

PRAYER FOR PEACE

International Day of Peace • September 21, 2018

Theme

The Right to Peace – The Universal Declaration of Human Rights at 70

Setup: Create a sacred space with symbols of welcome and unity such as a candle, flowers or a welcome mat.

Song: Select music to aid in focusing your group, e.g. Let There Be Peace on Earth, Prayer of St. Francis, Dona Nobis Pacem, or instrumental music.

Introduction: This year's theme celebrates the 70th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, a milestone document in the history of human rights. Drafted by representatives with different legal and cultural backgrounds from all regions of the world, the Declaration was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in Paris on 10 December 1948 as a common standard of achievement for all peoples and all nations.

"It is time all nations and all people live up to the words of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which recognizes the inherent dignity and equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human race. This year marks the 70th anniversary of that landmark document," says United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres.

The Universal Declaration states in Article 3. "Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person." These elements build the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world. Yet the Universal Declaration does not include a separate article on "Right to Peace."

LEADER

As we come together on this day dedicated to peace, we reflect on what peace means to each of us, and how we are called to create peace for all peoples.

READER 1

"Today, dear brothers and sisters, I wish to add my voice to the cry which rises up with increasing anguish from every part of the world, from every people, from the heart of each person, from the one great family which is humanity: it is the cry for peace! It is a cry which declares with force: we want a peaceful world, we want to be men and women of peace, and we want in our society, torn apart by divisions and conflict, that peace break out! War never again! Never again war! Peace is a precious gift, which must be promoted and protected."

—Pope Francis

READER 2

One way to understand the effects of war is to consider the sheer number of refugees and displaced persons in the world. As we gather today:

There are over **68 million** persons forcibly displaced from their homes as a result of persecution, conflict, violence or human rights violations. This is roughly equivalent to the entire population of France.

25 million of that number are refugees, the highest number ever seen.

40 million of that number are internally displaced persons, having fled their homes but remaining in their country.

1 person becomes displaced **every two seconds** – less than the time it takes to read this sentence.

—United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

REFLECT AND SHARE

Leader: Let's take a few moments in silence to consider:

Do I believe people have a fundamental right to peace?

What responsibilities would go along with recognizing such a right to peace?

How would our world be different if we recognized a right to peace?

Climate change and environmental degradation are increasingly significant in promoting and exacerbating wars. What changes can be made, individually and collectively, to reduce this risk?

How am I being called to work for peace? At home and across the world?

(After the quiet)

Leader: I now invite anyone who would like, to share briefly your reflection.

(Sharing)

Leader: Let us now offer prayers for persons everywhere who are suffering from war, conflict or persecution.

(spontaneous prayers)

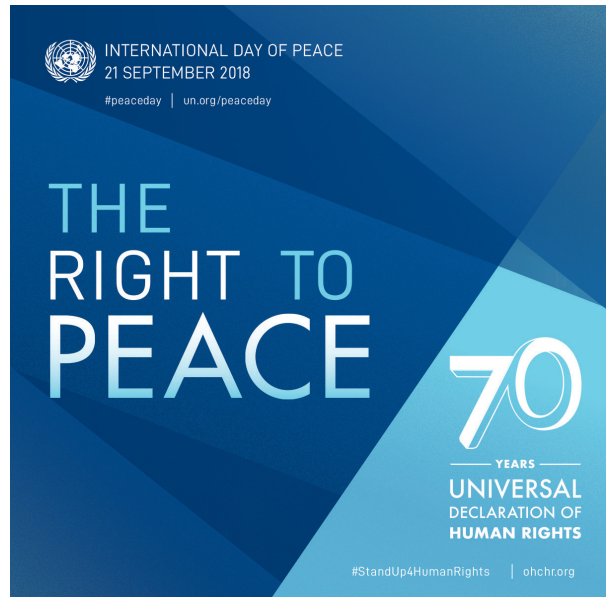
CLOSING PRAYER

God of peace and mercy, Help us to see with your eyes: eyes which notice one another and help us understand. Help us to dream your dream: of communities that reach out and dialogue and where diverse people creatively cooperate. Help us to be people of solidarity and action, so moved by prayer, encounter, and understanding that peace can become a reality. Amen.

—US Conference of Catholic Bishops

ACTION

Commit to living the UN Human Rights Pledge.



UNITED NATIONS HUMAN RIGHTS PLEDGE

I will respect your rights regardless of who you are. I will uphold your rights even when I disagree with you.

When anyone's human rights are denied, everyone's rights are undermined, so I will stand up.

I will raise my voice. I will take action. I will use my rights to stand up for your rights.

