

Participation – April 2018

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



This day aims to raise awareness about landmines and to make progress toward their eradication. In many countries, landmines pose a continuing risk to life and limb, long after wars and conflicts have ceased. For children playing, farmers planting or harvesting their fields and people traveling along the side of the road, buried explosive devices can change life forever. In such areas of the world, educational awareness is critical to keeping civilians as safe as possible. This day also includes advocating for universal participation in international treaties related to landmines, for removing explosive remnants of war and aiding their victims, and destroying landmines stockpiled by governments and non-state armed

groups. The international community has banded together to try to detect and eliminate landmines and other explosives through the mine-action initiative. According to the *Landmine Monitor Report 2005*, 84 countries were affected by landmines and unexploded ordnance, which together kill or maim between 15,000 and 20,000 adults and children annually. The UN works together with countries to find and destroy these devices. It also helps to provide various mine-action services in many countries. This effort was of special interest to Princess Diana of Great Britain, and now her sons have continued to raise funds and advocate for an end to the use of landmines and to removal of existing ones.

God of peace, transform our hearts as we seek to build a world of peace, where each human life is treasured and protected from violence. Help us to courageously demand an end to the production, use and possession of landmines, that kill and maim so many people. Let us build a world where all weapons of war are seen as inhumane and help us to turn to peaceful means of resolving conflicts.



**UNIVERSAL
HEALTH
COVERAGE:
EVERYONE,
EVERYWHERE**



April 7—World Health Day

2018 marks the 70th anniversary of the founding of the World Health Organization (WHO). Through this year's theme "Health For All", the WHO is calling on governments throughout the world to honor the pledges they made when they supported the Sustainable Development Goals of 2015. One goal aims at providing access to affordable basic healthcare for all people by the year 2030. At this time, about half of the world's population lacks access to basic healthcare. Health costs have pushed about 100 million people into poverty. The call is for governments

everywhere to move toward universal healthcare coverage for all. Access to essential quality care and financial protection not only enhances people's health and life expectancy, it also protects countries from epidemics, reduces poverty and the risk of hunger, creates jobs, drives economic growth and enhances gender equality. Every person has a human right to access services that help to maintain good health and treat basic, treatable illnesses.

Holy One, we pray for people throughout the world who do not have access to affordable basic healthcare. Help us to continue to advocate for universal healthcare access where it does not exist and to strive to eradicate hunger, poverty and war which make good health delivery impossible.



April 11—Holocaust Remembrance Day (begins at sunset)

The date marks the anniversary of the liberation of the Nazi Concentration and Extermination Camp of Auschwitz-Birkenau by Soviet troops on 27 January 1945. Holocaust Remembrance Day is a time to remember the victims of Nazi extremism and genocide, and to dedicate ourselves to building a world free from antisemitism, racism, discrimination and intolerance of diversity. This year's theme "Holocaust

Remembrance and Education: Our Shared Responsibility” underlines the continued duty to learn about and remember the Holocaust. Unfortunately, such atrocities continue to happen. Remembering is the first step in the continuing effort to ensure that such violence and genocide will not be repeated. It is also essential that we study the causes and long-term consequences of such violence, both to individuals, families, towns and cities, and nations. We, the people of the world, must never allow this to happen. We must never be silent in the face of hate speech or hate policies.

God of peace and justice, open our hearts in love and care for one another. Give us the courage to stand up for one another in the face of discrimination, antisemitism or intolerance. Help us to find our voice, so that we are never complicit through our silence.



April 12—International Day For Street Children

This day provides a platform so that street children can speak out and demand that they be listened to. It is a day to remind governments that they have a special responsibility to protect and provide for children who are deprived of a family environment. These children have a right to an adequate standard of living—to food, shelter and safety, so that they can survive. Children are the future for any country, and each person has a precious and unique contribution to make to their society. Education is also needed for any child to reach his or her full potential. The best way

to meet the needs of street children is to listen to them, so as to better understand where they come from, how they have had to survive and what services could help them claim their future with dignity.

Let us pray for street children throughout the world. God, protect these children who so often have had to fend for themselves. Protect them from those who would take advantage of their vulnerability. Open our hearts and our hands to help in whatever way we can. Let us not be afraid to reach out in love and kindness. Help us to see and respond to those in need.



April 22—Earth Day and April 23—International Day of Mercy

The 2018 Earth Day theme is: "End Plastic Pollution-Be the Change." Plastic pollution is artificially damming up streams and rivers and contributing to flooding during heavy rains in many parts of the world. Plastics are also killing marine life in our oceans and rivers and washing up on beaches thousands of miles from their point of origin. Plastic is overwhelming our landfills and because they are not biodegradable, are threatening the survival of our planet. This Earth Day, let us each take

concrete steps to stop plastic pollution. The first step is using less plastic—refusing to buy plastic water bottles and using re-usable containers for carrying water; recycling plastic bottles, containers and bags; using cloth bags for shopping. Another step is actively participating in clean-up efforts at local rivers, streams and even street sides. We must lead by example and teach future generations to reject plastic and demand biodegradable containers rather than plastic.

God, we ask forgiveness for our throw away culture and our personal throw away habits. We commit ourselves to continue to find ways to reduce our use of plastics. What we do use, we commit ourselves to recycling rather than discarding plastic into our environment. We also commit ourselves to caring of Mother Earth in ways great and small, so that we and future generations can live healthy lives in harmony with creation.