

Participation – April 2017

April 4—International Day of Mine Awareness & Assistance in Mine Action



The theme for 2017 is: Needs Driven—People Centered. This day is a call to foster the establishment and development of national mine-action capacities in countries where mines and explosive remnants of war constitute a serious threat to the safety, health and lives of the civilian population, or an impediment to social and economic development at the national

and local levels. In March 2017, the Government of Japan has contributed \$906,000 for the mine action project “Humanitarian Mine Action in Support of Conflict Affected Communities in South Sudan.” Over the past five years, Japan has contribution over USD 13 million to mine action operations in South Sudan. An estimated 7.5 million people have been directly affected by the conflict in South Sudan since it began in December 2013. Over the past year, the affected population has grown by more than one million. On 8 July 2016, the optimism for peace and socioeconomic development resulting from the Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in South Sudan was interrupted by an outbreak of conflict in Juba and several locations in South Sudan. The use of explosive weapons such as rockets, grenades, and mortars has further increased the proliferation of explosive hazards with accident levels in 2015 and 2016 being the highest in the last five years. It is clear that the explosive legacy of war will continue to inhibit social and economic recovery long after the guns have been silenced. South Sudan is only one example of many where mine action is needed in order for people to be able to rebuild their lives after armed conflict ceases.

God of peace, our hearts are broken as we pray for the many victims of war and violence around the world. As we work towards an end to war, we ask you to strengthen us in our efforts to outlaw the use of land mines as weapons of war. May we have the courage to speak out against war as a means of resolving conflicts and instead create a world where dialogue and understanding can lead to true and lasting peace.



April 7—World Health Day

This day marks the day the World Health Organization (WHO) was founded in 1948. The WHO strives to promote development by calling attention to the link between poverty and poor health, fosters health security, strengthens health systems, harnesses information, research and evidence in order to prioritize needs and promote health, enhances partnerships, and improves performance of health systems. This year’s theme “Depression: Let’s Talk” is an effort to raise awareness of the devastating effects of depression worldwide and to dispel the many myths and stigma often attached to the diagnosis so that more people will seek treatment. Depression affects individuals, families and communities and can often be prevented or treated.

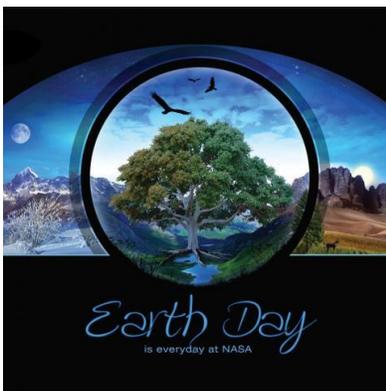
Holy One, we come to you holding in our hearts all those throughout the world suffering from poor health, often related to poverty, hunger and malnutrition. We pray that they will know your loving care for them through our active efforts to bring hope and healing in whatever way we can. We especially pray for those suffering from depression. May we offer our loving support, understanding and care.



April 12—International Day For Street Children

This day reminds us that the best way to end global poverty is to begin with children. Childhood poverty is not just a problem of the developing world. It is also experienced in so called “developed” nations. In the US, 1 in 5 children (roughly 15.5 million) live in poverty, the highest rate of any developed country. In sub-Saharan Africa, nearly half the population lives in severe poverty, without access to basic food, water and shelter. Across the world, millions of children rely on the streets for their survival. In November 1989, the UN established the UN Convention on the Rights of Children, which states that every child has rights, whatever their gender, ethnicity, nationality, language, religion, abilities or any other form of distinction might be. However, every day, millions of street-connected children suffer multiple and repeated violations of their rights. Their numbers are likely to be growing worldwide as a result of conflicts in the Middle East, recession in Europe, natural disasters in Asia and Africa and many other factors. In 2017, The United Nations will publish a “General Comment On Children In Street Situations”. This document is a set of guidelines that will give governments around the world the information they need to make sure street children’s rights are recognized and protected. This is important for street-connected children because it’s the first piece of authoritative UN guidance on street-connected children’s rights, and this is our time to stand with them and make sure Governments around the world implement these guidelines.

Let us pray for street children throughout the world. May our hearts be open in love, our hands be open in generosity, our minds be open in understanding and our feet be open in action on their behalf.



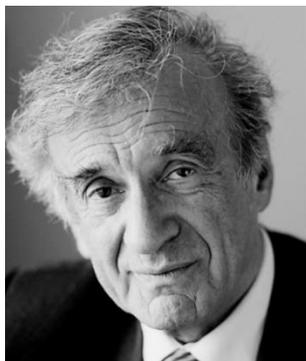
April 22—Earth Day and April 23—International Day of Mercy, Mercy2Earth Weekend

The 2017 Earth Day theme is: "Environmental and Climate Literacy." This year, the focus is the education of a global citizenry about the science of climate change and the consequences for Earth, in order to motivate and inspire everyone to action. Although nearly 100 nations agreed to the urgency for specific action at the Paris Climate meeting in September 2015, many have not yet begun significant implementation strategies to accomplish those goals. The time is now for action. Only global citizens can demand and ensure global action. And each person can take individual actions for the good of our planet, which collectively can make a difference. In his address for the “World Day of Prayer for Creation” on September 1, 2016, Pope Francis again linked the “cry of the poor” with “the cry of creation”. Climate change is leading to ever more severe droughts, floods, fires and extreme weather events all of which are disproportionately affecting the world’s poor. The Pope linked the Jubilee Year of Mercy to the global climate crisis, declaring April 23 International Day of Mercy and linking it to Earth Day. He called on all people to show mercy to Earth our common home, and to the poor who suffer so much. This call was a call to a profound interior conversion of heart. So, this year, we celebrate a weekend of awareness and conversion—**Mercy2Earth Weekend**. The conversion of heart to which we are called requires an attitude of gratitude, and “a serious examination of conscience and moved by sincere repentance, we can confess our sins against the Creator, against creation, and against our brothers and sisters... In the same way, the resolve to live differently should affect our various contributions

to shaping the culture and society in which we live. Indeed, “care for nature is part of a lifestyle which includes the capacity for living together and communion” (*Laudato Si'*, 228). Economics and politics, society and culture cannot be dominated by thinking only of the short-term and immediate financial or electoral gains. Instead, they urgently need to be redirected to the common good, which includes sustainability and care for creation.” (Pope Francis September 1, 2017)

God, we ask forgiveness for so often being deaf to the cry of the poor and cry of creation. We are grateful for the beauty of creation, for the wonders of Earth, our common home, and for the unique beauty of each person who shares this planet with us. Fill our hearts with mercy as we incorporate into our lives new spiritual and corporal works of mercy proposed by Pope Francis:

As a spiritual work of mercy, care for our common home calls for a “grateful contemplation of God’s world” (*Laudato Si'*, 214) which “allows us to discover in each thing a teaching which God wishes to hand on to us” (ibid., 85). As a corporal work of mercy, care for our common home requires “simple daily gestures which break with the logic of violence, exploitation and selfishness” and “makes itself felt in every action that seeks to build a better world”



I swore never to be silent
whenever and wherever
human beings endure
suffering and humiliation.
We must always take sides.
Neutrality helps the oppressor,
never the victim.
Silence encourages
the tormentor,
never the tormented.”
- Elie Wiesel
Photo Credit: Sergey Bermeniev/npr
HistoryByZim.com

Elie Wiesel, born in Romania- the international face of holocaust remembrance, calling us all to always stand up for justice and human dignity

continues today and we are seeing an alarming rise in extremism, xenophobia and anti-Muslim sentiment in many parts of the world. Today is a day to remember where such hatred can lead and to say “never again”.

On this Day, Chancellor Angela Merkel from Germany will receive the Elie Wiesel Award from the US Holocaust Museum in Washington DC for her many years of work advancing holocaust remembrance.

Holy One, we remember with sadness and repentance the many victims of the holocaust. We confess that it frightens us to realize that such inhumanity towards others is even possible. May we never turn a blind eye to suffering or injustice. Let us always keep in our minds and hearts the realization that we are all one, all brothers and sisters sharing one common home—Earth. May our hearts overflow with gratitude for who we are, and for how we and all of creation reveal the divine to us.

April 23—Holocaust Remembrance Day (begins at sunset)

It seems only fitting that Pope Francis chose Holocaust Remembrance Day as his Day of Mercy. The 2017 theme is: “Holocaust Remembrance Day—Educating for a Better Future”. The Nazis used propaganda to win broad voter support in Germany after World War I, eventually even using it to justify war and mass murder. This year’s focus challenges us to educate ourselves to question, analyze and seek the truth so that we will never be succumb to lies and propaganda. Unfortunately, anti-Semitism

and anti-Muslim sentiment continues today and we are seeing an alarming rise in extremism, xenophobia and anti-Muslim sentiment in many parts of the world. Today is a day to remember where such hatred can lead and to say “never again”.