

## Participation - February 2017



Saint Josephine Bakhita

### February 8—International Day of Prayer and Awareness Against Human Trafficking

The Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace and the International Union of Superiors General has designated February 8th as an annual day of prayer and awareness against human trafficking. February 8th is the feast day of St. Josephine Bakhita, who was kidnapped as a child and sold into slavery in Sudan and Italy. Once Josephine was freed, she became a Canossian nun and dedicated her life to sharing her testament of deliverance from slavery and comforting the poor and suffering. She was declared a Saint in 2000. On this day around the world Catholics are asked to pray in a special way for victims of human trafficking and to act to end this practice wherever we encounter it.

*O God, when we hear of children and adults deceived and taken to unknown places for purposes of sexual exploitation, forced labour, and organ 'harvesting', our hearts are saddened and our spirits angry that their dignity and rights are ignored through threats, lies, and force. We cry out against the evil practice of this modern slavery, and pray with Saint Bakhita for it to end. Give us wisdom and courage to reach out and stand with those whose bodies, hearts and spirits have been so wounded, so that together we may make real your promises to fill these sisters and brothers with a love that is tender and good. Send the exploiters away empty-handed to be converted from this wickedness, and help us all to claim the freedom that is your gift to your children. (Taken from a prayer of the Archdiocese of Vancouver, Canada.)*



The sick being attended to in a small clinic in Haiti

### February 11—World Day of the Sick

February 11th, the commemoration of Our Lady of Lourdes, marks the 25th annual World Day of the Sick. It is a day to remember those who suffer illness, those relatives, friends and caregivers who minister to them and all healthcare professionals whose lives are dedicated to caring for the sick. It is especially a time for each of us to dedicate ourselves to the cause of universal healthcare as a right for all human beings. No one who is ill should be alone or suffer without loving care.

*We pray for the needs of the sick and of all those who suffer — the poor, the infirm, the outcast, the marginalized. May they be recognized for their innate and inalienable dignity, and may they bring out in others the love and compassion that are part of every created human heart.... We pray for those who provide care and assist the sick—family members, health workers and volunteers—that they may accompany the infirm and show them the love of God made manifest in human hands and hearts. We pray for those in different roles of service and in health care institutions throughout the world, that they will be strengthened in their professionalism and dedication to the sick and the suffering. (Taken from a Prayer for World Day of the Sick from the US Catholic Health Care Association)*



## February 20—World Day of Social Justice

Social justice is an underlying principle for peaceful and prosperous coexistence within and among nations. We uphold the principles of social justice when we promote gender equality or the rights of indigenous peoples and migrants. We advance social justice when we remove barriers that people face because of gender, age, race, ethnicity, religion, culture or disability. For the United Nations, the pursuit of social justice for all is at the core of its global mission to promote development and human dignity. The General Assembly proclaimed February 20th as World Day of Social Justice in 2007,

inviting Member States to devote the day to support efforts of the international community in poverty eradication, the promotion of full employment and decent work, gender equity and access to social well-being and justice for all.

God of justice and mercy, we ask your blessing upon those trapped by the world's sin  
For those who live in the terror of war ...

*Place peace in the hearts of those carrying out violence*

For those who live shackled and trafficked ...

*Grow mercy in the hearts of those who hold them captive or benefit from their suffering*

For those who bear the weight of poverty ...

*Create generosity in the hearts of those who can help bear the weight*

For those whose life and livelihood are affected by our changing climate ...

*Place prudence in the hearts of those in positions of power*

For those who continue to be pushed to the margins of society – the elderly, immigrants, addicted ...

*Grow compassion in the hearts of those who might welcome them into its center*

And for all of us, grant the strength to continue working for justice in this world and the faith to believe that we can create the world we wish for.

(taken from the 2016 US Catholic Health Association Prayer for World Day of Social Justice)



## February 24—International Stand Up To Bullying Day

This day, the last Friday of February, is an annual event in which everyone is encouraged to wear a pink shirt to take a visible, public stand against bullying. Wearing this shirt identifies a peer based support structure to victims and their bullies in a non-confrontational way. The color of the shirts is

based on a campaign started by Travis Price and David Shepherd, two students who took a stand for a fellow student who was bullied for wearing a pink shirt to school.

*God, we thank you for creating each person as a unique expression of your love. We pray for all those who have been victims of bullying, that they may come to know that they are special gifts to our world. May we always treat each other with respect, honor and love. May we have the courage to support others when they experience bullying and to intervene to stop it. May we never condone bullying by our silence.*