

Praying in Solidarity with Women of Latin America

2012 Lenten Soup Supper

Ash Wednesday – February 22, 2012 *** Easter – April 8, 2012

Thank you for hosting a Lenten Soup Supper and standing in solidarity with the women of Latin America. Mary's Pence hopes these materials are helpful in planning your gathering. If you have question or comments please contact the office at 651-788-9869 or katherine@maryspence.org.

Program Materials

- TV and DVD player or computer and projector
- Mary's Pence DVD
- Sign in sheet and pencils
- Nametags and markers
- Printed materials
 - Grace and Prayers
 - Recipes
 - Music if planned
 - Bios of Latin American Women
- A pottery bowl and water if you are doing water blessing at the end
- Decorations
 - Pictures of Latin American women for tables or walls
- Mary's Pence Materials
 - One-pager handout
 - Sample newsletters
 - Envelopes
- Leader or set up supplies
 - Paper and pencil to write names for litany
 - Tape for posting pictures
 - Microphone – depending on size of group

Agenda

1. Welcome and Gathering 15 minutes
2. Introduction to Mary's Pence 15 minutes
3. Mayan Alter / Prayer Circle 15 minutes
4. Grace and Meal 45 minutes
5. Closing Blessing Ritual with Water (optional) 15 minutes

Total Time – up to 1 hour 45 minutes

Preparation and Notes

- We didn't provide a sample invitation or notice but would be happy to do so if you would like. Invite more people than you think will come. Don't be shy about calling people to remind them, this greatly improves turnout, and people feel good when they know their attendance makes a difference.
- We've included only a few calendars, if you need more we will be happy to send them, or you can use them in a drawing.
- Preview all materials ahead of time to make sure you have everything you need.
- Check DVD sent to make sure it works.
- Call Mary's Pence office if you need more materials, want more pictures, or have questions.
- Pictures are all of Mary's Pence grantees in Mexico, Guatemala, Nicaragua and El Salvador.
- Take time ahead of time to identify the biographies that you would like used, including any women that are of particular interest to you or the group. Include well known or lesser known women.
- Take time to read the newsletter and the Mary's Pence Background Information and Answers to see if you have questions.
- Please send contact information to Mary's Pence office for those participants that want to receive materials from us. Getting new people on our mailing list is a great help to us.
- Envelopes are available if anyone wishes to donate at this time. You are not required to ask for a donation, we know this is not appropriate in some settings.

- We'd love feedback after the event. Let us know how it went and what we can improve.

Mayan Alter

See pictures of alters used in Guatemala during visit of Mary's Pence to Asociación de Mujeres Sembradoras de Esperanza, in Santa Cruz de Quiché.

Supplies

- Colorful Cloths to use as base
- Pine needles to enhance base alter
- Fruits of their labors - Dried corn, beans, fresh fruits and vegetables
- Colored candle and matches – White and yellow, red and black or purple, blue and green
 - If you cannot get candles in all colors use any color of candle(s)
- Items from Latin America – colored cloths or embroidery, ceramics, crosses, wood carvings, etc.
- Pictures of women from Latin America

Setup

Create a Mayan Altar – Use colorful fabrics as a base. Spread pine needles to cover the cloths. Place produce on the pine needles. Include the candles and the decorative items from Latin America

1. Welcome and Gathering

Have sign-in sheet, name tags, MP handout, handouts for program.

Set room up in a circle, with Mayan Alter in the center.

Welcome

Meaning of Lent

- Lent is a time of preparation for Easter. It is a time of reconciliation with God and one's neighbors.
- All humans are members of God's family. Today we are standing in solidarity with the women of Latin America.

Materials come from Mary's Pence.

- Mary's Pence has been doing grants to women's groups across the Americas, including the U.S., for almost 25 years.

Participant Introductions

Ask people to say their name, and something about what drew them here today, including any experience they have had in Latin America.

Discussion

Why is it important to be in relationship with people of Latin America?

We share a common history.

Our trade policies impact Latin America.

Our drug policy and military have had an impact in Latin America.

We experience a lot of immigration from Latin America.

Why do you think we chose to focus on women for this gathering?

Women and children make up the world's poor.

Women use funds to ensure their children are clothed and fed, and go to school.

Women have less access to resources – jobs, education, loans, land.

2. Introduction to Mary's Pence

Background

- Founded by women religious in the late 80's when they had difficulty getting grants to fund women's projects.
- Given close to 2 million dollars to over 500 groups, in 15 countries.
- They fund based on Catholic Social teaching, based on social justice, seeking projects that will create change in a society that gives all the right to survive and to thrive.

Video

We will view a video of women from Latin America, recipients of Mary's Pence ESPERA Funds. ESPERA Funds are community lending pools, owned and managed by the women.

Note – one video is focused on ESPERA Funds in El Salvador, Mary's Pence community lending pools. There is a 6 minute version with Katherine Wojtan, Executive Director of Mary's Pence explaining the ESPERA Fund Program. The Nicaragua video is also 4 minutes, and tells of women's projects in Nicaragua. Either video can engender discussion about supporting women, and women's needs. If there is time both videos can be shown.

Discussion

What did you notice in the video?

What is important to the women?

How is their experience the same or different than yours?

3. Mayan Altar / Prayer Circle

Gather around the altar, either sitting or standing. Make sure that everyone can see the Mayan Altar.

Opening comments

Explain God is *with us*. We are praying in the sharing, remembering and connecting.
God is with us- Immanuella.

Explain the Mayan Altar

Ask, "Who has been to Latin America?" "Have they seen a prayer altar there?"

In Guatemala many Mayan and Christian traditions are intermingled. During gatherings in Guatemala you will frequently experience Mayan alters.

- Pine needles or boughs – represent celebration, the green needles represent earth and paradise.
- The Mayan altar is divided into four sections, each representing one of the four directions. If you have colored candles point out that the path of humanity runs north to south and God's path follows in the east to west direction. East stands for the rising sun, and holds the red candle. West color is purple or black, and stands for the setting sun. North is white, representing birth, and south is yellow, representing death, which we will all experience. Two candles in the middle, where the paths meet, are the blue candle representing heaven, and the green candle representing earth.
- The altar usually holds the produce of the season. We use this altar to represent food that nourishes, and gifts we have received from the people of Latin America (colorful cloths, ceramics, painted crosses, etc).

Litany of Latin American Women

This portion of the ceremony is a chance to recognize women of Latin America, to stand in solidarity with our "Compañeras," our friends.

Read stories

- Identify women in the "Standing in Solidarity with Latina Women" handout that are particularly meaningful to you or the participants. Highlight them and use them for this portion of the program. Have volunteers read the biographies of some of the women. Ask readers to speak slowly.

Discussion

- Ask participants to reflect on the stories and share their reactions or observations.
- Who would you like to add? Please say one or two sentences about them.
- Note: Leader should write down names of those mentioned for use in litany.

Litany of Women

- Use the names of the women whose biographies were read. Read one name at a time, and have group respond "Pray for Us." Then read each name brought up by a participant, again with the group responding "Pray for Us."

End by saying the Hail Mary together.

4. Grace and Meal

Use one of the Graces enclosed, or a favorite of your own.

- The World Peace Prayer is a prayer that at one time was said hourly around the world, and may still be so. If people around the world used it at noon it would be said 24 times a day in different locations. The prayer is used daily at ARC Retreat Center in Stanchfield, Minnesota. The tradition was started by Fellowship of Reconciliation.
- Other Graces included are from Prayer without Borders, published by Catholic Relief Services.

Soup recipes can be shared with participants.

5. Closing Blessing Ritual with Water (optional, depending on time)

- Water connects us all, links us all. Water is life giving, cleansing, thirst quenching, creating our bodies. It is also dangerous, life-taking and can move us to an unknown place.
- Bless each other on palms of hands: Start with leader blessing one participant, follow with that participant blessing the participant next to them. Continue around the circle until all are blessed. "Water of Life connects all women, everywhere."