

Participation - January 2017



January 1—World Day of Peace

January 1st -- World Peace Day -- marks its 50th anniversary, first declared by Pope Paul VI as a special feast day in 1967 following the publication of the Pope John XXIII encyclical *Pacem in Terris*. This year, Pope Francis has published his world day of peace reflection entitled *Non-violence: A Style of*

Politics For Peace.

Pope Francis said in his Aug. 26 message, 'The proliferation of hotbeds of violence produces most serious negative social consequences. ... Peace, by contrast, promotes social positive consequences and it allows the achievement of real progress.' Justice achieved through the means of active non-violence is the Gospel way to peace.

Let us pray to our God of Peace for the gift of disarmament. May we turn away from war and violence and commit ourselves to building a world of justice and peace through active non-violence.



January 15—Birthday of Martin Luther King Jr

January 15th is the birthday of Martin Luther King Jr, a great, non-violent civil rights leader from the USA. He was born in 1929 and died after being shot by an assassin on April 4, 1968 as he campaigned for a just wage for garbage workers in Memphis Tennessee. The theme for

this year's celebration and remembrance is "we shall overcome". Although Doctor King is best known for his non-violent struggle for racial justice and equality during the civil rights struggle in the US in the 1950's and '60's, his later years expanded his work, demanding economic justice and an end to war as essential to the struggle for civil rights. This day honors the total legacy of Dr. King, focuses on the issue of civil rights, highlights the use of nonviolence to promote change, and calls people into public service. Martin Luther King Jr has become an international symbol of hope throughout the world and his legacy continues to inspire millions in their struggle for freedom, equality, justice and dignity around the world.

Let us pray for those around the world still living in oppression and hopelessness because of racial, ethnic or religious hatred or intolerance. May they be inspired by the

many heroes of non-violence who have helped to bring about social change. May Martin Luther King's story and life inspire each of us to work for economic justice, equality, respect for diversity and non-violent peace making.



January 27—International Day of Commemoration of the Victims of the Holocaust

This day of commemoration of the victims of the holocaust was adopted by the United nations in 2005 in order to remind the world of the lessons learned so that all forms of genocide can be guarded against and prevented from happening again. This day reminds all of us of what hatred, bigotry, racism and prejudice can lead to. It calls upon all citizens of the world to respect and cherish our diversity and to protect one another whenever someone is

threatened with harm. This day reminds us that bad things happen when good people remain silent. We must never be silent in the face of injustice, even if standing in solidarity with “the other” could result in death. This is truly a sobering realization, but this is what we are called to do.

Let us pray for the many victims of the holocaust whom we remember today. We also remember and pray for the many victims of genocide who continue to suffer from extreme violence and “ethnic cleansing” in Central America, Syria, Iraq and so many other places. We pray for the courage to protect our brothers and sisters whenever we see them under attack. May we always stand in solidarity, wrapped together in the cloak of love and respect.