

**PRAYER/PROGRAM OUTLINE**  
***"Sisters of Selma" – PBS DOCUMENTARY***

**Prayer for Unity**

**Psalm 133**

How wonderful, how beautiful,  
when brothers and sisters get along!

It's like costly anointing oil  
flowing down head and beard,  
flowing down Aaron's beard,  
flowing down the collar of his priestly robes.

It's like the dew on Mount Hermon  
flowing down the slopes of Zion.

Yes, that's where God commands the blessing,  
ordains eternal life.

Glory be to the Father, to the Son  
and to the Holy Spirit,  
as it was in the beginning, is now, and  
will be forever more. Amen

**Reading from the first letter to the Corinthians**

Now I appeal to you, brothers and sisters, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you be in agreement and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be united in the same mind and the same purpose. For it has been reported to me by Chloe's people that there are quarrels among you, my brothers and sisters. What I mean is that each of you says, "I belong to Paul," or "I belong to Apollos," or "I belong to Cephas," or "I belong to Christ." Has Christ been divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul? I thank God that I baptized none of you except Crispus and Gaius, so that no one can say that you were baptized in my name. (I did baptize also the household of Stephanas; beyond that, I do not know whether I baptized anyone else.) For Christ did not send me to baptize but to proclaim the gospel, and not with eloquent wisdom, so that the cross of Christ might not be emptied of its power.

*1 Corinthians 1:10-17*

**Time for Reflection**

## Introduction for the PBS documentary

The following prayer was delivered by **Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. in 1953** as part of his summer radio broadcasts from Ebenezer Baptist Church in Atlanta, Georgia. He was a PhD student at Boston University.

### **“Help Us To Work with Renewed Vigor”**

*“Most gracious and all wise God, before whose face the generations rise and fall; Thou in whom we live, and move, and have our being. We thank thee (for) all of thy good and gracious gifts, for life and for health; for food and for raiment; for the beauties of nature and the love of human nature. We come before thee painfully aware of our inadequacies and shortcomings. We realize that we stand surrounded with the mountains of love and we deliberately dwell in the valley of hate. We stand amid the forces of truth and deliberately lie. We are forever offered the high road and yet we choose to travel the low road. For these sins O God forgive. Break the spell of that which blinds our minds. Purify our hearts that we may see thee. O God in these turbulent days when fear and doubt are mounting high, give us broad visions, penetrating eyes, and power of endurance. Help us to work with renewed vigor for a warless world, for a better distribution of wealth, and for a brotherhood that transcends race or color. In the name and spirit of Jesus we pray.”*

**“Help us to work with renewed vigor.”** I think that Dr. Martin Luther King is speaking directly to us today as we are gathered as a community of sisters, associates, staff members, clergy, civic leaders and friends. **Help us to work with renewed vigor.**

As most of you know, the Dominican Sisters of Peace, Sisters and (lay) Associates in Mission, live a life of Dominican spirituality built upon 4 pillars: **prayer, study, community and ministry**. We strive daily to preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ with our lives. We are OP-**order of preachers-sisters** or OPA- **order of preachers- associates - who preach with our lives**.

It is for these reasons that we are here today. And we also welcome each guest and friend with an embrace of peace as you join us.

We are here to view the PBS documentary, *Sisters of Selma*. Here is a perspective of what you are about to see. This is an excerpt from the National Catholic Reporter - Global Sisters Report –March 9, 2015 ([globalsistersreport.org/news/selma-effect-catholic-nuns-and-social-justice-50-years-21201](http://globalsistersreport.org/news/selma-effect-catholic-nuns-and-social-justice-50-years-21201))

**“When six Catholic nuns from St. Louis boarded a chartered plane headed for Selma, Alabama, in the early morning hours of March 10, 1965, they had no idea they were about to change their own destinies and the lives of many American women religious. Traveling with 48 other men and women from a variety of faith traditions, the sisters were scheduled to join hundreds of demonstrators in a voting rights’ march scheduled for later that morning in Selma. Clothed in their floor-length, traditional habits of black serge wool and veils, the nuns were swarmed by the media and their photographs and subsequent interviews filled**

**the front pages of many national newspapers, providing the lead story for national television networks over the next few days.**

**In reality, the sisters and those they marched with walked only about a block that day before they were stopped by Alabama troopers and a sheriff's posse; but that short walk helped propel American Catholic sisters into a new era that forever changed the face of religious life and would inevitably redefine how sisters understood and acted upon social justice issues for the rest of the century.**

**The mandates of Vatican II dovetailed with the major social upheavals and transitions prevalent in 1960s America. The Vietnam War, the war on poverty, the civil rights movement and the women's movement jerked the country out of its 1950s idyllic complacency and shook the nation into reexamining its own ideals and its bedrock principles of equality and justice for all. Women religious were far from immune from these social struggles and, emboldened by the mandates and optimism of Vatican II, they saw these events through the lens of Gospel imperatives and as significant opportunities to live their Catholic faith and religious identity in the modern world."**

Sitting among us today, there are sisters, clergy and lay folks who participated directly in the 60's civil rights movement and who are participating in this current civil rights movement. We wish to honor our Sisters through this film whether they marched or taught or nursed or cooked and lived their lives with courageous Gospel values. We wish to thank you, Sisters, and we join you as lay people with our courageous lives to do what Dr. King prayed- "help us to work with renewed vigor". This is the theme of our gathering today.

Let us watch this documentary which will be followed by discussion.

## **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

- Talk to your neighbor about your reaction to the film (share the things that spoke to you, a word or gesture that popped out at you; something that impressed you; a comment or message that stuck with you)
- In small groups, discuss the contrasts and similarities of the 1960s (including the time women religious joined the protests in Selma) and what we are facing today (do you see things that are different? Do you see things that are the same?)
- In open discussion, have participants share with the entire group some of the things that they discussed and possibly propose some ways that we can work toward racial justice and bridging the gap.

## Following the PBS documentary and discussion

### Responsive Reading

Gracious God, we thank you for making one human family of all the peoples of the earth and for creating all the wonderful diversity of cultures.

**Enrich our lives by ever-widening circles of fellowship and show us your presence in those who differ most from us.**

Forgive those of us who have been silent and apathetic in the face of racial intolerance and bigotry, both overt and subtle, public and private.

**And take away the arrogance and hatred which infect our hearts.**

Break down the walls which separate us.

**And help us to find that unity which is the fruit of righteousness and which will enable us to become your beloved community.**

Empower us to speak boldly for justice and truth and help us to deal with one another without hatred or bitterness, working together with mutual forbearance and respect.

**And work through our struggles and confusion to accomplish your purposes. Amen.**

### Lenten Prayer

O God of unconditional love,

you who show no partiality in respect to persons or nations,  
we have heard your good news of great joy for all the people,  
We hear that good news, and in hearing, believe.

We know that your sanctuary is a house of worship for all people,  
with no regard for the color of our skin.

As we worship you, knit us into a people,  
a seamless garment of many colors.

May we celebrate our unity, made whole in our diversity.

Forgive us for our inability to let our "old selves" die to the world.

We acknowledge that we participate in structures that are inherently racist,  
and yet we do nothing to remedy it.

Show us when we fail when we judge others according to the color of their flesh.  
Amen.

### Dominican Blessing