

International Solidarity Days—August 2019

August 6 and 9—World Remembrance of Hiroshima and Nagasaki



At 8:16 AM, over Hiroshima on August 6 and at 10:58 AM on August 9 over Nagasaki, in 1945, the course of human history changed forever with the dropping of 2 nuclear bombs during World War II. This violent ushering in of the nuclear age stunned humanity with its overwhelming destructive power. In a single horrible blast, whole cities could be wiped off the face of the earth, and subsequent radiation exposure continued to claim victims even 20-30 years later. Since then, nuclear armed countries have developed even more powerful and deadly nuclear weapons, which they all recognize could end life on Earth as we know it. We deceive ourselves into believing that the restraint of “mutually assured destruction” (MAD) can

keep us safe, while at the same time we know that a single moment’s decision could unleash “hell on earth” in response to an actual or falsely perceived threat. On July 7, 2017, at the UN General Assembly, 122 states voted to adopt the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW). Advocates of the ban argue that the nuclear-weapon states parties to the 1968 Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) have been too slow in complying with their NPT Article VI commitment “to pursue good faith negotiations toward nuclear disarmament.” Although no nuclear-possessor state joined the TPNW negotiations, this treaty, which outlaws even the possession of such weapons, is an important step to delegitimizing these weapons. Hopefully, over time, nuclear weapons-armed states will agree to getting rid of all such weapons. True and lasting peace must be built on a foundation of respect for human rights, international cooperation for the sake of the common good, and cross-cultural relationship building.

Holy One, rid us of our fear of differences which too often leads to hatred and violence. Turn our hearts from trusting in weapons of war, especially nuclear weapons, rather than in the power of your love. Open our hearts to hear the dreams, desires and hopes of people from all cultures, nations, religions and races and to realize that our common humanity is what unites us.

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 she was of noble birth, she learned early on from her mother the practice of generosity to the poor and devotion to prayer. After hearing Francis of Assisi preach and observing his dedication to a Gospel way of life, she was inspired to leave her privileged circumstances and embrace radical poverty, prayer and service to the poor as her new way of life. Together with Francis, Clare founded what later became the “Franciscan Order”. The women who joined her became known as the “Poor Ladies of San Damiano” and today are known as “the Poor Clares”.

Clare became known as a healer of the sick, a confidant of St. Francis and some of his brothers, and a woman determined to chart her own course for her new community of women. She spoke out to popes and bishops about her Gospel way of life and refused to compromise on what she felt God was calling her to. Eventually, she was successful. In the end, through her dedication to simple living, care for creation, commitment to non-violence, and courageous service to the poor who came seeking help, she and Francis changed the

Church and the world. Their prophetic witness continues to inspire followers not only in the Catholic Church, but people from diverse nations and religions, more than 800 years after their deaths.

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



World Humanitarian Day honors the thousands of people around the world who risk their lives in order to provide food, medical care, water, shelter, and hope to millions of people suffering from the ravages of war, violence and natural disasters. Governments of all nations are urged to protect aid workers and to assist them in bringing help to the most vulnerable. Wherever people suffer, volunteers from around the world are inspired to reach out in

whatever ways they can. Medical personnel care for the sick and injured, search and rescue teams mobilize to look for survivors and to recover those who have died, relief workers donate, collect and transport water and food to those in desperate need and ordinary civilians distribute clothing, blankets and shoes to their suffering brothers and sisters. Many of these efforts are carried on in the midst of ongoing danger and threat.

God, we pray for the humanitarian workers many of whom risk their lives while reaching out to relieve the suffering of others. Protect them as they bring hope to those they serve. May we be inspired to also respond in whatever ways we can to those in need of our help. Open our hands in a gesture of love and compassion. Open our minds with understanding. Open our hearts with generosity.

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



On 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. The uprising was finally successful at establishing Haiti's independence from the French in 1804 and was the only slave uprising to give rise to a state ruled by former slaves. On this day we remember the power of the human spirit to rise up and struggle for freedom, even in the most oppressive circumstances. Slaves endured the horrors of the "middle passage" across the Atlantic, with many people dying on the way. Slavery robbed them of their cultures, their countries, their families

and even their names. Abuse, poor nutrition, over work and poor living conditions robbed slaves of their strength and health. Yet, in spite of their suffering, those enslaved lived and struggled for freedom and dignity. Finally, in 1888, Brazil became the last state in the Americas to outlaw slavery. Racial discrimination continues as a legacy of slavery in the Americas. The modern-day slavery of human trafficking continues to oppress people for the enrichment of others. This day reminds us that although

abolished over 130 years ago, we have much work to do to overcome and abolish systems of oppression that continue to this day. Let us rededicate ourselves to ending all forms of slavery so that all people can live in freedom and dignity.

Holy One, bless in a special way those who suffer due to modern-day slavery and those who suffer from systemic racism that continues to enslave ancestors of former slaves. Fill us all with resolve to address racism in our own hearts as well as in societal institutions. Help each of us to work together for the common good so that each person can live with respect, dignity and freedom.

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 by designating August 26 of each year as Women's Equality Day. This day is now celebrated around the world to honor women and to demand full participation in the political, religious, economic and social life of all countries. In the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG's) of 2015, the United Nations Goal # 5 states: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls. To achieve all the other SDG's

requires the education of women on a par with men, and full participation of women in creating the world of the future. Excluding women or relegating them to the domestic and agricultural realms only, weakens the entire fabric of society. Inclusion broadens and strengthens societies and nations. Caring for the entire human family requires that all voices are heard equally at the decision-making tables of the world.

God, we pray for women and girls throughout the world who still struggle to have their voices heard. Give us all the strength and courage to continue to work for equality and justice for all women and girls, so that together we can build the world that we desire. May discrimination and intimidation cease so that women everywhere can stand up, be heard, take action, and create change!

August 29—International Day Against Nuclear Tests



Stopping all nuclear testing is the first step to eventually eliminating all nuclear weapons from the earth. The Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) was opened for signatures by the United Nations in September 1996. In spite of over 20 years of global efforts, the treaty has yet to go into effect because of a lack of support by some of the 44 nations required to sign and ratify the treaty before it can take effect. India, Pakistan and North Korea have failed to sign or ratify the agreement. Among those who have signed but not yet ratified the agreement are: China, Egypt, Iran, Israel, and the United States have signed, but so far have failed to ratify the treaty. The overwhelming majority of the world's countries and citizens support ending the madness of "MAD" ("mutually assured destruction) as a strategy for avoiding war in the future. Most realize and admit that the power of present-day nuclear

weapons would, if used, destroy life as we know it and would spread radioactive contamination worldwide. In 2017 the UN convened a conference to negotiate a legally binding instrument to prohibit nuclear weapons, leading to their total elimination. The Treaty to Prohibit Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) prohibits development, testing, producing, acquiring, possessing, stockpiling, deploying, using or threatening to use nuclear weapons. It was opened for signature in September 2017. Unfortunately, all of the nuclear weapon possessing states refused to participate in developing the treaty. 122 states did participate in developing the treaty and now support it. It is clear that concern about the catastrophic humanitarian disaster that would result from any use of nuclear weapons is shared by most people on earth. This day reminds us that a nuclear weapons free world is what we desire and is what we are willing to work for.

God, we ask for an end to nuclear weapons in our world. Help us to reject the idolatry of nuclear weapons—help us to realize that they do not keep us safe but threaten our entire planet. May we turn from producing nuclear weapons and instead use our resources to feed the hungry, clothe the naked, heal the sick and educate the young.

August 30—International Day of Victims of Enforced Disappearances



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. By the same resolution the Assembly adopted the [International Convention for Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance](#), and decided to declare 30 August the International Day of the Victims of Enforced Disappearances. Enforced disappearance is defined as *the arrest, detention, abduction or any other form of deprivation of liberty by agents of the State or by persons or groups of persons acting with the authorization, support or acquiescence of the State, followed by a*

refusal to acknowledge the deprivation of liberty or by concealment of the fate or whereabouts of the disappeared person, which place such a person outside the protection of the law. Involuntary disappearances have been used by governments and paramilitary groups to intimidate whole populations. They are usually aimed at community leaders who inspire and/or organize the people to improve their lives or to demand respect for their rights and dignity as human beings. Those who are arrested or detained have a right to know the specific charges against them. They also have a right to a timely legal process. While in custody, they have a right to be treated with at least basic respect for their human dignity and their families have a right to know where they are being held, on what charges and how they can assist them with legal help. Many of the disappeared are never seen again and the people responsible for their disappearances are never identified or brought to justice. Enforced or involuntary disappearance is a violation of human rights and dignity.

Let us pray for all victims of forced disappearances, for their families and for their communities. Let us also pray for government leaders that they will turn away from involuntary disappearances that terrorize and intimidate their people. Instead, may all leaders see themselves as servants of the people, listen to their voices and respond to them as best they can for the common good. We pray also for those who carry out forced abductions and secret arrests on behalf of others. May their hearts be converted and may they be touched by the plight of their brothers and sisters and thus recover their own humanity.