

The WISC Faithful Budget Campaign Prayer Vigil

Led By Religious Leaders of the Washington Interreligious Staff Community

Monday, July 25th at 12:30 pm

Leader: God be with you...

All: **And also with you.**

Leader: We are gathered on Capitol Hill as people of faith to pray for a just and compassionate federal budget. Inspired by a common spiritual conviction that God has called on all Americans to protect the vulnerable and promote the dignity of all individuals living in society, we are an interfaith coalition aiming to protect those struggling to overcome poverty in the U.S. and abroad, and to exclude programs that protect people in poverty from the U.S. budget deficit debates. Today's vigil is part of an 18-month faith-based public policy campaign to urge Congress and the Administration to exempt programs that assist at-risk families and children in the U.S. and abroad from budget cuts. We are in solidarity with more than 25 heads of communion and national religious organizations who wrote Congressional leaders and President Obama saying, "We share our grave concern and dismay that the ongoing conversations and negotiations regarding our nation's budget may yield an outcome that places individuals and families struggling with poverty at risk of even further hardship while shielding the wealthiest in our nation from any additional sacrifice." We believe that the federal budget is a moral document. We affirm governments role in serving the common good, and we pray for a global economy and a national budget that break the yokes of injustice, poverty, hunger and unemployment throughout the world.

Hymn

1) Open our eyes, that we may see
Glimpses of truth we are to be;
Place in our hands the wonderful key
That shall unclasp and set us free.

2) Open our ears, that we may hear
Voices of truth Thou sendest clear;
And while the wave notes fall on our ear;
Everything false will disappear.

3) Open our mouth, and let us bear,
Gladly the warm truth everywhere;
Open our hearts and let us prepare
Love with Thy children thus to share.

*Silently now we wait for Thee,
Ready our God, Thy will to see,
Open our eyes, illumine me,
Spirit divine!*

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A Reading from the Prophets: Isaiah 58:1-12

"Shout out, do not hold back! Lift up your voice like a trumpet! Announce to my people their rebellion, to the house of Jacob their sins. Yet day after day they seek me and delight to know my ways, as if they were a nation that practiced righteousness and did not forsake the ordinances of their God; they ask of me righteous judgments, they delight to draw near to God. 'Why do we fast, but you do not see? Why humble ourselves, but you do not notice?' Look, you serve your own interest on your fast day, and oppress all your workers. Look, you fast only to quarrel and to fight and to strike with a wicked fist. Such fasting as you do today will not make your voice heard on high. Is such the fast that I choose, a day to humble oneself? Is it to bow down the head like a bulrush, and to lie in sackcloth and ashes? Will you call this a fast, a day acceptable to the Lord? Is not this the fast that I choose: to loose the bonds of injustice, to undo the thongs of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke? Is it not to share your bread with the hungry, and bring the homeless poor into your house; when you see the naked, to cover them, and not to hide yourself from your own kin? Then your light shall break forth like the dawn, and your healing shall spring up quickly; your vindicator shall go before you, the glory of the Lord shall be your rear guard. Then you shall call, and the Lord will answer; you shall cry for help, and he will say, Here I am. If you remove the yoke from among you, the pointing of the finger, the speaking of evil, if you offer your food to the hungry and satisfy the needs of the afflicted, then your light shall rise in the darkness and your gloom be like the noonday. The Lord will guide you continually, and satisfy your needs in parched places, and make your bones strong; and you shall be like a watered garden, like a spring of water, whose waters never fail. You ancient ruins shall be rebuilt; you shall raise up the foundations of many generations; you shall be called the repairers of the breach, and restorers of streets to live in."

Leader: Through Isaiah, God challenges a nation that on the one hand professes a delight in seeking God and knowing God's ways, yet serves self interests, oppresses workers, neglects poor and hungry people and quarrels to no good end. Isaiah calls our nation to a righteous practice that loosens the bonds of injustice, lets the oppressed go free, and breaks every yoke.

ALL: Oh God, may we and our nation, the President and Congressional leaders, hear your word.

A Litany for a Faithful National Budget
(Prepared by Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns)

Leader I: Let us pray...
All: **Blessed be our God.**

Leader I: Twenty percent of all children in the United States live in poverty. We cannot leave our children a legacy of rising debt, nor can we leave them a legacy of rising poverty.

All: We pray for a just and compassionate budget that protects all our children from hunger and homelessness, from inadequate education and healthcare, from poverty. Our God hears the cry of the children who are poor. Blessed be our God.

Leader I: Many older adults in the United States live near or below the poverty line. Social Security and Medicare are their lifelines. We cannot neglect the very real needs of our senior citizens.

All: We pray for a just and compassionate budget that protects our elders from poverty, financial insecurity and inadequate healthcare. Our God hears the cry of our seniors who are poor or vulnerable. Blessed be our God.

Leader II: Women in the United States are disproportionately served by the social safety net. Women rely on many of the programs facing drastic cuts – from Medicare and Medicaid to SNAP and TANF, from SSI and Pell grants to domestic violence prevention to nutrition and child care. We cannot ignore the real needs of women in our society or fail to address the systemic injustice that perpetuates their vulnerability.

All: We pray for a just and compassionate budget that protects women from poverty, financial insecurity, inadequate healthcare and physical danger. Our God hears the cry of the women. Blessed be our God.

Leader II: With an official unemployment rate over nine percent, millions of U.S. Americans are struggling to meet their most basic needs. Yet an unjust federal budget could reduce or eliminate assistance for the unemployed and their families.

All: We pray for a just and compassionate budget that responds to the needs of those who are unemployed, protecting them and their dependents as much as possible from the overwhelming anxiety of financial insecurity and lost self-esteem. Our God hears the cry of those who are unemployed. Blessed be our God.

Leader III: We live in a world that is intensely interconnected. Loving our neighbors requires that we promote the global common good. Yet, programs that respond to HIV and AIDS, extreme poverty, food insecurity, overwhelming debt, violence against women, natural disasters and other urgent needs are likely to be severely cut.

All: We pray for a just and compassionate budget that respond to the needs of our brothers and sisters around the world. Our God hears the cry of those who live on the margins of our world. Blessed be our God.

Leader III: God's good creation continues to suffer from our use and abuse of its precious gifts. The enforcement of laws that protect the integrity of creation could be severely compromised by unjust budgetary decisions.

All: We pray for a just and compassionate budget that respects and protects the integrity of creation. Our God hears the cry of Earth. Blessed be our God.

Leader IV: For the gift of vision to see a way forward that is just and compassionate.

All: Give us your vision.

Leader IV: For the gift of conviction to work with vigor and faithfulness for a just solution to the crises we face

All: Give us your courage.

Leader IV: Spirit of God, renew the hearts of all of us who are gathered here. Inspire Congress and the administration to act justly and to protect our most vulnerable brothers and sisters, here and around the world. Reinvigorate our nation's vision of the common good.

All: May God, our Creator and parent, breathe into us new life and new meaning. May the Wisdom of God breathe into us new hope and a new awareness. May the Spirit of God breathe into us a new spirit and a new understanding of the world in which we live.

ALL: Amen.

Benediction

Go out into the world in peace; have courage; hold on to what is good; strengthen the fainthearted; support the weak, and help the suffering; honor all people; work for justice; love and serve God, rejoicing in the power of God's Spirit. **Amen.**