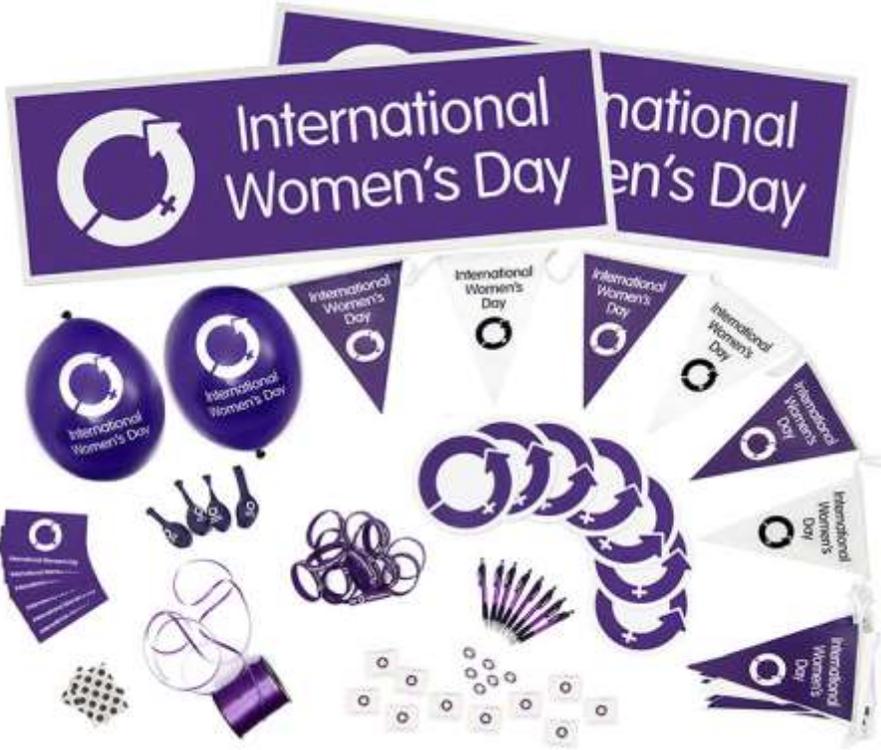


International Solidarity Days – March 2019



March 8—International Women's Day

International Women's Day (IWD) was first recognized by the United Nations in 1975. However, IWD was first celebrated in New York in 1911 and was supported by over one million people. Today, IWD belongs to all groups collectively everywhere. Gloria Steinem, world-renowned feminist, journalist and activist once explained "The story of women's struggle for equality belongs to no single feminist nor to any one organization but to the collective efforts of all who care about human rights." The Theme for IWD 2019 is #BalanceforBetter. The theme aims at raising awareness that everyone everywhere has a part to play in building a gender balanced, better world. The world of the present and

future expects balance, and we notice its absence and celebrate its presence. This day calls to our attention that gender balance is essential for economies and communities to flourish and for individuals to thrive.

Oh, Holy One, as we celebrate the lives, struggles and gifts of women and girls around the world, we ask that you bless us as we work towards equality and balance for a better world. Keep us steadfast in our commitment to balance and equality in family life, civil society, the work place, and religious institutions. Inspire all women and girls to know their gifts and to use them for the common good. As we remember the great women who have inspired us and who have walked this path before us, may we continue to dedicate ourselves to equality, freedom and gender balance at all levels of Church and Society.

March 21—Week of Solidarity Against Racism and Racial Discrimination

March 21st begins the UN week of solidarity against racism and racial discrimination. This date was chosen to remember the 69-people killed by police on March 21, 1960, at a peaceful demonstration against the apartheid "pass laws" in Sharpeville, South Africa. Racial and ethnic discrimination remains a major problem in many parts of the world. Too often, people are still judged by the color of their skin, rather than by the content of their character. (paraphrased from Martin Luther King, Jr.) This day calls our attention to discrimination in the work place, in employment and advancement opportunities, in housing, in education and in unjust incarceration. Racial slurs and hate speech also help to fan the flames of racially motivated violence. This week we commit ourselves to the elimination of racial discrimination in all its forms, which prevents individuals as well as communities from living up to their full potential.



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O God, we ask your blessing as we examine our own lives and discover what racial discrimination may lurk within us. Help us to recognize our own complicity and give us the courage and strength to reject racism in all its forms. Help us to reach out to those who may seem different from ourselves, so that we can come to a deeper understanding of how we are all one, called to create a world of understanding, compassion and love.

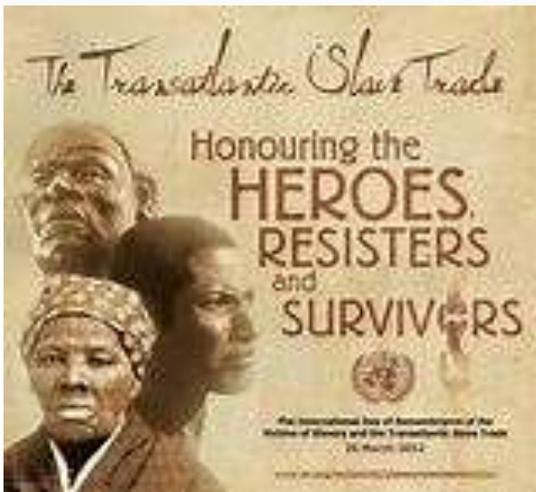
March 22—World Water Day



This Day was established in 1993 by the UN to raise awareness among all people about the need to protect and conserve the precious gift of water. This year's theme is "Water For All—Leaving No One Behind", and recognizes that no matter who you are or where you are, everyone has a right to safe water. Water is a human right, since no one can live without water. The UN Sustainable Development Goal #6 calls for "Water for All" by 2030. Yet, today billions of people are living without access to clean, safe water for drinking, cooking, bathing, growing crops, and sustaining healthy lives. Marginalized groups often have their access to water severely restricted or cut off. Their water sources are maybe contaminated, thus affecting their health and quality of life. Ensuring access to safe water is essential for human life and for social development.

God, we thank you for the precious gift of Sister Water. Water soothes and refreshes us, cleanses and sustains us, waters our crops and provides us with food, teams with life in oceans, lakes, rivers and streams. Help us to care for Water by protecting it from contamination and by using it wisely. Let us work to provide universal access to clean, uncontaminated water, so that everyone everywhere can live!

March 25—International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade



This UN day of remembrance has been held annually since 2008. Over 17 million Africans were transported to the Americas during 16th to the mid-19th centuries, with many millions more dying in route. This day is a special day for remembering—remembering all those who were sold into slavery as well as those who died during the treacherous Atlantic crossing. Systemic and institutionalized racism remains today as a legacy of the slave trade. Discrimination, racial profiling and racially motivated hate crimes continue to plague our world as hold-overs of its brutality. Despite the generations subjected to slavery, those victimized by it still held on to hope. They contributed to the building up of entire societies in immeasurable ways, through their strength, resilience and creativity, in spite of brutality, humiliation, family separations and deprivations. This is a day to honor those who suffered, but also to honor their descendants who carry on their personal histories of hope, strength,

survival, courage and love. This is a day to remember that we are all sisters and brothers to one another, free and equal, working to build a more just and peaceful world.

God, we ask forgiveness for the suffering caused to so many people by the transatlantic slave trade. Heal us all of the racism that continues to divide us from one another. Help us to respect, honor and support one another as equals, created to bring justice and love to our world. Help us to work diligently to end all forms of modern-day slavery, such as human trafficking.