

Participation-October 2018

October 1—International Day of Older Persons



International Day of Older Persons is celebrated on October 01, 2018. This day was initiated by the United Nations in 1990 to honor the efforts of the elderly and the value they bring to society. Many active elders lead the way in efforts to build peace with justice locally and around the world. However, this day also calls attention to the many needs of the elderly that still need to be addressed, such as accessible transportation, healthcare, nutritional support and social structures that keep them engaged with society. Many elderly persons have gifts and talents that are much needed by society. Unfortunately, too often social structures fail to engage them in a way that could benefit themselves and the young. This is a day to break down barriers and engage one another for the good of all.

Holy One, bless those in our midst who are elderly. Help us to treasure their wisdom and to learn from their many years of experience. Bless all elderly persons with health, happiness, security, love and peace. Bless those who are ill or alone with caring communities, friends and neighbors who reach out to them when they are in need.

October 2—International Day of Non-Violence



This date, the birthday of Mahatma Gandhi, was chosen as the international day of non-violence by the United Nations on June 15, 2007. It is a day for promoting awareness of the power of non-violence through education about non-violent resistance that has been successful at overthrowing systems of oppression. It is a day to promote dialogue and understanding among one another. By sharing our stories and listening to others, we can slowly begin to promote understanding. It is through such relationship-building that true peace can be

built. When injustice is encountered, however, action is required—inaction and silence in the face of such oppression is a form of complicity. There are three main categories of non-violent action that were employed by Gandhi:

- Protest and persuasion, including marches and vigils.
- Non-cooperation.
- Non-violent intervention, such as blockades and occupations.

By changing our hearts, promoting open listening and dialogue, and actively resisting systems of oppression, we can begin to create a non-violent world.

God, we pray for peace today beginning within our own hearts and extending to all whom we meet. Help us to stand in solidarity with the oppressed. Give us the courage to take non-violent action on behalf of justice and peace. May non-violence rooted in love be the building blocks for a better world.

October 4—Feast of St. Francis of Assisi



St. Francis of Assisi was born around 1181 and died on October 3, 1226. He was a man of peace and non-violence, compassion, joy and love. He lived in poverty because he wanted nothing to separate him from other people. He saw everyone and all of creation as one. Today, he is known as the patron saint of peace and non-violence, as well as the patron saint of ecology. Francis embodied what *Laudato Si* (Pope Francis' encyclical of 2015) calls an integral ecology. He knew that care for Mother Earth was intimately linked to care for the poor. Human flourishing and growth depends on living in harmony with nature and we cannot live in harmony with nature unless we are in harmony with all human beings as well. "The cry of the Earth and the cry of the poor are one."

Holy One, we praise the wonders of your glory revealed every day in the wonders of creation. Help us to live in harmony with nature and with one another, as we journey into the future. Open us to recognizing your presence in the grand diversity of creation and in the uniqueness of each human being. Help us to reach out to heal ourselves, one another and our world.

October 10—World Day Against the Death Penalty



This year marks the 16th World Day Against the Death Penalty. This year's focus is to raise awareness about the inhumane living conditions faced by those on death row throughout the world. The conditions of detention of the people sentenced to death might differ from country to country, but affect us all. From solitary confinement in the United States, to the overcrowded and horrendous conditions in prisons in several countries in Africa and Asia, the living conditions for the people sentenced to death tend to dehumanize and take away the dignity of individuals. As Pope Francis put it: *Therefore, all Christians and people of good will are called today to fight not only for the abolition of the death penalty, whether legal or illegal, and in all its forms, but also in order to improve the prison conditions, in respect of the human dignity of the persons deprived of freedom.*

The death penalty in practice:

- **107 (up from 104 last year)** countries have abolished the death penalty for all crimes
- **7** countries have abolished the death penalty for ordinary crimes
- **28** countries are abolitionist in practice
- **56** countries continue to have the death penalty in law
- **23** countries carried out executions in 2017
- In 2016 and 2017, the top five executioners were China, Iran, Iraq, Pakistan, and Saudi Arabia.

God, we pray that nations throughout the world will continue to work for the abolition of the death penalty. We commit ourselves to respect the dignity of every person, because we know that all human beings were created in your image and have the divine spark of life within them, no matter what evil deeds they may have committed. As followers of the Gospel, we commit ourselves to promoting compassionate alternatives to the death penalty, including restorative justice and funding for victims' services. Help us to reject revenge as we continue to work for justice.

October 13—International Day of Disaster Reduction



Hurricane photographed from space

The International Day for Disaster Reduction (IDDR) encourages every citizen and government to take part in building more disaster resilient communities and nations. It is a day to call for civil society actions that will bring attention to much needed infrastructure construction and repairs needed to prevent disasters. It is also a day to raise awareness of local populations to natural disasters common in their particular part of the world so that people know how to respond to disaster when it strikes and how to respond to public warning systems when/where these exist. Many areas prone to tsunamis do not yet have warning systems in place, which can help save lives. Many areas of the world prone to earthquakes do not have adequate building standards that can

minimize deaths and destruction due to earthquakes. Many cities around the world that are already prone to flooding from sea level rise are still allowing population growth and new construction, making future disasters even more destructive. Raising awareness, disaster prevention when possible, and disaster response training can all reduce disaster impacts.

Holy one, we thank you for the wonder of creation. We ask you to give us wisdom, that we might live in harmony with creation. May we always respect the power of nature and honor our place within it. May we work to support each other in times of natural disaster, and may we always put nature and human life ahead of economic and commercial concerns in seeking to prevent, mitigate, prepare for and respond to natural disasters. May we always respond with generosity to those suffering loss and hardship.

October 15—International Day of Rural Women



International Day of Rural Women recognizes the role that rural women and girls play in ensuring the sustainability of rural households and communities, improving rural livelihoods and the overall wellbeing of rural communities. Structural barriers and discriminatory social norms continue to constrain women's decision-making power and political participation in rural households and communities. Women and girls in rural areas lack equal access to productive resources and assets, public services, such as education and health care, and infrastructure, including

water and sanitation, while much of their labor remains invisible and unpaid. Their workloads have also become increasingly heavy due to the out-migration of men. Globally, with few exceptions, every gender and development indicator for which data are available reveals that rural women fare worse than rural men and urban women, and that they disproportionately experience poverty, exclusion and the effects of climate change. Promoting education, land rights and access to resources needed for agricultural production for rural women would have a tremendous impact on the lives of rural women, their families and communities.

God, bless all rural women who are struggling to provide care for their children, put food on the table and keep a roof over their family's heads. Open our hearts to the plight of these women and to supporting them in whatever ways we can, recognizing that when women flourish, families and communities also thrive.

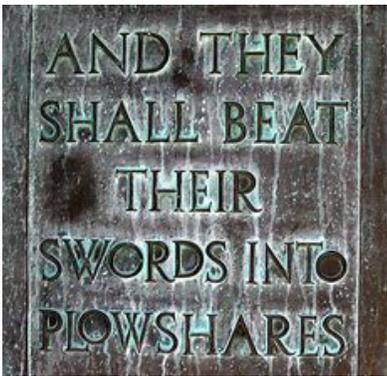


October 17—International Day for the Eradication of Poverty

The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals call for an end to extreme poverty globally by the year 2030. Effective measures to achieve this goal require the active involvement of those living in poverty. Dialogue is needed to understand and address the needs of the poor in a meaningful way. However, extreme poverty cannot be addressed if war and active armed conflict are present. Such violence and fear displace farmers from their traditional lands, often leading whole communities into starvation. Migration in response to violence strains the resources of receiving communities and can lead to fear and scapegoating of refugees, isolating them without access to water, food, shelter, basic health care and education. Officials of the World Bank agree that the world has the

resources to end extreme poverty by 2030. Now, what we need is to end armed conflict and harness the political will to address poverty worldwide. It takes all of us to become part of the solution.

Holy One, we pray for the 1 billion people living in extreme poverty throughout the world and the over 800 million people who endure hunger and malnutrition. Inspire us creatively to review our lives and to make changes—living more simply so that others may simply live. Help us to call all world leaders to implement the Sustainable Development goals, which include eradicating extreme poverty by 2030.



October 24-30—United Nations Disarmament Week

The annual observance of Disarmament Week, which kicks off on the anniversary of the founding of the United Nations (24 October), was first called for in the Final Document of the General Assembly's 1978 special session on disarmament (resolution S-10/2). The document called for abandoning the use of force in international relations and seeking security in disarmament. States were invited to highlight the danger of the arms race, propagate the need for its cessation and increase public understanding of the urgent tasks of disarmament. The elimination of nuclear and all other weapons of mass destruction

remains a central but elusive objective of the United Nations. Despite commitments from Member States, there has been limited progress on this long-standing goal. For nuclear weapons, this is largely due to growing tensions between nuclear-armed States and the rigidity of the disarmament machinery.

In the meantime, the Southern hemisphere of the planet has already become almost entirely one nuclear-weapon-free zone by virtue of regional treaties: the Treaty of Rarotonga, covering the South Pacific, the Treaty of Pelindaba, covering Africa, the Treaty of Bangkok covering Southeast Asia, the Treaty of Tlatelolco, covering Latin America and the Caribbean and the Antarctic Treaty. Recently we have witnessed the entry into force of the Treaty on a Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone in Central Asia, the first such instrument situated entirely north of the Equator.

The adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development was a defining moment for global efforts to prevent, combat and eradicate the illicit arms trade: the Agenda included a specific target to significantly reduce illicit arms flows by 2030. The General Assembly and other bodies of the United Nations work to advance international peace and security through the pursuit of the elimination of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction and the regulation of conventional arms.

God, open our hearts to the Gospel message of peace. Help us to work tirelessly for an end to war and the elimination of all nuclear weapons. May we sow trust instead of fear, hope instead of despair, cooperation instead of conflict, understanding instead of suspicion, peace instead of hatred. Help us to trust in the power of your love rather than the power of weapons. Let peace be in our hearts and in our world.