This year, 2010, we are invited to remember the human rights defenders who act to end discrimination in all its forms. Some of these people, like Gandhi and Nelson Mandela are famous. Others are not well known. They work individually or in groups, in local communities, in national capitals, or even on the international level to promote the rights and dignity of all.

Human rights defenders "speak up" when they see discrimination, exclusion, oppression or violence. Some advocate for justice, some work with victims, some demand accountability. All believe the opening words of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) that "All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights."

This task of defending human rights cannot be left to others. Eleanor Roosevelt, one of the authors of the UDHR, said it well:

> *"Where, after all, do universal human rights begin? In small places, close to home - so close and so small that they cannot be seen on any maps of the world. Yet they are the world of the individual person; the neighborhood he lives in; the school or college he attends; the factory, farm, or office where he works. Such are the places where every man, woman, and child seeks equal justice, equal opportunity, equal dignity without discrimination. Unless these rights have meaning there, they have little meaning anywhere. Without concerted citizen action to uphold them close to home, we shall look in vain for progress in the larger world."*

As December 10, 2010, draws near we are all invited to examine the "small places, close to home" to determine which human rights need to be defended, and how we can "speak up" and "stop discrimination."

Resources

☺ Universal Declaration of Human Rights *(360 languages).*

☺ The Vatican Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace makes available the *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church* and statements related to human rights. *(Multiple Languages)*

☺ Education for Justice *(English, Español),* a project of the Center of Concern, and Faith Doing Justice offer resources, which foster greater understanding of Catholic Social Teaching and current social justice and human rights issues.

☺ The UN Cyberschoolbus *(English, Español)* suggests materials to help teach and promote human rights with children.

☺   Multilingual Human Rights, <u>Children's Rights across the World</u> *(Multiple Languages)*
provides the Convention of the Rights of the Child and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Actions

☺   Pray that the dignity and rights of all are respected.

☺   Plan an event to commemorate Human Rights Day in your local community, school, or parish.

☺   Learn more about <u>Human Rights Defenders</u> and test you <u>Human Rights IQ</u>.

☺   Visit the website of the UN <u>Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights</u> *(Official UN Languages)* for information on the theme and scheduled activities and events for December 10.

☺   Know your rights; read the <u>Universal Declaration of Human Rights</u> *(360 languages)*.

☺   Educate for justice by promoting values of <u>*Shalom*</u> *(Deutsch, English, Español)*, human rights, <u>Catholic Social Teaching</u>, and the <u>Millennium Development Goals</u>.

☺   Learn about the forms of discrimination and the limitations on human rights in your country or region, and advocate for non-discrimination and respect of human rights for all.

☺   Express solidarity with someone who has experienced some form of discrimination or limitation of their human rights.

☺   Share with others whatever you do to mark Human Rights Day; e-mail details and photos to VIVAT International viny@vivatinternational.org

Prayer

God of Justice,
You have given all of your children
human dignity and human rights.
Help us recognize the dignity and the rights
of all human kind.
Open our hearts to hear your teachings,
open our eyes to the suffering
of those who are denied their basic economic, social, and political rights.
Let our voices join in declaring
all humanity is sacred, all human rights must be respected.