

Commemoration of Eleanor Roosevelt

December 10

The Day of Universal Declaration of Human Rights

The Collect

Traditional

Holy and everliving God, we give thee thanks for Eleanor Roosevelt and all those who have championed human rights for all people. Guide us, we beseech thee, to follow her example to respect the dignity of every human being that we, too, may be the instruments of hope and healing to those who suffer and are living in despair; through Jesus Christ, who liveth and reigneth with thee and the Holy Ghost, one God, now and forever. Amen.

Contemporary

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Scripture Readings

Isaiah 56:5-8

Psalm 133

2 Corinthians 5:16-21

Matthew 25:31-46

Eleanor Roosevelt Biography

Best known for being First Lady for twelve years, Eleanor Roosevelt was also a lifelong public advocate for democracy, civil rights, women's rights, workers' rights, youth programs and opportunities for the poor and marginalized.

Born Anna Eleanor Roosevelt in New York City in 1884 to a high society family, Eleanor was baptized in 1885 at Calvary Episcopal Church in New York City. Both parents and a younger brother would die before she reached the age of ten. While being raised by her maternal grandmother, Eleanor was immersed in a strong Episcopalian tradition of daily prayer, Sunday services at St. Paul's Episcopal Church in Tivoli, New York and Sunday evening hymn sessions around the piano. Later she would attend St. James Episcopal Church while living in Hyde Park. She said of religion that, "...all human beings must hold some belief in a power greater than themselves, and that whatever their religious belief may be, it must move them to live better in this world..."

Through a combination of humility and persistence Eleanor learned to embrace the humanity of all people. In the 1920's she actively participated in a number of civic and political organizations establishing her influence in New York State and later at the national level. As First Lady she invited prominent black leaders to the White House and held the first women's press conference. She became friends with activist Pauli Murray from whom she learned to become more impatient with the progress of civil rights. During the Great Depression she

traveled the country to witness conditions of the poor and unemployed and to champion their cause with FDR and various government agencies. She used her radio shows and publications, especially the My Day column, to communicate news and concerns directly with the American people.

During World War II Eleanor lobbied against the incarceration of Americans of Japanese descent and then visited the camp at Gila River to highlight conditions and advocate for improvements. She worked tirelessly to keep focus on domestic issues during World War II and visited wounded soldiers in the U.S., Latin America and the South Pacific.

Following FDR's death Eleanor was called upon to serve as a U.S. delegate to the newly formed United Nations. As chair of the Commission on Human Rights Eleanor directed the creation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Considered a cornerstone document for all discussions on human rights for all people, the Declaration was adopted by the UN General Assembly on December 10, 1948.

Eleanor died on November 7, 1962, at age 78, at her home in Manhattan, NY, while being cared for by her daughter, Anna.

She was known to pray daily. Throughout WW II, she prayed this prayer:

Dear Lord,
Lest I continue
My complacent way,
Help me to remember that somewhere,
Somehow out there
A man died for me today.
As long as there be war,
I then must
Ask and answer
Am I worth dying for?