

## Participation-August 2017

### August 6 and 9—World Remembrance of Hiroshima and Nagasaki



August 6 and 9, 1945 are days that forever changed the history of the world. The nuclear weapons that destroyed Hiroshima and Nagasaki on those dates ushered in the age of nuclear weapons, the nuclear arms race, and the theory that world peace could only be assured by the fear of “mutually assured destruction”. Fear, rather than respect for human dignity and life, became the basis for international diplomacy. We recognize and affirm that peace is not measured by the absence of war and can never be achieved by fear. Peace results from the power of love and respect for human dignity. We must work ceaselessly so that nuclear weapons are never used

again. Let us commit ourselves to ridding the planet of nuclear weapons.

*Holy One, we ask your forgiveness for the human folly in which we all share. Turn our hearts from fear and distrust of one another toward respect and love for all our brothers and sisters throughout the world. Grant us peace that is built on solidarity, recognizing that we must live as one human family.*

### August 11—Feast of St. Clare of Assisi



St. Clare of Assisi was born in Assisi on July 16, 1194, as Chiara Offreduccio, the beautiful eldest daughter of Favorino Scaff, Count of Sasol-Rosso and his wife Portolans. As a young girl, Clare dedicated herself to prayer. At 18-years-old, she heard St. Francis of Assisi preach during a Lenten service in the church of San Giorgio and asked him to help her live according to the Gospel. On Palm Sunday in 1212, Clare left her father's home and went to the chapel of the Periocular to meet with Francis and to become one of his growing number of followers. Clare joined the convent of the Benedictine nuns of San Paulo, near Bastia, under Francis' orders. When her father found her and attempted to force her back into his home, she refused and professed that she would continue her life of dedication to Jesus Christ.

In order to give her the greater solitude she desired, Francis sent Clare to Sant' Angelo in Panzo, another Benedictine nuns' monastery. Clare's sister Catarina, who took the name Agnes, joined her at this monastery. The two remained there until a separate dwelling was built for them next to the church of San Damiano. Over time, other women joined them, wanting to also be brides of Jesus and live with no money. They became known as the "Poor Ladies of San Damiano." They all lived a simple life of austerity, seclusion from the world, and poverty, according to a Rule which Francis gave them as a Second Order. San Damiano became the center of Clare's new order, which was then known as the "Order of Poor Ladies of San Damiano." For a brief period of time, the order was directed by St. Francis himself and by 1216, Clare became the abbess of San Damiano. Ten years after Clare's death, the order became known as the Order of Saint Clare. Following Francis' death, Clare continued to promote her order, fighting off every attempt from each pope trying to impose a rule on her order that would water down their "radical commitment to corporate poverty." On August 9, 1253, Pope Innocent IV declared Clare's rule would serve as the governing rule for Clare's Order of Poor Ladies. Two days later, Clare died at 59-years-old.

*God, we thank you for the inspiration of Clare, the co-founder of our Franciscan family. Her dedication, courage, generosity and loving kindness continue to call all of us to live lives inspired by the Gospel. May each of us reach out to the poor and oppressed, bringing food, health, healing, joy, hope and love.*

## August 19—World Humanitarian Day



*More than half of the 250,000 people who lost their lives during Somalia's 2011 famine were children, exposing how vulnerable they are in this crisis-prone country after over two decades of chronic food shortages, widespread violence, droughts, and floods. Photo credit: Celeste Hibbert, International Organization for Migration.*

World Humanitarian Day is a global celebration of people helping people. Each day, thousands of volunteers worldwide are actively involved in meeting the needs of vulnerable people throughout the world, often at considerable risk to themselves. They work tirelessly to save lives, alleviate suffering and maintain human dignity. Often, people begin this journey of humanitarian service by connecting deeply and personally with the needs of others. This experience then moves them to lead the way for others to get involved. When we allow our hearts to be touched by the needs of others in a personal way, we are compelled to reach out. Thus, person by person, the world is transformed.

On this year's World Humanitarian Day, the UN and its partners are advocating for the protection of civilians, aid workers, and all those affected by conflict. Every year, thousands of men and women the world over put their lives in danger working in humanitarian relief efforts. Working in the most poverty and illness stricken third world countries, often in areas of great social violence, these dedicated heroes put their lives on the line, and sometimes lose them in the pursuit of their goals. World Humanitarian Day is when we remember these heroes and their sacrifices.

*We pray for all people suffering from injustice, violence and hopelessness. May each of us open our hearts and allow ourselves to be changed. May each find a way to alleviate the suffering of others and to transform our world through the power of love.*

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



This date is significant because, during the night of August 22 to August 23, 1791, on the island of Saint Domingue (now known as Haiti), an uprising began which set forth events which were a major factor in the abolition of the transatlantic slave trade. It was a successful anti-slavery and anti-colonial insurrection by self-liberated slaves against French colonial rule in Saint-Domingue, now the sovereign nation of Haiti. It began in 1791 and ended in 1804 with the former colony's independence. It was the only slave uprising that led to the founding of a state, which was both free from slavery, and ruled by non-whites and former captives. It is now widely seen as a defining moment in the history of racism in the Atlantic World.

Its effects on the institution of slavery were felt throughout the Americas. The ending of French rule and the abolition of slavery in the former colony by the former slaves was followed by their successful defense of the freedoms they won, and, with the collaboration of mulattoes, their independence from rule by white Europeans. It represents the largest slave uprising since Spartacus's unsuccessful revolt against the Roman Republic nearly 1,900 years before. It challenged long-held beliefs about black inferiority and about enslaved persons' capacity to achieve and maintain their own freedom. The rebels' organizational capacity and tenacity under pressure became legendary. This day is a time to reflect on the resiliency of the human spirit, the human desire for freedom and self-determination, and the dedication needed in the struggle for justice.

*“While we should never forget the atrocities committed in the past, we should be equally vigilant in seeking to abolish the contemporary forms of slavery that affect millions of men, women and children around the world. Despite the arsenal of international instruments created to combat the exploitation of human beings, as well as the growing awareness of the forced labour and the sale and prostitution of children, the disturbing truth is that such flagrant*

violations of human rights continue. They are a scourge undermining the social fabric of many societies, which UNESCO is working with determination to end.

I therefore call upon all UNESCO Member States to seize the opportunity provided by this International Day to make a common appeal for universal remembrance of the tragic events of the past and to renew their efforts to end all forms of oppression in order to build more tolerant and just societies for the present and future generations.”

—UNESCO Director General 2008

*Holy One, we pray for those throughout the world enslaved against their will. May all people experience their human dignity and may each of us show respect and love to one another. Help us to work tirelessly for peaceful change that moves the world ever forward, towards justice for all.*

### August 26—Women’s Equality Day



Women in the United States were given the right to vote on August 26, 1920 when the 19th Amendment to the United States Constitution was signed after 72 years of struggle. In 1971 Congresswoman Bella Abzug introduced a resolution designating August 26 of each year as Women's Equality Day. This resolution passed. Today, women’s equality has grown to mean much more than just sharing the right to the vote. Organizations such as Equality Now and Womankind Worldwide continue to work to provide women across the globe with equal opportunities to education and employment, pushing against suppression and violence towards women and against the discrimination and stereotyping which still occur in every society. Indeed, the UN Sustainable Development Goals of 2015 recognize that Goal. “Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls” is essential to eradicating severe poverty worldwide and achieving sustainable development by 2030. Let us use this day to celebrate and recognize the many gifts that women and girls bring to the local, regional and global community. Let’s act to ensure that every woman and girl has what she needs to reach her full potential so that we can all move into the future with hope, justice and peace.

*God, we pray that woman and girls throughout the world may experience true freedom. May they be able to develop themselves to the fullest. May all people recognize that “human rights are women’s rights, and women’s rights are human rights, once and for all.”*

### August 29—International Day Against Nuclear Tests



Licorne test, 1971, French Polynesia. Photo: The Official CTBTO Photostream.

As more and more nations seek to acquire or develop nuclear weapons, this day dedicated to abolishing weapons testing as a step towards a nuclear weapons free world takes on new urgency and significance.

UN Secretary-General's Message for 2016:

For nearly a decade as United Nations Secretary-General, I have witnessed many of the worst problems in the world as well as our collective ability to respond in ways that at times seemed

impossible. Our ambitious new 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Paris Agreement on climate change have demonstrated the power of political will to break longstanding deadlocks. On this International Day against Nuclear Tests, I call on the world to summon a sense of solidarity commensurate with the urgent need to end the dangerous impasse on this issue.

Today marks a quarter of a century since the closure of the Semipalatinsk test site in Kazakhstan, ground zero for more than 450 nuclear tests. The victims there are joined by others scattered across Central Asia, North Africa, North America and the South Pacific. A prohibition on all nuclear testing will end this

poisonous legacy. It will boost momentum for other disarmament measures by showing that multilateral cooperation is possible, and it will build confidence for other regional security measures, including a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction. When I visited Semipalatinsk in 2010, I saw the toxic damage – but I also witnessed the resolve of the victims and survivors. I share their determination to strive for a world free of nuclear weapons.

Since its adoption 20 years ago by the General Assembly, the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty has yet to enter into force. Given the catastrophic risks posed by nuclear weapons to our collective human and environmental security – even our very existence – we must reject this stalemate. I urge Member States to act now. Those States whose ratification is required to bring the Treaty into force should not wait for others. Even one ratification can act as a circuit breaker. All States that have not done so should sign and ratify because every ratification strengthens the norm of universality and shines a harsher spotlight on the countries that fail to act. On this Day, I call on all countries and peoples to work for the CTBT's entry into force as soon as possible so that we may advance toward a nuclear-weapon-free world.

*Ban Ki-moon*

*God, we ask that humankind may turn from violence to peace, from weapons of mass destruction to massive efforts to feed the hungry, clothe the naked and give hope to the hopeless. Change our hearts so that we trust in you and your love for us, rather than trusting in nuclear weapons. May we turn our creative energies to serving the needs of one another. May we forever reject nuclear weapons.*

### **August 30—International Day of Victims of Enforced Disappearances**



*Mothers in Sri Lanka remember family members who are victims of forced disappearances.*

Secret imprisonment, forced disappearances and abduction by governments or paramilitary groups is seen by the UN as a clear violation of human rights. People being arrested or detained have a right to know the charges against them and to have legal representation through processes legally established. The **International Day of the Disappeared**, on August 30 of each year, is a day created to draw attention to the fate of individuals imprisoned at places and under poor conditions unknown to their relatives and/or legal representatives. Work on secret imprisonment is an important part of the activities for a number of international bodies and organizations in the fields of human rights activism and humanitarian aid, including for example

Amnesty International (AI), the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). The International Day of the Disappeared is an opportunity to highlight these institutions' work, increase public awareness, and to call for donations and volunteers. Visiting those detained in relation to conflicts and enabling them to restore and maintain contact with their families, is a very important part of the ICRC's mandate. But the definition of the Missing or the Disappeared goes far beyond the victims of enforced disappearance. It includes all those whose families have lost contact as the result of conflicts, natural disasters or other tragedies.

These missing may be detained, stranded in foreign countries, hospitalized or dead. Through its tracing services and working with the 189 national Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies around the world, the ICRC seeks to obtain information about their fate on behalf of their families. It reminds governments and other groups of their obligations to respect the families' right to know the fate of their loved ones. It also works with families of the missing to help them address their particular psychological, social, legal and financial needs.

*We pray for those who have disappeared and their families who miss them so much. We ask for the safety of those still alive whose fate is unknown to their loved ones. May they be returned to their families and may they be comforted in their suffering. We pray for family members, that they may be comforted in their sorrow and loss. May each of us ceaselessly work for justice for all of our brothers and sisters.*