

➤ **Sister Dorothy Stang, SNDdeN Prayer Reflection**

Introduction: Sister Dorothy Stang, a Sister of Notre Dame de Namur, worked for more than 30 years in the Amazon rainforest of Brazil. She opened schools and offered classes in religious education for children and adults, but the heart and soul of her work was empowering local indigenous peoples and small farmers to secure land rights and engage in sustainable development projects. According to Sister Mary Alice McCabe, SNDdeN, who also works in Brazil, “Sister Dorothy was with the excluded migrant farmers in their constant, futile search for a piece of land to call their own. She persistently pressured the government to do its job of defending the rights of the people. She never gave up. She never lost hope.”

On February 12, 2005, while walking along a muddy Amazon jungle road attempting to halt illegal logging where land sharks had interests but no legal rights, she was shot and killed. Authorities believe that the murder was arranged by a local rancher and that a consortium of loggers and ranchers who wanted to develop the land for their own purposes contributed to the bounty in an effort to silence Sister Dorothy. Her murder had the opposite effect with the President of Brazil, Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, giving the land in question, more than 22,000 acres, for sustainable development to the local farmers whose cause Dorothy had worked for so tirelessly. Today she is known as “the Angel of the Amazon.”

Leader: The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the peace of the Holy Spirit be with us.

All: We ask that our hearts be open to the voice of God in our midst.

Opening Song: (if desired) *Bread for the World* by Bernadette Farrell

Leader: In his apostolic exhortation, *Gaudete et Exultate* on the call to holiness in the contemporary world, Pope Francis calls the Beatitudes our “Christian Identity Card” and “life plan.” The life and death of Sister Dorothy Stang inspires all of us to live the Beatitudes and be disciples in a global society “called to live the prophetic nature of the gospel, with a passion for justice and love for the poor.” (Mission Statement of the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur)

Reader 1: Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. This Beatitude calls us to a life of personal simplicity and an understanding of how much others have but need and how much we have but do not need. It calls us to an attitude of receptivity and openness to what God is calling us to in our lives at this moment in time.

Reflection: “We can’t talk about the poor. We must be poor with the poor and then there is no doubt how to act.” (Sister Dorothy Stang)

Pause for a moment

Leader: To commit to living more simply
To learn to distinguish between our wants and our needs
To live the prophetic nature of the Gospel

Response: (All) We open our hearts to do your will, Lord.

Reader 2: Blessed are the meek for they will inherit the earth. This Beatitude calls us to recognize that we are but one small thread in the tapestry of creation, yet this thread is essential to the whole. The gifts we have been given are for the good of all. With humility and trust we listen for God's voice in our lives.

Reflection: "We are only here on the land for a few decades...Use every day to bring joy and not greed to our tired land so full of anguish." (Sister Dorothy Stang)

Pause for a moment

Leader: To recognize our own gifts and talents
To see ourselves as an integral thread in the tapestry of creation
To learn humility and trust

Response: (All) We open our hearts to do your will, Lord.

Reader 1: Blessed are those who mourn for they will be comforted. We so often want to avoid pain at all costs, yet this Beatitude call us to embrace mourning and allow it to empty us that we might be open to God's love. The capacity to sympathize with the pain and sorrow of others enables us to touch life's depths and experience true happiness.

Reflection: "When I pray, I light a candle and look at Jesus on the cross and ask for the strength to carry the suffering of the people." (Sister Dorothy Stang)

Pause for a moment

Leader: To accept the pain in our own lives and that of others
To allow ourselves to become empty that we might be open to God's love
To truly understand the meaning of "the common good"

Response: (All) We open our hearts to do your will, Lord.

Reader 2: Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness for they shall be satisfied. Yearning for justice moves us from our heads to our hearts. It is expressed in our work for justice for the most vulnerable in our midst. This Beatitude calls us to be just in the decisions that we make and to allow ourselves to be transformed by God's love in our lives.

Reflection: “My heart screams joy. But I need patience as it (reform) can’t happen overnight. How to maintain hope has been a challenge.” (Sister Dorothy Stang)

Pause for a moment.

Leader: To be just in our decision-making
To work for the most vulnerable in our midst
To allow ourselves to be transformed

Response: (All) We open our hearts to do your will, Lord.

Reader 1: Blessed are the merciful for they shall obtain mercy. Pope Francis reminds us “of how much wrong we do to God and his grace when we speak of sins being punished by his judgment before we speak of their being forgiven by his mercy.” This Beatitude calls us to be merciful by giving, helping and serving others, but also that we be forgiving and understanding. It is merciful hearts that bring hope and peace into our world.

Reflection: “There are things you do because they feel right and they may make no sense and they may make no money and it may be the real reason we are here: to love each other...” (Sister Dorothy Stang)

Pause for a moment

Leader: To give without counting the cost
To be merciful in our actions
To bring hope and peace into our world

Response: (All) We open our hearts to do your will, Lord.

Reader 2: Blessed are the pure of heart for they shall see God. A famous quote by George Bernard Shaw states: “You imagine what you desire. You will what you imagine. And, at last, you create what you will.” This Beatitude calls us to see clearly what we desire because it is our heart’s desires that lead to action.

Reflection: “If we strip ourselves of all our extras that consume so much of our time and thoughts...our left-over time is no longer colored and it is no longer hard to give a Gospel response.” (Sister Dorothy Stang)

Pause for a moment

Leader: To take time for prayer in our daily lives
To desire what is good for all God's people
To see clearly the beauty in all of creation

Response: (All) We open our hearts to do your will, Lord.

Reader 1: Blessed are the peacemakers for they shall be called children of God. The late General Omar Bradley stated: "We are stumbling blindly through a spiritual darkness while toying with the precarious secrets of life and death. The world has achieved brilliance without wisdom, power without conscience. Ours is a world of nuclear giants and ethical infants. We know more about war than we know about peace, more about killing than living." This Beatitude calls us to be artisans of peace in our world through our thoughts, words and actions; to emerge from spiritual darkness into the light of God's kin-dom.

Reflection: "We are a global people-one family. A deep Christian value is sharing. I am an instrument to help them come together. I am a person free to do that." (Sister Dorothy Stang)

Pause for a moment

Leader: To work for peace right where we are
To reach out to people different from ourselves
To help build the kin-dom of God

Response: (All) We open our hearts to do your will, Lord.

Reader 2: Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. This Beatitude calls us to stand up for what is right; to stand by the poor and vulnerable in their struggle for justice. It calls us to move beyond our fear to preach the Gospel through our daily words and actions.

Reflection: "I know they want to kill me, but I will not go away. My place is here alongside these people who are constantly humiliated by persons who consider themselves powerful." (Sister Dorothy Stang)

Pause for a moment

Leader: To stand by the poor and vulnerable in society
To speak for those who have no voice
To let go of our fear of what others may think and do

Response: (All) We open our hearts to do your will, Lord.

A Reading from *Laudato si'*: “A true ecological approach always becomes a social approach; it must integrate questions of justice in debates on the environment, so as to hear both the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor...Everything is connected. Concern for the environment thus needs to be joined to a sincere love for our fellow human beings and an unwavering commitment to resolving the problems of society.”

Response: A Prayer of Faith (written by John Shea)

Side One: We believe that where people are gathered together in love, God is present and good things happen and life is full.

Side Two: We believe that we are immersed in mystery; that our lives are more than they seem; that we belong to each other and to a universe of great creative energies whose source and destiny is God.

Side One: We believe that God is after us; that God is calling to us from the depths of human life. We believe that God risked all and shared our life in Jesus. In and with Jesus we believe that each of us is situated in the love of God. And the pattern of our life will be the pattern of Jesus through death and resurrection.

Side Two: We believe that the Spirit of Peace is present with us when we gather to celebrate our common existence, the resurrection of Jesus, and the fidelity of God. And most deeply we believe that in our struggle to love, we incarnate God in the world.

All: And so, aware of mystery and wonder, caught up in friendship and laughter, we stand speechless before the joy in our hearts and we celebrate the sacredness of all life. Amen.

Closing Song: “*We Are Called*” by David Haas