

Building a New Humanity through Universal Values
Prayer Service for the International Day of the Girl Child

Quotes: ‘Any child that is brought in the world is a blessing not a mistake’

‘Woman as architect of the society deserve equal right & respect’

‘Girls are the spirit of our nation; save them from exploitation.’

‘A Girl Child brings joy; she is no less than a boy’

Scripture: ‘That our daughters may be as the columns of the temple’

Ps. 144:12

Introduction: Lighting of the lamp: as the lamp is lit, all will remain standing

Leader:

Light represents the presence of God who guides us with divine wisdom. As we take part in the prayer service for the International Day of the ‘Girl Child’, let us welcome the Divine Presence in our hearts, in our lives in our midst and in our world of work as the lamp is being lit by dignitaries.

She is a Daughter,

She is a Sister

RESPECT GIRLS

Reader 1: (all are seated)

On December 19, 2011, the United Nations General Assembly adopted Resolution 66/170 to declare 11 October as the International Day of the ‘Girl Child’, to recognize the rights of the ‘girl child’ and the unique challenges the ‘girl child’ faces in society. We focus our attention on the ‘girl

child’, as part of a massive and relentless drive towards a world of equality: a Planet 50-50 by 2030."The Sustainable Development Goals precisely include key targets for gender equality and empowerment of all women and girls and offer an occasion for a global commitment to break intergenerational transmission of poverty, violence, exclusion and discrimination and realizing our vision of a life of dignity for all" (Ban Ki-moon).

Girls have the potential to play key role in achieving a sustainable and equitable world, both as the empowered girls of today and as tomorrow's mothers, mentors, household heads, workers and political leaders. Any investment in empowering the 'girl child' to uphold her rights today for a thriving future ensures gender justice; since woman is an equal partner in solving the problems of economic growth, disease prevention and global sustainability.

Reader 2:

The term "girl child" typically carries negative image of sexual discrimination and bias from the womb to the tomb as many cultures believe that the 'girl child' is inferior to the boy child. Every 12 seconds, a baby girl is aborted in India. That's about 7,000 unborn girls killed in sex-selection abortion daily in India, an annual United Nations report on children said. Around 60 million 'girl child' got eliminated from wombs in Asia and 30 million alone from India. "It's almost as if a whole gender has been exterminated". Female feticide, infanticide, malnutrition are the concern of skewed sex ratio in India. By default if 'girl child' is born, she often suffers systematic discrimination and negligence through poor nutrition, inferior education, exploitation, child abuse, female genital mutilation (FGM), sexual harassment and violence by family and society

Girls are the
spirit of our
nation. Save
them and stop
their
exploitation

Although, India is a country where female goddesses are worshiped at various festivals, the 'girl child' suffers from prejudice being denied her rights and respect in prevalent patriarchal society where a son is valued for lineage. "Daughter are Angels sent from above to fill our heart with unending love" says J. Lee. A 'girl child' always is a blessing and reason for the continuation of life in this world. Instead of rejoicing at the birth of every 'girl child' who adds beauty and meaning to our world, the 'girl child' experiences distress from cradle to the grave. In truth 'girl child' plays key role as a good daughter and a sister now, to be a loving wife and caring mother / grandmother as the roles multiply.

Reader 3:

Girl child has fundamental rights of equality in the society like boys. The Government of India has started a "Save the Girl Child" campaign with the slogan "[A happy girl is the future of our country](#)" to end the gender-selective abortion of female feticide, which has skewed the gender ratio. The UN has many initiatives that aim at the welfare of the girl child. The Indian Prime Minister, Narendra Modi launched a campaign 'Beti Bachao: Beti Padhao' to spread awareness towards saving and educating the 'girl child' in our home and society. Life possibility for humanity on the earth without daughters is grim for without women everything is incomplete in this world like man, home and a world itself.

Friend, sister,
daughter
When you kill a girl,
you kill many others
Let girls see the world.
They will make you
feel proud

(-Reflective Pause-)

Can we reclaim the value and dignity of each human life, to restore and ensure the equal inherent value of an unborn girl child?

SAVE THE GIRL CHILD.

Think of a world
without us.

Can we mobilize minds /hearts /hands and join in the movement to cause a change in mindsets by choosing 'culture of life' over 'culture of death'?

Can we be the catalyst by championing the value and precious worth of our girl children?

(-Pause-)

Prayer of Intercession: *(alternate the readers)*

Let us join in praying '*That our daughters may be as columns of the temple.*' (Ps. 144:12). We pray that women and girls everywhere may live life abundantly as God intends for them. Your response is: **God give us life.**

We need to teach our daughters to distinguish between:

A man who **flatters** her and a man who **complements** her.

A man who **spends** money on her and a man who **invest** in her.

A man who views her as **property** and a man who views her **properly**.

A man who **lusts** after her and a man who **loves** her.

A man who believes he's a gift to **women**, and a man who believes she's a gift to **him**.

And then we need to teach our **sons** to be that **kind** of man.

1. We pray for the safety of unborn and infant girls before they are born. Let them be born healthy and whole; let their parents love and cherish them as much as you do O God our loving Creator. **R: God give us life**

2. God of love and life, we pray for a change in the mindset of people to accept and respect your image in every person without bias on the girl child. Help us value everyone as precious, loved and wanted. **R: God give us life**

3. We bring before you every 'girl child': daughter, sister, wife and mother in their different roles. Help us to uphold the dignity and empower the 'girl child' to play the rightful role in society /nation. **R: God give us life**

4. We pray for all victims of abuse, discrimination and violence who feel unloved and rejected. Heal their wounds and strengthen them to attain their potential to live fuller life. **R: God give us life**

5. We pray for the safety of girls in vulnerable situations, trafficked for sex trade, those who are exploited, oppressed and in distress. Creator of heaven and earth, deliver them from all evil and harm. **R: God give us life**

A sister is like the pride of our life.

A daughter is the best blessing from God.

RESPECT A GIRL

She is the smile of your life

6. We pray for those in authority: government, organizations, church, society: that they be sensitive to issues affecting the girl child /women, and adopt measures to protect/ promote their growth/development. **R: God give us life**

7. May we the Good Shepherd Sisters be committed at all times to stand for life at every phase to defend the vulnerable from unsafe conditions and support their rights socially/educationally/economically. **R: God give us life**

Leader:

We pray that every child feel accepted and treasured within her culture as someone who has been created in God's image (Psalm 139:13-18) and that everyone is sensitized to be responsible for the protection of the other. We pray for the donors, network of organizations and activists who look after the rights of the girl child to empower them. We pray that the merciless acts of human trafficking and sexual exploitation stop as we pray:

All together:

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be Thy Name; Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. Amen.

Contributed by Sister Taskila Nicholas, Province of Central East India/Nepal