

Participation-June 2016



Child surrounded by the rubble of war.

June 4—International Day of Innocent Children Victims of Aggression

This special day was first designated by the United Nations in 1982 to remember the children victimized by the war in Lebanon. The purpose of the day is to acknowledge the pain suffered by children throughout the world who are the victims of physical, mental and emotional abuse. As a result of international conflicts, countless children have been killed or maimed and many of those who have survived have lost their parents and their means of sustenance. This day

affirms the UN's commitment to protect the rights of children. They are to be given the opportunities and facilities to enable them to develop in a normal and healthy manner, in conditions of freedom and dignity, and to grow up in an atmosphere of affection and security.

Let us pray for those children throughout the world who suffer physical, emotional and spiritual trauma as a result of war and violence. May we recommit ourselves to working for peace with justice and an end to violence of all kind, so that children and all people can live in peace and harmony with one another and all can grow and flourish.



The decade 1979-1989 saw the elephant population in Africa halved by poaching.

June 5—World Environment Day

Sponsored by the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP) the World Environment Day raises global awareness to take positive environmental action to protect nature and planet Earth. This annual day has been celebrated around the world since 1972. The theme in 2016 is "Fight Against the Illegal Trade in Wildlife". This trade seriously threatens biodiversity and is pushing many species closer to extinction. This year's World Environment Day celebrations are being hosted by Angola, a country seeking to restore its elephant herds, conserve Africa's biodiversity-rich wildlife, and safeguard the environment as it continues to rebuild after more than a quarter-century of civil war.

Let us pray that we may all grow in awareness of and respect for the dignity of all creatures on Earth. Their beauty and uniqueness are gifts to be treasured by all of us. May we honor the great web of life by protecting each creature as precious.



June 8—World Oceans Day

World Oceans Day is a yearly event that celebrates and honors the oceans of the world that unite us all. The oceans generate much of the oxygen that we breathe, they regulate our climate, and they feed us. Only about 10% of the oceans waters have been explored and there may be as many as 9 million species yet to be discovered, mostly in the deep ocean waters. Ocean warming due to climate change threatens many species and alters weather patterns worldwide. Over

fishing and pollution are also threats. The oceans are the life blood of our planet.

Let us pray for the vast oceans of the world, which team with life, feeding us, regulating our climate, creating oxygen for us to breathe and blessing the earth with beauty, majesty, power and awe. May each of us do what we can to protect the oceans on which our planet depends. May our gratitude embrace the wonders of the oceans, large and small, known and yet to be discovered.



June 17—World Day to Combat Desertification and Drought

The World Day to Combat Desertification has been observed since 1995 to promote public awareness relating to international cooperation to combat desertification and the effects of drought. The theme for 2016 is: *Protect Earth. Restore Land. Engage People*. This day is a unique occasion to remind everybody that desertification can be effectively tackled, that solutions are possible, and that key tools to this aim lay in strengthened community participation and co-operation at all levels.

Let us pray that as we struggle for sustainable development, we will be conscious of preserving and protecting the land and its rich biodiversity and life-sustaining resources. May we not exploit the land, but learn to live in harmony with all of creation so that we and future generations may continue to enjoy rich harvests, and an environment that inspires us with its beauty.



Syrian refugees fleeing their city homes now turned to rubble.



Syrian refugees leave Syria in search of safety.

June 20—World Refugee Day

Since 2001 World Refugee Day has been a day to remember the millions of refugees and Internally displaced persons worldwide who have been forced to flee their homes due to war, conflict and persecution. The ongoing conflict in Syria, as well as crises in Iraq, Ukraine, South Sudan, Central African Republic, northeastern Nigeria and parts of Pakistan, have led to a staggering growth and acceleration of global forced displacement. Presently, over 50 million people have been forced to flee their homes, and often their countries, in desperate attempts to reach safety. Recent images of the Pope's visit to Syrian refugees have touched our hearts.

Let us pray that as we struggle for an end to violence and war we will reach out in love, support and solidarity to our refugee sisters and brothers. May we respond with open hearts and willing hands, to welcome them into our midst and to support them in their efforts to find a place to live, work and grow in peace and security.



June 26—International Day In Support Of Victims Of Torture

International Day In Support Of Victims Of Torture is a day dedicated to remembering and supporting the many victims and survivors of torture around the world. States have an obligation not only to prevent torture but to provide all torture victims with effective and prompt redress, compensation and appropriate social, psychological, medical and other forms of rehabilitation. The day serves as a reminder to people that torture is not only unacceptable, it is a crime. This event gives everyone a chance to unite and voice their opinions against human torture.

Let us pray for all victims of torture. May they find the love and support and professional help they need to begin again to live their lives with hope and strength. May all those who have inflicted torture look deep within their hearts and get in touch once again with their own humanity and the dignity of all human beings. May we be instruments of peace, hope, healing and respect to all victims of torture.