



**10TH OF DECEMBER 2014
WORLD HUMAN RIGHTS DAY**

A DAY OF PRAYER -

**WE ARE IN AWE
OF THE HUMAN PERSON**

sponsored by

The Carmelite NGO

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“WE ARE IN AWE OF THE HUMAN PERSON”

- Quote from Carmelite NGO “Position Paper on Human Rights”

OUR CONTEXT

“...the basis of our belief in the equal dignity of all human persons is the transcendental origin of humanity, from which distinctions of sex, race, colour, language of creed, among others, make no sense. This belief increases our regard for one another and is the basis of our understanding of human rights. We marvel at the miracle which the human person is by its very nature. We seek a sense of wonder and regard for the natural dignity of every human person, irrespective of their condition in life. *Justice demands this. Truth requires it. Peace can come from it.*”

(Cfr. Purchased People, the 1957 pastoral letter of Donal Lamont, Bishop of Umtali, Zimbabwe, p. 9 cited in Carmelite NGO “Position Paper on Human Rights”)

At a time when human dignity was being violated in a massive way by the Holocaust, two Carmelites, Edith Stein and Titus Brandsma testified through their lives and their deaths to the infinite value of each human life. We listen to their wisdom as we prepare to celebrate this Day of Prayer for Human Rights.

Holy Father!

As a child of the Jewish people who, by the grace of God, for the past eleven years has also been a child of the Catholic Church, I dare to speak to the Father of Christianity about that which oppresses millions of Germans. For weeks we

have seen deeds perpetrated in Germany which mock any sense of justice and humanity, not to mention love of neighbor. For years the leaders of National Socialism have been preaching hatred of the Jews. Now that they have seized the power of government and armed their followers, this seed of hatred has germinated... The responsibility...also falls on those who keep silent in the face of such happenings.

- From a letter by Edith Stein to Pope Pius XI in 1933

When we speak of and pray for the coming of the kingdom, it is not a prayer for a kingdom based on differences of race and blood but on universal brotherhood. In union with [God] who makes the sun rise on the good and on the evil, all are our brothers and sisters---even those who hate us and fight us...We live in a world in which love is condemned: it is called weakness, something to be overcome. Some say: never mind love, develop your strengths; let everyone be as strong as possible; let the weak perish... [But]We shall not give up on love. Love will gain back for us the hearts of these pagans...the living witness of love will always renew the power which will conquer and capture the heart of women and men.

- From the Writings of Titus Brandsma

Opening Song: “The Kingdom of God is Justice and Peace”

(Taizé – Laudate Omnes Gentes CD or it can be found on YouTube)

The Kingdom of God is justice and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.
Come, Lord, and open in us, the gates of your kingdom.

A Reading from the Prophet Isaiah
(10:1-3)

Woe to those who enact unjust statutes
and who write oppressive decrees,
depriving the needy of judgment
and robbing my people's poor of their rights;
making widows their plunder,
and orphans their prey!
What will you do on the day of punishment
when ruin comes from afar?
To whom will you flee for help?
Where will you leave your wealth..?

- *The Word of the Lord.*

(pause for a few moments of silent reflection)

A Reading from the Gospel of Luke
(6:20-26)

And raising his eyes toward his disciples Jesus said:

**“Blessed are you who are poor,
for the kingdom of God is yours.**

**Blessed are you who are now hungry,
for you will be satisfied.**

**Blessed are you who are now weeping,
for you will laugh.**

**Blessed are you when people hate you, and when they
exclude and insult you, and denounce your name as evil
on account of the Son of Man. Rejoice and leap for joy on
that day! Behold, your reward will be great in heaven. For
their ancestors treated the prophets in the same way.**

But woe to you who are rich, for you have received your consolation.

**But woe to you who are filled now,
for you will be hungry.**

**Woe to you who laugh now,
for you will grieve and weep.**

Woe to you when all speak well of you, for their ancestors treated the false prophets in this way.”

- The Gospel of the Lord.

(pause for a few moments of silent reflection)

A Reading from The Joy of the Gospel

Sometimes it is a matter of hearing the cry of entire peoples, the poorest peoples of the earth, since “peace is founded not only on respect for human rights, but also on respect for the rights of peoples.” (Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*) Sadly, even human rights can be used as a justification for an inordinate defense of individual rights or the rights of the richer peoples... It must be reiterated that “the more fortunate should renounce some of their rights so as to place their goods more generously at the service of others.” (Paul VI, *Octogesima Adveniens*) To speak properly of our own rights, we need to broaden our perspective and to hear the plea of other peoples and other regions than our own country. We need to grow in a solidarity which “would allow all peoples to become the artisans of their destiny, since “every person is called to self-fulfillment.”

- Paul VI, Popularum Progressio

Pause for silent reflection:

Where do I see unjust statutes or oppressive decrees

robbing God's people of their rights?

Am I complicit in this? How?

Is there some right God is calling on me to renounce that I may place myself more generously at the service of others?

. . .

LEADER: **God of Justice, God of Struggle,
through the resurrection of Jesus
you delivered humankind
from the oppression of darkness,
from death and from sin.**

**You invite us to new life,
to freedom and joy.**

ALL: **Blessed are you, God of the Universe;
you have cast your fire on the earth.
Kindle it in our hearts, kindle it in our world.**

(Alternate readers or sides)

As your Spirit in Jesus
changed the course of salvation history,
encourage us
to transform those structures and institutions
that demean the dignity of your people,
especially the homeless, the poor, the untouchables,
those without power, without rights and representation.

**Blessed are you, God of the Universe;
you have cast your fire on the earth.
Kindle it in our hearts, kindle it in our world.**

Deliver us from our false selves,
from our compulsions and unhealthy patterns
that keep us from enjoying to the full
the risen freedom that is our inheritance.

Deliver us from fear, hate, prejudice, greed,
and every desire to encroach upon our neighbor's life.

As your daughters and sons,
may we walk in the freedom of your light,
free in all our relationships with each other.

**Blessed are you, God of the Universe;
you have cast your fire on the earth.
Kindle it in our hearts, kindle it in our world.**

Liberating and Loving Friend,
you sent Jesus to be our Just One and our Peace.
Help our hearts to rest in him,
especially when our peace is troubled by too many claims.

Strengthen us to work for justice as prudently as we can
and give us the humility to recognize our limitations.

FOR FURTHER REFLECTIVE READING:

“The Dignity of the Human Person—Carmelite Perspectives,” a Position Paper on Human Rights; The Carmelite NGO: Meeting People in the Marketplace. Carmelite Media, 2013

The Joy of the Gospel: Apostolic Exhortation of the Holy Father Francis, 2013

Should we grow weak and weary in the struggle,
be at our side so that we may continue
in the footsteps of your prophets
who illumined the way to secure true justice.

**Blessed are you, God of the Universe;
you have cast your fire on the earth.
Kindle it in our hearts, kindle it in our world.**

- Prayer taken from Canticles and Gathering Prayers, Mossi and Toolan

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CLOSING PRAYER: Gracious God, source and giver of all life, you gave to St. Edith Stein and to Blessed Titus Brandsma the Spirit of courage to proclaim human dignity and the freedom of the Church, even in the throes of degrading persecution and death. Grant us that same Spirit so that we may remain in awe of you and of the goodness and beauty of the human person. Amen.

. . .

CLOSING SONG: Bambela (Never Give Up), Marty Haugen, Turn My Heart CD or YouTube



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