

Participation-February 2019

February 6—International Day of Zero Tolerance to Female Genital Mutilation

Myth about FGM

THERE ARE MANY MYTHS ABOUT FGM...

"Only girls who undergo FGM can enter womanhood and be considered respectable."

FALSE

Cultural norms are changing and alternative rites of passage into womanhood that do not involve FGM are increasingly accepted.

World Health Organization

February 6th is a day to promote the UN's campaign to raise awareness and educate people about the dangers of Female Genital Mutilation (FGM). This practice is found mostly in Middle Eastern and African countries, although global migration due to climate change and violence has seen significant emergence of FGM in many other places as well. On February 6, 2003, Stella Obasanjo, the then First Lady of Nigeria and spokesperson for the Campaign Against Female Genital Mutilation, made the official declaration on "Zero Tolerance to FGM" in Africa during a conference organized by the *Inter-African Committee on Traditional Practices Affecting the Health of Women and Children (IAC)*. UN Sub-Commission on Human Rights adopted this day as an international awareness day. There is a growing awareness that FGM can lead to serious physical and psychological injury to women and girls that can be lifelong. This is a day to work on dispelling the myths associated with this practice.

Holy One, we recognize that we are created in your image. Our bodies are sacred, and every part of our bodies are to be cherished and cared for. Help us to treat our bodies as vessels of the divine. Let us work ceaselessly to end all forms of violence against women and girls and help us dispel the myths that enable the perpetuation of the practice of FGM.

February 8—International Day of Prayer and Awareness against Human Trafficking



they are often promised well-paying jobs to help support their families if they put their trust in a trafficker. Human trafficking violates the sanctity, dignity, and fundamental rights of the human person. Through coercion, deceit, or force, they are trapped in jobs and situations from which they cannot escape. This day is celebrated each year on the feast day of Josephine Bakhita, who was kidnapped as a child, sold into slavery in the Sudan and in Italy, eventually granted her freedom, and then became a nun who dedicated her life to comforting the poor and suffering.

O God, bless all those who are suffering as modern-day slaves controlled by human traffickers. Help them to reach out in hope for help. Open our eyes to see victims of trafficking that we may encounter, so that we can respond to their need by reporting suspicious situations. Help us to recognize sex trafficking, forced labor trafficking and all other forms of coercive behavior as a violation of human rights, immoral, and sinful. Change the hearts of all those who profit from human trafficking so that they will free those in captivity and live lives of respect for human dignity.

The theme for this day in 2019 is "Together Against Human Trafficking". Today, millions of people are suffering after being sold into modern forms of slavery. Sex trafficking and forced labor trafficking are seen in every country. Although many trafficking victims are women and girls, men and boys can also be trafficking victims. It affects over 300,000 children worldwide, and many industries rely on unpaid or under paid forced child labor. The poor and immigrants are most vulnerable, since

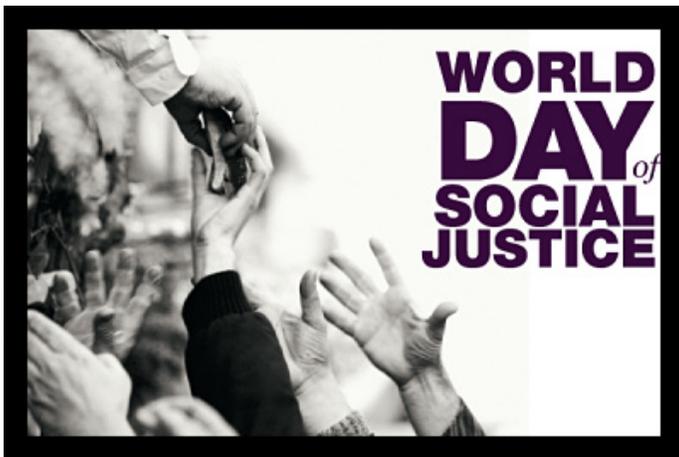
February 11—World Day of the Sick



The World Day of the Sick was instituted in 1993 by Pope John Paul II and celebrated on the feast day of Lourdes. It is a day to pray for all those who suffer from illness or injury. It is also a time to pray for those who work to alleviate pain and suffering, to treat illness, and to restore health. It is also a time to advocate for access to universal healthcare so that all those who are suffering from injury or illness can get the help they need to live productive and happy lives. It is a time to promote wellness, and to thank God for all health.

God of wholeness, healing and compassionate care for all of us, bless us with good health. For those suffering pain, bring them peace and comfort. For those who are ill, soothe their suffering and restore them to health. We pray also for the terminally ill, that they may be blessed as they let go of life on earth and prepare to enter into eternal life with you. Relieve any fear or anxiety and give them hope-filled anticipation for the life to come.

February 20—World Day of Social Justice



Social Justice is the underlying principle that makes peaceful, respectful and cooperative coexistence among nations possible. It includes fair globalization, including fair trade and working conditions to avoid human exploitation. Catholic Social Teaching, as outlined and summarized in the documents of Vatican II and in many of the “social encyclicals” such as *Rerum Novarum*, *Quadragesimo Anno*, *Pacem in Terris*, *Populorum Progressio*, and most recently *Laudato Si*, addresses seven areas of social justice: Life and Dignity of The Human Person--Call to Family, Community, and Participation—Human Rights and Responsibilities--Option For The Poor and Vulnerable--The Dignity of Work and The Rights of Workers—Solidarity--Care For God's Creation.

By incorporating Gospel values and Christ's life of service to, and lifting up of, the poor and suffering we seek to care for earth and the poor, while changing structures that promote destruction of the earth and suffering of the poor. This day is dedicated to what Pope Francis calls “integral ecology”. The suffering of creation and the suffering of the poor are one. We cannot care for creation if we do not also care for the poor. Peace will not reign on earth until justice is established. Our call today is to pray for, speak out for and act on behalf of justice.

Holy One, we pray that peace based on justice will grow throughout the world. Open us so that we can respond with compassion, love, and solidarity for the good of creation and for the poor among us. Help us to grow in awareness of the cry of the poor and the cry of creation, so that we are moved to respond with generosity. Bless us as we seek justice for all!

February 23—International Stand Up to Bullying Day

Bullying is unwanted, aggressive behavior that involves a real or perceived power imbalance. The behavior is repeated, or has the potential to be repeated, over time. Both those who are bullied and who bully others may have serious, lasting problems. In order to be considered bullying, the behavior must be aggressive and include:

- **An Imbalance of Power:** Those who bully use their power—such as physical



strength, access to embarrassing information, or popularity—to control or harm others. Power imbalances can change over time and in different situations, even if they involve the same people.

- **Repetition:** Bullying behaviors happen more than once or have the potential to happen more than once.
- Bullying includes actions such as making threats, spreading rumors, attacking someone physically or verbally, and excluding someone from a group on purpose.

International Stand Up to Bullying Day is a day when people are urged to wear pink shirts to indicate solidarity in their stance against bullying. The wearing of the pink shirts initially served as a non-confrontational way to signal to victims of bullying that the wearer was a person they could turn to for help and support. Now it is worn on this day as a sign that we will no longer stand aside in silence when someone is suffering bullying. This day occurs twice a year, on the last Friday in February and the third Friday of November.

God, we ask that you bless us with courage as we seek to confront and stop bullying. Help us to refuse to be silent when witnessing bullying, but to step forward in a loving and respectful way to put an end to it. We ask that you comfort those who suffer from bullying so that they will not sink into despair, loneliness and hopelessness. Let our love, respect, compassion and determination support those who are bullied, so that they may be restored to wholeness.