

Prayers for a just and compassionate federal budget

July 2011

Leader: We are gathered as people of faith on Capitol Hill to pray for a just and compassionate federal budget. As Congress and the administration consider different approaches to reducing the deficit, we are here to make visible the potential impact of the budget negotiations on our country's most vulnerable populations and on Earth herself. We believe that the federal budget is a moral document. To eliminate vital domestic and international programs that respond to the needs of poor people and our planet is wrong.

Reading from Jeremiah 6:

Thus says Yahweh:
Stand at the crossroads and look.
Ask about the ancient paths.
Ask what the good way is and walk that way.
Then you will find peace within yourselves.
But the people say, "We will not walk it."
I also appointed sentinels for you:
"Listen for the sound of the trumpet."

But you said, "We will not listen."
Therefore, hear this, you nations,
And understand, you witnesses
What will happen to such obstinate people!
Hear this, earth:
I am about to bring disaster upon my people –
The fruit of their own schemes.
For they did not heed my words;
They rejected my instruction.

All: Our God hears the cry of those who are poor. Blessed be our God.

Reading from Isaiah 61:

The Spirit of Yahweh is upon me
For Yahweh has anointed me:
God has sent me to bring good news to
those who are poor;
To heal broken hearts;
To proclaim release to those held captive;
And liberation to those in prison

To announce a year of favor from Yahweh
And the day of God's vindication;
To comfort all who mourn,
To provide for those who grieve in Zion –
To give them a wreath of flowers instead of ashes,
The oil of gladness instead of tears,
A cloak of praise instead of despair.

All: Our God hears the cry of those who are poor. Blessed be our God.

Leader: 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: 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: 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: 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: 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: 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.

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

All: Give us your vision.

Right side: 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: 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. Amen Amen

(Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns)