *Spend a few moments looking at the picture and quotations of Aung San Suu Kyi. Contemplate her faith amidst darkness of hopelessness that engulfed her country for 60 years. We may reflect how some her words closely resemble the Biblical values of Justice and opportunity for the oppressed. Those who feel like sharing their reflections can do so.*

God give us the courage to follow our dreams, even when they look big, foolish and impossible. Inspire us by the great example of women like Aung San Suu Kyi, who by her fortitude and faith saw the power of evil diluted and the good once again asserting itself. Help us to believe in our struggle for peace and justice. Amen.

*Reflection 1*

**Aung San Suu Kyi : Justice is a dream. But it is a dream that we are determined to realize.**

Realities are made of dreams. 50 years ago, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. gave an inspiring speech: “I have a dream.” Justice was denied to the African Americans for centuries. Few people were willing to see this dream realized. Today, the USA is governed by Barack Obama, who himself often spoke of the “Audacity of Hope.”

What made the difference in the lives of Aung San Suu Kyi and Dr. King, to not to give up hope and live by a dream? What are the mental challenges that occur in our life and mission when faced with apparently unsurpassable evil?

Learn to do right, seek Justice (Is: 1:17). Reflect in silence about what the areas are where God is calling us to ‘do right and seek justice.’ Write down your justice dreams, and in a procession offer them on the altar with silent prayer. Old Testament God is a God of Justice. May we have courage to respond to God’s Call.



**“You should never let your fears prevent you from doing what you know is right.”**  
- Aung San Suu Kyi

*For sixty long years, fear hovered over Myanmar, with its strict thought control and ever present military intelligence. People lost their voice to fear. Fear became a national malady, paralyzing every sector. All forces melted under the power of fear.*

*Except One person: Aung San Suu Kyi. Neither the arrogant power of an all-powerful army of 500,000 or her own incarceration for 15 years stripped her moral courage. Her silent was eloquent, her defiance moral. She always urged everyone to defeat the mutilating fear. Her book **FREEDOM FROM FEAR** became a best seller.*

## Reflection 2

*The Bible has many examples. Most of the Prophets – Moses, Isaiah, Ezekiel – all were immobilized by fear, felt unworthy of their calling. Fear clouded their reason. Moses, the great liberator of the slaves of Egypt protested “How can I?” God’s promise to all those who are challenged by the monstrous evil **“I am with you always.”***

In our work to protect the dignity of people, as in anti-trafficking work, we encounter international mafia, colluding government officials, and criminals. Fear and Anxiety shroud our reason and often slow down our response. When good people choose silence in the face of evil, that silence can be criminal. *“We will have to repent in this generation, not only for the evil words and deeds of the bad people, but for the appalling silence of the good people.”* - Martin Luther King Jr.

Let us examine our conscience, the times we compromised with the evil, stunted by fear. Ask God to bless us with strength to speak out when “they sell honorable people for silver and poor people for a pair of sandals.” ( Amos 2:6). We may share our individual and collective fears in this age.

***Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul.  
Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body . (Mt 10:28)***

At the age of 70, Aung San Suu Kyi is graceful, youthful and an indomitable hard worker. Her power is the power of women to forgive, the power not to believe in violence. During the recent elections, she travelled through mountains, rivers, floods and landslides to reach out to the people, listening to their stories in person. Her concern brought a landslide victory, opening possibilities for a new Myanmar with greater justice and peace.

“WE WORK FOR WHAT WE WANT” – a simple mantra that brought monumental changes to lives of millions of Myanmar.

Her leadership as a woman brings a day of hope and joy to all women. She has redefined power, affirming justice to the most vulnerable.

Each woman is blessed to follow her great example of struggling for justice, never giving into fear. International Women’s Day is a timely reminder that another world is possible. Aung San Suu Kyi is the modern Moses. Mary’s Magnificat is fulfilled in her life and the lives of millions of women who struggle for Justice.

*Prayer: Bathe us God with your Grace and Hope that in our weakness we may believe in your strength, in our hopelessness we may seek your courage, in our moments of doubt we may be strengthened by great example of women like Mary and Aung San Suu Kyi, and build a world with justice and peace. – Amen.*

