

Becoming the Voice of the Voiceless
STAND with ... PRAY for STAN AND OTHERS
20 November 2020 (Friday) – 04

Leader: God, come to my assistance.

All: Lord, make haste to help me.

Leader: Let my prayer come into your presence.

All: Incline your ear to my cry for help, O Lord.

Leader: Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit.

All: As it was in the beginning, is now and will be forever. Amen.

Leader: Invocation by all

Lord, we place ourselves in your presence, knowing fully well that we are under your loving gaze, and you are active and labouring in the world. We ask you for the grace that all our intentions, actions and operations may be directed purely to the service and praise of Your Divine Majesty. We ask you Lord, for the grace that we may become the voice of the voiceless brothers and sisters who are unjustly treated in our society. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

EXCERPTS from a letter and telephonic conversation with Fr. Stan Swamy SJ, from Taloja:

Dear friends,

Thank you so much for the solidarity support by so many, for me and my co-accused. I am really grateful.

The Prison administration provides breakfast, tea, milk, lunch and dinner. Any additional edibles are to be purchased from the prison canteen, twice a month. Also, newspapers, toiletries, stationary and other essentials can be purchased through the prison canteen. My needs are limited. The Adivasis and the Society of Jesus have taught me to lead a simple life.

I had brought with me a “sipper-tumbler”, to drink tea and water. However, the same was disallowed at the prison gate, on entry on 9 October. Now, I am using a baby-sipper mug, which I purchased through the prison hospital. I have communicated this need to our lawyers. I am still waiting to receive the sipper-tumbler.

Varavara Rao is very sick. Kindly, pray for him. Listening to the life-narratives of the poor prisoners is my joy in Taloja. I see God in their pains and smiles.

Regards and prayers,

Fr. Stan Swamy SJ

PROPHETIC INSIGHT

Let us remember Fr Stan and all the others who are unjustly imprisoned. Let their courage to stand up for the poor and become their voice, enkindle the zeal within us as we listen to Fr Stan's prophetic voice in silence.

“...Stand up and be the voice of the voiceless, no matter what religion, culture, and ethnicity one belongs to... Truth must be spoken, right to dissent must be upheld and justice must reach the doorsteps of the poor. I will continue to be the voice of the voiceless, who cannot raise their voice and defend their rights. People who fight for the rights of the poor and helpless and become their voice, will face all kinds of crisis in their lives. As committed Christians, religious and priests, we need to raise our voice against unjust situation around us... I fear that the pro-tribal activities of mine have angered powerful interests within the establishment...”.

Silence: Let Fr Stan move our hearts.

THE WORD OF GOD: Proverbs 31:8-9

Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves; ensure justice for those being crushed. Yes, speak up for the poor and helpless, and see that they get justice.

The word of the Lord.

Leader: Let us reflect on the Word of God in silence.

REFLECTION: Pope Francis’s message to the Synod of Bishops of Amazon...

“...Someone must speak in their name, because a poor person is unable to defend himself... The church must be the voice of the poor and help them find real solutions to their problems and challenges... As Catholics, we have a responsibility to be a voice for the voiceless, to protect the vulnerable that cannot properly defend themselves — whether it is poor, the refugee fleeing persecution and violence, the victims of racial discrimination and bigotry, the unborn child threatened by abortion or the elderly or disabled whose lives are deemed as worthless. Wherever the life and dignity of the human person are threatened, we must come to their defence with compassion and courage...”.

Leader: The Lord is a refuge for the oppressed.

All: A stronghold in times of trouble.

INTERCESSIONS

Response: Lord hear our prayer.

1. **For Fr. Stan:** that the Lord grant him good health and strength to remain steadfast with hope and courage. That the voice of justice for the voiceless which he raised, be heard. May his life and works continue to inspire and challenge us to dedicate our lives for the voiceless. *We pray to the Lord.*
2. **For the poor and the marginalized:** That they may know their rights and may not be afraid to demand their legitimate rights through peaceful means. And may their cries for justice be not deemed as anti-social and anti-national by the state machinery but be heard and responded positively. *We pray to the Lord.*
3. **For the promoters and defenders of human rights:** That the Lord may bless them with good health, patience, perseverance and wisdom, so that they continue to promote and

defend human rights through their works and advocacy despite opposition and persecution.
We pray to the Lord.

4. **For the media:** That the mainstream media may not ignore the voices of the voiceless people of society but become their voice by giving adequate coverage to their issues and pressurizing the state agencies to address their concerns. *We pray to the Lord.*
5. **For the rich and powerful:** That the rich and powerful may recognize, respect and protect the inalienable human dignity of every person, particularly the poor and marginalized, by treating them as equals and reaching them out in love and service. *We pray to the Lord.*

In silence, we pray for our personal and local needs

HYMN (sing or recite)

Here I am Lord... (Hymn Number N. 29 from the *Joyful Lips*)

Or any appropriate hymn

CONCLUDING PRAYER (by all)

God our Father, by the grace of our vocation as Christians we are called to care for our neighbour who is in need, to “incarnate the duty of hearing the cry of the poor” [*Evang. Gaud.* 193] and to be moved by the sufferings of humanity. Help us Lord to constantly remind ourselves that "the option for those who are least, those whom society discards" (*Evang. Gaud.* 195), is our priority as the followers of Jesus Christ your Son. Today we specially pray for our brother Fr Stan, the many human rights defenders and countless others who have been falsely accused and imprisoned across our country and the world at large.

Lord Jesus, we surrender all those who are imprisoned and harassed for standing up for truth and justice. Be their strength and comfort, may they experience a profound closeness to you and draw strength from you who walked the way of the cross. May your cross be a source of courage and consolation to them at this time that they ever remain source of voice for the voiceless.

O Holy Spirit fill the hearts of these men and women with your grace of fortitude and counsel. We also pray for all those who have authority over these brothers and sisters of ours, that they may be filled with right judgement, understanding and compassion, so as to work towards justice and peace.

Mary our loving mother intercede for these children of yours that they may soon be released from the prison and all the dehumanizing treatment that they are being meted with.

We also pray for every Christian for the grace of prudence and courage so that we may be the channels of justice against injustice, love against hate, peace against violence, unity against division, generosity against greed, hope against despair, and equality against discrimination. We ask this through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

-----*JAM-Jesuits*-----