

PRAYER EXERCISE

WHOSE HANDS ARE THEY?

They are Christ's!

Introduction:

This prayer service is based on the prayer method called: "**Listening Group**". "It is intended to create a deep religious experience.

It is rather long and meant for selected groups

It is based on meditating, contemplating and praying on hands.

Intent of this Prayer Exercise.

- ✓ *To thank God for the gift of our hands.*
- ✓ *To discover that finally all hands are Christ's hands.*
- ✓ *To grow in love and respect for all men and women, friends and foes.*

Uses of this Prayer Service

- ✓ For praying in groups..
- ✓ As personal meditation and reflection.
- ✓ As an awareness-cum-prayer.

Requirements

- ✓ A quiet place conducive to prayer.
- ✓ If conducted in a group a very good reader is wanted..(*The reading has to be prepared very carefully*)
- ✓ Writing material.

PROCEDURE:

Introduction

- Relax. Quiet down. Soft music or relaxation exercises will help.
- Preparatory prayer.
- Singing of appropriated hymns.

Reader:

- Read very slowly and emphatically.
- Tell the participants to close their eyes and to listen very attentively to the reading, drinking in the meaning of the words and relish them

Reader:

Tell the participants **Imagine, visualize and fantasize what is being read.**

Pause for a few seconds

- There are motherly hands that carry children... Pause
- There are caring hands that nurse the sick... Pause
- There are helpful hands that run switchboards....Pause
- There are hardworking hands which plough and sow the fields... Pause
- There are hardy hands which build houses, roads and cities.... Pause
- There are slim artists' hands that fill the world with beauty.... Pause
- There are consecrated hands which bless, forgive and heal.... Pause
- There are outstretched hands that beg in need and want... Pause
- There are hands waving farewell... Pause
- There are welcoming hands receiving us... Pause
- There are caressing hands that comfort us... Pause
- There are children's hands.... Pause
- There are old people's tremulous hands in need of support... Pause
- There are doctors' hands healing us... Pause
- There are hands digging graves which receive us... Pause

Pause for a little longer, and then carry on.

- There are the hands that were nailed for us ... Pause
- The hands that set us free, Pause...
- The Hands that carried the burden of our guilt....Pause
- The hands from which flow pardon and peace ... Pause
- The hands that opened blind eyes and deaf ears... Pause
- The hands that raised the dead... Pause
- The hands that caressed little children..... Pause
- The hands that multiplied food and broke it to hungry crowds...Pause
- Glorious hands they were, yet they washed our dirty feet... Pause

Pause for a little longer

Then, instruct the Participants:

- **Close your eyes and be relaxed.**
- **Slowly and deliberately let all tensions flow away.**
- **Keep your hands resting on your lap, palms up**
- **Become aware of your finger tips and their sensations**
- **Experience the fullness, the strength and maturity of your hands.**

Reader, carry on.

- Think of the most unforgettable hands you have ever known... Pause
- The hands of your father, your mother, grandparents, spouse... Pause
- Remember the oldest hands that rested in yours.. Pause
- Think of the hands of a newborn child ...Pause.
- Once upon a time your hands were the hands of a child... Pause

- The hands of your younger your brother, sister, nephew, niece..
- Think of all that your hands have done since the day you were a child..... Pause
- Turning you over, crawling and creeping. .. Pause.
- Walking and balancing yourself. . Pause.
- Washing and bathing, dressing ... Pause
- Remember the day you could play a game.....Pause
- The time you could write your own name ... Pause

Pause for a little longer, and then carry on.

- Remember the works they have done, the tiredness and aching they have known....Pause.
- Remember the cold and heat, the soreness and the bruises they have born....Pause
- Remember the tears they have wiped away... your own, and others' ... Pause
- The blood they have bled, and the healing they experienced... Pause
- The anger and even violence they have expressed.... Pause
- The gentleness, tenderness and love they have given.... Pause
- The handshakes they have given to friends.....Pause
- The waving "Hellos" and "Goodby's" you have extended to one and all...Pause.

Pause for a little longer, and then carry on.

- Remember, how often you folded your hands in prayer.. Pause.
- The times you have raised them heavenwards in supplication..... Pause
- The day your Dad and Mum taught your hands the Sign of the Cross and the striking your breast.... Pause

Now, instruct the participants:

- Keep your eyes closed;
- Now very slowly, raise your right hand and gently place it over your heart....Pause
- Press it firmly until your hand picks the beat of your heart ...Pause.
- The most mysterious of all sounds, the heart beat....a sound you learned in your mother' womb...Pause.
- Now lower your hand to your lap very carefully as if it you were carrying your heart in your hand, - for it does... Pause
- When you extend your hand to any one for a handshake, it is not just bone and skin you offer, it is your heartPause
- Any handshake you give to anyone it's really your heart you offer them ...Pause
- Remember, your hands are not meant for you only, but for others too ... Pause :

Pause for a little longer, and then carry on with the following instructions.

- Still with your eyes closed, very slowly stretch your right hand until it finds someone else's hand
- Do not just hold it, but explore it and sense the history and mystery of that hand....

- Let your hand speak to it and let it listen to the other hand... .
- Express – just by touch - your gratitude to that hand your are holding now in yours...
- Finally, rest your hand back on your lap...
- Experience the presence of that hand lingering upon your hand....
- The after glow will be faint, but that hand-print will remain there forever...

Pause for a little longer, and then carry on

- Guess now: Whose hand was that, you held in yours?Pause
- It could have been your fathers, or your mother's hand.... of your best friend's hand... how so you feel?.... Pause...
- It could have been your enemy's hand. .Imagine it was!... how would you feel?.... Pause...
- It could have been Christ's hand.... Suppose it was, how would you feel?... Pause...

Pause for a little longer, and then carry on

- Actually it was Christ's hand!
- Christ has no other hands today in our world but ours! Pause....
- Christ said: Whatever you do to others, you do it to me. ...
- We can truly say: Whichever hand we hold in life is Christ's hand we hold, - be a friend's or an enemy's hand. ..Pause....
- Jesus' is everybody's friend. Anybody's hands we hold are Jesus' friends' hands. Pause....
- Our hands too, belong to Christ... Use them as He would....
- Respect them all, love them all, serve them all, venerate them all!

Carry on for a while thinking, reflecting and praying...

After some time, request them to gradually open their eyes

Personal Reflecons

Put down in writing:

1. What I felt during the exercise.
2. What I learned.
3. What type of hands I have.

Group Sharing: (In small groups of 6 to 8)

- Share the points you have written.
- Just listen to the sharing..
- No questioning, No discussions. No interaction.

Shared Prayer: (In the same small groups)

- Spontaneous shared prayer.
- End with a prayer of thanksgiving for your hands.... And for the hands that served and helped you, actually speaking, they are Christ's hands..

