



INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS DAY



Prayer Service

December 10, 2006

Sisters of the Holy Cross
Congregation Justice Committee
Democracy, Nonviolence and Peace Working Group

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights was adopted by the United Nations on December 10, 1948. The declaration was one of the first major achievements of the United Nations, and remains a powerful instrument which continues to exert an enormous effect on people's lives all over the world.

Since 1948, the Universal Declaration has been translated into more than 300 languages and remains one of the best known and most often cited human rights documents in the world. Over the years, the declaration has been used in the defense and advancement of people's rights. Its principles have been enshrined in and continue to inspire national legislation and the constitutions of many newly independent states. (To read the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in your language, go to <http://www.unhchr.ch/udhr/>.)

The theme for International Human Rights Day 2006 is *Fighting Poverty: A Matter of Obligation, Not Charity*. Poverty is both a product and a cause of human rights abuses. There is a growing awareness of poverty as a complex web of lack of capacity, government policy, exclusion, discrimination and material deprivation. Yet, in the public mind, and in the view of some governments, poverty is still often synonymous with fate, the individual's laziness or a country's level of development. It is rarely seen as a question of human rights, but poverty is a human rights issue that requires human rights-based solutions.

*“Whenever we lift one soul
from a life of poverty,
we are defending
human rights.
And whenever we fail
in this mission,
we are failing
human rights.”*

— Kofi Annan, United Nations
Secretary-General

International Human Rights Day

Prayer Service

OPENING SONG

City of God

by Dan Schutte, SJ

or another appropriate song

POEM

“Gitanjali” #104

by Rabindranath Tagore

I'm looking at all of you
Give me a place among you

under and behind everyone
in the world of dust,
in a place
that has no value,
in a place
that's not worth dividing with lines,
where there's no difference
between self-pride and insult,
Give me a place there
among you all.



Where there's no outer cover,
where I see myself revealed,
where I see
I have absolutely nothing my own,
where I can't hide this truth
within myself,
standing there
I'll take my fill of my extreme poverty,
taking it
as God's greatest gift —
Give me a place
among you all.

SILENT REFLECTION

READING

Luke 18:1-8

Jesus told the disciples a parable on the necessity of praying always and not losing heart. “Once there was a judge in a certain city who feared no one — not even God. A woman in that city who had been widowed kept coming to the judge and saying: ‘Give me legal protection from my opponent.’ For a time the judge refused, but finally the judge thought, ‘I care little for God or people, but this woman won’t leave me alone. I’d better give her the protection she seeks, or she’ll keep coming and wear me out.’”



Jesus said, “Listen to what this corrupt judge is saying. Won’t God then do justice to the chosen who call out day and night? Will God delay long over them? I tell you, God will give them swift justice.”

— Translation from *The Inclusive New Testament* by Priests for Equality, 1994

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION



- What did Jesus intend in the telling of this story? What did Luke intend in placing this parable within the context of justice? How might we all be challenged by this story?
- How can we protect and preserve human rights in our personal and community life? In the lives of all people everywhere?
- Do we have the courage and patience to speak truth and defend justice and human rights where we live?

PSALM RESPONSE Psalm 72:1-8, 11-14, 17-19

Recite antiphonally

Side 1: Bring justice to the peoples, O Beloved
And your mercy to all generations!
May the people be known for mercy,
Rendering justice to the poor ones.

Side 2: Let their spirits soar as the eagle,
Let joy abide in every heart.
May you heed the cry of the poor —
The young and the old,
Setting free all those in need,
Melting the hearts of oppressors.



Side 1: May we know you long as the sun endures,
As long as the moon,
Throughout all generations.
May we acknowledge you in the rain
Falling on the fields, like showers that water Earth.

Side 2: In our day may justice flourish
And peace abound
Throughout all the nations.

Side 1: May every heart be open to Your love
From sea to sea
From the River of Life
Out to the universe.
May fears that imprison the people
Be brought to the light
And rise from the depths.



Side 2: May the leaders of nations
Listen to your Word;
May they spend time in silence before they counsel.
May the leaders surrender to your love
And the nations serve the Most High.

Side 1: For you heed the needy ones when they call,
The poor ones and those who have no friend.
You have compassion on the weak and the downtrodden
and give them strength and hope.
From injustice and oppression you redeem their life;
And they are precious in your heart.

Side 2: May your name live on forever,
Your love endure as long as the sun!
May all the people be blessed by you,
And all nations call you blessed.

All: Blessed be the Beloved, the One
Who dwells in open hearts,
Who guides us along the way.
Blessed be you, who comes in the name of love,
May your glory fill the earth.
Amen! Amen!

— Translation from *Psalms for Praying* by Nan C. Merrill, 1996



PRAYERS OF PETITION

Leader Compassionate God, we pray for our sisters and brothers who struggle to survive under the burden of grinding poverty and unsustainable debt.

Response O God, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

Leader Active God, we pray for those who do not have clean water and adequate food, who cannot find work, who have been victims of violence, and for those who dismiss workers to increase profits.

Response O God, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

Leader Loving God, we pray for immigrants who, in search of a better life for themselves and their families, have left their home countries, extended families and friends. We also pray for those who are forced to leave their homes to search for safety in times of war and violent conflict.

Response O God, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

Pause to add your own prayers of petition.

CLOSING PRAYER ***Recite Together***

Faithful God, we are committed to being your servants for justice. Help us to realize that we have gifts and talents that you intend us to use for good. Help us to use the privilege we have, but have not earned, in order that our world might become a better place for all. Help us to defend the rights of those who cannot defend themselves, most especially the poor among us. We commit ourselves to work for justice and human rights, today and throughout our lives. We pray this prayer in the name of Jesus, our brother. Amen.

CLOSING SONG **The Cry of the Poor** *by John Foley, SJ*
or another appropriate song

*Prepared by the Sisters in the Holy Cross Novitiate,
Savar, Dhaka, Bangladesh*

“THE EQUAL AND INALIENABLE **RIGHTS**

OF **ALL** MEMBERS

OF THE **HUMAN FAMILY**

ARE THE FOUNDATION OF

FREEDOM,

JUSTICE

AND **PEACE**

in the world.”

— United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights



Sisters of the Holy Cross
পবিত্র ক্রুশ ভগিনীগণ
Irmãs da Santa Cruz
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