

Participation-January 2018

January 1—World Day of Peace



The World Day of Peace was introduced by Pope Paul VI in 1967, inspired by the encyclical *Pacem in Terris*. This year, Pope Francis has designated the day's theme as "Migrants and Refugees: Men and Women in Search of Peace." Building on his September "Share the Journey" campaign in support of migrants and refugees, Pope Francis' Message for the 51st World Day of Peace (Jan. 1) invites Catholics to embrace those who endure perilous journeys and hardships in order to find peace. Four "mileposts for action" are necessary in

order to allow migrants, refugees, asylum seekers, and trafficking victims the opportunity to find peace. These include:

1. **Welcoming**, which calls for "expanding legal pathways for entry" and better balancing national security and fundamental human rights concerns;
2. **Protecting**, or recognizing and defending "the inviolable dignity of those who flee";
3. **Promoting**, which entails "supporting the integral human development of migrants and refugees"; and
4. **Integrating** by allowing migrants and refugees to "participate fully in the life of society that welcomes them." Doing so enriches both those arriving and those welcoming.

Merciful God and Father of all, wake us from the slumber of indifference, open our eyes to their suffering, and free us from the insensitivity born of worldly comfort and self-centeredness.

Inspire us, as nations, communities and individuals, to see that those who come to our shores are our brothers and sisters.

May we share with them the blessings we have received from your hand, and recognize that together, as one human family, we are all migrants, journeying in hope to you, our true home, where every tear will be wiped away, where we will be at peace and safe in your embrace.

(Excerpted from Pope Francis' Prayer for Migrants at the Port of Lesbos, 4/16/16)

January 15—Birthday of Martin Luther King, Jr.



Martin Luther King, Jr. Day is a federal holiday in the United States honoring the achievements of Martin Luther King, Jr., the chief spokesman for nonviolent activism in the civil rights movement to end racial segregation. He was honored for this work with the Nobel Peace Prize in 1964. In his later years, he worked tirelessly for economic justice and an end to war and violence of all kinds. He was assassinated in 1968 while advocating for just wages for garbage workers in Memphis Tennessee. Over the years, Dr. King's legacy has inspired people throughout the world who are continuing the non-violent struggle for equality, justice, peace and hope. For this reason, this commemoration of Martin Luther King Jr. is now celebrated worldwide.

Holy one, we thank you for the gift of Martin Luther King Jr., a man of peace and non-violence, a man of courage and fortitude, a man of faith and hope, a man of love. Through his example, continue to inspire us to acts of justice. Help us to reflect on the gospel message in light of today's reality. Give us the courage to follow in Christ's footsteps, as Martin did, bringing hope, justice and love to our broken world.

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

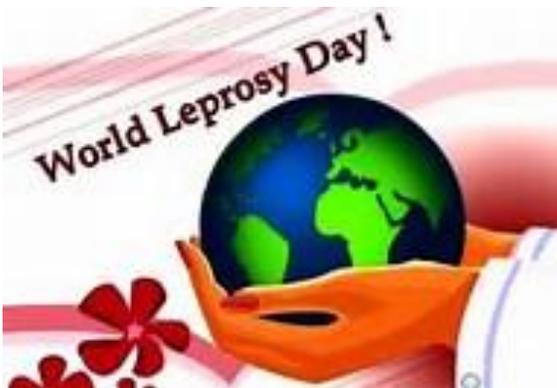


This day is called the International Day of Commemoration of the Victims of the Holocaust and is held on the date when the Soviet troops liberated the Nazi concentration and death camp Auschwitz-Birkenau in Poland on January 27, 1945. At a time when some people are denying the overwhelming historical record of the holocaust, this is a day to honor the victims—those who died and the millions more whose lives were forever changed by the brutality they suffered, witnessed or perpetrated. Recalling the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the United Nations General Assembly reaffirmed that “the Holocaust, which resulted in the murder of one-third of the Jewish people along with countless members of other minorities, will forever be a warning to all people of the dangers of hatred, bigotry, racism and prejudice”. This is a day

to remember and to share the stories, so that such atrocities and genocide will not continue to happen. Bigotry, racism, prejudice and hatred are powerful forces that must be guarded against and condemned. Silence in the face of such attitudes and violence is not an option. We must be willing to stand in solidarity with one another so that oppression cannot stand. The history of the holocaust is a powerful one that we must learn from. Let the stories be remembered and told so that this history will never be repeated.

God, we pray for the many victims of the holocaust living and dead. May we all remember the horrible price of bigotry, racism, prejudice and hatred. Help us to have the courage to stand in solidarity with those oppressed, persecuted and marginalized. God, give us the strength to denounce injustice and not remain silent.

January 28—World Leprosy Day



World Leprosy Day is held on the Sunday nearest to January 30th, to raise consciousness about leprosy, also known as Hansen’s Disease. This date is the death anniversary of Gandhi, and was chosen because Gandhi understood well the stigma and marginalization that people over the centuries have suffered because of this illness. He struggled tirelessly to eradicate the stigma associated with this disease, which for centuries added to the suffering of those afflicted.

Leprosy is one of the oldest diseases known to humankind. It is caused by an infectious organism that targets the nerves in the coolest parts of the body—the hands, feet and face. Disfigurement in these areas makes the disease disabling, and readily apparent to all who see it. This has led to stigma and fear, which even today persists in many cultures. Leprosy is also known as Hansen’s disease, named after Norwegian physician, Gerhard Henrik Armauer Hansen, who showed that the disease had a bacterial cause. It is now treatable with the use of special antibiotics. For thousands of years, people with leprosy have been stigmatized and considered to be at the extreme margins of the society. The aim of World Leprosy Day is to change this attitude and increase public awareness of the fact that leprosy can now be easily prevented and cured. There are 14 countries worldwide where 95% of all new leprosy patients are reported: Bangladesh, Brazil, Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, India, Indonesia, Madagascar, Mozambique, Myanmar, Nepal, Nigeria, Philippines, Sri Lanka and United Republic of Tanzania. Brazil, India and Indonesia account for 81% of new leprosy patients globally. India alone accounts for 60%. Through education and treatment, the World Health Organization hopes to one day eliminate this disease worldwide.

Holy One, we pray for those who suffer from leprosy, especially those who do not have access to the antibiotics that can treat and cure this disease. We pray for those who go undiagnosed due to stigma, fear, and lack of medical expertise. May each of us reach out to anyone in our communities who are stigmatized and marginalized for any reason. May we never let illness or fear separate us from one another.