

Participation-January 2019

January 1—World Day of Peace



The World Day of Peace was introduced by Pope Paul VI in 1967, inspired by the encyclical *Pacem in Terris*. This year's theme is: Good Politics at the Service of Peace. In many parts of the world, this day has become an interfaith day of prayer for peace. Violent conflict has greatly contributed to the global refugee crisis and has caused untold suffering for millions of people. It is a recognized fact that the world cannot hope to fulfill the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals unless and until global peace can be restored. War and violence make it impossible to restore and develop agriculture, deliver healthcare and disease prevention efforts, ensure children's education, secure equal rights for women and enforce laws against child labor and human trafficking. This day we call upon all people of the world to stand

up against war and violent conflict as a way of addressing international differences. We know that lasting peace can only be achieved through non-violent, active peacemaking. We must call upon our elected leaders to engage in and invest in open dialogue with neighbors and so called "enemies" so as to come to a peace built on open listening, understanding, empathy and respect for diversity. We must demand that our political leaders invest in nonviolent peacemaking—if even one tenth of the money that presently is spent on weapons and efforts of making war was spent on nonviolent peacemaking, success would be assured.

Merciful God, open our heart to hear the cry of the poor and the cry of all those who are suffering as a result of violence and war. Help us to turn from weapons and war-making towards active non-violence and peacemaking. We join our prayers with the prayers of people from all nations and all religions as we pray for the wisdom, courage and creativity that peacemaking requires. Help us to truly listen to one another so that we may be enlightened by understanding and compassion.

January 15—Birthday of Martin Luther King, Jr.



Martin Luther King, Jr. Day is a federal holiday in the United States honoring the achievements of Martin Luther King, Jr., the chief spokesman for nonviolent activism in the civil rights movement to end racial segregation and injustice. His life has inspired people around the world who long for justice and peace to courageously strive for these goals through active non-violence. Although his life was threatened many times, he never wavered in his commitment to peaceful resistance to injustice. He worked tirelessly to end racial discrimination in all aspects of life in the United States, including discrimination in housing, employment, education, voting, where a person could eat or drink, etc. He spoke out against war, which he knew was incapable of creating lasting peace and in which the poor suffered the most. He was assassinated on April 4, 1968 in Memphis Tennessee where he was joining sanitation workers demanding safer working conditions and a living wage. His commitment to the non-violent struggle for peace and justice continues to inspire millions of freedom seekers across the globe.

Holy one, we thank you for the gift of Martin Luther King Jr. He continues to inspire us to action and his life gives us renewed hope. Bless us as we continue to work for a just and peaceful world through peaceful actions of solidarity with those suffering from discrimination and injustice. Open our eyes so that we can see. Open our ears to hear. Open our hearts so that we can respond with courage and generosity.

January 27—International Day of Commemoration of the Victims of the Holocaust

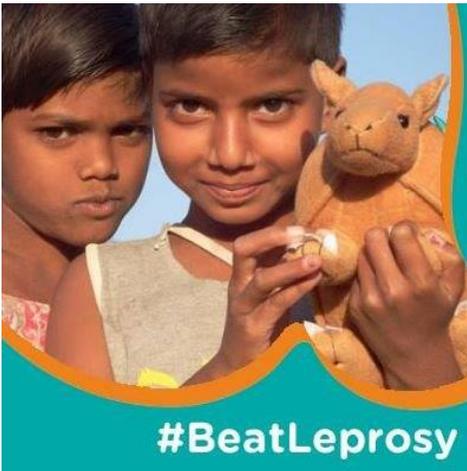


This day is called the International Day of Commemoration of the Victims of the Holocaust and is held on the date when the Soviet troops liberated the Nazi concentration and death camp Auschwitz-Birkenau in Poland on January 27, 1945. The day commemorates the genocide that resulted in the death of an estimated 6 million Jewish people, 5 million Slavs, 3 million ethnic Poles, 200,000 Romani people, 250,000 mentally and physically disabled people, and 9,000 homosexual men by the Nazi regime and its collaborators. On this day we are encouraged to remember and

recount the stories of what happened as a result of bigotry, racism, prejudice and hatred. Unfortunately, these powerful forces are still with us and must be guarded against and condemned. Silence in the face of such attitudes and violence is not an option. As the last of the holocaust survivors die, their stories are being recorded and preserved in holocaust museums in many countries so that we will never forget. This day, let us dedicate ourselves to ensuring that such horrors will never again be allowed to happen.

God, we pray for all victims of genocide, hatred, bigotry and racism. Give us the compassion and courage to speak out and take action so that such horror can never happen again. Help us to treat one another with respect, dignity and reverence.

January 28—World Leprosy Day



World Leprosy Day is held on the Sunday nearest to January 30th, to raise consciousness about leprosy, also known as Hansen's Disease. This date is the death anniversary of Gandhi and was chosen because Gandhi understood well the stigma and marginalization that people over the centuries have suffered because of this illness. He struggled tirelessly to eradicate the stigma associated with this disease, which for centuries added to the suffering of those afflicted. This year World Leprosy Day is January 27th.

This year we call on governments and aid organizations to dedicate more resources to combatting this disease and the stigma still faced by those who suffer from this illness. Greater educational efforts are needed to promote early diagnosis in the countries who still have significant numbers of new cases each year, so that this potentially curable disease can be treated before permanent disfigurement results. Also known as Hansen's disease, leprosy is still feared in many parts of the world and people are often shunned if they reveal that they suffer from this illness. With early treatment, cure is now possible, and victims can live normal, healthy lives. When left untreated, however, patients can suffer severe disabilities and disfigurement which can severely impact their quality of life.

Divine healer, we thank you for all the advances that medicine has made in the past many decades in treating leprosy. As we work to make more resources available for treatment, early diagnosis and education about this disease, help us to also support those suffering illness and stigma because of leprosy. We pray that all who are suffering will have the support and access to treatment that can enable them to live normal and healthy lives.