

## Participation-February 2018

### February 6—International Day of Zero Tolerance to Female Genital Mutilation



6 FEBRUARY  
International Day of  
ZERO  
TOLERANCE  
for  
FEMALE  
GENITAL  
MUTILATION

#EndFGM

February 6<sup>th</sup> is a day to promote worldwide awareness of female genital mutilation (FGM) and to promote its eradication. Although practiced for over 1000 years, this practice is now recognized as a violation of the rights of women and girls to have control over their own bodies and as a form of violence against women and girls. The effort to eliminate this practice is part of the struggle against violence of all kinds against women. It is also clear that many long-term health problems result from FGM. Because over 3 million girls are at risk each year, it is urgent that this practice be eliminated as quickly as possible. Although mostly practiced in the Middle East and Africa, immigrants to other countries have spread the practice worldwide. On February 6, 2003, Stella Obasanjo, the First Lady of Nigeria and spokesperson for the Campaign Against Female Genital Mutilation, made the official declaration on "Zero Tolerance to FGM" in Africa during a conference

organized by the *Inter-African Committee on Traditional Practices Affecting the Health of Women and Children (IAC)*. Then the UN Sub-Commission on Human Rights adopted this day as an international awareness day. This day is a part of a combined effort by the UN to meet one of its Sustainable Development Goals. The elimination of FGM is a key target under Goal 5—Gender Equality. With greater education, many women in countries where FGM is practiced are themselves demanding that this practice end—NOW!

*God of love and mercy, hear us as we pray for an end to female genital mutilation throughout the world. As education makes it clear to everyone the harm of such practices, open the hearts of all so that they will demand that this practice end NOW! Protect girls who are at risk and keep them safe.*

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



The First International Day of Prayer and Awareness against Human Trafficking was celebrated in all dioceses and parishes in the world on February 8, 2015, the Feast Day of Josephine Bakhita, a Sudanese freed slave, who became a Canossian nun, and dedicated her life to sharing her testament of deliverance from slavery and comforting the poor and suffering. The primary objective of the International Day is to create greater awareness of this phenomenon and to reflect on the overall situation of violence and injustice that affects so many people. Another goal is to attempt to provide solutions to counter this modern form of slavery by taking concrete actions. Human trafficking concerns the whole world. According to official data roughly 21 million people, often very poor and vulnerable, are victims of trafficking for sexual exploitation, forced labor and begging, illegal organ removal, domestic servitude and forced marriages, illegal adoption and other forms of exploitation. Each year, around 2.5 million people are victims of trafficking and slavery. On the other hand, for traffickers, this is one of the most

lucrative illegal activities in the world, generating a total of 32 billion dollars a year. It is the third most profitable “business” after drugs and arms trafficking. Pope Francis has stated “Human Trafficking is a crime against humanity. It’s a disgrace that people are treated as objects, deceived, raped, often sold many times for different purposes and, in the end, killed or, in any case, physically and mentally damaged, ending up thrown away and abandoned.”

When trafficking is suspected, it is crucial that we notify authorities so that they can investigate the situation and take action. In many countries, there are hotlines where concerned citizens can call anonymously to report concerns. In the US, the human trafficking hotline number is: 1-888-373-7888.

*O God, when we hear of children and adults deceived and taken to unknown places for purposes of sexual exploitation, forced labor, 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. Amen. (Archdiocese of Vancouver)*

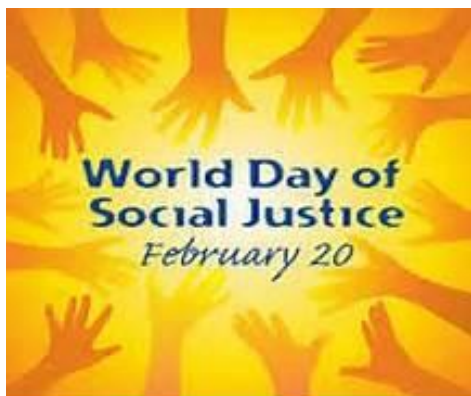
## **February 11—World Day of the Sick**



The World Day of the Sick was instituted in 1993 by Pope John Paul II, the year after he was diagnosed with Parkinson’s disease. The feast day of Lourdes was chosen because of the many people who have been cured of all sorts of illnesses at Lourdes. On this day, Catholics throughout the world offer prayers for the sick and their caregivers. This is a day to reach out to the sick by visiting them, giving respite assistance to caregivers, and visiting the ill who are confined to bed or home. It is a special time for bringing hope through our presence and love.

*God of healing and compassion, you shower us with your infinite care, and comfort all in pain and affliction. Look with abundant mercy on all who suffer in body, mind or spirit. Grant healing and hope to the sick, the wounded and the dying in their darkest hours, so they may witness the power of Your Healing Presence in the world. We thank you, gracious God, for all those who care for the sick. These are the women and men who inspire us every day. Send your merciful love and empowering presence to all who work to alleviate the suffering of the sick, the lonely and the broken-hearted, wherever they may be. Sustain us, your ministers of compassion and healing, as we continue your mission of love and healing. May we be the face of your son, Jesus, who said, “Come to me all who labor and are burdened and you will find rest for your souls, for my yoke is easy and my burden light.” May all of us who give care and all those who suffer with family and loved ones who are ill feel their burdens lightened through the intercession of our prayers. We ask this, on the world day of the sick, through the intercession of Our Lady of Lourdes, whose feast we celebrate today, and in the name of your Son, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit, now and forever. Amen. (adapted from the Catholic Health Association of the USA)*

## **February 20—World Day of Social Justice**



World Day of Social Justice was begun by the United Nations in 2009. 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. The UN recognizes that social justice is essential to attaining sustainable global development. Social justice is only possible when solidarity, harmony and equality within and among countries constitute the fundamental values of all societies. This must be accompanied by equitable distribution of income and access to resources. Observance of World Day of Social Justice should 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. This day calls each of us to actively participate in creating the just world that we all desire.

*Holy One, may justice rain down from heaven and grow among all people of Earth. Root us in hope, love, compassion and dignity. Help us to recognize our shared dreams and human rights as we build a sustainable and just future together. May each of us act justly, love tenderly and walk humbly with you, our God.*

## **February 23—International Stand Up to Bullying Day**



International Stand Up to Bullying Day is a day when people are urged to wear pink shirts to indicate solidarity in their stance against bullying. As awareness of bullying grows in schools, workplaces, and organizations, it is important to join together to put an end to bullying which still affects people of all ages. The wearing of the pink shirts initially served as a non-confrontational way to signal to victims of bullying that the wearer was a person they could turn to for help and support. Now it is worn on this day as a sign that we will no longer stand aside in silence when someone is suffering bullying. This day occurs twice a year, on the last Friday in February and the third Friday of November.

*God, we pray for the courage to stand up to bullying whenever we witness it. Let us not remain silent, but step in to stop it. Bless those who have suffered bullying. Let them know of our solidarity with them, so that they know that they are valued, loved and supported. Heal the hurt they experience and keep them safe from physical harm. Lead bullies to conversion of heart, so that they will no longer seek their own affirmation by putting down others. Heal their woundedness so that they will stop wounding others.*