



Monday, 24 November  
**Ecumenical Centre Chapel**

## *“NoXcuses for Violence Against Women and Girls”*

*This week in the Ecumenical Prayer Cycle, we are praying with the people and churches of Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania, and Niger*

On 25 November 1960, Patria, Minerva and María Teresa Mirabal, three sisters from the Dominican Republic were murdered by order of the President country Trujillo. The three sisters, known as “the butterflies” fervently opposed the Trujillo’s regime, considered one of the most brutal periods in the history of the Dominican Republic for over 30 years.

November 25<sup>th</sup>, day of their assassination, is observed as the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women and it leads into the 16 Days of Activism against Gender Based Violence, ending on 10 December, International Human Rights Day. Women across the world, when faced with violence, typically find that there is always an excuse for it. Those excuses vary from tradition to religion, from the outfit they were wearing to their lack of submission... always there seems to be a reason that justifies the violent act, always an excuse!

The World YWCA has launched a campaign called *NoXcuses for Violence Against Women*. “This is your fault; you’ve dishonoured the whole family!” The NoXcuses campaign questions the validity of similar sentences commonly used when a violent act is committed. Oftentimes, both parties involved in such an act don’t realize that no excuse is acceptable as violence is a violation of women’s fundamental human rights. WCC and LWF have joined the Campaign by affirming in a series of short videos that there is no excuse for violence against women and that there is no excuse to ignore it!

We gather today in prayer for the many butterflies that have been victims of violence. For those who, as the Mirabal sisters, did not survive the torture and abuse, and for those resilient butterflies of today, that live in terror in the midst of an armed conflict, trapped in discriminatory traditions and customary laws, or in a place where they are supposed to be safe and respected: their own homes. Today we pray and we act for you.

### **Opening**

Jesus came proclaiming the realm of God,  
saying, “The realm of God has come near:  
Turn! Change your hearts. Live the good news!”  
How do we live the realm of God?

Mark 1:14, 15

### **How do we live the gospel?**

The realm of God is like a woman who is hiding.

### **Hiding?**

She’s hiding a lump of leaven  
in three great measures of flour.  
Soon the flour is rising, and rising,

And soon she makes bread –  
enough to feed everyone in need.

The realm of God is like a woman  
Who has lost something precious.

### **Precious?**

She has lost a coin,  
A coin that speaks of her dignity and value.  
She will not stop, or be silent,  
But turns the house upside down  
Until the coin is found.

The realm of God is something small:  
A seed, salt, a single light.

### **Seed? Salt? Light?**

God's realm is a single light, a candle, flickering on a hill-top.  
You can't hide it.

How do we live the realm of God?

### **How do we live the gospel?**

The realm of God is like someone who sees where there is silence  
An "elephant in the room," a skeleton in the closet,  
She knows that inside this silence  
Hides a great wrong.  
And she speaks.  
And speaks  
And doesn't give up until the injustice is named,  
and something changes.

### **Prayer:**

**We give you thanks, Eternal One,  
for those who shone their light at the risk of their life  
who made salt, and sprinkled it when it was illegal;  
who spoke a word, who took a small action  
that echoed everywhere, that changed people's hearts.  
we give you thanks for those who spoke for justice,  
when no one else dared.**

### **Suggested Song**

Sometimes a healing word, Patrick Michaels, U.S.  
Suggested tune: Wer nur den Lieben Gott

**Reading**      2 Samuel 13:1-22

*Prelude*

*(Reader 1 and 3 take their places at 1<sup>st</sup> podium and 2<sup>nd</sup> podium respectively. Reader 2 calls out her part from among the congregation.)*

**Reader 1** *(at 1<sup>st</sup> podium)*

Israel and Judah, united under its second king, King David, is in the midst of a bloody civil war. David has, with great sorrow and reluctance, raised an army against his beloved second son, Absalom.

Absalom had murdered his half- brother Amnon, and then fled into exile. Three years later, he returned, only to begin building popular support to take over the kingship from his father. This story will end with the death of Absalom, the humiliating defeat of David's army, and his very public shame and grief over the death of his beloved second son.

**Reader 2** *(from among the congregation)*

Wait! Go back.

Is this the David who killed the giant Goliath with a stone, the famous King David – poet, lover, statesman, the man “after God’s own heart”?

**Reader 1**

Yes – and also the one who seduced Bathsheba, the wife of his commander Uriah, and then arranged for Uriah, her husband and his commander, to be killed in battle.

**Reader 2**

Is this what caused the outrage, and the war?

**Reader 1**

No.

**Reader 2**

What then?

**Reader 1**

It is complicated. It's politics.

Kings and princes live under extreme pressure.

Some say they are subject to different laws from the rest of us.

**Reader 2**

Wait. Go back.

Why did Absalom murder his half-brother?

**Reader 1**

It's complicated. Family dynamics.

There was a cover-up. After all, some things should not be spoken of in public. There were very strong reasons for silence, for not taking action.

Apparently Absalom said, “Be quiet now, my sister. Do not take this to heart. He is your brother.”

David the king heard of it. He was very angry. But he would not punish Amnon. After all, Amnon was the first-born son.

## Reader 2

Wait! Go back.

What happened?

What are we talking about here?

## Reader 3 (*from 2<sup>nd</sup> podium*)

David’s son, Absalom had a beautiful sister, whose name was Tamar. Their half-brother, Amnon fell in love with her. Amnon was so tormented that he made himself ill because of his sister Tamar, for she was a virgin and it seemed impossible for Amnon to do anything to her. His cousin, Jonadab, son of Shimeah, was a skilled manipulator, and devised a plan. Amnon followed his advice.

<sup>6</sup>...So Amnon lay down, and pretended to be ill; and when the king came to see him, Amnon said to David the king, “Please let my sister Tamar come and make a couple of cakes in my sight, so that I may eat from her hand.”

<sup>7</sup>Then David sent home to Tamar, saying, “Go to your brother Amnon’s house, and prepare food for him.” <sup>8</sup>So Tamar went to her brother Amnon’s house, where he was lying down. She took dough, kneaded it, made cakes in his sight, and baked the cakes. <sup>9</sup>Then she took the pan and set them out before him, but he refused to eat. Amnon said, “Send out everyone from me.” So everyone went out from him. <sup>10</sup>Then Amnon said to Tamar, “Bring the food into the chamber, so that I may eat from your hand.” So Tamar took the cakes she had made, and brought them into the chamber to Amnon her brother. <sup>11</sup> But when she brought them near him to eat, he took hold of her, and said to her, “Come, lie with me, my sister.” <sup>12</sup> She answered him, “No, my brother, do not force me; for such a thing is not done in Israel; do not do anything so vile! ... <sup>14</sup> But he would not listen to her; and being stronger than she, he forced her and lay with her.

<sup>15</sup>Then Amnon was seized with a very great loathing for her; indeed, his loathing was even greater than the lust he had felt for her. Amnon said to her, “Get out!” <sup>16</sup> But she said to him, “No, my brother; for this wrong in sending me away is greater than the other that you did to me.” But he would not listen to her. <sup>17</sup> He called the young man who served him and said, “Put this woman out of my presence, and bolt the door after her.” <sup>18</sup> (Now she was wearing a long robe with sleeves; for this is how the virgin daughters of the king were clothed in earlier times.) So his servant put her out, and bolted the door after her.

**Song** Senzenina (South Africa)

## Reader 3

But Tamar put ashes on her head, and tore the long robe that she was wearing; she put her hand on her head, and went away, crying aloud as she went.



are not able to protect the victims and allow open accusation. We pray that justice prevails over shame.

**Response**      Refrain of “For everyone born”

Inclusive God, we pray with all the invisible women and girls in the life of today’s Tamars, who bear so much pain accompanying their violated children, sisters and mothers. You, who see their pain, and know each of them by name, hold them in your healing embrace so that they are able to journey with the violated towards justice and peace with no sexual and gender-based violence.

Merciful God, we pray with the voice of the servants who were sent out and forced to look away. Give us courage to see and raise our voice for the wellbeing of women and girls suffering from violence. Grant us wisdom, sensitivity, and strength to take action.

### **The Lord’s Prayer**

**Response**      Refrain of “For everyone born”

### **Blessing**

Go in peace,  
Go also awakened and alert,  
Go in joy  
Go also in anger

And when you feel that your actions count for nothing  
Or that your pilgrimage  
leading to neither justice, nor peace:

remember the woman who concealed a lump of leaven  
in some flour, and fed a multitude,  
and remember the tiny mustard seed  
that grew into a mighty tree of shelter.

**We will go, remember, and follow the steps of those  
who made salt, and sprinkled it when it was illegal;  
who spoke a word, who took a small action  
that echoed everywhere,  
that changed people’s hearts;  
who spoke for justice,  
when no one else dared.**

**Amen.**

**Choir** (*as congregation leaves*)

Señor, ten piedad de nosotros  
Clara Ajo and Pedro Triana, Cuba (from “Misa Cubana”)

## **The 16 Days of Activism against Gender Violence**



WCC, LWF, YWCA 2014