READER #2: Do we know the hurt of women today? In Latin America, as in our own United States, the vast majority of the poor are women and children. In rural areas, women are employed only two or three months a year and at wages a third less than those of men. Women must take their children with them to the coffee and cotton harvest. Through the sharecropping system in El Salvador, women and children work on the men's crews and so they are dependent on the man for their pay and for their meager food allowance. In such regions, they experience the worst living conditions.

Many women migrte to the cities for better living conditions. They may become domestic servants for rich and middle-class families where they are virtual house-slaves with no protection from the law. Or they work in factories where young women are preferred and pregnant women are denied jobs. Other women turn to street-vending, which is illegal.

Illiteracy is twice as prevalent among women as men. Those who can study are employed as secretaries, nurses, and saleswomen at wages which don't cover a family's needs. Very few Latin American women reach the professional level.

Expectant mothers lack proper nutrition and health care, contributing to a high infant mortality rate and diseases of malnutrition among most children five and under.

In these times of political repression, women, even pregnant ones are also taken prisoner, raped, and tortured. Many women are held to discover the whereabouts of their husbands, fathers, or sons, if they themselves are accused of nothing. Most Salvadorian refugees, both inside and outside the country, are women and children.

READER #1: Jesus said, "Don't weep for me, weep for yourselves and for your children."

SONG (optional): "The Cry of the Poor"

LEADER: O God, help us to accept that each of us has his or her own individuality and integrity as a human being.
At a time when women seek equal status with men in this country, prod our conscience when women are exploited anywhere.
O God, we know that in your sight there is neither slave nor master, Greek nor Jew, but all are one in you.
Help us live this out in civil society and in our churches.

ASSEMBLY: "Let us be united in faith and hope."

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

9. THEY KNOW NOT WHAT THEY DO

LEADER: "Forgive us for crucifying You again in their flesh."
ASSEMBLY: "For we knew not what we did."
SCRIPTURES: Luke 23: 32-34

READER #1: We see Jesus being executed in one of torture's most cruel ways - by crucifixion, by being nailed to a cross, and left there to hang until he dies. And yet, with compassion and with insight, Jesus can say of those who torture him, "Forgive them, God, because they don't know what they're doing."

READER #2: When an assassin strikes at a person of peace, we ask, "Why?" When we hear of widespread torture, we ask "Why?" We'd like to think that the mutilation of bodies and minds can only be the work of an insane, or desperate, or drugged human being. Unfortunately, many torturers come from "good" Christian families. General Garcia, El Salvador's military leader, and a "Christian" says,"If it is necessary to kill 100,000 Salvadorans to restore peace and freedom, we will do it."

Mnsr. Oscar Romero, the martyred bishop of the poor, knew that his quest for a just society in El Salvador made him a likely target of assassins. He said, "May my death, if it be accepted by God, be for the liberation of my people and a testimony of hope for the future. If they succeed in killings me, I will forgive and bless those who do it...a bishop will die, but the church of God, which is the people, will never perish...May God have mercy on the assassins."

READER #1: Truly, he was a righteous man.

SONG (optional): "To Each Woman, Man , and Nation" (Tune: "Once to Every Man & Nation)

LEADER: Forgive us, Lord, when we fail to see the "enemy" in ourselves.
Forgive us when we humiliate or demean any other person.
Give us strength, dear God, to forgive, even reconcile with those who persecute us for our efforts to do your will.
O God, may there be a world awakening against the madness of the way of assassins, oppressors, and torturers.

ASSEMBLY: "Let us be united in faith and hope."

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

10. SAVE YOURSELF

LEADER: "Forgive us for crucifying You again in their flesh."
ASSEMBLY: "For we knew not what we did."
SCRIPTURE: Matthew 27:39-44

READER #1: We see Jesus being mocked while he hangs on the cross. We see the unbelief of the witnesses as they dare Jesus to come down from the cross to prove he's the Son of God. Where once the cross was a tool of torture and death, through his resurrection victory, he gave proof that he was the Christ.

READER #2: Oscar Romero lives too, in the struggle of the poor. He said,"they can kill me, but they can't kill the voice of justice...If God accepts the sacrifice of my life, may it be that my blood serve as the seed of freedom."

Jon Sobrino said,"Maura, Ita, Dorothy, and Jean are Christ dead today. But they also are the risen Christ who keeps alive the hope of liberation...Even though four bodies fill us with sadness and indignation,...with Maura, Ita, Dorothy, and Jean, God came to El Salvador!"

The blood of martyrs is the seed of liberation.

READER #1: And the crucifixion crowd shouted, "Come down from the cross."

SONG (optional): "O Come and Mourn With Me Awhile"

LEADER: O Lord, your cross is victory! You have nothing to "prove" to us.
We pray thanksgiving in the words of Maura Clarke,
"Though I am somewhat fearful of the days ahead for our people of El Salvador,
I feel convinced, Lord, that you want me there;
that you will give me the light and strength I need."

ASSEMBLY: "Let us be united in faith and hope."

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

11. WHY HAVE YOU FORSAKEN ME?

LEADER: "Forgive us for crucifying You again in their flesh."
ASSEMBLY: "For we knew not what we did."
SCRIPTURES: Mark 15: 33-37

READER #1: We see Jesus reaching his final moment of abandonment. Into God's hands Jesus commits his spirit.

READER #2: Lonliness is accelerated during times of suffering. Yet it is then that we can reach the ultimate in faith. In terms of what abandonment meant to him, listen to the thoughts of Adolfo Esquivel, nonviolent activist from Argentina and the 1980 Nobel Peace Prize winner: "I was in a torture center, imprisoned in a small cell without light or sanitary facilities. When they opened the door, letting in the light, I could see many inscriptions on the walls. One day, written by a finger dipped in blood, I read these words, "Dios no mata'- God does not kill."

A Chilean priest writes,"The first time I was tortured, I tried to act as I thought a priest would act. The second time, I was conscious only of the pain."