



Current Issues in Prayer

January 2022

Welcome! The Pope invites people of good will to come together and pray **for all those suffering from religious discrimination and persecution; may their rights and dignity be recognized, since these originate from all of us being brothers and sisters in the one human family.**



Getting started:

I find a quiet place and I spend time in silence and feel God's presence within me. I think of people who are suffering from religious discrimination and persecution and ask God to protect them.



Short story:

On the 19th February 2018, 110 schoolgirls aged 11–19 were kidnapped by the Boko Haram terrorist group from a public girls' secondary school in Dapchi, Nigeria. Five schoolgirls died on the same day of their kidnapping. All the others were released a month later except for Leah Sharibu. The girls returned to their overjoyed parents. Yet, Rebecca Sharibu could not find Leah anywhere. Frantic with worry, she found two of Leah's friends and asked them: "Where is Leah?" "I can't find my Leah! Why did you leave her there?" The girls told her: "Boko Haram told Leah to accept Islam and she refused. So, they said she would not come with us and she should go and sit back down with three other girls they had there. We begged her to just recite the Islamic declaration and put the hijab on and get into the vehicle, but she repeated that it was not her faith and that she was not going to lie. Leah went on by stating that even under threat of being killed, she would not recite the words that would make her Muslim. Before they left, Leah had asked these girls to tell her parents to pray for her.



In January 2020, after spending almost two years in captivity, news spread that Leah Sharibu had given birth to a baby boy, after being forcefully converted to Islam and married off to a Boko Haram commander. It was later reported that she had given birth to a second child. Leah is still in captivity.



Time to reflect:

Do I realise that there are many persons all over the world who are not allowed to live their faith in safety? How aware am I that many persons all over the world fall victim to unjust imprisonment, physical harm and intimidation all because they profess their faith?



Let us pray:

Dear Lord, protect our brothers and sisters around the world who are being persecuted for their faith, especially those who are active in sharing the gospel. We ask you to watch over them and encourage those who work to support oppressed believers on the ground, risking their own lives to do so.



Inspiration:

Persecutions are inevitable in the life of a Christian. We are not greater than our Master, Jesus Christ, in whose Holy Spirit we gain strength to endure.

Monica McGowan Johnson



Hands on:

Show solidarity with those who are being persecuted by supporting campaigns that ask governments to pursue justice for the victims. If ever we ourselves encounter a case of persecution, we should not pass by – even if the person involved belongs to a different religion to ours.