

Day Three, January 20 , Betty Williams and Mairead Corrigan

Welcome to Day Three of our ecumenical prayer for Christian Unity. The theme for this week is “Light from Light for Light.”

Each day this week we are highlighting leaders in the ecumenical movement from whom we can learn and apply actions in our own lives. Today we reflect on the work of Betty Williams and Mairead Corrigan.

Together, let us pray.

Genesis 1: 1-5

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters. And God said, “Let there be light,” and there was light. God saw that the light was good, and he separated the light from the darkness. God called the light “day,” and the darkness he called “night.” And there was evening, and there was morning—the first day.

Peace Must March

<https://www.nobelprize.org/prizes/peace/1976/ceremony-speech/>

Excerpts from the award ceremony speech by Egil Aarvik, Vice-Chairman of the [Norwegian Nobel Committee](#), on the occasion of the awarding of the Nobel Peace Prize for 1976 in the University Festival Hall, Oslo, December 10, 1977.

On August 10, 1976, a remarkable incident occurred in one of the streets of Belfast in Northern Ireland. A man, in an attempted getaway, comes tearing down the street in his car, trying to shake off his pursuers. Suddenly a shot rings out, and with a mortally wounded driver slumped over the steering-wheel, the vehicle swerves into a fence, knocking down a mother and her three children. The mother, though badly injured, survived, while her three children were killed on the spot. In the area where the three children were killed lived a housewife: she heard the thud as the car crashed into the fence, and as she hurried to the spot she took in the whole horror of the scene. At that moment something happened in that woman’s mind: it was like the bursting of a dam.

What she saw shocked her profoundly; but even more, she was overwhelmed with a passionate desire to make a stand against all violence and terror. Now, for heaven’s sake, something must be done! She started to go from door to door in the actual street where the tragedy had occurred. The time had come when the ordinary man and woman must rise in protest against this senseless use of violence. It was no longer a question of political attitudes or religious convictions. There was only one remedy: the people themselves must cry halt. Radio and television showed a certain amount of interest in the housewife’s campaign, and she was given an opportunity of making a broadcast appeal to the Irish people not to capitulate to terror. Peace must not be allowed to sit idly on the sidelines: now, for once, *peace* must march!

Her appeal found a ready response. More and more people rallied to her call. One of the first to do so was an aunt of the three children, and these two women now marched boldly out into the no-man’s land of war, proclaiming their simple, heartening message of reconciliation. From these small beginnings sprang what today, the world over, is known as the Peace Movement of Northern Ireland.

Protestant and Catholic, Betty Williams and Mairead Corrigan have shown us what ordinary people can do to promote the cause of peace. The two women who share the Peace Prize for 1976 have refused to bow to bleak skepticism: they simply acted. They never heeded the difficulty of their task: they merely tackled it because they were so convinced that this precisely was what was needed. There was no talk here of ingenious theories, of shrewd diplomacy or pompous declarations. No, their contribution was a far better one: a courageous, unselfish act that proved an inspiration to thousands, that lit a light in the darkness, and that gave fresh hope to people who believed that all hope was gone.

Take a few moments of silence and reflect:

- What brings light to your heart and soul?
- Where are you called to be a source of light for others in our divisive world?

Then pray

God, our Creator strengthens our hearts in expectation and hope as we work for unity and together seek the harmony of all creation. Let us be burning lamps, until the day of the coming of your Son in glory, with all his saints in the everlasting kingdom. Blessed are you, now and forever, and to the ages of ages. Amen.

Thank you for praying with us today. Please join us again tomorrow.

This octave of prayers is sponsored by three Catholic spirituality centers: the Marillac Center in Leavenworth, Kansas, the Sophia Center in Atchison, Kansas, and Precious Blood Renewal Center in Liberty, Missouri.

We encourage you to share these prayers with members of your family and circle of acquaintances, including those who belong to another faith tradition.