



In Recognition of the 70th Anniversary of Human Rights Day, we recall God's guidance in all of our relationships, acknowledge our failures, repent of them, and seek forgiveness for the past. We look to a change in these relationships that glorifies God through Jesus Christ.

Human Rights Day, established by the United Nations in 1948 at the end of World War II, calls to mind the basic

tenets of our country's founding, "that all persons have equal dignity and worth." Jesus teaches us that, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself."

"Human rights are rights inherent to all human beings, regardless of race, sex, nationality, ethnicity, language, religion, or any other status. Human rights include the right to life and liberty, freedom from slavery and torture, freedom of opinion and expression, the right to work and education, and many more." www.un.org/en/sections/issues-depth/human-rights/

Recently, human rights have come under attack from the most staunch supporters, including the U.S. As people of faith, we are called to respond to these attacks. The foundation for that response comes from Scripture:

The alien who resides with you shall be to you as the citizen among you; you shall love the alien as yourself, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt: I am the Lord your God. Leviticus 19:34

He has told you, 'O mortal, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?' Micah 6:8

Remember those who are in prison, as though you were in prison with them; those who are being tortured, as though you yourselves were being tortured. Hebrews 13:3

Our neighbors are near and far. We invite them into our home and see them on Facebook, Twitter, and television, etc. Christians have a unique opportunity to love our neighbors.

One way we love neighbors is by renewing our covenant with Christ and the Church, as Jesus teaches us, "'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.' This is the greatest and first commandment. And a second is like it: 'You shall love your

neighbor as yourself.' On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.'" (Matthew 22:37-40)

We acknowledge that violations of human rights occur every day in our jails and prisons through the use of solitary confinement and other kinds of torture. Children and others seeking asylum are being transported and held in cages far from their families. Though torture is immoral, illegal, and has been proven ineffective, our government and some citizens support its use.

As Christ has taught us, we remember the worth and dignity of all persons. Let us confess these activities, accept forgiveness, and commit ourselves to join others to end these and other inhumane practices wherever we find them:

Loving and merciful God, you have set in motion the fullness of your reign through the death and resurrection of your own Son, Jesus Christ. Yet, we are unable to live as you have taught us. We confess that we have harbored greed and prejudice. We have ignored your commandments to love our neighbors as ourselves, to love our enemies and to do good to those who we believe would harm us. We have relied on our own thoughts and inventions rather than seek your ways and follow you.

Forgive us, we pray. Enable us to humbly seek to live with You and our neighbors in right relationship. Grant us courage to humbly return to the fold of your teaching. Grant us right vision as we look for our shortcomings, prejudices and ways we harm others and allow others to be harmed on our behalf.

Help us to accept and live the life of freedom and love you have granted to all of humanity. Infuse us with courage to speak against the use of solitary confinement, torture, and other violations of human rights. Remind us how to love with an open heart, mind, and soul. Empower us to work diligently wherever we can so that your light will shine through us upon the dark places wherever they may be found.

A time of silent reflection.

We have confessed.

Together we accept the forgiveness of Christ. In repentance, we will seek ways to alleviate the suffering our actions have caused. In faith, we will seek ways to protect others from harm. Our light will shine, in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen!