

'TO BREAK EVERY YOKE' HUMAN RIGHTS

ASH WEDNESDAY, YEAR A

Lectionary Texts: Joel 2:1-2, 12-17 Isaiah 58:1-12 Psalm 51:1-17
2 Corinthians 5:20b-6:10 Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21

Focus Text: Isaiah 58:1-12

¹ Shout out, do not hold back! Lift up your voice like a trumpet! Announce to my people their rebellion, to the house of Jacob their sins. ² Yet day after day they seek me and delight to know my ways, as if they were a nation that practiced righteousness and did not forsake the ordinance of their God; they ask of me righteous judgments, they delight to draw near to God. ³ "Why do we fast, but you do not see? Why humble ourselves, but you do not notice?" Look, you serve your own interest on your fast day, and oppress all your workers. ⁴ Look, you fast only to quarrel and to fight and to strike with a wicked fist. Such fasting as you do today will not make your voice heard on high. ⁵ Is such the fast that I choose, a day to humble oneself? Is it to bow down the head like a bulrush, and to lie in sackcloth and ashes? Will you call this a fast, a day acceptable to the LORD? ⁶ Is not this the fast that I choose: to loose the bonds of injustice, to undo the thongs of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke? ⁷ Is it not to share your bread with the hungry, and bring the homeless poor into your house; when you see the naked, to cover them, and not to hide yourself from your own kin? ⁸ Then your light shall break forth like the dawn, and your healing shall spring up quickly; your vindicator shall go before you, the glory of the LORD shall be your rear guard. ⁹ Then you shall call, and the LORD will answer; you shall cry for help, and [the LORD] will say, Here I am. If you remove the yoke from among you, the pointing of the finger, the speaking of evil, ¹⁰ if you offer your food to the hungry and satisfy the needs of the afflicted, then your light shall rise in the darkness and your gloom be like the noonday. ¹¹ The LORD will guide you continually, and satisfy your needs in parched places, and make your bones strong; and you shall be like a watered garden, like a spring of water, whose waters never fail. ¹² Your ancient ruins shall be rebuilt; you shall raise up the foundations of many generations; you shall be called the repairer of the breach, the restorer of streets to live in.

NRSV

ADDITIONAL TEXTS

So God created humankind in [God's] image, in the image of God [God] created them; male and female [God] created them.
Genesis 1:27

God has taken [God's] place in the divine council; in the midst of the gods [God] holds judgment: "How long will you judge unjustly and show partiality to the wicked? Give justice to the weak and the orphan; maintain the right of the lowly and the destitute. Rescue the weak and the needy; deliver them from the hand of the wicked."

Psalm 82:1-4

The LORD is good to all, and [the LORD's] compassion is over all that [the LORD] has made. All your works shall give thanks to you, O LORD, and all your faithful shall bless you. They shall speak of the glory of your kingdom, and tell of your power, to make known to all people your mighty deeds, and the glorious splendor of your kingdom. Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and your dominion endures throughout all generations. The LORD is faithful in all [the LORD's] words, and gracious in all [the LORD's] deeds. The LORD upholds all who are falling, and raises up all who are bowed down.

Psalm 145:9-14

For my thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways my ways, says the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts... For you shall go out in joy, and be led back in peace; the mountains and the hills before you shall burst into song, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands. Instead of the thorn shall come up the cypress; instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle; and it shall be to the LORD for a memorial, for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off.

Isaiah 55:8-13

SCRIPTURE COMMENTARY

BY CHRIS LIU BEERS, PROGRAM ASSOCIATE
NC COUNCIL OF CHURCHES

Thousands of years before the U.N. passed its groundbreaking “Universal Declaration of Human Rights,” ancient Israel’s prophetic tradition had already articulated a beautiful, sweeping vision of justice and protection for the oppressed and afflicted. Here in Isaiah 58:1-12 we behold through the eloquence of the prophet the radical justice of God. To better understand this text and its connection to human rights, we will look closely at the set of indictments and promises with which God confronts the people of Israel.

To begin, God commands the prophet to “shout out” an indictment against the beloved and chosen people, for they would claim to be a righteous people in the midst of their “rebellion.” What is their rebellion? They carefully attend to religious ceremony such as fasting while ignoring what Jesus would later call “the weightier matters of the law,” justice for the oppressed and peace for the persecuted. God does not listen to those who fast even as they “oppress all their workers.” God pays little attention to those who pray while striking out with a “wicked fist.” A series of rhetorical questions heightens the force of the prophet’s indictment; one can imagine the almost sarcastic tone with which he addresses the people. Do you really think that this is what it’s about? Do you really think that God will listen to you while you deny the most basic human rights of those around you?

What kind of religious observance is God ready to accept? “Is not this the fast that I choose: to loose the bonds of injustice, to undo the thongs of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke? Is it not to share your bread with the hungry, and bring the homeless poor into your house; when you see the naked, to cover them...?” Is it not, the prophet seems to say, to work for justice in the midst of a terribly violent and destructive world? Is it not to uphold the human rights of all people?

In verse 8 the tone of the passage shifts dramatically, as the prophet goes from giving voice to divine accusation to expressing the divine vision for the world as it is supposed to be. When God’s people liberate the oppressed, breaking every yoke of bondage, discrimination, violence and injustice, then their “light shall break forth like the dawn, and [their] healing shall spring up quickly; [their] vindicator shall go before you, the glory of the LORD shall be [their] rear guard” (58:8). In verse 11, the prophet holds forth the promise that *as* God’s people work for justice, God will provide them with guidance, strength, and provision for their every need. When Israel takes up the cause of the oppressed, God promises to be faithfully present in their midst, filling them with light. The passage concludes with the image of a faithful people rebuilding and restoring their ancient ruins, making once-desolate city streets safe and secure again. It is like the sound of children’s laughter returning again to a place that once knew only war or genocide. This is the call of God upon God’s people: to offer food to the hungry, to liberate the oppressed, to uphold the rights and dignity of all people, to rebuild the ancient ruins for the glory of God.

PASTORAL REFLECTION

BY PATRICK O’NEILL, CO-FOUNDER,
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CATHOLIC WORKER HOUSE, GARNER

In her writings, the late Catholic pacifist Dorothy Day often focused on the central role love must play in the life of the Christian. “Love is the measure,” Day wrote. Yes, indeed, we respond, yet we live in culture where this quintessential message of Jesus – to love everyone, even our enemies – is subverted by a blurring of the lines between fidelity to God and fidelity to the nation state. United States citizens like to claim we are “One nation under God,” but that is merely a trivial slogan that has no real meaning and no real context. It is designed as a sound bite that gives false comfort and a sense of moral certitude to a privileged people who have no interest in a deeper faith that demands sincere holiness and personal accountability.

Stanley Hauerwas, a Duke Divinity School professor of Christian ethics, who’s best-known book is appropriately titled “Resident Aliens,” says American Christians are “more American than Christian.” In a Duke Magazine interview, Hauerwas said the identification of God and country is very troubling: “Let me be as clear as I can be, the God of ‘God and country’ is not the God of Jesus Christ. Yet this is not a development that began with September 11. One of the issues before American Christianity is whether the God we worship is the God of Jesus Christ. American Christians simply lack the disciplines necessary to discover how being Christian might make them different.”

Which brings us to our Lenten text. In Isaiah 58, the instruction is clear; there are no ambiguities. The prophet delineates what should make a person of faith “different,” so to speak. You know what’s been done, Isaiah writes. Let’s call it “public penance.” Heads bowed “like a reed.” Sackcloth and ashes making a mess. Pounding the chest in false piety perhaps. But, lo, is this the accountability God wants? “Do you call this a fast, a day acceptable to the Lord?” Isaiah asked. “Is this the manner of fasting I wish?” Of course not. In fact, Isaiah exposes a common hypocrisy of his day: Ritualistic public penance without any substance. “Lo on your fast day you carry out your own pursuits, and drive all your laborers. Yes, your fast ends in quarreling and fighting, striking with wicked claw.”

Sadly, these hypocrisies are still with us in one form or another. In this land of plenty, the “least of these”

fall through the so-called safety net or go without. The edict of love is forgotten in a nation that wages war on several fronts simultaneously. Rather than welcome the stranger, we revile the stranger. The homeless and mentally ill -- the have-nots -- are often left to fend for themselves, and scorned by the haves. Laborers in our society are often exploited. Some North Carolina farmworkers have been held as slaves, been made to live in squalid conditions in farm labor camps and exposed to dangerous pesticides in the fields. Unions are rejected, and scores of manufacturers have abandoned North Carolina workers and their communities to move abroad where regulations are few and workers are exploited in countless ways.

As we enter this 40-day season of penance and reflection, let's examine what it is God wants from us as we grow in our faith. "This rather is the fasting that I wish: releasing those bound unjustly ... setting free the oppressed, breaking every yoke; sharing your bread with the hungry; sheltering the oppressed and the homeless; clothing the naked when you see them, and not turning your back on your own." There are countless ways in which we can make these passages come to life in our own lives and in our society so that "We can be the change we want to see in the world." Once again, following Jesus' example is our best starting point. In Matthew 25, Jesus says the depth of our faith is measured by the depth of our relationship with those society labels "outcasts." In Jesus' day, outcasts were lepers, prostitutes and tax collectors to name a few. Today, outcasts include those with HIV and AIDS, gays and lesbians, Latinos, Muslims and prisoners, among others. Each of these groups of people faces scorn and vilification in our culture, but Christians must be different. We are called to provide love to those who are rejected and hated.

This love should include a level of depth that stretches us beyond our comfort zone and even beyond prayer. Often, people make donations to those who work to improve the lives of the poor and oppressed. That's important. We may even write a letter to an elected official stating our desire for change. That's also good work. However, the Christian must make the distinction between good work and God's work. Jesus' example of fasting and prayer is challenging, but we must also remember Jesus used those Lenten disciplines as a means to an end. In Jesus' case, the end was direct action. Our faith must move us beyond charitable giving and letter-writing and into personal contact and direct action.

Jesus was a healer, and to heal usually includes touch. Personal contact with outcasts -- the unclean -- was a way of life for the Prince of Peace. Personal contact with outcasts can help us achieve a depth of love that Jesus calls "abundant life." It is direct action that expands us, and best expresses God's love through us. As we practice the Lenten disciplines for the next 40 days, let's spend time reflecting on what direct action might look like in our lives. Can we get to know a homeless person personally? Can we visit a prisoner? Can we become part of an AIDS care team? Can we provide safe haven for a domestic violence victim? Can we stand on a picket line with a worker, hold a sign at a peace rally? Can we risk arrest in an act of civil disobedience? Can we take up our cross and follow the nonviolent Jesus? All things are possible with God, and with love as the foundation of everything we do, we will "taste and see the goodness of the Lord."

WORSHIP AID - 'TO BREAK EVERY YOKE'

RESPONSIVE READING

Human Rights Litany

Someone is shouting in the desert: "Prepare the way of the Lord; make a straight path for God to travel! Every valley must be filled up, every hill and mountain leveled off. The winding roads must be made straight, and the rough paths made smooth" (*Luke 3:1-6*).

God of justice, your messenger has called us to prepare your way, to make your paths straight.

But the world is not ready to receive you. The roadway is choked with material possessions of people who have become rich from the labor of those who are denied access to resources because of their race, ethnicity, gender, class or nationality.

God of peace, your messenger is calling us to prepare your way.

But fearful threats exist. The highway is barricaded with armaments. The valleys are filled with landmines that kill innocent children, women and men.

God of compassion, your messenger is calling us to prepare your way.

But not everybody will be free to greet you. Some of the courageous languish in prison, tortured for their beliefs or for speaking truth to power. Many women are imprisoned in their homes, abused by their husbands and without means of escape because they are denied legal and economic recourse. Many children are chained in sweatshops or sold into prostitution.

How then shall we prepare the way?

In the name of God and for the sake of God's people, we proclaim in word and deed that all human beings are born with fundamental human rights.

How shall we prepare the way?

(continued on next page)

We will strive to guarantee the dignity and worth of the human person and the equal rights of women and men.
How shall we prepare the way?

We will work for a world in which human beings enjoy freedom of speech and belief and freedom from fear and want.
Then we will go out in joy, and be led back in peace; the mountains and the hills before us shall burst into song, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands. And every valley shall be filled and the crooked shall be made straight, and all flesh shall see the salvation of God.

(adapted from PC(USA), "Human Rights Litany," www.pcusa.org/peacemaking/worship/humanrightsworship.pdf)

PRAYER OF CONFESSION

Let us pray that contemplating Jesus,
Our Lord and our Peace,
We Christians would repent
Of the words and attitudes
Caused by pride, by hatred,
By the desire to dominate others,
By enmity towards members of other religions
And towards the weakest groups in society,
Such as immigrants and itinerants.

(Pause for silent prayer)

Lord of the world, Father of all, Mother of all,
Through your Son
You asked us to love our enemies,
To do good to those who hate us
And to pray for those who persecute us.
Yet Christians have often denied the Gospel;
Yielding to a mentality of power,
We have violated the rights of ethnic groups and peoples,
And shown contempt
For other cultures and religious traditions:
Be patient and merciful towards us,
And grant us your forgiveness!
We ask this through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

(adapted from "Universal Prayers of Confession," www.vatican.va/news_services/liturgy/documents/hs_lit_doc_20000312_prayer-day-pardon_en.html)

SUGGESTED HYMNS

† <i>Let Your Heart be Broken</i>	BH 611/MW 582
† <i>Go Down Moses</i>	CM 499/PH 334/NCH 572/CH 663/ UMH 448
† <i>Hold Me in Life</i>	GC 599
† <i>In Suffering Love</i>	CH 212
† <i>The Servant Song</i>	BH 613/GC 669/CH 490

◆ *Hymnal Legend* ◆

† AM – African Methodist Episcopal
† BH – Baptist Hymnal
† CH – Chalice Hymnal (Disciples of Christ)
† CM – Christian Methodist Episcopal
† GC – Gather Comprehensive (Rom Cath)
† LW – Lutheran Worship
† MW – Moravian Book of Worship
† NCH – New Century Hymnal (UCC)
† PH – Presbyterian Hymnal
† TH – The Hymnal 1982 (Episcopal)
† UMH – United Methodist Hymnal

ADDITIONAL PRAYERS

Our God,
who gave commandments that guide us into paths of justice and compassion,
teach us what it means to make good rules.
We pray for rules to govern our trade
that can bend to serve the needs of the poor,
that are strong to contain the greed of the rich,
that will challenge the inequalities present in our world.
Make us restless for change,
refusing to submit to political realities
where life and death are bought in the market place,
and daring to work for the coming of your kingdom
where the world is reshaped in the image of Christ.
In whose name we pray. **Amen.**

(adapted from "Baptist Human Rights Day," www.bwanet.org/humanrights/humanrights2005.htm)

We Cannot Merely Pray to You

We cannot merely pray to you, O God, to end war, for we know that you have made the world in such a way that all people must find their own path to peace within themselves and with their neighbors.

We cannot merely pray to you, O God, to end starvation, for you have already given us resources with which to feed the whole wide world, if we could only use them wisely.

We cannot merely pray to you, O God, to root out our prejudice, for you have already given us eyes with which to see the good in all people, if we would only use them rightly.

We cannot merely pray to you, O God, to end despair, for you have already given us the power to clear away slums and to give hope, if we would only use our power justly.

We cannot merely pray to you, O God, to end disease, for you have already given us great minds with which to search out cures and healings, if we would only use them constructively.

Therefore we pray to you instead, O God, for strength, determination and will power, to do what we can, to do what we must, to *do* instead of just to pray, to *become* instead of merely to wish.

(adapted from "We Cannot Merely Pray to You," <http://ns3810.ovh.net/~fiacat/en/spip.php?article264>)

Prayer for Human Rights Defenders

Lord our God,

Despite all the misery and cruelty that people inflict upon each other,

Let us hope that one day monuments will be erected for the peace-loving and non-violent.

Now is the time to act together in another way :

Not only talk about justice but do it;

To loose all bonds, to overturn misery, to bring liberation.

Not only talk about peace but create it; to surmount walls, to work for reconciliation, to approach each other.

Not only talk about creation but preserve it, to protect life, to be a guardian, to support the weak.

Not only talk about love but live it; to accept each other, to be there for one another, to give one's heart away.

Not only talk about hope but spread it; to give evidence, not to give up, to look forward.

Now is the time to act together in another way.

(adapted from "Prayers for Human Rights Defenders," <http://ns3810.ovh.net/~fiacat/en/spip.php?rubrique66>)

ADDITIONAL HELPS

▣ QUOTES ▣

First they came for the Communists; I did not speak because I was not a Communist. Then they came for the Jews; I did not speak because I was not a Jew. Then they came to fetch the workers, members of trade unions; I did not speak because I was not a trade unionist. Afterwards, they came for the Catholics; I did not say anything because I was a Protestant. Eventually they came for me, and there was no one left to speak.

Martin Niemöller, Dachau, 1942

Give to every human being every right that you claim for yourself.

Robert Ingersoll

It is often easier to become outraged by injustice half a world away than by oppression and discrimination half a block from home.

Carl T. Rowan

All humanity is one undivided and indivisible family, and each one of us is responsible for the misdeeds of all the others. I cannot detach myself from the wickedest soul.

Mahatma Gandhi

▪ **PERSONAL VIGNETTE** ▪

PROTESTING TORTURE IN NORTH CAROLINA

BY BARBARA ZELTER, FORMER PROGRAM ASSOCIATE, NORTH CAROLINA COUNCIL OF CHURCHES

This is at base about whether America should be a country that pretends not to torture people, while at the same time allowing a system, called “extraordinary rendition,” that exports torture to be done elsewhere, with our CIA directing and sometimes participating. We of *NC Stop Torture Now* want to lift the veil of secrecy and lies perpetrated by our government, in our names, with our tax dollars. We want to sever the NC link in this secret, ineffective, cruel and immoral, and counter-productive process, in which innocents and others are tortured in the name of national security.

I personally come to this effort through my Judeo-Christian faith and the NC Council of Churches. The mandate of Jesus to “love one another” seems not to allow for torturing one another. The words of the Hebrew prophet Micah to “do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with your God,” seem to call us to name when injustice happens. Most religious denominations and most faiths have official words against the use of torture. So we are called to act locally; faith demands noticing and action.

The Civil Disobedience Action at Aero Contractors, Inc., Smithfield Airport, April 9, 2007

My pastor, Rev. Greg Moore of All Saints United Methodist Church in Raleigh, picked me up early this morning so we could converge with others at St. Ann’s Roman Catholic Church in Clayton, NC, about 45 minutes down I-40 east of Raleigh. It was a cold morning the day after Easter, in the midst of an unusual North Carolina freeze. About 40 of us got out of our cars in the parking lot of the church, gathered ourselves and our props, and set out in a convoy down the road to the Smithfield airport, where the CIA front organization Aero Contractors is lodged in a large blue metal building.

Our goal was to serve the leadership of Aero with a citizens’ arrest warrant asking Aero to cooperate with the FBI investigation into their CIA extraordinary rendition flights and also with the German indictments of three of their pilots implicated in the rendition of an innocent man to be tortured overseas.

Our hope was that media would notice this concerted citizen action, even as the Aero leadership and the CIA would hide. One more step in the uncovering of the United States’ torture machinery. We had packets for the press with documentation of Aero’s complicity in torture. We had bright orange (the color of the anti-torture movement) citizen indictment papers. We had a group of several who were willing to be arrested, detained, jailed, and tried for this witness. We had children and their parents, a local elder on her cane, photographers, life-time advocates for human rights, and two formal legal observers.

Would they let us in past their gates to serve our citizens arrest papers? Would we climb their barbed wire fence to get arrested for trespass if they did not let us in? Would anyone pay attention?

(For more information, visit www.ncstoptorturennow.net)

▪ **CONTACTS AND OTHER RESOURCES** ▪

- ✦ www.un.org/rights – Home to the *United Nations’ High Commissioner for Human Rights*, this website includes numerous international resources, including the full text of the ground-breaking “Universal Declaration on Human Rights,” which was adopted by the General Assembly 60 years ago in 1948. The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights works to strengthen and coordinate United Nations work for the protection and promotion of all human rights of all persons around the world. The Secretary-General has made human rights the central theme that unifies the Organization’s work in the key areas of peace and security, development, humanitarian assistance and economic and social affairs.
- ✦ www.amnesty.org – *Amnesty International* is one of the most important global non-governmental organizations dedicated to advancing the cause of human rights. Founded more than 40 years ago, Amnesty currently has almost 2 million members from nearly 150 nations around the world. Amnesty’s vision is of a world in which every person enjoys all of the human rights enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. In pursuit of this vision, Amnesty undertakes research and action focused on preventing and ending grave abuses of the rights to physical and mental integrity, freedom of conscience and expression, and freedom from discrimination, within the context of its work to promote all human rights.

- ✦ www.hrw.org – *Human Rights Watch* stands with victims and activists to prevent discrimination, to uphold political freedom, to protect people from inhumane conduct in wartime, and to bring offenders to justice. In particular, they investigate and expose human rights violations and hold abusers accountable while challenging governments and those who hold power to end abusive practices and respect international human rights law. To this end, HRW enlists the public and the international community to support the cause of human rights for all. Their website contains numerous articles, reports and other resources documenting human rights abuses around the world and ways for ordinary citizens to become more involved in the global struggle to achieve human rights for all people.
- ✦ www.humanrightsfirst.org – *Human Rights First* believes that building respect for human rights and the rule of law will help ensure the dignity to which every individual is entitled and will stem tyranny, extremism, intolerance, and violence. Human Rights First protects people at risk: refugees who flee persecution, victims of crimes against humanity or other mass human rights violations, victims of discrimination, those whose rights are eroded in the name of national security, and human rights advocates who are targeted for defending the rights of others. These groups are often the first victims of societal instability and breakdown; their treatment is a harbinger of wider-scale repression. Human Rights First works to prevent violations against these groups and to seek justice and accountability for violations against them.
- ✦ www.witnesstorture.org – At its inception, *Witness Against Torture* began as a group of friends who – as Americans and Catholics – walked to Guantánamo to visit the prisoners, to perform a work of mercy, to respond to the victims of the war on terrorism. Upon returning from that journey, they began to organize more broadly to shut down Guantánamo, working with interfaith, human rights and activists organizations – including the North Carolina Council of Churches. They have planned a series of nonviolent direct actions to expose and decry injustice, build awareness about torture and indefinite detention amongst Americans and forge human ties with the prisoners at Guantánamo and their families.

Editor's Note: The following "Contacts and Other Resources" address specific human rights violations taking place in North Carolina.

- ✦ www.pfadp.org – Nearly 80 percent of executions in the United States take place in the South, the former slave states. *People of Faith Against the Death Penalty* is a nonpartisan, nonprofit, interfaith organization whose mission is to educate and mobilize faith communities to act to abolish the death penalty in the United States. Founded in 1994 as part of the NC Council of Churches, PFADP is now an independent organization focusing its programs on organizing among faith communities in the South. PFADP seeks to be totally inclusive - reaching out to all citizens regardless of faith, race or ethnic group, income, political affiliation, age, ability, and so on. Their members include Christians, Jews, Muslims, Buddhists, and people from other faith traditions.
- ✦ www.ncstoptorturennow.net – *North Carolina Stop Torture Now* (NCSTN) is a grassroots organization dedicated to ridding North Carolina of its complicity with practices of torture and detainee abuse. The discovery that N.C. hosts a critical link in the CIA's system of illegal detentions, disappearance, and torture-by-proxy has led to the formation of NCSTN. The immediate goals of NCSTN is for the Global TransPark Authority, chaired by Governor Easley, to comply with N.C. law and for the State Bureau of Investigation to participate in a thorough investigation of Aero Contractors and take appropriate action. Despite numerous requests, the Governor and Global TransPark Authority Board have failed to call for the SBI to investigate Aero Contractors.
- ✦ www.smithfieldjustice.com – *Justice at Smithfield* is a campaign of the United Food and Commercial Workers International Union (UFCW) to improve working conditions at the world's largest hog processing plant, run by Smithfield Packing, in Tar Heel, NC. Cited by *Human Rights Watch* for violating international human rights standards, Smithfield has created an environment of intimidation, racial tension, and sometimes violence for workers who want a voice on the job. The approximately 5,500 workers kill and cut up 32,000 hogs per day, which is 16,000 hogs per 8-hour shift, 2,000 per hour, 33 hogs every minute -- one every 2 seconds.

KEY FACTS

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights¹

On December 10, 1948 the General Assembly of the United Nations adopted and proclaimed the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, portions of which appear below.

PREAMBLE

- Whereas recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world,
- Whereas disregard and contempt for human rights have resulted in barbarous acts which have outraged the conscience of mankind, and the advent of a world in which human beings shall enjoy freedom of speech and belief and freedom from fear and want has been proclaimed as the highest aspiration of the common people,
- Whereas it is essential, if man is not to be compelled to have recourse, as a last resort, to rebellion against tyranny and oppression, that human rights should be protected by the rule of law...
- Whereas the peoples of the United Nations have in the Charter reaffirmed their faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person and in the equal rights of men and women and have determined to promote social progress and better standards of life in freedom...

Now, therefore **THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY proclaims THIS UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS** as a common standard of achievement for all peoples and all nations...

- All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood.
- Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as race, color, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status. Furthermore, no distinction shall be made on the basis of the political, jurisdictional or international status of the country or territory to which a person belongs, whether it be independent, trust, non-self-governing or under any other limitation of sovereignty.
- Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person.
- No one shall be held in slavery or servitude; slavery and the slave trade shall be prohibited in all their forms.
- No one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment...
- Everyone has the right to freedom of movement and residence within the borders of each state.
- Everyone has the right to leave any country, including his own, and to return to his country.
- Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance...
- Everyone has the right to work, to free choice of employment, to just and favorable conditions of work and to protection against unemployment.
- Everyone, without any discrimination, has the right to equal pay for equal work.
- Everyone who works has the right to just and favorable remuneration ensuring for himself and his family an existence worthy of human dignity, and supplemented, if necessary, by other means of social protection...
- Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control.

1. United Nations, "Universal Declaration of Human Rights," www.un.org/Overview/rights.html.