

WORLD DAY OF PRAYER
For Women's Ordination into a Renewed Priesthood
Stations of the Cross
Good Friday, March 25, 2005

Ministers: Leader, Lector, Narrator, Therese of Lisieux, Ludmila Javarova, a woman called to the priesthood in the Roman Catholic tradition today, musicians and cantor. If there is a woman in your community who is called to the priesthood, she can tell her story instead of using the story that is given here.

Gathering Rites

Call to Worship: *Please stand.*

Leader: We gather in the sign of the Cross +,

All: a stumbling block to some, and a scandal.

Leader: But, to all who believe, it is assuredly

All: undying symbol of unrelenting, unconditional love.

Opening Hymn: "Tree of Life," text by Marty Haugen, tune is THOMAS, adapted by Marty Haugen, c 1984, GIA Publications, Inc. *During the hymn, the Cross is carried in procession by three women storytellers and placed in the center of the worship space. Following these three women are the lector, narrator and mother. The lector sets the book on the ambo and waits there, the narrator goes to another lectern, and the mother stands near the cross. The three women stand behind three chairs, not far from the cross.*

Liturgy of the Word

Please remain standing.

Gospel: Luke 8:1-3¹

Soon afterwards Jesus went on through cities and villages, proclaiming and bringing the good news of the kingdom of God. The twelve were with him, as well as certain women who had been cured of evil spirits and infirmities: Mary, called Magdalene, from whom seven demons had gone out, and Joanna, the wife of Herod's steward Chuza, and Susanna, and many others, who provided for them out of their resources.

Please be seated as the three women sit down.

Beginnings

Narrator: They followed Jesus from Galilee, and from Alencon and Lisieux, in France, and Brno, the largest city in Moravia, Czechoslovakia. And from many tiny dots on our fragile, blue globe. They absorbed the Good News, each in their own way. And they brought their resources with them... pouring them out in abundance. Luke tells us that the women's discipleship brought them all the way to the cross and the empty tomb, where the angels spoke

¹ I prefer "certain" women to "some women" in the NRSV translation of 8:2; either is an accurate translation of the Greek.

clearly to them, “Remember how he told you, while he was still in Galilee, that the Son of Man must be handed over to sinners, and be crucified, and on the third day rise again.”² Many women remembered and learned the story of the cross by heart. We continue to walk that path for the sake of our beloved church... and those who will come after us. Listen, as three women tell their stories.

Voice 1, Therese of Lisieux: Born in the world’s lace-making capital of Alencon, France, on January 2, 1873, my family loved me very much, for I was the youngest of five sisters, who all doted on me.³ My gentle, loving father — Louis Martin — had pet names for us all. I was his “little queen.” I have been told that I was “an intelligent, lively child.” For I “learned to say (my) prayers before (I) was two, chattered all day, and sang the tuneless little songs that toddlers often sing to themselves.”⁴ But, I also had quite a mind of my own! If I couldn’t go to Vespers, I “was furious and wept and stormed.”⁵ And yet, from the age of three, I distinctly remember, I never refused God anything.

But, my happy, secure world was rocked by my mother’s death when I was only four and a half years old. My mother... Zelig... did everything, it seemed. She tended to us and loved us dearly. She attended early morning Mass with my father every day and taught us our faith. And, she worked hard as a lace-maker in her own business. But, by the time she saw the doctor, the cancerous tumor had progressed too far. After she died, we moved to Lixieux, to be near her sister’s family, the Guerins. Celine, three years older than I, named our oldest sister Marie as her mother. And I claimed Pauline- 11 years older than I- as *my* mother. All this affected me profoundly. “I, who had been so full of life, so outgoing, became shy, quiet and oversensitive. A look was enough to reduce me to tears.”⁶ This lasted for several years, until I would regain my earlier exuberance. But, throughout it all, “I cannot say how much I loved Papa, everything in him made me love him.”⁷ And, it was in the garden at our new home that I first really became absorbed in prayer.

Voice 2, Ludmila Javarova: The church bells rang the moment I was born! Was it coincidence? To my parents, it was as if their beloved church was rejoicing with them. For now, after four sons, a daughter was born to them! The date was January 31, 1932. The place, Brno, Czechoslovakia. I would carry my mother’s name, Ludmila. And I would also bear her stoic nature, her sense of order and propriety, her profound trust in God, and her love of children. My father gave me his expansive spirit, his love of books and nature, and his kindness. Both my parents taught me generosity. For, during World War II, we opened our home to another family- 20 of us, ultimately, in one house.

At the end of the war, the Soviet Union “liberated” Czechoslovakia. After the “communist coup” of February 25, 1948, the Soviet vice tightened... until totalitarian rule was established. We called it “Totality.” Women and men... church leaders everywhere... were scrutinized in minute detail. One of these leaders was Felix Davidek, a charismatic, free-spirited priest. Ordained in July, 1945, he became fast friends with our family. And after that, our lives would be forever intertwined.

² Luke 24:6-7.

³ There were actually 9 children, 7 girls and 2 boys, but only 5 girls survived to adulthood.

⁴ Rosemary Haughton, *Therese Martin: The Story of St. Therese of Lisieux*, (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1967), p. 6; hereafter referred to as Haughton.

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ Guy Gaucher, *The Story of a Life. St. Therese of Lisieux*, (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1987), p.33; hereafter referred to as Gaucher.

⁷ Gaucher, p. 35.

Voice 3, A woman called to ordination today: Mine was an ordinary childhood, you could say. Born just before the American entry into World War II, I still have vivid memories of blackouts... food rationing... letters from an uncle who fought in the Pacific... my mother's trauma as she learned of President Roosevelt's death. As an only child, I was shy. But I loved books and found friendship in them. I found friendship in my faith, as well. It was my father who first taught me to pray before bedtime. And my parents brought me to Mass every Sunday, though the Latin sounded like gibberish to my young mind. And yet... there was something... Mystery... that drew me in. I remember statues covered in purple during Lent, incense wafted aloft. I remember visiting churches on Holy Thursday evening. And, as a teenager, I can remember being wrapped in the hovering silence of a darkened church before Midnight Mass. Then suddenly, trumpets would sound, lights would come on full, and joyful strains of familiar hymns would fill the church. Christ was born! Alleluia! Alleluia! Liturgy mattered to me. But it would be many years before I would come to know how very much it mattered.

Musical response: "The Summons," verses 1-4, text by John L. Bell, c 1987, Iona Community, GIA Publications, Inc., agent; tune is KELVINGROVE, Scottish Traditional, arr. by John L. Bell, c 1987, Iona Community, GIA Publications, Inc., agent.

THE CALL

Narrator: Each heard the call of God and responded, each in her own way.

Therese of Lisieux: At age 14, I knew God was calling me to the Carmelite Order, and my response was an exuberant "Yes!" Though others considered that I was too young to know what I was doing, I persistently pursued this call with our local bishop. And, at *his* urging, with Pope Leo XIII himself, in Rome, accompanied by my father. The following April, when I was fifteen, I entered the Carmel of Lisieux. I took the name Sister Therese of the Child Jesus of the Holy Face, for I was devoted to both the Child and the Holy Face of the Passion.

It would be another eight years before I could fully name my calling to Jesus. "To be Your Spouse, to be a Carmelite, and by my union with You to be the Mother of souls, should this not suffice me? And yet it is not so... I feel within me other vocations. I feel the vocation of the WARRIOR, THE PRIEST, THE APOSTLE, THE DOCTOR, THE MARTYR.... I feel in me the vocation of the PRIEST. With what love, O Jesus, I would carry You in my hands when, at my voice, You would come down from heaven. And with what love would I give you to souls! But alas! While desiring to be a Priest, I admire and envy the humility of St. Francis of Assisi and I feel the vocation of imitating him in refusing the sublime dignity of the Priesthood."⁸ Finally, after reading St. Paul's soaring poetry on love, "I understood that LOVE COMPRISED ALL VOCATIONS, THAT LOVE WAS EVERYTHING, THAT IT EMBRACED ALL TIMES AND PLACES.... IN A WORD, THAT IT WAS ETERNAL!... MY VOCATION IS LOVE!"⁹

Ludmila Javarova: "Every Sunday my brothers played at pretending they were priests. They would celebrate 'Mass.'.... But I was out of this. Not only was I not allowed to play, they

⁸ John Clarke, O.C.D., translator of *Story of a Soul: the Autobiography of St. Therese of Lisieux*, (Washington, D.C.: Institute of Carmelite Studies, 1975, 1976), p. 192; hereafter referred to as *Story*.

⁹ *Story*, p. 194.

didn't even want me among them, especially the older ones."¹⁰ When I asked my mother about this, she said "girls couldn't be 'Reverend Fathers.' I was not content with this..."¹¹

By the time I was twelve or thirteen, I came across a question in a magazine by a female student, "Why can't women be ordained priests?" "I was so joyful that someone else had asked this question.... It awakened a desire that lay dormant down deep in my heart."¹²

I knew, by my late 20's, that I would devote my life to God in some way. But this was to become very hard under Totality in Communist Czechoslovakia. Meanwhile, Felix Davidek was imprisoned for fourteen years, but he never stopped dreaming and ministering. He realized how very important it was to ordain women as priests; the women in prison had nobody to meet their sacramental needs! Upon his release in 1964, Felix returned to our area and renewed his friendship with our family. His goal was the same as mine: "to bring people to God and God to people in the midst of the pervasive godlessness of a totalitarian state."¹³

Late in 1970, Felix acted on his dream of ordaining women. He had been secretly consecrated as a bishop. Though some other bishops objected, he ordained me a Roman Catholic priest on the night of December 28, 1970. I was sworn to secrecy. It had to be like that, but I was transformed, nonetheless. I prayed that God would send people who needed my ministry, and my prayers were heard.

A woman called to ordination today: I was forty years old when I fell head over heels in love with the liturgy of the church. How did it happen? One event built on another, without my ever realizing it: an inspiring priest, the recognized need, finally, for something more, something deeper and truer, despite marriage and three beautiful children. Within months of becoming head of the parish liturgy committee, I participated in workshop after workshop. What excitement! What connection to my deepest longings! One morning I literally woke up and knew that I had to study theology... and that ministry would become a way of life for me. And, from the time I walked into my first theology class, I felt I had come home.

People I served in parishes confirmed what I knew to be true. "You have found your calling!" "Who says women can't be ordained priests!" (This statement was made before Pope John Paul II clearly pronounced that the church had no authority to ordain women.) It was then that liturgy became the source of my deepest joy... and my deepest pain. The church I love denied me my heart's greatest desire, and the calling of the Spirit.

Musical Reflection: "Restless is the Heart," tune and text by Bernadette Farrell, c 1989, published by OCP Publications. All rights reserved.

THE STRUGGLE: STATIONS OF THE CROSS

Lector: A reading from the Prophet Isaiah (42:1-4, with "he" made plural)

Here are my servants, whom I uphold,
My chosen, in whom my soul delights;
I have put my spirit upon them;
they will bring forth justice to the nations.
They will not cry or lift up their voices,
or make them heard in the street;
a bruised reed they will not break,

¹⁰ Miriam Therese Winter, *Out of the Depths: The Story of Ludmilla Javarova, Ordained Roman Catholic Priest*, (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 2001), p. 22.

¹¹ Winter, p. 23.

¹² Winter, p. 33.

¹³ Winter, p. 72.

and a dimly burning wick they will not quench;
they will faithfully bring forth justice.
They will not grow faint or be crushed
until they have established justice in the earth;
and the coastlands wait for their teaching....

Invitation to participate in the Stations of the Cross: *The Leader invites everyone to participate in each station by standing and bowing to the Cross, as able, and then sitting during each reflection, silence and response. The Leader proclaims each station.*

The First Station: Jesus is condemned to death.

Ludmila: Because of my integrity, I wrote to the Pope myself, in 1983, informing him of my ordination. But I heard nothing... until an Austrian magazine revealed the secret ordinations in Czechoslovakia. “In 1996 (I) was summoned to the bishop’s office and notified that (I) was formally prohibited from exercising (my) priesthood, which was considered invalid. (I) was told not to reveal the details of the prohibition.”¹⁴

Silence

Response: O Christ, Rejected One, we adore you and bless you; by your holy cross, help us transform our world.

The Second Station: Jesus takes up the cross.

Ludmila: It was the evening of December 28, 1970. On my way home from work I stopped to see Felix, to accept my ordination. “Yes, I will receive it.” For Felix believed that he had been called to ordain me. “It was all very simple. Of course I had no idea of the size and shape of the cross that was standing just ahead of me. I had no idea how to develop this charism, but I accepted it with faith, with a feeling of responsibility, and with love.”¹⁵

Silence

Response: O Christ, Gateway to life, we adore you and bless you; by your holy cross, help us transform our world.

The Third Station: Jesus Falls the First Time

A woman called today: How can I ever forget the excruciating pain? After 8 full years in parish ministry, suddenly there was no place open for me. I felt like my heart had been ripped out! In the end, the God who had led me this far, was still with me. A few dear friends supported me in my return to studies to complete my M.Div, and my spiritual strengthening.

Silence

Response: O Christ, Vulnerable One, we adore you and bless you; by your holy cross, help us transform our world.

The Fourth Station: Jesus Meets His Mother

Therese: I was only nine and terribly heartbroken. How I still missed my mother! My older sister Pauline — my second mother — had left me, too, and entered the Carmelite Order. By May of my 10th year, there seemed to be no hope. Some today might call it a breakdown. Whatever it was, I was able to turn to my Mother in Heaven, the one who would never abandon me. And on this day, which I will never forget, it seemed that I no longer gazed on a statue of Mary. No, it was Mary herself, smiling at me with a motherly smile that

¹⁴ Winter, p. 211.

¹⁵ Winter, p. 126.

went straight to my heart. I was so happy! And within a couple of days, I was cured... and back to my normal routine.¹⁶

Silence

Response: O Christ, Our Mother, Laboring on the Cross for us,¹⁷ we adore you and bless you; by your holy cross, help us transform our world.

The Fifth Station: Simon Helps Jesus Carry the Cross.

Therese: I was in prayer, when a picture of the crucifix slipped out of my missal. “A great wave of feeling swept over” me, and I offered right then and there to stand at the foot of the cross with Jesus, “to receive the blood of my Savior and pour it out upon the souls who needed it so much.”¹⁸ For I knew that the blood of Christ was nothing less than the love that propelled him in all his actions. “To love Christ was to share his untiring love for human beings, even to death.”¹⁹

Silence

Response: O Christ, Compassion Poured Out, we adore you and bless you; by your holy cross, help us transform our world.

The Sixth Station: Veronica Wipes the Face of Jesus.

A woman called today: Isn't it ironic that our Tradition names a woman as true icon of Christ? For that is the meaning of Veronica's name. And we have all seen true icons of Christ, haven't we? They are people of compassion, people who listen deeply, people of prayer, to the point of intimacy with God, people who are gifted pastors, teachers, preachers, administrators, and faithful friends and prophets. They are women, as well as men. How is it, then, that the hierarchy of the church *continues* to maintain that males alone represent Christ, are “in persona Christi”? Doesn't Baptism immerse us into the life and likeness of Christ?

Silence

Response: O Christ, Human Face of God, we adore you and bless you; by your holy cross, help us transform our world.

The Seventh Station: Jesus Stumbles a Second Time.

A woman called today: The people of our diocese had spoken in a synod process. They listed the dignity of women in church and society as one of their main goals over the next few years. And yet, within five and a half years, with the work only begun, with much left to do, the diocesan office of women was dismantled. My heart was broken, for the full participation of women in church had become my passion.

Silence

Response: O Christ, Suffering Servant, we adore you and bless you; by your holy cross, help us transform our world.

The Eighth Station: The Women of Jerusalem Weep for Jesus.

A woman called today: I weep for our wounded church and world. I weep for all whose God-given gifts are ignored, rejected, and left unused by a church that desperately needs them. I weep for a conference of bishops that would so easily give up Eucharist for “Sunday Celebrations in the Absence of a Priest” because the number of male celibate priests is declining. I weep for a church hierarchy that refuses to see the many priests in our midst,

¹⁶ Haughton, p. 45.

¹⁷ This is an image from Julian of Norwich, *Showings* LT 63, p. 298.

¹⁸ Haughton, p. 62.

¹⁹ Haughton, p. 63.

women as well as men. I weep for a papacy that silences discussion of such a possibility. And I must ask, “Is the Holy Spirit being silenced as well?” If so, I weep.

Silence

Response: O Weeping Christ, we adore you and bless you; by your holy cross, help us transform our world.

The Ninth Station: Jesus Falls the Third Time.

Narrator: In the years following his 1964 release from prison, Felix Davidek developed his dream of Koinotes, an ecclesia “that would integrate the strengths and needs of the church in the world.”²⁰ And to him, that included the ordination of women. But he became totally frustrated at the unwillingness of local bishops to participate in such ordinations. “Even though the church has keys,” he said, “it does not open anything. It only rattles them, just like a jailer in Mirov.”²¹

Silence

Response: O Christ, Open-Hearted One, we adore you and bless you; by your holy cross, help us transform our world.

The Tenth Station: Jesus is Stripped of His Garments.

Therese: When asked by my blood sister, Mother Agnes of the Carmelites, about the way I wanted to teach, this was my reply. The little way. “The way of trust.... I shall tell them there is only one thing to be done on earth, and that is to scatter the flowers of small sacrifices before Jesus and win him by tenderness.”²²

Silence

Response: O Christ, Our Way, Our Truth and Our Life, we adore you and bless you; by your holy cross, help us transform our world.

The Eleventh Station: Jesus is Nailed to the Cross.

Ludmila: When I celebrated Eucharist, I would call upon the saints to become my community. But, out in public, Eucharistic celebrations became a source of deep pain for me. “I had the words in my mind, words to nourish the spirit, words that people were hungry to hear, words that were easy to understand and much more closely connected to life, but I was not allowed to express them. Sometimes I just wanted to scream.”²³

Silence

Response: O Christ, Crucified One, we adore you and bless you; by your holy cross, help us transform our world.

The Twelfth Station: Jesus Dies on the Cross.

Narrator: It had been a long agony, week upon week of suffering, of each breath becoming a sword to her chest. But, finally, at twenty minutes past seven, on September 30th, 1897, Therese breathed her last. She was twenty-four years old.

Silence

Response: O Christ, Blessed and Broken, we adore you and bless you; by your holy cross, help us transform our world.

²⁰ Winter, p. 91.

²¹ Winter, p. 93.

²² Haughton, pp. 196-97.

²³ Winter, p. 176.

The Thirteenth Station: Jesus is Taken Down from the Cross

Therese: As I lay dying, I knew this was not the end for me. I assured my sisters, “I feel that my work is just going to begin, my work of making souls love God as I love him, of teaching my little way to souls. If I get my wish, I shall spend my Heaven here on earth until the end of the world.”²⁴

Silence

Response: O Christ, Passionate One, we adore you and bless you; by your holy cross, help us transform our world.

The Fourteenth Station: Jesus is Laid in the Tomb

Narrator: All her sisters gathered around Therese, silently, after she died. Then, somewhere in the silence, they were suddenly aware that the rain had stopped and the night sky was brilliant with stars.... Mother Agnes and Sister Marie of the Sacred Heart- her blood sisters Pauline and Marie- washed and prepared her body for burial; and all the nuns then paid her a final visit. “Seeing her so radiantly beautiful, they went away with peace and joy.”²⁵

Silence

Response: O Christ, Anointed One, we adore you and bless you; by your holy cross, help us transform our world.

The Fifteenth Station: The Resurrection

Ludmila: “Once I lay claim to my identity as a priest, I could not be separated from it. Just like in motherhood, that connection is forever.”²⁶ “I cannot understand, when it is a matter of salvation or of helping souls in need, why the hierarchy of the church objects if a woman should enter into the process. Who is the priest? Someone to accompany people in their joy and in their suffering, who offers to go together with them, who is an experience of Christ to them, who works together with God.”²⁷

Silence

Response: O Christ, Living One, we adore you and bless you; by your holy cross, help us transform our world.

Sign of the Cross: *The Leader invites everyone to pair up and sign one another with God’s power of compassion poured out, of life out of death, as she proclaims,* “My friend, receive the sign of the cross on your forehead. It is Christ who now strengthens you with this sign of his love. Learn to know and follow him.”²⁸

Closing Hymn:

“**Out of Darkness,**” text and tune by Christopher Walker, c 1989, Christopher Walker, Published by OCP Publications. OR

“**Pour Out, I Will Pour Out,**” text by John L. Bell, based upon Joel 2:28, c 1995, The Iona Community, GIA Publications, Inc., exclusive North American agent. This hymn is found in *Come All You People: Shorter Songs for Worship*. The words are these: Pour out, I will pour out my spirit, earth shall be more than it seems. Both sons and daughters shall prophesy, young and old shall dream dreams.

The Women’s Ordination Conference is deeply grateful to Gloria Ulterino for writing this prayer service and for her consistent support of women’s ordination.

²⁴ Haughton, p. 196.

²⁵ Haughton, p. 213.

²⁶ Winter, pp. 137-38.

²⁷ Winter, p. 139.

²⁸ These words are slightly adapted from the ritual, “Acceptance into the Order of Catechumens,” Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults.