SONG (optional): Refrain: "Were You There..."

LEADER: In these days of darkness, O God, show us light.
Above our national pride, nurture our compassion for all humanity.
As Jesus speaks your Word, O God, open our minds to His truth.
ASSEMBLY: "Let us be united in faith and hope."

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

2. THE TRUTH SPOKEN OPENLY

LEADER: "Forgive us for crucifying You again in their flesh."
ASSEMBLY: "For we knew not what we did."
SCRIPTURE: John 18: 19-23

READER #1: We see Jesus before the high priests. Knowing that his ultimate judge is God, Jesus reminds his critics that he has spoken to public gatherings, not in secret. He has spoken the truth - the Word of God. His critics do not answer, for it is the truth and the public that they fear. And Jesus speaks for both. So they strike Jesus.

READER #2: Maria, a Brazilian student, was being questioned. She was innocent. "They asked me about people I did not know and about things I did not understand." That was the truth. But the interrogator wanted an answer - his answer. "Give me the truth!" he shouted. She was silent. He beat her. He tortured her.

Unlike many, Maria survived her torture and was released. Many speak the truth when they plead ignorance and innocence. Others are guilty. They are guilty of the Gospel, knowing the truth as God's Word. The Gospel is alive in places like El Quiche, Aguilares, and Solentiname. Oscar, of Solentiname, Nicaragua, says, "God sees the poor person's sincerity and promises him the Kingdom of God." Oscar and Maria seek God's Kingdom, and like Jesus face persecution and torture.

READER #1: And Jesus said,"If I speak the truth, why do you hit me?"

SONG (optional): "Were you there when they stood for others'rights? (Tune:"Were You ...tired to break someone? There..")

LEADER: Dear God, in moments of confrontation, may our authority be in the truth of the "good news" - spoken first by your son, Jesus Christ.
As we separate right from wrong, help us to forgive the sinner, while condemning the sin.
ASSEMBLY: "Let us be united in faith and hope."

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

3. HE STIRS UP THE PEOPLE

LEADER: "Forgive us for crucifying You again in their flesh."
ASSEMBLY: "For we knew not what we did."
SCRIPTURE: Luke 23: 1-5

READER #1: We see Jesus stirring the conscience of Pilate. Thus the Roman ruler finds no wrong in Jesus. But men of local power accuse Jesus of subverting the nation. They fear Him. He has given the people the example of healing the sick, feeding the hungry, preaching good news to the poor, proclaiming release to the captives, freeing the oppressed, praying for their persecutors, and forgiving enemies. Such acts of love have started to threaten the powerful and the rich. And the people have been listening to Jesus.

Most Christian martyrs today are tortured or killed, not because they joined a guerilla group or a political party, but because they defend the rights

of the poor to organize rural cooperatives or slum housing associations, or because they minister to the physical and spiritual needs of the oppressed, or because they teach God's commandment, "Thou shalt not kill." Archbishop Oscar Romero of El Salvador was assassinated not because he defended the rights of the Church, but because he defended the rights of the poor and urged the soldiers to love their brothers and sisters and end the killing.

READER #1: And Pilate said,"I find no basis for a charge against this man."

SONG (optional): "Kumba Ya"

LEADER: As we see the sick, the hungry, the poor, and the oppressed, O God, challenge us to follow Jesus' example - to heal, feed, comfort, and free.
As we seek to be nonviolent, show us the way to love our enemy - especially the one who wishes us dead.
As we are tempted to stir up people, breathe into us power of your Holy Spirit, and purify our unclean hearts.
ASSEMBLY: "Let us be united in faith and hope."

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

4. CRUCIFY HIM! CRUCIFY HIM!

LEADER: "Forgive us for crucifying You again in their flesh."
ASSEMBLY: "For we knew not what we did."
SCRIPTURES: Mark 5: 6-14; Matthew 27: 24-26

READER #1: We see the leaders manipulate the crowd to demand that Jesus be crucified. The mob is easily swayed. "Crucify Him!" they cry. The noise is shrill. Pilate, like so many people of "principles," buckles under the pressure. He washes his hands of the responsibility of the death of Jesus.

READER #2: In a U.S. Congressional hearing, a Nicaraguan priest testifies before a legislative committee, "We only want for ourselves what you want for yourselves. If you don't want dictators in your country, do not support them in other countries. What is good for you is also good for us."

But in the US, we Church people are often easily swayed by the cry - "They are Communists!" We're often blind to seeing that freedom and human rights are as important to people in their countries as they are to us in our country. Simply stated - the Golden Rule has not been practiced in relating to our Latin American neighbors. Instead, we ship armaments to military regimes which we know abuse their people and repress all freedom.

And when US business interests need protection in the nations of military dictators, our government responds even when US corporations are involved in the oppression of that nation's people - as was I.T.T. in Chile.

Our media is silent. Our leaders manipulate public opinion, spurring Americans to cry,"Kill the Communists!" And innocent people are slaughtered. Will we wash our hands?

READER #1: And Pilate turned Jesus over to the soldiers.

SONG (optional): "Were you there when they yelled 'you Communist'" (Tune:"Were you there..."

LEADER: As tensions on public decisions grow, O God may we live the Golden Rule and resist the pressures of the "crowd morality."
In the struggle for freedom and human rights for all, may we side with brothers and sisters abroad who suffer continual injustice.
O God, empowered by your loving spirit, may we cry above the crowd, "Save Them! Stop the Killings!"
ASSEMBLY: "Let us be united in faith and hope."
PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION