

Participation-August 2018



August 6 and 9—World Remembrance of Hiroshima and Nagasaki

On August 6 and 9, 1945 humanity experienced a level of destructive, human-created power that changed international relationships forever. Fear of “mutually assured destruction” (MAD) became the motivation for nuclear powers like Russia and the US to avoid war. But true peace cannot be built on fear. Building relationships of respect for human dignity and diversity is the only way that true peace can be achieved. Fostering understanding and justice among people of every nation, religion and culture is required if we are to silence the guns of war and eliminate the use, and even the existence, of nuclear weapons. This is one of the

urgent moral challenges of our times.

Holy One, turn our hearts away from fear, mistrust and hatred of one another as we strive for peace rooted in justice. Forgive our sin of idolatry—trusting in immoral nuclear weapons to keep us safe, rather than believing in the power of Divine Love. Open our hearts to people throughout the world, so that true peace built on love, respect, justice and solidarity will lead to the total elimination of nuclear weapons, war and violence.



August 11—Feast of St. Clare of Assisi

St. Clare 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. Although born into nobility, Clare had a generous compassion for the poor from an early age. She was inspired by St Francis to embrace a life of radical poverty. Renouncing her wealth, she joined Francis and his followers and became a confidant of Francis. Together, they co-founded the Franciscan order. The men who joined Francis became a community of Friars Minor, and the women who joined Clare became known as the “poor Ladies of San Damiano.” Clare lived with her sisters at San Damiano, outside the safety of the walls of Assisi, in order to be with the poor. Because of Church constraints at the time, Clare and her sisters could not leave the monastery to minister to the sick, dying and suffering people. So instead, those in need were brought to San Damiano

for Clare’s counsel, healing care, and gentle compassion. Francis himself often met with Clare and sought her advice. Together, their dedication to simple living, care for creation and commitment to Gospel non-violence changed the Church and the world forever. They continue to inspire many followers more than 800 years later.

God, we thank you for the inspiring life of St Clare. Her wisdom and courage call us to open our hearts to the message of the Gospel. We ask that you continue to open our hearts to the Gospel values that changed Clare’s life—reaching out to the poor and oppressed, living simply, caring for creation and embracing compassionate non-violence.

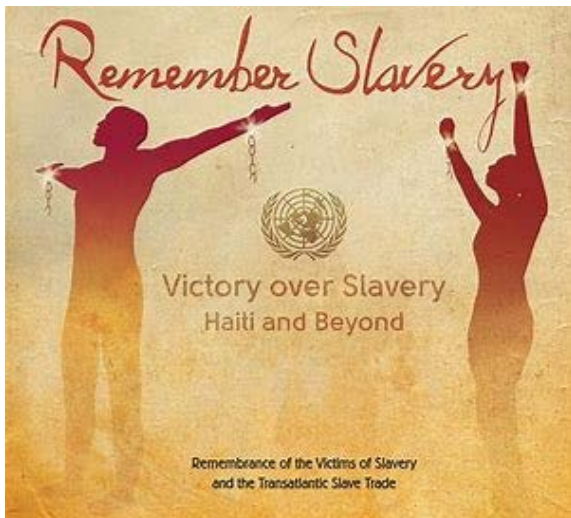
August 19—World Humanitarian Day



This Worldwide day of celebration honors the thousands of volunteers who work around the world helping people in desperate need of assistance. In many cases, these volunteers work in extremely dangerous conditions due to natural disasters, such as floods and earthquakes, or due to violent conflicts, such as war or genocide. This day honors all those who allow their hearts to be touched by the suffering experienced by another person and are moved to action. In the midst of suffering, they reach out in compassion and empathy, willing to put themselves at risk in order to help in whatever way they can. Every day, aid workers in Somalia risk death in order to get food and medicine to those suffering from the decades of civil war in that country. Aid workers in Guatemala work near a recently erupting volcano to rescue

victims caught in the ash flows and collapsed buildings. One international rescue worker died and another was injured trying to rescue 12 boys and their soccer coach from a flooded cave in Thailand. These and many, many more volunteers remind us that the human spirit unites us all, across neighborhoods, countries, and continents and draws us to respond when we see someone in need. May all of us do what we can to respond to human suffering whenever we encounter it.

We pray for all people suffering from injustice, violence, natural disasters and hopelessness. We pray for those who work each day to bring relief to the suffering, often at great risk to themselves. 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.

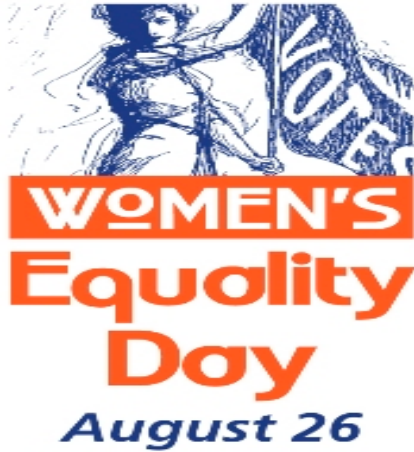


August 23—International Day for Remembrance of the Slave Trade and its Abolition

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.

On this day, we remember the struggle for freedom so inherent in the human spirit. We recall the suffering endured by those ripped from their homelands and forced to endure the Atlantic crossing in misery of heart and body. Abolition of slavery has unfortunately failed to end slavery. Many people in every country on earth still suffer from forced sexual or labor exploitation. Human trafficking, modern day slavery, continues to enrich a few at the expense of much human suffering. On this day, let us rededicate ourselves to ending slavery in all its forms. Let respect for human dignity open the hearts of all people so that freedom and love can flourish in our world.

Holy One, as we live each day, may we grow in love and respect for all people. Comfort those who are forced to live without freedom. Help each of us to act justly toward all and to report instances of human trafficking whenever we encounter it. Help us to work tirelessly to support and acknowledge those who have suffered because of slavery, recognizing that such trauma affects many generations beyond emancipation. Help us to see you in every person we meet.



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. In many parts of the world, including in the USA, women are in many ways still treated as second class citizens. Women often earn less than their male counterparts in the work place who do the exact same work. Girls are often not able to go to school, because a boy's education is deemed more valued. Women cannot drive a car, sign a contract, work outside the home or be politically active in many countries. In the Sustainable Development Goals of 2015, the United Nations Goal # 5 states: Achieve gender equality and empower all women

and girls. It was recognized by those who working on sustainable development that the other goals could not be realized unless and until women and girls are treated as full and equal participants in creating the future that we desire.

God, we pray that woman and girls throughout the world will be treated with full equality and respect and given every opportunity to reach their full potential. May every woman enjoy full human rights, recognizing that "women's rights are human rights and human rights are women's rights, once and for all." (Hilary Rodham-Clinton in Beijing, 1995) Help us to empower all women so that together we can build the world that we desire.



August 29—International Day Against Nuclear Tests

Nuclear weapons have become the scourge of our modern world. They have been used to intimidate other countries. Nuclear weapons threaten the globe with annihilation and contaminate the earth with radiation. Their development has continued to consume the wealth of many nations, diverting resources from peaceful, personal, social and economic development, from healthcare and education, and from care of the Earth. These weapons of war have the potential to destroy our planet, making not only their use, but their

manufacture and possession immoral. It is time for the citizens of earth to demand a total ban on nuclear weapons. On July 7th, 2017 the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) was adopted by the UN. In the year since, we've made great progress towards enforcement and the stigmatization of nuclear weapons. But there is still work to be done.

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.



U-2 with Mothers of the Disappeared in Santiago, Chile in 1998.

August 30—International Day of Victims of Enforced Disappearances

Secret, forced disappearances are a clear violation of human rights and have been condemned by the United Nations. These disappearances have been used as a means of intimidation, not only targeting the victims, but their families and communities. Victims are often tortured and many are eventually killed. Families are left to wonder what happened to their loved ones and where they might be.

Often, warnings are left behind so that the family and community are intimidated

into compliance with the wishes of the perpetrators. Such tactics may be employed by governments against their own people in order to subjugate citizens and to silence protest. The UN clearly supports the right of citizens to know the charges against them when they are taken into custody, the right to a just judicial process, and condemns the use of torture. Human dignity demands that families know where loved ones are being held and that they are being treated with basic respect. Forced disappearances, unfortunately, continue to occur in many countries around the world. Of particular concern are:

- the ongoing harassment of human rights defenders, relatives of victims, witnesses and legal counsel dealing with cases of enforced disappearance;
- the use by States of counter-terrorist activities as an excuse for breaching their obligations;
- and the still widespread impunity for enforced disappearance.

On 21 December 2010, by its [resolution 65/209](#) the UN General Assembly expressed its deep concern about the increase in enforced or involuntary disappearances in various regions of the world, including arrest, detention and abduction, when these are part of or amount to enforced disappearances, and by the growing number of reports concerning harassment, ill-treatment and intimidation of witnesses of disappearances or relatives of persons who have disappeared.

By the same resolution the Assembly welcomed the adoption of the [International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance](#), and decided to declare 30 August the International Day of the Victims of Enforced Disappearances, to be observed beginning in 2011.

Let us pray for all victims of forced disappearances, for their families and for their communities. May all of us raise our voices in solidarity with them to demand an end to state-sponsored secret arrests, torture, intimidation and terrorism. May all who mourn for loved ones taken from them be comforted and strengthened. May all of us who believe in the inherent dignity of the human person do whatever we can to protect human rights, free prisoners held in secret and without charges, and work to create a more just world where every person is respected.