

Opening Song: Amazing Grace

Amazing Grace, how sweet the sound,
That saved a wretch like me....
I once was lost but now am found,
Was blind, but now, I see.

T'was Grace that taught...
my heart to fear.
And Grace, my fears relieved.
How precious did that Grace appear...
the hour I first believed.

Through many dangers, toils and snares...
we have already come.
T'was Grace that brought us safe thus far...
and Grace will lead us home.

The Lord has promised good to me...
His word my hope secures.
He will my shield and portion be...
as long as life endures.

When we've been here ten thousand years...
bright shining as the sun.
We've no less days to sing God's praise...
then when we've first begun.

Amazing Grace, how sweet the sound,
That saved a wretch like me....
I once was lost but now am found,
Was blind, but now, I see

Leader: Lord we gather here today to pray for an end to execution. Together we proclaim the injustice of the death penalty and we pray that through you we will be able to abolish this vengeful institution.

All:

**God of compassion,
You let your rain fall on the just and the unjust.
Expand and deepen our hearts
So that we may love you as You love,
Even those among us
Who have caused the greatest pain by taking life.
For there is in our land a great cry for vengeance**

**As we fill up death rows and kill the killers
In the name of justice, in the name of peace
Jesus, our brother
you suffered execution at the hands of the state
But you did not let hatred overcome you.
Help us reach out to victims of violence
So that our enduring love may help them heal.
Holy Spirit of God,
You strengthen us in the struggle for justice,
Help us to work tirelessly
for the abolition of state-sanctioned death
and to renew our society
So that violence will be no more.
Amen**

Leader:

Lord God, we are here today to cry out against the death penalty. We know, that it is You alone who can make the decision to give and take life. May our actions help show others the injustice of the death penalty and Lord, please help abolish this abominable system. Through Your Will and our actions, help us to promote a culture of respect, love, and sanctity of life.

Reader 1:

Matthew 27, 11-14

Now Jesus stood before the governor and the governor asked him, "Are you the King of the Jews?" Jesus said, "You say so," But when he was accused by the chief priests and elders, he did not answer. Then Pilate said to him, "Do you not hear how many accusations they make against you?" But he gave him no answer, not even to a single charge, so that the governor was greatly amazed.

All:

Lord, help us to stand for those who are falsely accused, and for those who cannot speak to defend themselves. Let us be their voice, and let us be a voice for justice. Help us to treat all people, innocent or guilty, with the dignity they deserve as people created in God's image.

Reader 2:

Matthew 27, 15-22

Now at the festival the governor was accustomed to release a prisoner for the crowd, anyone whom they wanted. At that time they had a notorious prisoner, called Barrabas. So after they had gathered, Pilate said to them, "Whom do you want me to release for you, Barrabas or Jesus who is called the Messiah?" For he realized that it was out of jealousy that they had handed him over. While he was sitting on the judgment seat, his

wife sent word to him, “have nothing to do with that innocent man, for today I have suffered a great deal because of a dream about him.” Now the chief priests and the elders persuaded the crowds to ask for Barabbas and to have Jesus killed. The governor again said to them, “Which of the two do you want me to release for you?” and they said, “Barabbas.” Pilate said to them, “Then what should I do with Jesus who is called the Messiah?” all of them said, “Let him be crucified!”

All:

Lord, help us to fight against the philosophy of eye-for-an-eye. Instill in our citizens justice, hope, and mercy, that they will realize that taking a life for a life does not help the accused or the victim’s families. Help us show others that the days of the death penalty are numbered, so that we can all shout, “Forgiveness! Healing!” not “Death.”

Reader 3:

Matthew 27, 24-27

So when Pilate saw that he could do nothing, but rather that a riot was beginning, he took some water and washed his hands before the crowd, saying, “I am innocent of this man’s blood, see to it yourselves.” Then the people as a whole answered, “His blood be on us and on our children!” So he releases Barabbas for them and after flogging Jesus, he handed him over to be crucified.

All:

We will not wash our hands of this abomination! We will not let the blood of fellow Americans, fellow Humans, stain the integrity of our nation. Lord Jesus, protected and shielded by the precious blood you spilled for us, may we bring an end to the death penalty. In your name we pray, Amen.

Intercessions

Leader: Lord God, we ask you to help us in our mission to abolish the death penalty. Please grant that our prayers may be fulfilled and that your will may be done.

Please respond “Lord hear our prayer”

For our social order, that it may show love, mercy, justice and peace.

Lord hear our prayer

For all elected officials, that they may govern with compassion.

Lord hear our prayer

For all prisons, that they may be places of restoration & healing.

Lord hear our prayer

For all prison employees, that they may respect prisoners as fellow human beings.

Lord hear our prayer

For all prisoners, that they may have the courage not to become embittered or hopeless.

Lord hear our prayer

For all on death row, that their lives may be spared and that they may walk in newness of life.

Lord hear our prayer

That all may be saved from cruel & unusual punishment.

Lord hear our prayer

That the death penalty may be seen as incompatible with the dignity and self-respect of persons, and be abolished.

Lord hear our prayer

For what else shall we pray for?

(Please state any further intercessions you may have)

God of life, hear our prayer. **Amen.**

Now let us all pray together:

A Prayer to Abolish the Death Penalty

By Sister Helen Prejean

You have said when two or more agree on something and is asked in the name of Jesus this will be granted.

We come to You asking for the immediate abolition of death penalty in the USA.

We pray for those on death row, so they might keep the faith and the strength to live to the day this abomination is abolished.

We pray for those who have lost their lives due to this barbaric practice and now are in the loving presence of God.

For their families, so they may never doubt the Resurrection of those they loved and lost in such a hideous way.

**We also pray for the supporters of death penalty
and also for those directly involved with the application of it,
so they may get an insight of how precious a human life is
and will be deterred from harming it, which ultimately belongs to God.**

**We pray for those in positions of influence, civil or religious,
that they might gain an open mind and a forgiving heart.**

**We give thanks for all those who are actively involved in this cause,
those who have opened their minds and hearts
to an alternative to death penalty.
Thank You also for those who will join this cause in the future
and go forth to victory.**

**This is the time of victory, because You, Father,
are timeless and for You future is already present.
Praised be Your Holy Name.**

Amen.

And so we go forward now,
knowing that the violence stops with us.
Bless us, o Compassionate One,
and give us strength for the journey.
Fill us with that amazing grace
which breaks down walls of hatred and fear
and allows Your love and mercy to enter in,
that the process of healing and reconciliation might begin.

Amen.

Closing Song:

BATTLE HYMN OF THE REPUBLIC

Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord;
He is trampling out the vintage where the grapes of wrath are stored;
He hath loosed the fateful lightning of His terrible swift sword;

His truth is marching on.

Glory! Glory! Hallelujah! Glory! Glory! Hallelujah!
Glory! Glory! Hallelujah! His truth is marching on.

I have seen Him in the watch fires of a hundred circling camps
They have builded Him an altar in the evening dews and damps;
I can read His righteous sentence by the dim and flaring lamps;
His day is marching on.

Glory! Glory! Hallelujah! Glory! Glory! Hallelujah!
Glory! Glory! Hallelujah! His day is marching on.

I have read a fiery Gospel writ in burnished rows of steel;
“As ye deal with My condemners, so with you My grace shall deal”;

Let the Hero, born of woman, crush the serpent with His heel,
Since God is marching on.

Glory! Glory! Hallelujah! Glory! Glory! Hallelujah!
Glory! Glory! Hallelujah! Since God is marching on.

He has sounded forth the trumpet that shall never call retreat;
He is sifting out the hearts of men before His judgment seat;
Oh, be swift, my soul, to answer Him! be jubilant, my feet;
Our God is marching on.

Glory! Glory! Hallelujah! Glory! Glory! Hallelujah!
Glory! Glory! Hallelujah! Our God is marching on.

In the beauty of the lilies Christ was born across the sea,
With a glory in His bosom that transfigures you and me:
As He died to make men holy, let us live to make men free;
While God is marching on.

Glory! Glory! Hallelujah! Glory! Glory! Hallelujah!
Glory! Glory! Hallelujah! While God is marching on.

Leader:

This Vigil is now over. Thank you for coming. Feel free to stay and pray for a few more moments.

Prepared by Maria Frederick