

Forgive me, Father

by Carmen Barroso

Forgive me, Holy Father
because I was so ignorant
I did not know how to protect myself

Forgive me, Father
because I was so stupid
I thought it would never happen to me

Forgive me, father
because I was so naïve
I believed you would take care of me

Forgive me, father
because I was so young
I did not know how to care for a new life

Forgive me, Father
because I was so weak
I could not convince you of my reasons

Forgive me, Father
because I was so dense
I did not appreciate the guiltig power of the church

Forgive me, father
because I was so powerless
I did not have many options

Forgive me, Holy Father
because I felt so ashamed
I did not stop the priest from playing with my body

Carmen Barroso is in the women's movement since her youth, and has supported movement building throughout her distinguished career, beginning as a university professor and a founder of a women's studies center in Brazil. In the 1990s, she was a director of the MacArthur Foundation, which supported women's organizations in Latin America, Africa and Asia. She retired from her position as director of the Western Hemisphere of IPPF but continues to be active for reproductive and sexual rights, through writing, consulting or serving in global committees of the UN, WHO and UNFPA. When she received the UN Population Award, her speech dedicated it to the doctor who had made her abortion when she was a student dreaming to overcome the Brazilian dictatorship. She started writing poetry in the last decade and has published some, mostly in Portuguese. "Forgive me Father" was written when the Pope pardoned women who had abortions.