

Litany for International Human Right Day

December 10, 2015

INTRODUCTION

Leader: As we ready ourselves to celebrate International Human Rights Day, we must not lose sight of the sheer magnitude of human rights violations in our world. Pope Francis reminds us, “Even today, we let ourselves be guided by idols, by selfishness, by our own interests, and this attitude persists. We have perfected our weapons, our conscience has fallen asleep, and we have sharpened our ideas to justify ourselves. As if it were normal, we continue to sow destruction, pain, death! Violence and war lead only to death, they speak of death! Violence and war are the language of death!” (Pope Francis, *Vigil for Prayer for Peace*, September 2013)

Reader 1: The struggle for human rights is not just against dictators and religious fanatics. Neither is it simply a struggle for advancing U.N. conventions and processes, as vital as these are. Unless citizens call on their governments to support human rights, government leaders rarely will do so. Eleanor Roosevelt said that the ideals of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights will “carry no weight unless the people know them, unless the people understand them, unless the people demand that they be lived.” Building a global community that promotes and protects human rights is up to all of the world’s citizens.



CALL TO PRAYER

Leader: God of All that lives, in a spirit of unity, we come together to celebrate International Human Rights Day, believing that working together for the cause of justice can make a difference in our world.

Reader 1: Let us unite our prayers and stand in solidarity with our sisters and brothers around the world whose human rights are being violated and whose hope is fading this day. (*Pause for a moment of silence.*)

Reader 2: We pray for Christ in the hungry and the needy in our midst.

All: Redeemer of humanity, God-with-us, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

Reader 3: We pray for Christ in the persecuted, the disappeared, and the tortured.

All: Redeemer of humanity, God-with-us, in your mercy, hear our prayer.



Reader 4: We pray for Christ in those whose labor rights are not recognized and in those whose productive lands are being taken over by foreign agricultural investors and wealthy foreigners.

All: Redeemer of humanity, God-with-us, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

Reader 5: We pray for Christ in those deprived of adequate housing, water, healthcare, and education.

All: Redeemer of humanity, God-with-us, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

Reader 6: We pray for Christ in those who welcome the strangers who have experienced unspeakable brutality and indignity on the road to safety.

All: Redeemer of humanity, God-with-us, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

Reader 7: We pray for Christ in the human rights defenders who walk side by side with the poor and the oppressed, and who help them to defend their inalienable human rights.

All: Redeemer of humanity, God-with-us, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

Reader 8: We pray for Christ hidden in perpetrators of genocide, crimes against humanity, and ethnic cleansing.

All: Redeemer of humanity, God-with-us, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

CLOSING PRAYER

Leader: God of All Life, help us to uphold the values of human dignity that are so central to who we are.

Forgive us, God, for our attitudes of indifference and the inhumane way that we, too, often, treat the stranger in our midst: the vulnerable members in our society, the elderly, the undocumented, the uninsured, the prisoner, and the homeless.

Guide us, God, on our path of justice and may we always remember that we have a moral responsibility to defend the human rights of our sisters and brothers.

Embolden us, God, with the spirit of Mary, Mother of the afflicted and remind us that all your children are entitled to the right to live a full and just life.

Strengthen us, God, with a daring spirit to raise global awareness of human rights violations in our global community and to rid our world of all forms of injustices.

Inspire us, God, to be grateful for international and church documents that seek to protect and defend the human dignity of all peoples, and may we celebrate the advances that have been made in the area of human rights. Amen.

