

Fall 2017

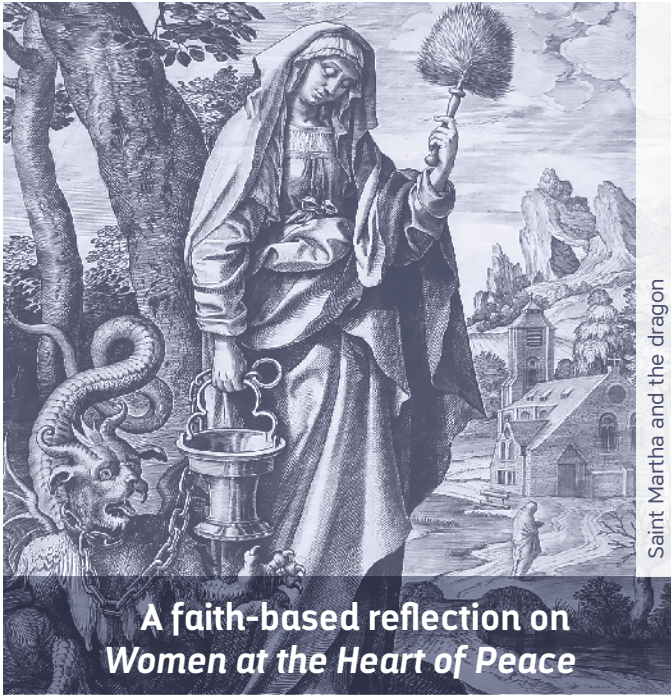
MAY PEACE BE WITH HER



A faith-based reflection on
Women at the Heart of Peace



The Canadian Catholic Organization for Development and Peace



Created in the full image and likeness of God, all persons are called to share in the divine life, expressed in communion with God and with one another. All humanity faces the challenge to protect our common home through sustainable and integral development (*Laudato Sí*, 13). But as Pope Francis also reminds us, it is often a woman, full of faith and hope, who restores strength to people and guides them along the paths of hope (General Audience, 25 January 2017). This includes promoting social structures that support the health and well-being of all people. However, in all societies, whether or not considered patriarchal, women often find themselves prevented from taking on full roles in decision-making processes. As such, women frequently are left voiceless, yet work generously and often heroically to provide water for the thirsty, food for the hungry, welcome to the stranger, clothing for the naked, care for the sick, and visits to those who are imprisoned (Mt 25:35-36). So many women demonstrate the resilience of the human spirit in the face of systemic exclusion. This is especially true during times of violent conflict, when resilience and works of mercy are needed more than ever.

In contrast to a marginalized role for women, the Gospels reveal women to be at the heart of Jesus' ministry of proclaiming the Reign of God. Mary Magdalene, the apostle to the apostles, announces to the disciples the Risen Christ (Jn 20:18) and Martha declares Jesus to be "the Messiah" (Jn 11:27). Women such as Mary Magdalene (Lk 8:23) and Mary of Bethany, who anoints Jesus (Jn 12:3), draw from their own resources to support Jesus' ministry. Jesus himself draws attention to the generous widow in the Temple (Mk 12:42-44). Women also exemplify great courage in the face of adverse circumstances. The hemorrhaging woman in the Gospel of Mark overcomes social stigma when, in faith, she reaches out boldly to touch Jesus' cloak and is healed. She then "in fear and trembling" tells Jesus the whole truth (5:25-34). Yet another compelling example is the determined Canaanite woman who intercedes on behalf of her daughter. In dialogue with Jesus, she insists on the need for healing, and is thereby witnessing to the truth while speaking on behalf of one who cannot (Mt 15:21-28).

Today women continue to do the work of the Reign of God. As Christians, we are all baptized into life in the Spirit, calling us to mission, hospitality and service to one another and to the whole of Creation. As the consecrated bread is broken during our Eucharistic celebration, we give thanks for the relationship Jesus has restored between God, humanity and Creation. We are reminded that we are each part of this larger whole, each with a role to play in bringing about the completion of the Reign of God established by Jesus.

Women in the Global South are witness to the strength of the early disciples of Jesus, and many women exemplify their commitment through their participation in various Church and social movements.

Wherever we are, we are called to recognize and support the work of women, especially in the area of peacebuilding. We must heal our social systems, broken as they are by violence, war, racism and sexism. We should do this in a way that empowers all people to participate in governance so that their voices may be heard and taken into account. Only then can we truly begin to live collectively as one in the full image and likeness of God, as it was originally conceived in Genesis.



50 YEARS OF SOLIDARITY

Loving God,

You who created everything that is good;
You who stretch out the heavens like a tent.

You have made us for each other. You call us
from our isolation into one community of love.
Your voice is sure and strong.

We come from many places and yet
we are woven together in your Holy Spirit.

Together, we hear the cry of the poor,
bearing the weight of injustice.

Together, we see the pain of the Earth
as her beauty is destroyed.

And together, we hear your voice most clearly:

Calling us to join in solidarity
with our sisters and brothers in need.

Calling us to commit ourselves,
as Ruth to Naomi saying,
“Where you go, I will go.
Where you stay, I will stay.”

O Lord, stretch the canvas of our hearts
that we might make room for the suffering
of all humanity, and of all creation.

Today, by your grace, we join our lives
to those who labour in the fields –
those who are weighed down by injustice and
those who work to build the world according to your way.

Lead us in the way of discipleship – the way
of love, of faith, of justice, and of peace –
the way made known to us through
your Son Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.



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