

Participation-December 2016



December 1—World AIDS Day

December 1, 2016 is the 28th annual World AIDS Day remembrance dedicated to raising global awareness about HIV/AIDS. It is a day to remember those who have died since the epidemic was recognized in 1981. It is also a time to stand in solidarity with the millions of people worldwide who have suffered unimaginable losses due to this pandemic. Most of all, it is a day to raise awareness that this illness continues to impact millions more each day. As we work toward education and prevention we also commit

ourselves to finding a cure.

Let us pray for scientists throughout the world, that their efforts will be successful at finding a cure for AIDS. Let us also pray that we may respond generously to all those suffering with HIV/AIDS, their families and their communities. May we stand together in solidarity, love and compassion.



December 3—International Day of Persons with Disabilities

This year's theme is: Achieving 17 goals for the future we want. The theme focuses on the Sustainable Development Goals adopted by the international community in September 2015. This day challenges us all to look at how these goals need to include and empower those living with disabilities throughout the world. In many parts of the world, persons with disabilities are shunned and excluded from participation in family, society and sometimes even religious institutions. This day calls us to focus on the

“Conventions on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities” to ensure equal and full participation.

Let us pray for the many disabled persons of the world, who seek to be full and equal participants in shaping the world's future. May they be protected from physical and psychological harm, and may they be empowered to reach their full potential. May their lives be treasured, respected and cherished.



A 1998 postage stamp from Germany, commemorating the 50th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

December 10—International Human Rights Day

Human Rights Day is celebrated annually across the world on 10 December, the date when the United Nations General adopted and proclaimed the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) in 1948. It remains as relevant today as ever.

This was the first global enunciation of human rights and one of the first major achievements of the new United Nations. Dec. 10th is also the day that the Nobel Peace Prize is traditionally awarded. Poverty and war remain the two greatest threats to human rights in the

world and the two are intimately linked to one another.

Let us pray for people around the world who suffer because of violations of their human rights. May each of us raise our voices whenever we witness human rights abuses, whether committed by individuals or government officials. May we have the courage to stand with our oppressed brothers and sisters, no matter what the cost.



Millions of people worldwide are on the move fleeing wars, drought and famine, natural disasters, and violence.

December 18—International Migrants Day

Throughout human history, migration has been a courageous expression of the individual's will to overcome adversity and to live a better life. There is a clear linkage between migration and sustainable development, as well as the opportunities it provides for co-development, that is, the concerted improvement of economic and social conditions at both origin and destination. Migration draws increasing attention in the world nowadays. Mixed with elements of unforeseeability, emergency, and complexity, the challenges and difficulties of international migration require enhanced cooperation and collective action among countries and regions. Growing sentiment against migrants has been fueled in many places by economic stresses, racial and ethnic differences and fear of "the other".

Let us pray for all those who have had to flee their homes because of war, violence, famine, natural disasters, extreme poverty or violence. May we willingly share what we have with those in need. May we open our hearts and our homes to welcome the stranger among us, so that we "stranger" can become "neighbor" and "friend."

December 20—International Human Solidarity Day

This international observance was established to remind people about the important role that solidarity plays in realization of all international agreements and programs. According to the UN General Assembly resolution, solidarity is one of the fundamental values of all humankind and it should be the basis of all modern international relations. Only solidarity can help people overcome the global problems. International Human Solidarity Day, December 20, was founded by the United Nations to highlight the eradication of poverty and the promotion human and social development in developing countries, in particular among the poorest segments of their populations. Hear the inspiring words of Anglican Archbishop Desmond Tutu:

We are made for goodness. We are made for love. We are made for friendliness. We are made for togetherness. We are made for all of the beautiful things that you and I know. We are made to tell the world that there are no outsiders. All are welcome: black, white, red, yellow, rich, poor, educated, not educated, male, female, gay, straight, all, all, all. We all belong to this family, this human family, God's family.

Let us pray for all those who are left behind in economic development: migrants, the unemployed, indigenous peoples, those with disabilities and so many others. God of compassion, Pope Francis challenges us to learn how to cry, to brave that pain, and so enter into true solidarity with your people.

With those who face hunger, who face war, who face exploitation, who face displacement, I stand in solidarity.

With those who face unjust discrimination, who face indifference, who face a lack of opportunity, who face a lack of health care, I stand in solidarity.

But in truth, I stand a little reluctantly. And I stand a little far off; detached and apart from the great human drama, lingering in the orchestra, even as you call me to the center stage. Lord, help me to look again at what has been done to your people, to their lives and to their dignity, so that slowly, and then more strongly, I will allow myself to cry. For it is only in those tears that we truly become one. My trepidations fall away and I step forward and stand anew. Teach me to cry. Amen.