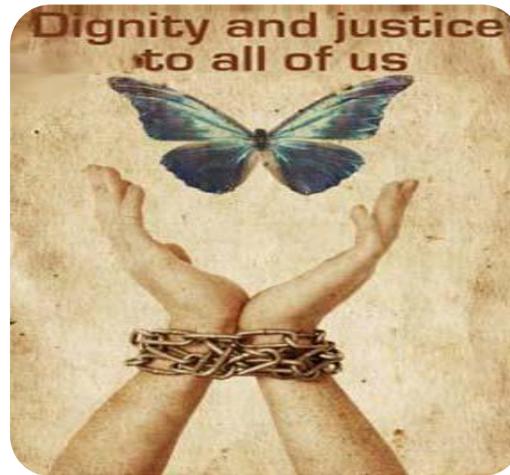


PRAYER SERVICE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS DAY

10th December 2019



INTRODUCTION

All States and interested organizations were invited by the United Nations General Assembly in 1950 to observe December 10 as Human Rights Day. The Day marks the anniversary of the Assembly's adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948.

Video: Black & White - National Human Rights Commission Award Winning Short Film (<https://youtu.be/AxUgUBaipRA>)

“There is a significant relation between the Gospel message and the recognition of human rights in the spirit of those who drafted the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*.” These are Pope Francis’ words directed to members of the diplomatic corps accredited to the Holy See. In that speech, the Pope, Francis looked ahead to today’s 70th anniversary of the adoption of that Declaration by the United Nations in 1948 which recognizes that “the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world” is based on “the inherent dignity” and the “equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family”. - Vatican News – 10 December 2018

We gather this day because we know that the human rights of millions of people on our planet are denied every day. This denial of human rights results in acute poverty, abuse, violence and despair. We gather together to reflect on this reality and to be in solidarity with those who suffer. We gather so that we may move forward with hearts and minds focused on our work to bring justice for all.

We come together this day to celebrate our human rights in a spirit of hope, because we believe that hearts joined together for the cause of justice can make a difference in our world.

God, you have created us in your image, and through the Incarnation of your child, Jesus, you have bestowed on all humans an essential dignity. Through your church, you speak again to us about the precious humanity and potential of every person, as our popes and bishops affirm and promote Human Rights for all members of the global family. Help us to listen closely to their message calling for human dignity in our world, to hear clearly the Good News that economic and social rights, as well as political and legal rights, are meant for every child of God, everywhere on earth.

Appropriate hymn may be sung.

Rights and equal human dignity rooted in the nature of each person - December 10, 2018

In his message for Human Rights Day 2018, read by Cardinal Peter Turkson, Prefect of the Dicastery for Integral Human Development, Pope Francis recognizes that through the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action, “the family of Nations wanted to recognize the equal dignity of every human person”. He explains that these rights are “universal, indivisible, interdependent and interconnected” and that they are rooted in the nature of the human person, as an “inseparable unity of body and soul”.

Pope Francis: Everyone has the right to life and happiness

Human Rights Day is an opportunity for us to reflect upon the respect that we must have for the human rights of every person in contemporary society. Pope Francis stresses that “special attention must be paid to the more vulnerable members of our communities”. Saying, in fact, that in observing our contemporary society, we encounter numerous contradictions that lead us to ask ourselves if the Universal Declaration of Human Rights is “recognized, respected, protected and promoted under every circumstance”.

Human dignity cannot be ignored

The Pope goes on to say that today many forms of injustice persist “nourished by reductive anthropological visions, and by an economic model based on profit that does not hesitate to exploit, discard and even kill man”. Whilst many live in wealth, says the Pope, many others “see their dignity ignored, despised or trampled on and their most basic rights ignored or violated.”

Pope Francis says that his thoughts are with those who “are subject to acts of intolerance, discrimination and violence because of their racial, ethnic, national or religious affiliation”, and stresses that he cannot forget those who are victims of the tragedy that is armed conflict, “while unscrupulous death merchants are enriched at the price of the blood of their brothers and sisters”.

Readings

Leader: Let us listen to the Prophet Isaiah - 11:6 -10

Reader 1:

The wolf will live with the lamb, the leopard will lie down with the goat, the calf and the lion and the yearling together; and a little child will lead them. The cow will feed with the bear, their young will lie down together, and the lion will eat straw like the ox. The infant will play near the cobra's den; the young child will put its hand into the viper's nest. They will neither harm nor destroy on all my holy mountain, for the earth will be filled with the knowledge of our God as the waters cover the sea. In that day the Root of Jesse will stand as a banner for the peoples; the nations will rally to him, and his resting place will be glorious.

Personal Reflection on reading and sharing

Each of us is called to help

“We are all called into question” says the Pope, “to contribute with courage and determination” within the realm of our respective positions, “especially we Christians” continues the Pope, for whom this “necessity for justice and solidarity” has a special meaning. He explains that the Gospel invites us to “move with compassion” as we look towards our more vulnerable brothers and sisters and to “make a real effort to alleviate their suffering”.

Litany

Leader: Before you, God, we are ashamed, for we continue to bring division into the work of your creation.

All: Christ, have mercy on us.

Leader: We continue to draw boundaries of race or nation or culture or class between your children.

All: Christ, have mercy on us.

Leader: Prevent us, God, from accepting too easily our state of division save us from regarding as normal that which is a sin against you and against humanity.

All: Unite us in justice and in love.

Leader: Deliver us from a spirit of narrowness, bitterness or prejudice, teaching us instead to recognize the gifts of other cultures and experiences.

All: Unite us in justice and in love.

Leader: By your power, God, graft us together in a common tree of life, rooted in the love of Christ Jesus. *You are welcome to add to the litany*

All: Unite us in justice and in love. We ask this in Christ's name. Amen.

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

Many fundamental rights continue to be violated, let us focus with our Pope Francis as we pray. At the end of each intercession we shall pray silently

1. **Leader:** The right to life, particularly of the unborn and the elderly (see [Evangelii gaudium](#), 213; [Address](#) to the Association of Science and Life)

Reader: We pray that people may realize the worth of God's creation in the form of life and respect it with due respect and dignity we pray;

2. **Leader:** The rights of women who suffer "violence and oppression, even within their own families"

Reader: We remember the women we work with and are facing domestic violence in and outside their family, that the importance of a woman may be realized and her worth recognised in the family, we pray;

3. **Leader:** The rights of the victims of human trafficking and modern forms of slavery

Reader: We pray for all those involved in human trafficking activities, that the Spirit of God rest on them and that they realize the cruel act they are involved in of destroying the lives of children, young girls and women. May they also realize the significance of the God-given gift of life. We pray;

4. **Leader:** The right to food and water (See [Laudato Si'](#), 30; [Address to the Seminar](#) on the "Human Right to Water")

Reader: We pray for the people struggling for food and water – one's basic needs – that we all sincerely recognize and acknowledge that we have to preserve and save both food and water so that all may be able to fulfill their basic needs and live a dignified life which is every one's right we pray;

5. **Leader:** The right to health care which "is not a consumer good, but a universal right" ([Address](#) to Doctors with Africa CUAMM)

Reader: We pray for the Doctors who make their profession a business and give less importance to the cure of the human body, that both the doctors and nurses go back to the good ethics of

medicine that they promised to follow when they began their studies. May they learn to value and care with reverence their patients and be proud of being co-healers with God the Chief Healer, we pray;

6. **Leader:** The right to live in peace

Reader: Peace is that which we long for and which Jesus Christ came to give. When peace is disturbed everything is disturbed. Let us experience the Peace of Christ and send vibrations of peace to the universe and all creation, we pray;

7. **Leader:** The right to migrate and freedom of movement

Reader: We pray for the safe migration of all the marginalised and vulnerable people that they may receive due respect and be protected from harmful activities which breaks the unity of the family. We pray;

8. **Leader:** The right to be happy (See *Laudato Si'* 44; *Evangelii gaudium*, 182)

Reader: Let us pray that Every person born on this earth may enjoy all their rights and be filled with happiness and joy and live with positive energy and spread happiness where he/she goes, we pray;

Closing Prayer

Help us to understand, God that we have neither knowledge nor power to know the infinite designs of worlds whereby your grace we may inhabit. Help us to explore the heights and depths our unique call to be warriors of justice, peace and love; the courage to follow the Shepherd and proclaim the Good news of liberty and freedom for the captives and the oppressed. This we make through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Prayer prepared by Sr. Taskila Nicholas,
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