

Introduction

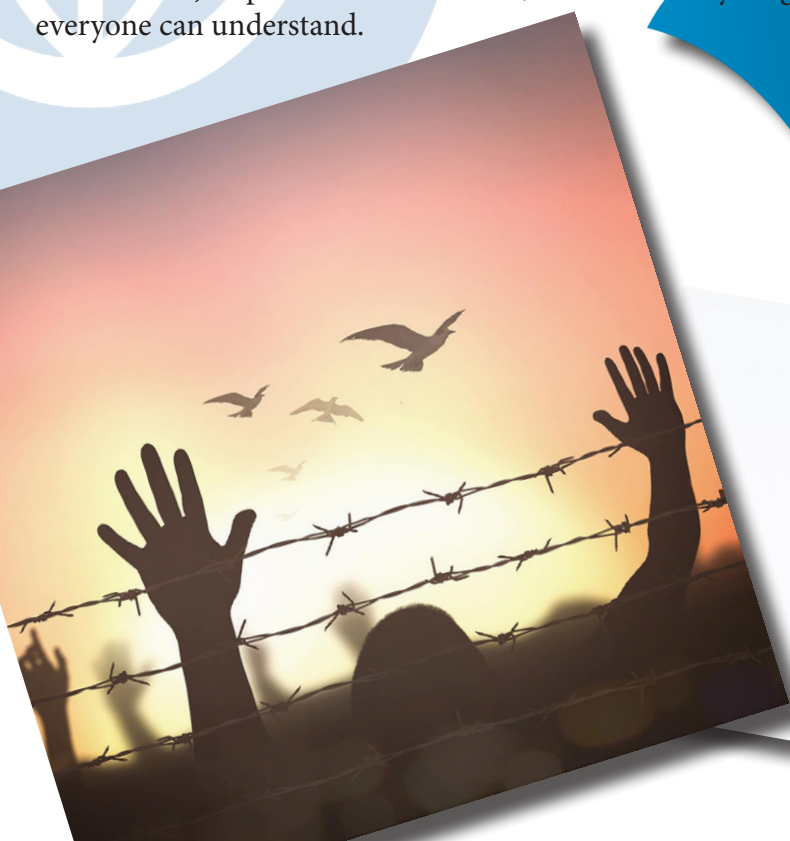
Human Rights Day is observed every year on 10 December, and this year it marks the 75th anniversary of one of the world's most groundbreaking global pledges: the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). This landmark document enshrines the inalienable rights that everyone is entitled to as a human being - regardless of race, colour, religion, sex, language, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status.

The Theme for the Human Rights Day 2023 is: Dignity, Freedom, and Justice for All. It is a matter of distress that dignity and equality in rights, has been under a sustained assault in recent years. As the world faces challenges new and ongoing – pandemics, conflicts, drugs, human trafficking and organized crime, wars, exploding inequalities, morally bankrupt global financial system, racism, climate change – Millions of people are forced to flee their countries and move to other countries where they hope their human rights will be guaranteed and they can live in peace. Pope Francis in his message for the 109th World Day of Migrants and Refugees 2023 wrote: “In whatever place we decide to build our future, in the country of our birth or elsewhere, the important thing is that there always be a community ready to welcome, protect, promote and integrate everyone, without distinctions and without excluding anyone”.

As Missionaries of the Divine Word, through international and intercultural community life, we learn to value diversity and to recognize ourselves as brothers. In this way we want to bear witness to the universal love that overcomes everything that divides and confronts us. As Saint Joseph Freinademetz said, love is the only language that everyone can understand.



HUMAN RIGHTS DAY





Biblical Reflection

“Open your mouth for the mute, for the rights of all who are destitute. Open your mouth, judge righteously, defend the rights of the poor and needy.” (Prov 31:8-9 ESV)

The Book of Proverbs lays down some essential guidelines for the lives of individuals, families, and communities. Following these guidelines leads to harmonious, joyful, and prosperous lives for all. In biblical terms, such a life is considered blessed, and the path to it is known as “wisdom.” Unfortunately, our world often strays far from this biblical ideal of peace and harmony. The way we operate on both an individual and communal level often seems distant from this path of wisdom, and disregard and violations of human rights are at the heart of the state of our world where achieving “Dignity, Freedom, and Justice for All” appears to be an unattainable dream.

Thankfully, the Scriptures do not leave us hopeless in the face of this harsh reality. Instead, they emphasize that the first and fundamental step in the fight for human rights is to give voice to the voiceless, the “mute” of our world. Thus, it is the fundamental duty of every believer to lend their voice and speak for and on behalf of those who have been silenced by oppression or circumstances. Evil operates by suppressing voices and concealing the truth, which is the path of destructive “folly.” However, wisdom boldly speaks out in public, condemning the folly that leads to suffering and chaos while also unveiling the ways to restoration and harmony.

Human Rights Day should be the moment when the voice of wisdom resounds with power through the mouths of those who can and are willing to advocate for the voiceless.





Action to promote Human Rights

1. Organize Human Rights campaigns: Organize these campaigns at parish/Christians institutions, incorporating appropriate means of publicity, such as speeches, leaflets, posters, handbills and streamers, lecture courses, films, sermons and religious services. It is important, indeed imperative, that such campaigns should be planned by both clergy and laity together.
2. Making public those rights which have suffered most violation in one's own country, and to correct these abuses by informing the competent authorities both in the Church and in the State and by alerting public opinion and keeping it regularly informed.
3. Advocacy: Create, both at national and international levels, a new social and political order, which will have structures capable of satisfying the demand for justice among peoples, societies and individuals. Hence, participate in lobbying and advocacy to protect human rights.
4. Networking: Human rights can be ensured only by networking with other organizations. Hence, find mechanism to network with other groups nationally and internationally to assert human rights.
5. Encourage young people to play their part in defending and promoting human rights and to make their distinctive contribution towards social development in this field.
6. Take action: If you think your rights have been breached and you want to take action, you'll need to: be sure that the Human Rights Act applies to the individual or organization treating you unfairly: find out more about who the Act applies to; identify which human right or rights you think have been breached and submit the complaint to the competent authority.
7. Promote the rights of women: Make a plan of action with specific practical initiatives within the context of each national society for defending women's rights. Each Christian institution should have norms to promote and protect women.
8. Promote legislation on the social, economic, indigenous people, migrants, vulnerable people and religious minorities rights of peoples in one's own country. Publication and research large help in this regard. More so, organize people to convince the law makers to promote these rights. Find mechanism to ensure these rights among people. Each parish can have legal cell or other groups to protect human rights.



Prayer for the World Human Right Day 2023

L.: God of justice and mercy, all peoples have their origin in you and it is your will to gather them as one family in yourself.

A.: Fill the hearts of all people with your love and the desire to ensure justice for all their brothers and sisters.

L.: Help us remember this day that you have created each and every person with dignity and worth.

A.: We honor the courage of those who came before us, who sought to declare that regardless of any differences among peoples that we all share basic human rights.

L. In all that we do, help us treat one another with the respect and honor due to each person.

A.: By sharing the good things of the earth, may we secure justice and equality for every human being, an end to all division, and a human society built on love and peace.

We make this prayer in Jesus' name. Amen

(adopted from www.nrcat.org)