

Prayer for Peace, Hope and Justice

Today the focus of the peace and justice candle will be on the domestic workers in South Africa of whom most are women racialised as black. Domestic work in South Africa (and all over the world) has its roots in slavery and for many women the conditions of their employment are brutal with the majority living with precarious financial stability, with no pension, no unemployment benefits, no access to private medical aid or adequate annual leave. Worldwide, according to HRW - Despite DW essential roles in private homes, they are among the most exploited and abused workers in the world. Children and migrant domestic workers are often the most vulnerable.

Let us pray.

Dear God help us to be confronted by the stark reality that for most domestic workers who are mothers, the absence from their own children and their own home is because of their presence raising other children and cleaning other homes. This absence has brutal consequences for these women and their own families, often shifting patterns of who can care for their children for generations. Let us pray for radical compassion from those who employ domestic workers, that they are moved to pay much more than the minimum wage, that they take care of the transport costs of their employees and are understanding if the domestic worker needs to take time off work not only to care for their own sick children but also sometimes to watch their own children in a school play or at a sports match. These acts of basic humanity (and parenting as usual for some) are often never enjoyed by domestic workers and their children therefore suffer the consequences of their parents and mostly their mother's inhumane yet widely accepted conditions of employment. Lord forgive us.

We pray that we can start paying more attention to the reasons why more than 30 years post democracy and because of apartheid spatial geography domestic workers have to travel long distances to get to work, at great expense and in unsafe modes of transport and then additionally have to walk to the various homes they work at in the early morning and then repeat this unsafe and long journey every evening after a full day of work.

The footsteps of domestic workers can be heard early in the morning and late in the evening, in suburbs that people are climbing into cars in order to go to their places of work – the disparities are so stark, yet they are normalised for all of us. God forgive us. Let us pray for each step taken by a domestic worker, for it is a daily march often needing tremendous courage as each step is a step closer to being dehumanised, erased, or ignored. Each step becomes a silenced act of protest.

Each step reinforces absence as it leaves the ground and presence when it reaches the ground again – we can and must do better about the absence of security, the absence of care, the absence of comfort, the absence of the process of dehumanising someone in order for them to work in conditions that are closer to conditions of slavery than the basic conditions of employment. God forgive us.

Omnipresent Lord, we thank you for the few employers who treat the domestic workers who are in their homes fairly and not as property, who are able to make a difference in these domestic workers lives because of their commitment to nation building and for those employers who are paying their domestic workers much more than the minimum wage – BUT this should not be lauded as generosity or benevolence but rather very simply – the right and just way to live...a Jesus way?

Dear Lord, help us to wake up to the injustices we are a part of again and again every single day in our own homes and in this home, we call South Africa. God, forgive us.

Let us pray the prayer for Africa and all the world

God Bless Africa

Guard our children

Guide our Leaders and

Give us peace

Amen.

*On the 9th August 1956, more than 20,000 South African women of all races staged a march on the Union Buildings . The march was led by Lillian Ngoyi, Rahima Moosa, Helen Joseph and Sophia Williams. This Wednesday, 9 August 2023 is National Women's Day.

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