

Participation-July 2018



July 11—World Population Day

June 11th, World Population Day, seeks to raise awareness of issues around world population. Today, Earth is home to over 7.6 billion people. In spite of the fact that the world's population has grown by over 58.5 million people this year, the planet still is capable of producing more than enough food to feed the world's population. With international cooperation, planning and coordination,

hunger could be eliminated by the year 2030, as called for by the Sustainable Development Goals. However, wars and other conflicts hinder planting and harvesting of crops and hamper food distribution. Ending such conflicts are critical to addressing the needs of the world's expanding population. As populations continue to grow, waste management worldwide is critical to protecting the environment. Caring for creation demands that we return to the use of biodegradable products and move away from the use of plastics and fossil fuels. It seems clear that the earth cannot sustain the level of population growth presently being seen and our Catholic Church has yet to address this growing critical issue. Although the "rhythm" method of family planning is approved by the Church, few people are educated about how to appropriately and effectively use this method. It is 75-87% effective when used correctly. Access to reproductive health education is a growing need worldwide and allows women to make a choice about how to address their health needs.

God, we thank you for the gift of life that we share with all creation. We rededicate ourselves to addressing the needs of the world's ever-increasing population—the need for food, clean water and air, safe environments in which to plant, grow and harvest. Thank you for Mother Earth who sustains and provides for us. May we recognize your presence in one another and in all that you have made!



July 18—Birthday of Nelson Mandela

Nelson Mandela was born on July 18, 1918 in Mvezo, to the Thembu royal family. Educated as a lawyer, Mandela joined the struggle against apartheid in 1943. In 1964 he was sentenced to life at hard labor at the notorious Robben Island Prison in S Africa for attempted violent overthrow of the government. At his trial, Mandela said:

I have cherished the ideal of a democratic and free society in which all persons will live together in harmony and with equal opportunities. It is an ideal for which I hope to live.

But, my Lord, if it need be, it is an ideal for which I am prepared to die.

From his prison cell he continued to work for an end to apartheid in S Africa. He came to realize that non-violence was the only route to lasting peace, and negotiated from behind bars for freedom and equality for all South Africans. After his release from prison he was successful at negotiating a formal end to apartheid and the creation of a democratic and free country. After an open and free political campaign, he was elected and inaugurated in 1994 as the first black president of South Africa. He became a symbol for people throughout the world who struggle for justice in the midst of oppression. His struggle also proved again that non-violent, peaceful transitions of power can lift up an entire country and make reconciliation possible.

Holy One, we commend to your love all those who suffer throughout the world from injustice, hatred, fear, and hopelessness. May we courageously and persistently work for peace and justice, no matter

how far from reality it seems. Like Nelson Mandela, inspire us to hold on to what we know is right, to work for what we know is possible, and to create the world we wish to live in.



July 30—International Day of Friendship

The International Day of Friendship was proclaimed in 2011 by the UN General Assembly with the idea that friendship between people, countries, cultures and individuals can inspire peace efforts and build bridges between communities. Forces of division often used to divide us from one another include nationalism, poverty, violence, ethnicity, sexual orientation, political affiliations, religion, educational level, and race. This day of international friendship is a day for tearing down those barriers that keep us apart. It is a day for getting to know others who are

“different” from ourselves. Through creating these broadening relationships, we are able to learn to love and respect each other. By promoting a shared spirit of solidarity and strong ties of trust, we can create a world of peace, understanding, respect and cooperation.

God, we thank you for creating such a wonderful diversity in our human family. Help us to reach out in solidarity to one another, forging friendships across all barriers. Give us the grace to see what we share in common, rather than allowing ourselves to be divided by what is different. Help us to recognize that diversity is a gift, and that unity and solidarity strengthen us as we create harmony and build peace.

July 30—World Day Against Trafficking in Persons



On July 30th every year, the United Nations promotes World Day Against Trafficking Persons. Human trafficking is a crime that exploits women, children and men for numerous purposes including forced labor and sex. It is a modern-day form of slavery. It is estimated that there are over 21 million people globally suffering from forced labor, many of them children. This number includes those forced into sexual exploitation. It is estimated that 71% of trafficking victims are women and girls. Trafficking occurs in every country and its victims are from every nation. The world migration crisis has also led to an increase in migrant smuggling and vulnerable people being held against their will in forced labor, particularly in the sex trade. This day is dedicated to raising awareness about this worldwide scourge. Citizens of every nation need to raise their voices to demand that governments work tirelessly to put an end to trafficking in persons. Perpetrators need to be arrested and held accountable, whether they are small time operators working only for themselves, or representatives working for large manufacturing or agricultural companies. This is also a day for each of

us to learn to recognize signs of possible trafficking and report it to authorities for investigation. Many countries have trafficking hot lines (phone numbers) where suspicious observations can be reported.

Holy One we commend to your love and protection all those affected by human trafficking. May victims be comforted and restored to full freedom. May those who exploit others by force have their hearts opened and changed. May those who “benefit” from the suffering of others be overcome with remorse and regret. May all of us work to free those in bondage and help those in desperation. May we be alert to the signs of human trafficking and have the courage to report our concerns.