Sustainable Development Goals Prayer Service

Leader's Notes

This prayer service is designed for a teacher, a class, a school, a youth group or any group of people to reflect on and pray for the Sustainable Development Goals. It can be used at any time of the year or you might choose this to be your focus for Anti-Poverty Week in October.

Theme: Sustainable Development Goals

Desired outcomes: For participants to reflect on what the Sustainable Development Goals are, why they are important and how we can all work to achieve them.

Time allocation: 20-30 minutes

Readers: Choose your four readers and who the leader will be.

Materials Required: Scripts for each reader and the leader, Opening and Closing Song/Hymn, PowerPoint, Copy of this document for the PowerPoint controller.

Prepare the prayer space – See Appendix 1 for suggestions

[Slide 2] Holding slide as group enters the prayer space.

[Slide 3] Introduction

Leader: Welcome!

We begin by acknowledging the traditional owners of this land, the _____ people, as a sign of our steps towards reconciliation with God and our neighbours.

Let us remember that we are in the presence of our living God by making the sign of the cross.
All: In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

[Slide 4] Leader: Today we gather together to focus on the Sustainable Development Goals. These are 17 goals to achieve 3 extraordinary things by the year 2030: to end extreme poverty; fight inequality and injustice; and fix climate change.

As people of faith we cannot sit idly by while millions of our sisters and brothers experience extreme poverty and injustice. The commitment to

‘leave no-one behind’ is a key feature of the Sustainable Development Goals and is inherent in having a preferential option for the poor, a key principle of Catholic Social Teaching. The goals are not considered to have been met if those who are most vulnerable and hard to reach are not included.

The Sustainable Development Goals are universal. They are for everyone, everywhere. To achieve these goals, everyone needs to take part. Yes, that means all of us gathered here today.

Optional - Please stand for our Opening Song.

[Slide 5] Opening Song

Suggestion: ‘Anthem’ by Tom Conry

[Slide 6] Opening Prayer

Reader 1: Loving God,
Help us to be more engaged with you by opening ourselves up to your invitation to prayer, to be more loving to our neighbours and to be more respectful of our fragile earth. Help us to work together to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals and to be the generation that ends poverty and inequality and fixes climate change.
We ask this in your name.
All: Amen

Optional: You may all be seated.

[Slide 7] Leader: Justice and poverty are not new concerns for people of faith. We listen now to the words of the prophet Isaiah which reminds us that to live in right relationship with God, we need to live in right relationships with each other and be just to all.

Reader 2: A reading from prophet Isaiah (58: 9-10)

Then you shall call, and the LORD will answer;
you shall cry for help, and he will say, Here I am.
If you remove the yoke from among you,
the pointing of the finger, the speaking of evil,
if you offer your food to the hungry
and satisfy the needs of the afflicted,
then your light shall rise in the darkness
and your gloom be like the noonday.

The word of the Lord.

All: Thanks be to God.

[Slide 8] Gospel Acclamation

Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia
God has sent me to bring good news to the poor, and to proclaim to all prisoners freedom. Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia

[Slide 9] Gospel

Reader 3: A reading from the Gospel of Luke (4:16-22)

When Jesus came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, he went to the synagogue on the sabbath day, as was his custom. He stood up to read, and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written:

"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,
because he has anointed me
to bring good news to the poor.
He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives
and recovery of sight to the blind,
to let the oppressed go free,
to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."

And he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant, and sat down. The eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. Then he began to say to them, "Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing." All spoke well of him and were amazed at the gracious words that came from his mouth. They said, "Is not this Joseph's son?"

The Gospel of the Lord

All: Thanks be to you Lord Jesus Christ.

[Slide 10] Leader: In silence let us take time to reflect on what we have heard.

How can we be the 'good news'?

Pause

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End poverty
Promote justice
Uphold dignity

[Slide 11] Do we contribute to the oppression of others- through what we say, what we buy, when we stay silent instead of speaking out?

Pause

[Slide 12] Do we sometimes find it easier to stay 'blind' to injustice?

Pause

[Slide 13] How can we open our eyes and hearts to the cry of the poor and the cry of the earth?

Pause

[Slide 14] Let's take a moment to imagine what the world would look like if the Sustainable Development Goals were achieved.

(Play SDG reflection slides 15-33. Click to move though each slide. If students are too far away from the screen to read it, then the Leader or a reader can read each slide.)

[Slide 34] Prayers of Commitment

Leader: 'Leaving no one behind' is a strong commitment of solidarity. It recognises that we are all members of one human family. No matter where you are or what challenges you face, we will not leave you behind.

[Slide 35] Leader: The response to our prayer is: "We will leave no one behind."

[Slide 36] Reader 4: That our Church and its agencies such as Caritas will be a source of light and hope continuing to proclaim the good news striving to end poverty, uphold dignity and promote justice, we pray:

[Slide 37] Response: We will leave no one behind.

[Slide 38] In a world where approximately 800 million people are experiencing extreme poverty and hunger and more than 6 million children die before their 5th birthday, we pray:

[Slide 39] Response: We will leave no one behind.

[Slide 40] In a world where 57 million children don't have the chance to go to school and women and girls continue to suffer discrimination and violence in all countries, we pray:

[Slide 41] Response: We will leave no one behind.

[Slide 42]

In a world where 663 million people are still without access to an improved water source and 2.4 billion people lack access to basic sanitation services, such as toilets or latrines, we pray:

[Slide 43] Response: We will leave no one behind.

[Slide 44] In a world where one in five people don't have access to electricity, 75 million young women and men don't have a job and 828 million people live in slums, we pray:

[Slide 45] Response: We will leave no one behind.

[Slide 46] In a world where climate change is now affecting every country on every continent; disrupting national economies and affecting all lives, particularly the most vulnerable making hard lives even harder, we pray:

[Slide 47] Response: We will leave no one behind.

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[Slide 48] In a world where poverty, injustice and climate change exists, let us proclaim to all the hope articulated in the sustainable development goals, remembering we are all members of one human family, we pray:

[Slide 49] Response: We will leave no one behind.

[Slide 50] Leader: Pope Francis reminds us

"Now is the time for courageous actions and strategies, aimed at implementing a "culture of care" and "an integrated approach to combatting poverty, restoring dignity to the excluded, and at the same time protecting nature." (Pope Francis, Address to United States Congress 2015)

[Slide 51] Let us now stand in solidarity as we pray the Our Father.

All: Our Father…

[Slide 52] Closing Prayer

Leader: Loving God,

As Christians we are led by the light of hope; we know, however, that hope only becomes reality when followed up with deeds.
Help us to actively participate in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals so we can build a better future, one where the world is at peace, in balance, free of poverty and where no one is left behind.

All: Amen

[Slide 53] Closing song

Suggestion: Raise Your Voice For Justice – John Burland

[Slide 54]