



## CALL TO PRAYER

**Leader:** Once again, God, you invite us to join with the global community in commemorating Human Rights Day. We are reminded daily that throughout our world, people of all ages and walks of life have their basic human rights violated. We recognize that the poverty that so many of our sisters and brothers experience is linked directly to the human rights abuses they suffer. There are mountains of examples of how governments, corporations, and institutions violate human rights. Some ignore the plight of their own citizens whose rights are denied due to their own economic and political interests while others contribute to suppressing rights in other countries. We also recognize that the “war on terror,” triggered by the 9/11 attacks in the United States, continues to contribute to the deterioration of human rights. Not only do terrorists commit human rights violations, but so do powerful governments who sacrifice rights for security. Forgiving and Patient God, give us the courage to resist the seduction of indifference that leads us to look away from the visible anguish and despair of our sisters and brothers. Inspire us to become a society that grounds all actions in human rights with love and respect for all people. Amen.

## READINGS

**Reader 1:** In today’s Gospel, Jesus teaches us the art of accompaniment. This act of solidarity invites us to “remove our sandals before the sacred ground of the other—drawing near, touching, and speaking in the language of the heart: ‘Do not weep,’” and sharing, at the very least, a drop of life.

### A Reading from the Gospel of Luke 7:11-17

“Soon afterward, Jesus went to a town called Nain, and the disciples and a large crowd accompanied him. As Jesus approached the gate of the town, a dead body was being carried out—the only son of a widowed mother. A considerable crowd of the townspeople were with her. Jesus was moved with pity upon seeing her and said, ‘Don’t cry.’ Then Jesus stepped forward and touched the coffin; at this, the bearers halted. Jesus said, ‘Young man, get up.’ The dead youth sat up and began to speak, and Jesus gave him back to his mother. Fear seized them all, and they begin to praise God. ‘A great prophet has risen among us,’ they said, and ‘God has truly visited us’” (The Inclusive New Testament, 1994).



*Pause for a moment of silence. Leader invites participants to reflect privately or communally on one or more of the following questions:*

- How does the Gospel passage highlight human rights? How does Jesus challenge you to stand with those who have experienced grief, trauma, or despair in their lives?
- Would you describe yourself as a passive or active defender of human rights? Explain. How do you respond when a person's human rights are being violated?
- Think of a government that has violated the human rights of its people. How can you stand in solidarity with the people of that nation?

**Reader 2:** Upon reflecting on this Gospel passage, Pope Francis shared his reflection on how an encounter with the suffering Jesus in our midst can overcome indifference:

“An encounter is something different. It is what today's Gospel proclaims to us: an encounter; an encounter between a man and a woman, between an only living son and an only son who had died; among a joyful crowd because they had encountered Jesus and were following him and a group of people, weeping, accompanying that woman, who had come out from the gate of the city; an encounter between the exit gate and the entry gate. The sheepfold. An encounter that makes us reflect on our way of interacting with each other.

We are accustomed to a culture of indifference and we must strive and ask for the grace to create a culture of encounter, of a fruitful encounter, of an encounter that restores to each person his or her own dignity as a child of God, the dignity of a living person. We are accustomed to this indifference, when we see the disasters of this world or small things: ‘What a shame, poor people, look how they are suffering,’ and then we carry on. An encounter. And if I don't look, it's not enough to see, no, (we must) look—if I don't stop, if I don't look, if I don't touch, if I don't speak, I cannot have an encounter and I cannot help to build a culture of encounter....[A]llow ourselves to be moved by pity. And then draw near, touch and say in the language that comes to each one of us in that moment, the language of the heart: ‘Do not weep,’ and donate at the very least a drop of life.”<sup>1</sup>

*Pause for a moment of silence. Leader invites participants to reflect privately or communally on one or more of the following questions:*

- How does Pope Francis challenge you to stand with those whose rights have been violated?
- Jesus and Pope Francis, each in his own way, call us to create a culture of encounter, an encounter that restores to each person his or her own dignity as a child of God, the dignity of a living person. In what ways do you help to create a culture of encounter in your community?
- What prevents you from speaking the language of the heart to those whose rights are abused?

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<sup>1</sup> Pope Francis at Mass: Overcome indifference, build a culture of encounter: <http://bit.ly/2e2GMaH>.

# PRAYER SERVICE

**Leader:** One way to stand up in the defense of human rights is through prayer. This is not an inactive response or an act of indifference in responding to the violation of rights and the denial of human dignity. In this act of solidarity, we join with the victims, their families, and the communities and raise our concerns to God. And, so together we pray:

**All:** God of Justice, grace us with the courage to stand up for someone's human rights today.

**Reader 3:** Awaken within us a deeper awareness that, as Gospel people, we are called to shake off the dust of indifference that inhibits us from defending the human rights of a refugee or migrant, a person with disabilities, an LGBT person, an older person, a woman, a child, or anyone else at risk of discrimination or violence.

**All:** God of Justice, grace us with the courage to stand up for someone's human rights today.

**Reader 4:** Awaken within us a deeper awareness that human rights are deeply rooted in historic struggles aimed at self-determination, democracy, and independence and that those who have gone before us struggled not just for political freedoms but also for social justice.

**All:** God of Justice, grace us with the courage to stand up for someone's human rights today.

**Reader 5:** Awaken within us a deeper awareness that discrimination exacerbates social exclusion, marginalization, and access to resources such as housing, education, and health care.

**All:** God of Justice, grace us with the courage to stand up for someone's human rights today.

**Reader 6:** Awaken within us an awareness that migrants, minorities, children, people living with disabilities, refugees, women and girls, and older persons are often among the most marginalized and disadvantaged populations of our society.

**All:** God of Justice, grace us with the courage to stand up for someone's human rights today.

**Reader 7:** Awaken within us a deeper awareness that everyone, everywhere, has the right to live with dignity and that no one should be denied their rights to adequate housing, food, water, sanitation, education, and health care.

**All:** God of Justice, grace us with the courage to stand up for someone's human rights today.

**Reader 8:** Awaken within us a deeper awareness that governments and activists must respect human rights in any action they take in the name of national security, countering terrorism, or working for systemic change.

**All:** God of Justice, grace us with the courage to stand up for someone's human rights today.

**Reader 9:** Awaken within us a deeper awareness that every day across the world refugees, migrants, and internally displaced persons make the difficult decision to leave their homes.

**All:** God of Justice, grace us with the courage to stand up for someone's human rights today.



# PRAYER SERVICE

**Reader 10:** Awaken within us a deeper awareness that torture and cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment must stop and that those responsible for authorizing and committing this crime against humanity must be held accountable.

**All:** God of Justice, grace us with the courage to stand up for someone's human rights today.

**Reader 1:** Awaken within us a deeper awareness that persons with disabilities experience inequalities in their daily lives and have fewer opportunities to access a quality education, social protection services and legal support systems, and are subject to disproportionately high rates of poverty.

**All:** God of Justice, grace us with the courage to stand up for someone's human rights today.

**Reader 2:** Awaken within us a deeper awareness that millions of women and girls around the world encounter rape, domestic abuse, mutilation, and other forms of gender-based violence.

**All:** God of Justice, grace us with the courage to stand up for someone's human rights today.



**Reader 3:** Awaken within us a deeper awareness that across the world, children are denied their human rights, abandoned and left to fend for themselves on the street, recruited to serve as child soldiers, or trafficked.

**All:** God of Justice, grace us with the courage to stand up for someone's human rights today.

**Reader 4:** Awaken within us a deeper awareness that the contribution older people make to society is invaluable. Yet, they remain some of the poorest and most neglected in the world—facing discrimination, abject poverty, lack of social services, and physical security.

**All:** God of Justice, grace us with the courage to stand up for someone's human rights today.

**Reader 5:** Awaken within us a deeper awareness that everyone has the right to seek, receive, and impart information and ideas without fear or interference and that this right is important for the personal development and dignity of every individual and is vital for the fulfillment of other human rights.

**All:** God of Justice, grace us with the courage to stand up for someone's human rights today.





# PRAYER SERVICE

**Reader 6:** Awaken within us a deeper awareness that local, national, and international corporations and the business community also have a moral and legal responsibility to use their influence to promote respect for human rights.

**All:** God of Justice, grace us with the courage to stand up for someone's human rights today.

**Reader 7:** Awaken within us a deeper awareness that every person, regardless of his or her sexual orientation or gender identity, should enjoy equal human rights.

**All:** God of Justice, grace us with the courage to stand up for someone's human rights today.

**Reader 8:** Awaken within us a deeper awareness that international justice is the cooperation between countries to hold accountable individuals accused of grave human rights abuses, such as genocide, rape as a weapon of war, and torture.

**All:** God of Justice, grace us with the courage to stand up for someone's human rights today.

**Reader 9:** Awaken within us a deeper awareness that we need to pray not only for oppressed peoples and communities, but also for the conversion of heart for those who give the orders and who carry out the human rights violations.

**All:** God of Justice, move us to act with courage and to stand up for someone's human rights today.

**Optional:** *If time permits, the leader will invite participants to come forward to wash their hands as a symbolic way of acknowledging their failure to come to a person's aid when his or her human rights are being violated. For this ritual activity, the leader will need a table to place a small washbowl filled with water and a hand towel.*



## CLOSING PRAYER

**Left:** Crucified God of Compassion, from borders of obscure wastelands,  
Open our eyes to see the treacherous paths the oppressed and the destitute walk  
As they search for a promised land—a land free of fear and injustice.

**Right:** Crucified God of Compassion, from the valley of grief,  
Bring relief to those living in battlefields of violence.  
Heal those whose lives have been so damaged by war and greed,  
Those who find themselves dancing between despair and hope.

**Left:** Crucified God of Compassion, from darkness to light,  
Chase away the intruders of injustice,  
Those who cloud our vision and blind us  
To our role as responsible citizens of the world.

**Right:** Crucified God of Compassion, from fear to trust,  
Replace our close-mindedness with openness  
And show us how to rise from fear and wounded pride  
To stand hand in hand with the oppressed of our world.

**Left:** Crucified God of Compassion, from misperception to clarity,  
Remind us to stand on the shoulders of our ancestors  
And draw from the pool of their wisdom to guide us on the  
way to a just world.

**Right:** Crucified God of Compassion, from the desert to the sea,  
Keep the seeds of compassion growing within us,  
Compassion that allows us to share “a drop of life,”  
Restores dignity, and overcomes indifference.

**Left:** Crucified God of Compassion, as we travel the roads of life,  
Empower us to live a faith that does justice.  
Empower us to be more daring—more eager to dress for action<sup>1</sup>  
As we commit to being your defenders of life and dignity. Amen.

— Dianna Ortiz, O.S.U.



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<sup>1</sup> Luke 12:35: “Jesus said, ‘be dressed for action and your lamps lit.’”

# Stand Up for Someone's Human Rights Today!

## FAITH IN ACTION

- Choose an act of injustice in your neighborhood or school and take a stand against it. Or you may choose an act of injustice in the world and take a stand against it.
- Invite leaders of human rights organizations to speak to your community or congregation on the issue of human rights.
- Organize a “Stand Up for Human Rights” celebration in your community or congregation to highlight the work of human rights defenders and of all the men and women who are involved in the cause of human rights.
- In standing up for human rights, it is important to remember to console the victims by sending them letters of support. The harnessing of international public concern can give strength and encouragement to those who suffer and to those who struggle with them. Consider sending a letter to TASSC International (<http://www.tassc.org>), an organization comprised of torture survivors working for the abolition of torture worldwide.
- Visit places where human rights are violated. Solidarity visits are very formative for sensitizing participants to demonstrate solidarity with those who are living in difficult situations. Remember, the purpose of the visits is to listen and to learn without any preconceived notions. For more information about solidarity visits, go to Witness for Peace (<http://bit.ly/1PEDmHI>) or the Guatemala Human Rights Commission (<http://bit.ly/1h4x0gM>).

*“Thou shalt not be a victim,  
Thou shalt not be a perpetrator,  
Above all, thou shalt not be a bystander.”*

—Yahuda Bauer, Israeli historian  
and scholar of the Holocaust

