

HUMAN RIGHTS DAY December 10

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.

Call to Worship

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

Opening Prayer

Lord, lead us from death to life, from falsehood to truth.

Lead us from despair to hope, from fear to trust.

Let peace fill our hearts, our world and our universe.

Let us dream together, pray together and work together to build a world of peace and justice for all.

Merciful God, listen to us as we pray for a world that will respect the God-given rights of all.

We dedicate ourselves to work for the rights of each human person, especially for those who find life burdensome, and who know the suffering of hatred, poverty and war.

Help us to share the fire of your peace with all people in all places at all times. **All:** Amen.

Readings

1. From the Word of God (Acts of the Apostles 2: 1-11)

2. From the Human Word (Dr. Martin Luther King, August 28, 1963, Washington, D.C.)

Introduction: It is an old problem. From early times debates raged over who could be in the communities of faith and who could not. Today we remember the pain. In the Israelite community, some were referred to as "the descendants of Ham and Canaan," and in Genesis 9 we find, "Cursed be Canaan; lowest of slaves shall he be to his brothers." Divisions began early in our history. We are moved by the words of Dr. Martin Luther King and his pleas for equality for all:

"I have a dream today. I have a dream that one day, down in Alabama with its vicious racists, with its governor having his lips dripping with the words of interposition and nullification, that one day, right there in Alabama, little black boys and little black girls will be able to join hands with little white boys and white girls as sisters and brothers.

"I have a dream today. I have a dream that one day every valley shall be exalted, every hill and mountain shall be made low, the rough places will be made plain and the crooked places will be made straight, and the glory of God shall be revealed and all flesh shall see it together.

"This is our hope. This is the faith that I go back to the South with. With this faith we will be able to hew out of the mountain of despair a stone of hope. With this faith we will be able to transform the jangling discords of our nation into a beautiful symphony of brotherhood. With this faith we will be able to work together, to pray together, to struggle together, to go to jail together, to stand up for freedom together, knowing that we will be free one day.

"When we allow freedom to ring, when we let it ring from every village and every hamlet, from every state and every city, we will be able to speed up that day when all of God's children, black and white, Jew and Gentile, Protestant and Catholic, will be able to join hands and sing in the words of the old Negro spiritual, 'Free at last! Free at last! Thank God almighty, we are free at last!'"

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: We have ignored the beam in our own eye, seeing only the mote in our neighbor's eye.

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.

All: We ask this in Christ's name. Amen.

Reading

3. From the Human Word (Miguel Angel Orcasitas, O.S.A., Augustinian Prior General, from "Human Rights: A Celebration and a Challenge for Humanity and for the Church", open letter to the brothers and sisters of the Augustinian Order on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1998)

Leader: The Order of St. Augustine has a special interest in promoting human rights, as we see from the following text:

Reader: *"The promotion of human rights is not only an obligation derived from our human, Christian and religious commitment. It is also because we are disciples of Augustine that we should show a particular concern for humanity. Augustine's preaching, as well as his pastoral ministry, so often dedicated to attend to the small needs of his flock, are an essential point of reference for us.*

"But it is not enough to simply reaffirm these principles. Our mission in the Church requires a certain level of leadership, even in the social dimension, on behalf of the faith. Our words and our actions have to accompany the process of humanization to which the Church aspires, by means of her teaching, to help each human being to discover his or her authentic transcendent dimension, directed toward God. 'The world vision of Christian faith can contribute significantly to the establishment of a global ethic that would permit men and women, without exception, to enjoy equal rights and a new world order.' (Intermediate General Chapter 1998: Augustinians in the Church for the World of Today)

"As religious we should dedicate ourselves to promoting peace and justice. Human rights are the basis of human existence and coexistence, and therefore have so much civic and ethical significance. Their defense constitutes a very concrete commitment that must be assumed by all humanity. The Pope, in his message for the most recent World Peace Day, asserted, 'Justice and peace are not abstract concepts or distant ideals; they are values that constitute a common patrimony and are found in the heart of each person. All are called to live in justice and to work for peace: individuals, families, communities and nations. Nobody is excused from this responsibility.'" (n.1)

Leader: We pray that the Augustinians might always be faithful to this commitment and that they might always feel the support of so many other groups and people committed to the same cause.

Closing Prayer

All: Beloved God, Creator of the just and the unjust, Lover of all human kind, share your eyes of love so that we will see beauty in all creation. As we pass this way, let us make it a path that sings the glory of all your creation and celebrates the infinite variety of your divinity in all and through all.

Help us, God, to understand that the violence of "isms," whether racism of sexism or anti-Semitism or heterosexism or militarism, is a violation of your creative will.

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 of our need to love and be loved, to understand that what we hate is often our sense of incompleteness. We shout against creations that we cannot love because we fear and do not understand.

We need to understand, because we need to bow before them as being godly as we, too, are godly.

Help us, God, and in the spirit of Mary, Mother of the afflicted, let us stand by the cross of our own humanity, loving it and knowing that dying to hatred is the only path to salvation. In the name of our loving brother, Jesus Christ. Amen.

Blessing

The Lord bless you and keep you.

The Lord's countenance shine upon you, and the Lord be gracious to you.

Suggested Hymns

Blest Are They (Haas)
Dwelling Place (Foley SJ)
Gather Us In (Haugen)
Make Us True Servants (Wentz)
On Eagle's Wings (Joncas)
Rain Down (Cortez)
They'll Know We Are Christians (Scholtes)
We Are the Light of the World (Greif)
You are Mine (Haas)

Bring Forth Thy Kingdom (Haugen)
Earthen Vessels (Foley SJ)
I Will Never Forget You My People (Landry)
No Longer Strangers (Haas)
God, You Search Me (Farrell)
Somos el Cuerpo de Cristo (Cortez)
Tree of Life (Haugen)
We Are Many Parts (Haugen)
Let There Be Peace on Earth (Miller/Jackson)

Cry of the Poor (Foley SJ)
Gifts (Hunter/Wrynn)
Lord, Give your Justice (Wrynn)
One Bread, One Body (Foley SJ)
Pan de Vida (Hurd)
Table of Plenty (Schutte)
We Are Called (Haas)
Whatsoever You Do (Jabusch)

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