

40 Days Prayer and Fasting for our Land

(Prayer Action during Lent 2010, 17th February to 4th April)

“True Happiness“

Why “40 Days Prayer and Fasting“?

Let Heaven be opened and pour out its blessings on our land! In order for that to become more than just a pious wish persistent prayer is needed. Christians are challenged in the Bible to take responsibility for the wellbeing of their country: “I urge, then, first of all, that requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for everyone – for kings and all those in authority”. (1 Timothy 2:1-2)

What could be a better time to do that than during Lent? “40 Days Prayer and Fasting” – a campaign, that is now running for the seventh time – is not primarily a call to give up something. It is rather much more an encouragement to take time for daily prayer for those in authority in politics, business, culture, the Church etc during the 40 days after Ash Wednesday (the Sundays are not included). In this way issues in our society are focussed upon which Christians don't generally pray for.

True Happiness

The “Beatitudes” in Matthew 5:3-10 – described as “True Happiness” in the translation “Das Buch. Neues Testament” by Roland Werner – with their different statements serve as a guiding theme. They are a promise for those who don't want to exclude Jesus from their thinking and behaving. He himself followed the way of the Beatitudes and in so doing experienced this “true happiness”. In a time when bookshops are filled with advice on “Happiness”, these sayings of Jesus challenge us to rethink our lifestyles. Those who pray during “40 Days” will be constantly reminded of *his* happiness. Through their prayers they can contribute to the spread of this happiness in all parts of society and see this having an ever greater influence on this country. The intercessor that hungers and thirsts to see the Kingdom of God being spread through this land experiences true happiness.

You will find the prayer requests summarised in weekly themes. Every day you will be given ideas for your prayers. They are there to stimulate thinking. Up-to-date events and developments can provide each day with a completely different content. If a different aspect of the prayer request is important to you, then simply pray for that. Whether you pray alone or in a group, what is important is the involvement in prayer as a sign of spiritual responsibility for the problems of society in this country.



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Suggestion: apply these prayer requests to your personal environment, your state or where you live. The extra TIPS can be a motivation to take concrete steps beyond prayer. Let yourself be surprised and rediscover anew Jesus' promise: "You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it." (John 14:14)

Practical Tips

You can pray alone or with others; regularly at a set time or spontaneously; at home or at church, before or after the worship service and meetings. Families, fellowships, home groups or churches can make their facilities available at specific times for this prayer call. Christians from other churches and groups are invited to join in. You can pray at school, in the workplace, before or after work or during the breaks, in a church service or in a home group. Why not take a few minutes at every regular Christian event during Lent to pray for the daily prayer request?

However you do it: pray, even if it's not daily and you can only manage it once a week.

Fasting in connection with prayer

Fasting emphasises our sincerity. It is a sign of lamenting before God. It helps us to orientate ourselves better towards God. It makes us sensitive to need, because fasting turns our focus away from ourselves and our own needs. Fasting realigns us with God and strengthens our faith. In addition, we show solidarity with each other as intercessors when we fast. That's what we desire from this prayer appeal.

Tips for fasting and self-denial

You can fast by:

- denying yourself sweets or other favourite habits: coffee, a glass of wine, daily time watching television
- or on the computer or on your hobby,
- foregoing a meal or something else each day and praying instead,
- going without meals one day a week, or only consuming bread and water,
- sacrificing a time of sleep in order to pray,
- setting up a prayer and fasting chain: intercessors choose one day within these 40 days and take turns praying for an hour during this time, together at one place or individually at home.

Fasting is an option. Find a way that works for you.

Tip

After the many prayer suggestions you will find concrete tips. Sometimes it will be a tip about a book. You will find the relevant publications listed alphabetically at the end of the booklet in the section "Resources".

True Happiness from Matthew 5:3-10

Week 1. Life in the Spirit

Verse 3: "You're blessed when you're at the end of your rope. With less of you there is more of God and his rule."

Week 2. When you've lost...

Verse 4: "You're blessed when you feel you've lost what is most dear to you. Only then can you be embraced by the One most dear to you."

Week 3. Gentleness instead of bossiness (being self-opinionated)

Verse 5: "You're blessed when you're content with just who you are - no more, no less. That's the moment you find yourselves proud owners of everything that can't be bought."

Week 4. Desire for righteousness

Verse 6: "You're blessed when you've worked up a good appetite for God. He's food and drink in the best meal you'll ever eat."

Verse 7: "You're blessed when you care. At the moment of being 'careful,' you find yourselves cared for."

Week 5. A pure heart

Verse 8 "You're blessed when you get your inside world - your mind and heart - put right. Then you can see God in the outside world."

Week 6. Peacemakers

Verse 9 "You're blessed when you can show people how to cooperate instead of compete or fight. That's when you discover who you really are, and your place in God's family."

Week 7. Persecuted and rejected

Verse 10: "You're blessed when your commitment to God provokes persecution. The persecution drives you even deeper into God's kingdom.

Verse 11: Not only that - count yourselves blessed every time people put you down or throw you out or speak lies about you to discredit me. What it means is that the truth is too close for comfort and they are uncomfortable.

Verse 12: You can be glad when that happens - give a cheer, even! - for though they don't like it, I do! And all heaven applauds. And know that you are in good company. My prophets and witnesses have always gotten into this kind of trouble." (From The Message)

Week 1 More of God's Spirit

*You're blessed when you're at the end of your rope.
With less of you there is more of God and his rule.
(Mt 5:3)*

1. Ash Wednesday, 17th February *More of God's Spirit*

What a relief that we can come to God with *empty* hands. We're not judged by him according to our performance, our qualifications, our talents or our successes in life. The only thing relevant for him is our longing for his presence and our desire to experience more of his Spirit. An attitude like that of the Pharisees (Luke 18:9-14) closed the door of heaven, but an attitude like that of the tax collector opened it. God responds with streams of blessings when he encounters a world open to his help instead of perfectionism.

We pray

- that our country will turn away from pride ("Made in Germany") to a humble yet whole and healthy self-awareness
- that more and more people will have a longing for God's Spirit and will experience God's powerful presence.

Tip: Read Dietrich Bonhoeffer's striking interpretation of the Beatitudes in his book "Nachfolge". (The Cost of Discipleship).

2. Thursday, 18th February *The Spirit of prayer*

God promised, "I will pour out a spirit of grace and supplication." (Zechariah 12:10) It's not the length or the number of words that count in prayer. Prayer is a gift from God and needs to be received and accepted as a gift. The request for Spirit-led prayer should therefore always shape the beginning of our prayer. The words of Reinhold Schneider are valid not only for the catastrophic time of the Third Reich but remain current for today: "Only the intercessors can succeed in keeping the sword from our heads".

We pray

- that many people will discover what it means for the Spirit to help us in prayer
- for an increase in faith-filled and expectant prayer
- for answers to prayer that encourage us to continue in prayer

Tip: Find a book on prayer.

3. Friday, 19th February *Year of Stillness*

Over fifty partners invite you to a "Year of Stillness" throughout the 2010 church year, starting in Advent 2009. Activity and stillness need to be balanced. Stress causes sickness. Because of this more and more managers are looking for a time of quietness in a monastery. The need for stillness is the same for every person in our country – especially for people of prayer. "One will never be in the position to pray to God effectively and whole-heartedly until one learns to be silent and to rejoice in the wonder of God's presence." (Metropolitan Bishop Anthony)

We pray

- that the Year of Stillness 2010 will give many people new motivation to rediscover stillness
- that those who don't belong to the Church will also encounter God through planned activities of the Church
- for a slowing down of the daily routine

Tip: You can order the Ideas Brochure for the Year of Silence 2010: www.Jahrderstille.de, c/o Bibellesebund e.V. Postfach 11 29, 51703 Marienheide, Tel 02264/40 434-29.

Try to bring back something of the "Sabbath rest" on Sundays.

4. Saturday, 20th February *Love instead of duty*

"Noble is humanity, helpful and good!" Whoever tries to live according to these words of Maxime Goethe and sees his life as fulfilment of duty places himself under permanent pressure. He believes a grand delusion. For "being good", that is living a life in love, can only be attained by people of faith. The Spirit of God wants to develop the fruit of love in us (Galatians 5:22). Whoever is ready to allow the Holy Spirit to work in his life will be given the ability to love. "Humanity without love is a flower without roots" (Golo Mann).

We pray

- for a growing awareness in our society that only the Spirit of God can enable humanitarian thinking and behaving
- that love and not duty should shape our work and the world of business
- that the workplace will be permeated with a climate of mutual esteem

Tip: By what criteria do I evaluate my working life and that of others?

Week 2

When you've lost everything

You're blessed when you feel you've lost what is most dear to you. Only then can you be embraced by the One most dear to you. (Mt 5:4)

5. Sunday, 21st February *"Not me"*

As humans we want to belong somewhere and have deep relationships. But as soon as God extends to us an invitation we tend to go to extremes. Either we feel so bad that we say, "Sure this invitation from God is valid, but not for me. I'm not good enough. He doesn't mean me..." Or we feel so good that we think, "Sure, God calls the losers to him, but not me. I'm too good for that. He doesn't mean me..." This is a confession of failure: "God, I don't need you". It's not that we're at the end of our rope, but that we have wrecked our chances to find true happiness.

We pray

- for a healthy self-image that doesn't block our way to God
- that God will fill our deficiency

Tip

Be on the look out for someone that you can show, quite naturally, how important he/she is.

6. Monday, 22nd February *No work, no meaning to life?*

Resonant words explain unemployment as "seasonal, structural or frictional". And current statistics confirm this with concrete figures. But it's not about figures – it's about people: People who can no longer financially provide for themselves or their families, who forfeit their self-worth in their own eyes or in the eyes of others because they have no work. As a society we should be doing all that we can to create jobs. At the same time as Christians we can emphasise that our value is not determined by our work.

We pray

- for policies that open new ways to create jobs
- that people both with and without paid work can engage in worthwhile activities outside their job

Tip: Is there a programme for unemployment somewhere near you that you can become involved in?

7. Tuesday, 23rd February *Carrying those who are weak*

My grand-child attends an integrated kindergarten. Handicapped and "normal" children are together in the groups. And sometimes visitors ask "Who is actually handicapped here?" The Christian Church is not a Therapy Centre. It is however something special, when healthy and sick people and people with handicaps, be it physical or psychological, can find a spiritual home together, can praise God together, and help each other to mature in the faith. A church that is ready to carry those who are weak will be blessed, because God himself blesses those who are weak.

We pray

- for wisdom and love in our interactions with people who are psychologically unwell
- for God's healing influence especially on those who are burdened

Tip: "Ich muss verrückt sein, so zu leben" by Shane Claiborne (The Irresistible Revolution: Living as an Ordinary Radical)

8. Wednesday, 24th February *When everything becomes too much*

Overload, burnout and stress are words that unfortunately describe our society very well. Some have no work, others have too much. The daily overload is increasing as is the longing to get away from it all. Our real challenge is to create islands of quietness and relaxation in the middle of our daily routine. That's exactly what the "Year of Stillness" is all about: Finding a healthy balance between work and rest; discovering God's fascinating rhythm of life, true happiness in the midst of life.

We pray

- for honesty, so that we don't escape into activity and hustle and bustle
- for good ideas to help us slow down, take time out and encounter God

Tip: The book „AusZeit“ by Doug Fields: Kleine Ruhe-Inseln im Alltag entdecken (Discovering small islands of quietness in the every day).

9. Thursday, 25th February *Not on the scrap heap*

Many people want to grow older, but not many want to be old. The obsession with youth has a firm grip on our society, even within the church. This is especially so in Germany, where seen statistically we are an aging society. How do we deal with that? Do we manage to create lifestyles in and outside the family where it is possible to age with dignity? Where life remains worth living? As a Christian church we should be leading the way here.

We pray

- for positive relationships between the generations
- for practical ways that allow people to grow old with dignity and to be able to grow old within families, shared accommodation or in aged care facilities.

Tip: Visit an older person in your neighbourhood with whom you have had no previous contact.

10. Friday, 26th February

Health – the greatest commodity

Health has always been priceless, but in these days of empty kitties this seems much more so. The waiting times for a doctor's appointment are increasing, the benefits provided by health insurance are decreasing, and a class-based provision is no longer a threat, but a reality. At the same time a significant number of Christians are working in the health sector as doctors, nurses, etc. Is it possible that God has something in mind with them? Something that goes beyond the vocation of individuals?

We pray

- for wisdom for politicians, that they apply the existing resources to meaningful health reforms
- for God's perspective for Christians in the health sector

Tip: Put into practice a good resolution that impacts your health.

11. Saturday, 27th February

Political wisdom has run out

Solomon had just come to power when God asked him what he wished for his rule: riches? power? He decided on wisdom and thereby set a real milestone for our politicians. In our times of great change, when old concepts no longer apply, God's wisdom is needed more than ever before. Those who wish to work for the good of our nation as politicians can no longer do so with the party politics of yesterday – they need a hot line to the living God.

We pray

- for our national and state politicians, that they will seek God and his wisdom anew
- for the Christians beneath them, that they will show their colours in positive ways.

Tip: Let your state or national parliamentarian know that you regularly pray for him or her – and do it!

Week 3

Gentleness, instead of bossiness (being self opinionated)

You're blessed when you're content with just who you are – no more, no less. That's the moment you find yourselves proud owners of everything that can't be bought. (Mt 5:5)

12. Sunday, 28th February

God shows us what is really important to him through Jesus:

He wants us to be reconciled with Him. Jesus endured injustice, and even gave up his own life for us to experience reconciliation with God. He endured because he knew that in the end God would judge justly. Jesus came to love unconditionally and to overcome evil with love. And through doing so he won the very best: your life and your love. However, even in small disputes we often want to claim our rights. But those who hang on to their rights can no longer forgive. Being right is not always the best.

We pray

- for the ability to recognize when it is time to let go of our rights
- that Christians will be examples of how to live in reconciliation
- that people who suffer injustice will experience God's love

Tip: There is a folder called "Sanfte Kraft" (Gentle Strength) which can support you over the next four weeks with daily thoughts and questions to engage you in your own learning process on the themes of humility and meekness.

13. Monday, 1st March

Fish or Shark?

How many lives would be preserved if all drivers on the roads didn't force their right of way? On the road it is clear to see how some people think when someone pushes into a small gap just to end up only a meter or so ahead. How often do we see someone driving dangerously and on the back of their car a fish sign? That's more like a shark chasing its own rights!

We pray

- for thoughtful driving on the roads
- that drivers abstain from drinking alcohol
- for improved safety measures on the streets

Tip: Observe your own driving habits. Are you willing to forego your rights?

14. Tuesday, 2nd March
Good Peacemaking

Being right and receiving justice is not the same in Court. How much time and money is wasted in resolving disputes! That is why many courts offer new ways of resolving a dispute: extra-judicial mediation. The mediation process does not pronounce judgement. A mediator helps to settle the dispute as both parties agree to work through the process of conflict resolution to achieve a satisfactory resolution for both. Today children are trained as mediators even in elementary school so that they themselves learn to solve conflict without violence.

We pray

- for success in the work of adolescent and adult mediators
- for the expansion of mediation procedure in the courts
- for more Christians to be trained in this area

Tip: Would training in mediation be something for you? Or how about encouraging someone else to do that?.

15. Wednesday, 3rd March
Conflict Resolution in Church

How many conflicts are pushed under the carpet in our churches? Conflicts are quite normal. When we manage to resolve conflict in healthy ways both parties come out of it for the better. On the other hand is the question, "How can we resolve conflicts in a good way?" Does the strongest or the one who speaks most eloquently win? Does someone make a command? And if so, who? When it's just about being proved right, then both sides dig in. Our churches need knowledge about good conflict resolution, (for example through mediation)!

We pray

- that those in our churches in conflict with each other will learn to respect one another and the art of coexistence.
- that concealed conflicts are uncovered
- for readiness to endure „ each other in love“ (Ephesians 4:2)

Tip: Consider whether your church needs help in conflict resolution. What could you yourself contribute to it?

16. Thursday, 4th March
Living together in the family

How many rights are given up when mothers and fathers take care of their children? There is little sleep, continual disturbance, financial restrictions, etc. but true happiness is experienced as parents accompany their children through life. Unfulfilled needs are however also a cause of tension. There needs to be a satisfactory balance between giving and taking, so that no members of the family are overloaded. But many families cannot talk about this without becoming dogmatic and blaming each other. Relationships between married couples and children break up because of quarrels and conflict.

We pray

- for wisdom for everyone involved in family and marriage counselling
- that married couples will find help in situations where there seems to be no solution
- for all children who suffer because their parents are separated

Tip: Gewaltfreie Kommunikation – eine Sprache des Lebens (Non-violent communication – a language of life) by Marshall B. Rosenberg indicates new ways for effective communication.

17. Friday, 5th March
Contact with politicians

Dealing with political opponents is often not done in a fair way. Opponents' mistakes are often blown out of context, with little acknowledgement of our own failings. Personal weaknesses of politicians are too often exposed by the media. This is not without consequences for individual people. Even Christians are often much quicker to judge or condemn politicians, than to pray for them. Here it seems to be especially difficult to love others as we do ourselves, and prayer for politicians often becomes more accusation than intercession. But Jesus has already denied himself the right to accuse!

We pray

- for forgiveness, where we have not prayed lovingly for politicians
- for the protection of marriages / families and friendship of politicians
- that politicians may learn to treat each other with respect

Tip: What would be different in your life if you applied the Great Commandment (to love people and God) also to politicians?

18. Saturday, 6th March

Renunciation because of the Gospel

In order to reach people with the good news of Jesus, there are many people who are ready to serve others unselfishly. This happens, for example, in social service ministry or through volunteer work. Apart from this there are new church plants which especially stress "Incarnational living". Their members want to discover new ways to be light and salt in their neighbourhoods. As Christians seeking to serve our community we need to change our ways to meet the needs of a changing society.

We pray

- for all people who give up many rights to serve others
- for new workers in social service and volunteer ministries
- for everybody looking for new ways to authentically live out their Christianity

Tip: An Internet-Blog where a lot can be found out about „Incarnational living“: <http://blog.gw.edu>.

Week 4

Desire for righteousness

You're blessed when you've worked up a good appetite for God. He's food and drink in the best meal you'll ever eat. You're blessed when you care. At the moment of being 'careful,' you find yourselves cared for. (Mt 5:6-7)

19. Sunday, 7th March

More righteousness!

If someone is considered as a winner in our society, then he/she has often got there by not considering what is right. Envy and greed often seem to bear fruit. Many people are looking out for their own benefit without considering others. Our society is not about doing what is right! Even in the education system it seems that family background still determines the chances of success. In the area of medicine a two-rank system pushes justice from the operating table. God wants us to know that he values people who campaign for justice. Their happiness lies in the fact that they are not apathetic and numb to what is going on around them.

We pray

- that Christians will emerge from their religious niches and campaign for justice
- that those in business and politics will make wise decisions that will strengthen the social peace in this country

Tip: Read or listen to news that highlights grievances and consider how you can become actively involved, even if it is only becoming aware of those in your area who are affected and speaking to them.

20. Monday, 8th March

Unfair distribution

Everyone gets worked up over excessive and disproportional managers' salaries! But still nobody seems to be able to do anything about it. Of course there are exceptions: There are managers who feel obligated to the companies that are entrusted to them and not only because they are well paid for it. Ultimately insight into injustice has to come from the hearts of individuals. But a society that is obsessed with money reaps what it sows: the rich get richer and the poor get poorer. Those with 1-Euro jobs and those receiving Hartz IV often quite rightly experience anger and feel misunderstood.

We pray

- for insight for business leaders in the area of proportionate financial aid
- for the strengthening of Christian ethics at all levels of responsibility

Tip: Give a business leader a book about Christian management

21. *Tuesday, 9th March*
Fair Trade

Fortunately Fair Trade products are now available in grocery discount shops. But there needs to be people who are prepared to pay the fair (mostly higher) prices. This is one simple way to fight against exploitation, especially of agricultural products. This is to reward honest labour and to support the dignity of people who produce these products. A part of this is making sure that the Third World Market is not flooded with subsidised groceries from the EU, thereby destroying the livelihoods of local farmers.

We pray

- for more consumer awareness in what people buy and the expansion of Fair-Trade marketing
- for trade between manufacturers and buyers that is fair and transparent

Tip: Ask your grocery discounter for Fair Trade products and promote, together with your church, the purchase of these products through different activities.

22. *Wednesday, 10th March*
Generational Justice

In our country the life achievements of the many older people are a contrast to the reduced performance possibilities of a shrinking younger generation. Families with children carry an even greater social burden than families without children. Their children however are urgently needed to absorb the costs of an aging society. The next generation needs to be considered in order to avoid a battle between meeting the needs of the young and those of the old. How should they live and how can they be supported? God's creative solutions are necessary to create justice.

We pray

- for the strengthening of families and a growing understanding between generations
- for new ideas to promote justice between young and old

Tip: Find out about possible volunteer involvement for older people in local schools and kindergartens and introduce them in your church.

23. *Thursday, 11th March*
Where is justice?

Legislation and jurisdiction increasingly exhibit gaps in justice: the Hartz IV benefits of parents are reduced when their children earn money from holiday jobs. Tax fraud into the millions is mildly dealt with, but a sales assistant who doesn't deal appropriately with drink bottle receipts (of insignificant value) is sacked without notice. And as Christians we wonder why the media attack and defame conservative values which don't hurt anyone.

We pray

- for by-laws that represent not so much the interests of the Lobbyists but the general well-being of the public
- that more justice will be seen, especially in the area of Hartz-IV laws

Tip: Become informed about legislation processes. This can be done through information from the Federal Centre for political education. There are also web-sites such as "Christian und Jurist" which have begun to get involved with this: www.ChristundJurist.de

24. *Friday, 12th March*
Growing Injustice

More and more people are unable to survive on salaries earned from their full-time jobs. Florists, hairdressers, security personnel and many in the hospitality industry have to apply for Hartz IV supplements. Through the increase of temporary employment in business many people are working in the same workplace with a considerably lower salary than the permanent staff. Frustration, envy and a lack of perspective through permanent insecurity and threats of dismissal are disabling the workers of many businesses. Managers have to repeatedly carry the costs of mistakes.

We pray

- that people can again live on the earnings of their fulltime jobs
- for those in politics, industry and trade unions to be able to work together to create fairer salaries for these difficult areas

Tip: Find out from the Internet how people live who depend on Hartz IV and compare that with your financial situation.

25. Saturday, 13th March

Pluck up courage...

Sensitivity for justice begins in our own hearts. This is where the decision is made to follow through on a perception or not. Moral courage and a high level of empathy are needed in these times to advocate for greater justice – in big things or small things. This means being prepared to accept disadvantages to ourselves and not just go along with what the government says. Many Christians from the east proved themselves good examples of this just over twenty years ago. Remaining silent and considering only ourselves promotes injustice in our environment.

We pray

- for a renewed moral courage to uncover injustices and to seek creative solutions
- for freedom of opinion and religion and for Christians who will commit themselves to working for this.

Tip: Recommend people from your area who have shown moral courage for awards. Encourage people in your church to do this: for example, the Values Award from "Stiftung Neues Leben". www.NeuesLeben.de

Week 5

A pure heart

You're blessed when you get your inside world - your mind and heart – put right. Then you can see God in the outside world. (Mt 5:8)

26. Sunday, 15th March

A pure heart

"Take care that your hearts remain pure", warned Jesus at the beginning of his sermon on the mountain. A "pure heart" needs to remain filled with the good and clean thoughts that God has placed within people. It is in constant danger. The inner pollution can easily take over in an era of ever-increasing media possibilities. God's adversary continually whispers bad and bitter thoughts to us. Those who trust their lives to Jesus experience the miracle of that first great cleansing of the heart. For it to remain pure however, it has to be washed clean every day.

We pray

- that spiritual disciplines such as repentance and confession would again be considered "in"
- that Christian counsellors and therapists would be empowered to help the many people who come to them seeking help.

Tip: Intentionally practice a spiritual discipline today that leads to inner purity.

27. Monday, 15th March

What really counts

"What really counts at the end of the world is everything that you are to me", the songwriter H.R. Kunze sings. But the relationship between two people is not everything. Through our relationship with God we realise that that is what holds life together. That is also true of our togetherness in society. Christian values such as the 10 Commandments are stage directions and instructions from the Creator. They point to the fact that life and cooperation with each other can work. What really counts at the end, is not that two people understand each other, but that every person can be acquitted of all the guilt in his/her life.

We pray

- for a greater awareness in this country's public life of what really counts
- for grace to not only acknowledge Christian values but to live them out as well

Tip: The next Congress for Christian Leadership (24-26th February 2011) again has the motto "Leading with values". www.christlicher-kongress.de

28. *Tuesday, 16th March*
Role-models in politics

"Even politicians are role-models. They should keep the promises they made before the election" said SPD Minister from Hessen, Dagmar Metzger in an interview in March 2008. Through her courageous "No" she, along with others, was able to prevent a government being built on broken election promises. Whoever holds public office in a democracy should be ready to align himself or herself with this standard. It's not about pointing a moral finger at the lifestyles of public figures. It's about a credible lifestyle – and that needs God's blessing.

We pray

- for credible role-models in politics
- that all Christians involved in politics will have the strength to work authentically for the truth

Tip: Let other people know who and what is the source of your strength

29. *Wednesday, 17th March*
Learning to trust again (Banks, Government, partners...)

The basic sense of trust grows in a small child when the mother and father show him love. Then he/she can trust others as an adult. What the child psychologists don't say is how to make up for it when the mother and father didn't show enough love. The Gospel makes it possible: Jesus Christ shows us a God that gives every child of God a basic sense of trust. Whoever accepts the personal loving attention of our heavenly Father will be freed from the basic mistrust of others. So even the deficits of our upbringing don't have the final word on our lives.

We pray

- that adults who are no longer able to trust will have healing encounters with God
- that parents and others responsible for children will be able to show loving acceptance and not pressure and fear in their daily lives.

Tip: Speak about the current political situation with a positive attitude. Don't go along with a general attitude of complaining!

30. *Thursday, 18th March*
Being honest – standing up for God's values without fear

Social anxiety is the fear of speaking in public – because it could be embarrassing. There are many different degrees of this anxiety. But for those who trust in God, there are no insurmountable barriers. Jesus encourages us: he has conquered the world and its fears (John 16:33). Those who don't like to speak could maybe write. Acting in ways motivated by our Christian faith is also an enduring witness – from refusing illegal employment to honestly issuing accounts to voluntary social service.

We pray

- for Christians who courageously confess their faith and their values in public
- for a great diversity of Christian witness through word and deed

Tip: Suggestions can be found on the home page: www.christliche-freiwilligenagentur.de

31. *Friday, 19th March*
Good news is also good news

Only bad news is news – which is why journalists report such bad things. People react more quickly when their curiosity is awakened in such ways. Unfortunately this brings good viewing ratings. There is a need for a media that is selective and gives feedback. It makes sense to react to one-sided reports on "Christian Fundamentalism", even in programmes which are funded through the fees that we all pay. In this way we can exert an influence on programming.

We pray

- for courageous journalists and programme managers to promote programmes that are not just focussed on getting top ratings
- for a fair and balanced presentation of acknowledged Christians in public media

Tip: www.kep.de/Aktionen/LobundTadel: a list of media organisations.

32. Saturday, 20th March
"Cleaned-out" hearts

Experts estimate that at least a half a million Germans are addicted to Internet pornography. The revenue from this world-wide industry lies in the billions. Real sex seems boring to those who are addicted and marriages and relationships are thereby destroyed. The situation of the youth is especially dramatic.

Investigations show that up to 90% of 8-16-year olds consume pornographic content. They desperately need adults who can show them how to deal responsibly with their sexuality, and role-models who can clearly show them that with God's help it is possible to break out of that scene.

We pray

- that there will be more reports about people who have been able to get out of the porn scene and who can clearly show that life is much better and more attractive without this addiction.
- for protective laws against the powerful influence of the porn industry that can really be enforced

Tip: www.fv-medienabhaengigkeit.de,
www.neuesland.de/return, www.porno-ausweg.de
(ERF and Weißes Kreuz)

Week 6

Peacemakers

You're blessed when you can show people how to cooperate instead of compete or fight. That's when you discover who you really are, and your place in God's family. (Mt 5:9)

33. Sunday, 21st March
The Peacemaker

This message of Jesus can be understood as a challenge to commit all our strength to a peaceful cohabitation. But it is naturally very difficult for people to live in peace with each other. A glance at world history shows that it is a history of war. Only God can bring about peace. That's why we want to pray that more and more people will open themselves to this God of peace and as "children of God" influence our society as peace-makers.

We pray

- that people in our country will not only be concerned about their own well-being but also consider the people around them
- for peace-making individuals called by God

Tip: Read biographies about peace-makers: Martin Luther King, Nelson Mandela.

34. Monday, 22nd March
German Armed Forces currently serving overseas

Since the end of the East-West-Conflict 1989/90 NATO has changed in its self-understanding and its field of activity. From this the German Army is committed to peace-keeping operations far beyond its borders. Among other things it is involved with protection against piracy on the coast of Somalia and especially in the increasingly difficult and dangerous assignment in Afghanistan. The Army continues to find itself in a process of renewal and differentiation of its mission in the context of security and military-political demands.

We pray

- for soldiers on overseas assignment and those responsible for them
- that the general public will understand that these assignments are necessary for the preservation and promotion of peace.

Tip: Take note of news reports about military assignments so that you can pray more concretely for them.

35. *Tuesday, 23rd March*
Violence prevention

Measures to prevent violence take on a growing significance in a society where violence is increasing. The intention here is to prevent and reduce violence. Training is offered in many prevention programmes in schools, youth work, sport clubs and the police force where communication, de-escalation methods and conflict resolution can be learned. At the 15th Annual Prevention Day in Berlin (10th – 11th May) a wide spectrum of general violence prevention ideas is highlighted and presented.

We pray

- for all groups and workers involved in the challenging training programmes for violence prevention
- for a raised awareness in our society of how to deal with violent people

Tip: Where is there a lot of violence in your area? Pray for all those who want to prevent it.

www.praeventionstag.de

36. *Wednesday, 24th March*
Social peace

The German state wants to grant all citizens equal opportunities in education and vocational security. The difference in income in Germany is however growing at a faster rate than other industrial countries. The cause lies in growing unemployment which is again a consequence of economical recession. Social peace can only occur when on one hand the constitutionally guaranteed equal opportunity doesn't get lost from view and on the other hand when people, who feel excluded because of poverty are taken seriously, are able to obtain help and no longer fall through the cracks.

We pray

- for a growing consciousness for people in material need
- for policies that will continue to grapple with social peace in our country
- for all those who commit themselves to working for people in social need

Tip: Who needs social or financial support in your local neighbourhood or amongst your friends? What can you do or give?

37. *Thursday, 25th March*
The Police as peace-makers?

More and more the presence of the police is required at demonstrations (particularly of rightist extremists) for de-escalation purposes. The tendency toward violence not only of the Neo-Nazis but also of the Leftists demonstrating against them often requires a great number of police officers. These in turn experience growing violence directed against them. The Police Union complains about financial cuts made by the government that will lead to a reduction of police presence. It sees resources being used up and requests an increase in personnel.

We pray

- for the protection of police on assignment, including through political measures
- that the service of the police will again receive more recognition in society
- for people, who commit themselves to a de-escalation of violence in demonstrations

Tip: Speak to a police officer about his or her involvement in a demonstration. There is also a club for Christian Police officers in Germany: www.CPV-online.org

38. *Friday, 26th March*
Peace with "Israel"

"He who blesses Israel will be blessed" (Genesis 12:3). This promise is still valid. Unlike the former G.D.R., which rejected diplomatic relationships with Israel, the Federal Republic of Germany is "richly blessed" – certainly in part as a consequence of its intensive relationship with Israel. The fight against every kind of anti-Semitism is a duty, especially in light of neo-Nazi thinking. At the same time Germany has the task, not only to promote relationship with Israel, but also to exhibit a great openness and regard for our growing Jewish population.

We pray

- for the protection of Jewish synagogues and cemeteries
- for a growing contact with Jewish fellowships
- for the uncovering of anti-Semitism that has been deeply rooted in our society for centuries

Tip: Visit a synagogue! Let yourself be invited to a Sabbath celebration or to the beginning of the Passover celebration!

39. Saturday, 27th March

Raising children for peace in the family, in kindergartens and in schools.

The foundation for a stable personality in a child is laid in the family home. This is the underlying requirement for a person who is capable of relationships and living peacefully with others. Even in the institutions of kindergarten and school the children orient themselves largely to the example of child care workers and teachers. Aside from these role-models, the child needs to have his or her abilities in relationship-building, conflict resolution and communication strengthened. Currently however increasing violence in children and youth is being registered. That's why it is becoming ever more important for a preventative type of upbringing.

We pray

- for competent help for children at risk or violence-prone children and youth
- that the values of living together harmoniously will be taken more seriously, recognised and put into practice in our society.

Tip: The magazine "family" www.bvzeitschriften.net. For questions about raising children see www.team.-f.de

Week 7

Persecuted and rejected

You're blessed when your commitment to God provokes persecution. The persecution drives you even deeper into God's kingdom. Not only that - count yourselves blessed every time people put you down or throw you out or speak lies about you to discredit me. What it means is that the truth is too close for comfort and they are uncomfortable. You can be glad when that happens - give a cheer, even! - for though they don't like it, I do! And all heaven applauds. And know that you are in good company. My prophets and witnesses have always gotten into this kind of trouble. (Mt 5:10-12)

40. Sunday, 28th March

Persecution and rejection...

is something that nobody wants to experience. Self-help literature teaches us how to show appreciation to one another. The education system and business are based on recognition for performance. So what was Jesus thinking then when he said that persecution and rejection should make us happy? That goes completely against the grain for our western way of thinking. It was totally different for the early Christians – and for a large number of Christians today! Because of their faith they are suffering persecution or rejection. Which of these two is the "normal situation"? Is it freedom of faith and mission, or resistance and persecution? Let's take time to check what our benchmark is.

We pray

- that God will wake us out of our expectation that freedom of religion and an unhindered proclamation of the Gospel is normal
- that Jesus will adjust my belief that recognition is the greatest goal

Tip: Evaluate honestly and critically before God and yourself how much a striving for recognition defines who you are.

41. Monday, 29th March

Resistance is normal

We really don't need to wonder when others ridicule, mock or avoid us because of the consistent way we live out our faith. This is happening more and more often in this country. That's exactly what Jesus had predicted for his followers. Maybe we should rather ask ourselves if our faith hasn't become too harmless when it doesn't cause offence to anyone. Naturally we want to do all we can to ensure that our faith is attractive to others. Both in private and in public however we need to be realistic about both reactions: there will be either interest or rejection. We would do well to relearn how to deal with that.

We pray

- for the ability to discern between what is discrimination because of our faith and what is “home-made” rejection
- that we learn patience and above all love when our faith provokes others

Tip: Speak about this theme in a Christian group, such as Bible Study, Home Group and so on. Collect your experiences, reactions and fears and pray for each other.

42. *Tuesday, 30th March*
Attacks and campaigns

In recent times there have been a number of attacks in the media and in the German public that unjustly brand clear Christian positions as undemocratic or fundamentalist. This includes topics such as marriage, homosexual partnerships, abortion and protection of life or Christian witness in the Muslim world. This kind of disparagement should not bother us. We do however need courage in order to defend our right to religious freedom or freedom of expression. It is necessary both to stand up clearly for biblical convictions as well as to encounter those who think differently with love.

We pray

- for a fair and objective media coverage of Christian convictions
- for the courage to treat those who think differently with truth and love

Tip: Observe how the media covers Christians and the Church and respond briefly with praise or criticism, either in writing or by phone.

43. *Wednesday, 31st March*
Silent Death

The danger of sickness and accident is decreasing – thankfully! Human life is mostly endangered at the beginning and the end: for children in the womb and for those with old-age related sickness. We've almost become used to it. God creates, protects and loves life – even that of the unborn, handicapped, sick and old. Therefore we need to raise our voices on his behalf against the hundreds of thousands of silent deaths. Churches, social welfare organisations and individuals can offer practical help, so that life that has been conceived can be accepted and promoted, and so that people can grow old and become sick with dignity.

We pray

- for a renewed courage to have families and children
- for love for and acceptance of those who are handicapped or sick

- against the acceptance of “silent deaths” in the minds of the public

Tip: Practical information and help can be found under www.bv-lebensrecht.de, www.kaleb.de

44. *Thursday, 1st April*
Different and rejected...

is how foreigners or migrants, those on Hartz IV, single parents and other disadvantaged people can feel even in our country. That can occur even in Christian Churches. The whole Bible speaks about love for those on the fringes of society. Jesus demonstrated this love – for the poor, for swindlers, for prostitutes, for unbelievers and for those infected with disease. Not only is he a role-model for us, but he is also a source of strength to us today to also have such an alternative and integrating effect. His love should permeate us, transform us and flow out to the outcasts, embracing them with the limitless love of the Father.

We pray

- for models of living together in our churches
- for a social and political climate that recognises and promotes the richness of diversity.

Tip: Invite people from your neighbourhood who have immigrated to Germany for a meal and let them experience the love and acceptance of God (at first without words).

45. *Good Friday, 2nd April*
Persecuted Christians

On Good Friday we want to enter into the vicarious suffering and death of our Lord Jesus Christ on behalf of our persecuted brothers and sisters. For them the Beatitude for the persecuted (the theme for this week) is especially valid – they are precisely the ones to whom the Kingdom of God belongs. They are not so noticeable, but there are now some thousands of Christian refugees from Iraq living amongst us. The main persecuting countries are North Korea, Saudi Arabia and Iran. Political measures have so far had little effect or have not even been attempted. Our intercession on their behalf is for this reason even more important.

We pray

- for effective pressure on countries which do not allow religious freedom
- for comfort and steadfastness for believers who are being threatened or imprisoned
- Claim the promise of the beatitudes for persecuted Christians!

Tip: Find out more information under www.ead.de/arbeitskreise/religionsfreiheit, www.opendoors.de

46. *Easter Saturday, 3rd April*
True Happiness forever

On the day between the death and resurrection of Jesus we want to think about eternity. Death, with all its fear and grief, is for Jesus People only a stop along the way. The Resurrected One promises those who belong to him and hold fast to him, "Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven". What a prospect! It is well worthwhile to believe, to hope and to love – and to pray to the living God 365 days a year, not just 46!

We pray

- Thank God that he answers prayers and that he has prepared a glorious future for those who belong to him
- Lay claim to the victory over death and the devil that the one who was crucified and is risen has won – for yourself and for those who are suffering or under pressure.

Tip: Evaluate, either by yourself or even better in groups of intercessors, your experience with "40 Days Prayer and Fasting for our Land". Record any difficulties or positive experiences and maybe send them on to the publishers.