

UN 75

2020 AND BEYOND

A PRAYER FOR the UNITED NATIONS

Hymn: All are Welcome in This Place- <https://youtu.be/GlnVLP0qFEo>

Introduction:

The United Nations rose out of the ashes of World War II. The 75th anniversary of the founding of the UN is an occasion for the celebration of its achievements – ‘save succeeding generations from the scourge of war, promote “fundamental human rights”, establish conditions for the respect of “justice and international law” and “promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom.” The anniversary provides us an opportunity to envision a United Nations fit for our times, to better serve a world very different from that of 1945.

Civil society organizations, especially faith-based organizations have engaged in the discussions on the shape of the UN right from the outset, feeding into the drafting of the UN Charter. It does not open in the name of the governments, but in the name of “We the peoples of the United Nations.” Throughout the past 75 years, civil society organizations have played a significant role in furthering the UN’s objectives, in eradicating communicable diseases, shaping landmark agreements like 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Paris Climate agreement. We are engaged in advocacy at the United Nations to ensure the voices of the most vulnerable are heard and on the ground to bring about transformation.

A reading from the Preamble of the UN Charter:

*“We the Peoples of the United Nations determined
to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war, which twice in our lifetime has brought
untold sorrow to mankind, and
to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, in
the equal rights of men and women and of nations large and small, and
to establish conditions under which justice and respect for the obligations arising from treaties
and other sources of international law can be maintained and
to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom,
and for these ends
to practice tolerance and live together in peace with one another as good neighbors, and*



to unite our strength to maintain international peace and security, and to ensure, by the acceptance of principles and the institution of methods, that armed force shall not be used, save in the common interest, and to employ international machinery for the promotion of the economic and social advancement of all peoples, have resolved to combine our efforts to accomplish these aims.”

The achievements of the United Nations during the past 75 years are laudable.

Call to mind the successes of the United Nations

Share aloud

Read aloud the following successes of the UN

- Works with 195 nations
- Promotes Human Rights
- Eradication of many communicable diseases, especially smallpox
- Supplies vaccines for 40% of the world’s children
- Provides food assistance to 90 million in 80 countries
- Averting another world war and promoting arms control
- Peacekeeping with 110,000 peacekeepers in 13 operations around the world
- Working with 26 million refugees
- Humanitarian response and assistance during disasters
- 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development
- Paris Climate Agreement

Readings from Catholic Social Teaching

The United Nations represents the obligatory path of modern civilization and of world peace.
Pope Paul VI, Address to the UN, 1965

In the work of promoting justice, building peace, and ensuring that human dignity and human rights are respected throughout the world, you (United Nations) have the full and complete support of the Catholic Church.

Pope John Paul II, Address to the UN, 1995

The work of the United Nations, according to the principles set forth in the Preamble and in the first Articles of its founding Charter, can be seen as the development and promotion of the rule of law, based on the realization that justice is an essential condition for achieving ideal of universal fraternity.

Pope Francis, Address to the UN, 2015

Pause for expressions of gratitude



Hymn: Singing Praise to God, David Haas: <https://youtu.be/DU15FoSARZ4>

We live in unprecedented times. Change is progressing at a pace and scale unparalleled in history. The impacts of climate change, global warming, rising sea-levels, environmental degradation, loss of biodiversity, wild fires, etc., are becoming a part of our daily living. These experiences have been compounded by the COVID-19 pandemic. People around the globe are challenged by the health, economic and financial consequences of the pandemic. It has disrupted life in every sphere. While unemployment, poverty, hunger, inequalities, racial injustice, etc., are on the rise, the pandemic has polarized societies. In fact, in January 2020, the UN Secretary General compared the current global threats – climate change, mistrust, global tensions and sinister technologies, to the four horsemen of the book of Revelations. Eight months later, he stated, the four horsemen were joined by, the pandemic, health and economic devastation, growing poverty and blatant inequalities. The Pandemic is a revealer of all that ails our world.

In spite of the opening words of the UN Charter, We the peoples, the civil society space for engagement at the UN is shrinking. Civil Society members are committed allies of the UN, who reflect the gospel values in their engagements, demand transparency, accountability and critique it's function. Many member states do not welcome or appreciate the role civil society plays. It is reflective of the erosion of democratic values and the values of partnerships and multilateralism.

- How shall we respond to these challenges?
- Our current institutions are inadequate to meet these challenges.
- What is our commitment to work for a world of shared prosperity, peace and security?
- How shall we lay the foundations for a better, renewed and transformed United Nations, capable of meeting the challenges of our times?

At this crucial juncture, it is incumbent upon us to envision another world, to rethink our relationship with earth, wealth, progress, development, global governance. We need a paradigm shift from the “us versus them” thinking to find new pathways and innovative solutions for collaboration and partnerships, while upholding the dignity and human rights of everyone. **We are the United Nations. The UN belongs to all of us.**

“The golden invitation of the twenty-first century is for us to bring our great dreams forward and collectively join in our common work of fostering a great dream: What world could we create together, by dreaming together collectively, that could work for everyone? Because essentially that’s what we want. That’s why we’ve been so mysteriously placed on this great blue jewel called Earth.” (Angeles Arrien)

Pause for Reflection



Intercessory Prayers

Hymn: We are Called, David Haas - <https://youtu.be/cQf2xKxP1Tw>

Concluding Prayer for Uniting of Nations

O loving and gracious Creator
Your love embraces all members of the human family,
Your care extends to the least of those among us,
To all our brothers and sisters in every part of the earth.

You call us to mature love and concern for the entire human community,
You call us as individuals, as a nation, as a united community of nations.
Let us hear this prayer in our hearts and respond with faith and good will.

God of compassion,
Walk alongside all of your global stewards,
who work to create a more just and peaceful world.
Equip the United Nations community with a sense of urgency and humility
That lets your will be done.
Teach the world's leaders to forgive,
To extend welcome across borders.

Show the world a new path beyond greed, oppression and division.
Bless all our efforts toward uniting peoples and nations.
Bless the United Nations
As it strives to be an authentic community,
As it witnesses to the needs of all, to the rights of all, including mother Earth.

Grant us the wisdom and grace
To become a true global family
And witness your Reign on this earth. Amen

Last Song: We are One, Joyce Rouse: <https://youtu.be/qpgFk1P7L2I>

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