

Participation-August 2016



Hiroshima and Nagasaki were reduced to rubble by the first and only atomic bomb attacks. Human beings were vaporized in seconds. Many more died later. Survivors suffered for a lifetime.

August 6 and 9—Remembrance of the Nuclear Bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Japan 1945

These special days are days to remember the first and only times that nuclear weapons have been used as weapons of war. On August 6, the U.S. dropped a uranium gun-type atomic bomb (Little Boy) on the city of Hiroshima. American President Harry S. Truman called for Japan's surrender 16 hours later, warning them to "expect a rain of ruin from the air, the like of which has never been seen on this earth". Three days later, on August 9, the U.S. dropped a plutonium implosion-type bomb (Fat Man) on the city of Nagasaki. Within the first two to four months of the bombings, the acute effects of the atomic bombings killed 90,000–146,000 people in Hiroshima and 39,000–80,000 in Nagasaki; roughly half of the deaths in each city occurred on the first day. During the following months, large numbers died from the effect of

burns, radiation sickness, and other injuries, compounded by illness and malnutrition. In both cities, most of the dead were civilians. The world must never forget the devastation of war that nuclear weapons epitomize. We must condemn not just the use but even the possession of nuclear weapons as immoral weapons of mass destruction. We must rid our world of all nuclear weapons.

Let us pray for victims of war throughout the world, particularly those still living who survived the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. May we all work to rid our world of all nuclear weapons. Let us pray for national leaders of every country. May they seek and find nonviolent ways to resolve disputes and come to understand one another as brothers and sisters.



Fresco of Saint Clare and sisters of her order, church of San Damiano in Assisi.

August 11—Feast of St Clare of Assisi

Clare of Assisi (Chiara Offreduccio) was one of the earliest followers of St Francis, joining his movement on Palm Sunday, March 20, 1212. She willingly embraced the poor and ill, serving their needs, counselling them and offering love and hope. In her monastery, all were sisters to one another. She recognized that wealth brought status, which separated people from one another. For this reason she steadfastly refused to accept property and possessions and insisted on living "the privilege of poverty". Like Francis, Clare teaches us to embrace everyone and all creation as brothers and sisters.

Let us pray that we may live with respect and love for one another. May we recognize that we are all one, sisters and brothers to each other and to all creation.



Aid workers prepare and serve food to residents of a refugee camp.

August 19—World Humanitarian Day

World Humanitarian Day is a day dedicated to humanitarian personnel and those who have lost their lives working for humanitarian causes. It was designated by the United Nations General Assembly and set as 19 August. It marks the day on which the then Special Representative of the Secretary-General to Iraq, Sérgio Vieira de Mello, and 21 of his colleagues were killed in the bombing of the UN Headquarters at the Canal Hotel in Baghdad in 2003. Humanitarian aid workers risk their lives daily around the world in order to bring relief to those suffering from disease, malnutrition, poverty and war.

Let us pray for all those who put their lives at risk in order to bring critically needed assistance to millions of suffering people around the world. May we support their efforts in whatever ways we can. May we each do our part to reach out to those in need to relieve their suffering and to bring hope.



The Ark of Return, the permanent Memorial to honor the victims of slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade, located at the Visitors' Plaza of UN Headquarters in New York. UN Photo/Rick Bajornas

August 23—International Day for Remembrance of the Slave Trade and Its Abolition

The International Day For Remembrance of the Slave Trade and Its Abolition is set on August 23 because in late August 1791, a slave uprising on the Island of Santo Domingo (present day Haiti and the Dominican Republic) eventually ended slavery on that island and set the stage for a broader movement to end the transatlantic slave trade. On this day we remember the more than 15 million women, men and children who were victims of the transatlantic slave trade over more than 400 years. It is a time to remember the brutality of the system of slavery, a system of injustice that brought unimaginable suffering to so many. We also remember the lasting legacy of racial discrimination that is a legacy of slavery today. We honor those who survived against all odds. We are grateful to those who worked to end slavery, often at the price of their own lives. We also work to raise awareness of the dangers of racism and prejudice today.

Let us pray that as we remember the millions of victims of slavery and more than 400 years of suffering, we also pray for an end to racism and discrimination that are today's legacy of slavery. May we work to cleanse our own hearts of prejudice. Heal us so that we can treat all humanity with dignity, respect and love.



August 26—Women's Equality Day

At the behest of Rep. Bella Abzug (D-NY), in 1971 the U.S. Congress designated August 26 as "Women's Equality Day." This date commemorates the 19th Amendment to the US Constitution, granting women the right to vote. Although not an international day, it is a good time for all of us around the world to remember that in many parts of the world, women are still treated as second-class citizens or as if they were mere possessions of men. It calls our attention to women's continuing struggles for full equality. The passage of the 19th amendment, after 72 years of effort, demonstrates the power of non-violent action for civil rights. When they first organized to gain political power, women were a virtually powerless, disenfranchised class. Yet without firing a shot, throwing a rock, or issuing a personal threat, women won for themselves the kind of political power that revolutionaries elsewhere have launched violent rebellions to achieve. To win the right to

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vote, women circulated countless suffrage petitions and gave speeches in churches, convention halls, meeting houses and on street corners. They published newspapers, pamphlets, and magazines. They were frequently harassed and sometimes attacked by mobs and police. Some women were thrown in jail, and when they protested the injustice they were treated brutally. Still they persevered. **Finally, on August 26, 1920, their goal was achieved. Women had won the right to vote and to hold elective office.**

Let us pray that as we struggle for civil rights around the world, may we harness the power of non-violent action to achieve lasting justice. May we stand in solidarity with women who are ignored, mistreated, oppressed and demeaned, and work for justice, respect and civil rights for all.