

"We must be poor with the poor and recapture a tender and kind relationship with Mother Earth. Then we will know how to act." -Sr. Dorothy Stang, SNDdeN

Prayer Service in Memory of Sr. Dorothy Stang Anniversary of Martyrdom: February 12, 2005

Background: (To be read silently or aloud)

Sister Dorothy Stang, 74, was shot to death in the Amazon jungle in Brazil on Saturday, Feb. 12, 2005. She was renowned throughout the Amazon region for her work with the poor and landless and for her efforts to preserve the rain forest.

Loggers and land speculators in the region have been angered over new land-use and ownership regulations and have been violent toward those that want justice for the indigenous poor in the area and for the environment. Immediately after the killing, President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva ordered two members of his cabinet and a special police investigative unit to the area.



Sister Dorothy was a native of Dayton, Ohio, and belonged to the order of the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur. She had lived and worked in the Amazon region since the early 1970's, focusing on organizing and educating peasant groups about issues that included land tenure and the economic and environmental benefits of avoiding deforestation.

Leader:

We begin with the words of Sr. Dorothy Stang,

"I pray daily that some day our world can hear the appeal that Christ our true liberator makes to each of us to live a more self-sacrificing life and create a world of fraternal people."

Let us take time today to remember and honor the life and witness of Sr. Dorothy Stang. May the seeds she planted continue to bear the fruit of love, justice, integrity and hope. May we keep in our prayers this day, all those who labor to bring greater dignity and justice to the poor of this planet even in the face of grave danger and the possibility of death.

Leader: We take a moment now to reflect on Dot's life and witness.

Reader 1: Dorothy was among those honored with the 2008 United Nations Human Rights Award. This was the citation read out by President of the Assembly, Miguel d'Escoto:

Reader 2: Sister Dorothy Stang spent nearly four decades in Brazil defending the human rights of the poor, landless and indigenous populations...She worked tirelessly, together with the farmers of the region, to help them rebuild their livelihoods, cultivate their land and defend their rights from illegal loggers and ranchers. Sister Dorothy became a symbol of the fight to preserve the rainforest and to protect the rights of the

most vulnerable groups. After receiving several death threats for her work in Brazil, she commented. “I don’t want to flee, nor do I want to abandon the battle of these farmers who live without any protection in the forest. They have the sacrosanct right to aspire to a better life on land where they can live and work with dignity while respecting the environment.”

(Pause for silence)

Reader 3: Dorothy saw the rainforest as a bountiful haven for the migrant workers she followed for over 30 years. She urged them to use the Amazon’s many resources respectfully and encouraged sustainable farming techniques that preserved the biodiversity of the forest. Dorothy was a martyr, not a victim, for she was well aware of the dangers associated with her activism. She was murdered at the orders of landowners who opposed her cause.

(Pause for silence)

Reader 4: Sister Dorothy’s involvement with politics and issues of land reform, in contrast, was more an offshoot of her personal dedication to the poor families, a manifestation of her spirituality and her deep commitment to God and all forms of creation.¹

(Pause for silence)

Song Reflection: Who Will Speak?

by Marty Haugen

from Agape: The Stories and the Feast

Who will speak for the poor and the broken?
Who will speak for the peoples oppressed?
Who will speak so their voice may be heard?
Oh, who will speak if you don’t?

(Refrain)

Who will speak if you don’t?
Who will speak if you don’t?
Who will speak so their voice will be heard?
Oh, who will speak if you don’t?

Who will speak for the ones who are voiceless,
Speak the truth in the places of power?
Who will speak so their voice will be heard?
Oh, who will speak if you don’t?

Who will speak for the children of violence?
Who will speak for the women abused?

¹ Source: Sr. Dorothy Stang: Struggling For Sustainable Development in the Brazilian Amazon, School of International Service, American University, Washington, DC., December 2005.
http://www.rfkmemorial.org/human_rights/2001_Frigo/AUStangReport.pdf

Who will speak so their voice will be heard?
Oh, who will speak if you don't?

Who will speak for the shunned and the outcast?
Who will speak for all people with AIDS?
Who will speak so their voice will be heard?
Oh, who will speak if you don't?

Who will work for the thousands of homeless?
Who will work in the barrios and streets?
Who will work so their voice may be heard?
Oh, who will work if you don't?

Who will care for the plants and the creatures?
Who will care for the land and the sea?
Who will work so their voice will be heard?
Oh, who will work if you don't?

Leader: On February 11, 2005, Dorothy was shot six times at point blank range by pistoleiros believed to have been hired by a mafia-like collective of landowners in the contested settlement area of Boa Esperança. Even as her killers held her at gunpoint, Dorothy read to them from the Bible, "Blessed are the peacemakers for they shall be called the children of God."²

Leader: A Reading from the GOSPEL OF MATTHEW (MATTHEW 5: 3-10)

Left: Blessed are the poor in spirit,
Right: for theirs is the reign of heaven.

Left: Blessed are they who mourn,
Right: for they will be comforted.

Left: Blessed are the meek,
Right: for they will inherit the land.

Left: Blessed are they who hunger and thirst for justice,
Right: for they will be satisfied.

Left: Blessed are the merciful,
Right: for they will be shown mercy.

Left: Blessed are the clean of heart,
Right: for they will see God.

² Source: Sr. Dorothy Stang: Struggling For Sustainable Development in the Brazilian Amazon, School of International Service, American University, Washington, DC., December 2005. http://www.rfkmemorial.org/human_rights/2001_Frigo/AUStangReport.pdf

Left: Blessed are the peacemakers,
Right: for they will be called children of God.

Left: Blessed are they who are persecuted for the sake of justice,
Right: for theirs is the reign of heaven.

Left: Blessed are you when they insult you and persecute you and utter every kind of evil against you because of me.

Right: Rejoice and be glad, for your reward will be great in heaven. Thus they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

Leader: The Gospel of the Lord...

Intercessory Prayers: (Spontaneous)

Please respond: God of Love, hear our prayer

Prayer (Sister Sandra Araujo dos Santos)

Leader: Dorothy, we remember and we thank you for the innumerable seeds that you have planted in the hearts, in the lives of hundreds of people, in the very Mother Earth, whom you loved so much.

Side 1: Long live your seeds of resistance!

Side 2: Long live your seeds of peace and joy!

Side 1: Long live your seeds of respect for life!

Side 2: Long live your seeds of sharing and of dreams!

Side 1: Long live your seeds of faith and perseverance!

Closing Prayer: (All)

Loving God, we know the blood of the martyrs are
the seeds of the Church.

May Sr. Dorothy Stang's life as well as her death
become seeds of a new and deeper understanding in us of social justice.

May her voice for the poor and for your Creation
continue to be heard,

and may we join in the chorus.

Like Sr. Dorothy, may our love become greater than our fear,
and may we moved to a deeper commitment
to learn about the injustices in this world
so we can become more effective in working
toward the Reign of God.

May Sr. Dorothy Stang rest in peace and may her life's work live on.

Amen.

Closing Song