

International Solidarity Days-January 2020

January 1—World Day of Peace



The World Day of Peace was inspired by the encyclical *Pacem in Terris*. This day call us to an awareness of the links between peace, poverty and the care of creation articulated in Pope Francis' encyclical *Laudato Si*. 2020 marks the 53rd annual World Day of Peace. The theme is PEACE AS A JOURNEY OF HOPE: DIALOGUE, RECONCILIATION AND ECOLOGICAL CONVERSION. War, violence, and the ecological damage caused by climate change have all contributed to the poverty and injustice that make true peace impossible. Restoring justice requires restoring balance in our world—respecting and protecting the balance in nature, working toward economic balance and equity, and working to build trust so that dialogue and openness replaces suspicion and violence. Peace is not merely the absence of conflict, violence and war, but the presence of justice based on living in right relationship with one another and with all

of creation. World peace must be built on a firm foundation of restorative justice, care for creation and sustainable human and community development.

Merciful God, grant us merciful hearts so that we can live in right relationship with each other and with all creation. Give us listening hearts to hear one another with compassion and understanding. Bless us with wisdom to respond in love to the cry of the poor and the cry of creation so that world peace can become a lived reality.

January 15—Birthday of Martin Luther King, Jr.



Martin Luther King, Jr. Day is a federal holiday in the United States honoring the life and legacy of Martin Luther King, Jr., the chief spokesman for nonviolent activism in the civil rights movement to end racial segregation and injustice. This day is now celebrated around the world by those who long for freedom, justice and equality. His commitment to peaceful, active non-violence as a means by which to effect social change was inspired by and based on the life and teachings of Gandhi. 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. Prior to his death, Martin Luther King Jr. was harassed, jailed, had his home attacked and was threatened with death. Yet he continued his steadfast life of non-violent resistance to injustice. His example continues to be a beacon around the world to those who still struggle for basic human rights and freedom. He was assassinated on April 4, 1968 in Memphis Tennessee where he was joining sanitation workers demanding safer working conditions and a living wage.

Holy one, we thank you for the life and legacy of Martin Luther King Jr. Give us the courage we will need to stand up against injustice, despite threats, intimidation, violence and even death. Help us to dedicate ourselves to active non-violence—meeting fear with compassion and understanding, hatred with mercy and violence with love.

January 26—World Leprosy Day



World Leprosy Day is held on the January 26th, to raise consciousness about leprosy, also known as Hansen's Disease. This is a day to raise consciousness about the prejudice and discrimination still faced to by those living with leprosy. Such discrimination often prevents those suffering with the disease from seeking treatment early. In many parts of the world, leprosy is poorly understood. This day is dedicated to education and a call to dedicate more resources to the diagnosis and treatment of this disease. 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 pray for all those who suffer from leprosy. May they have access to early treatment so that they can live normal, healthy lives. May they know the love and support of family and friends and not be shunned or discriminated against because of their illness.

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



International Day of Commemoration of the Victims of the Holocaust is held on January 27, the date in 1945 when Soviet troops liberated the Nazi concentration camp at Auschwitz-Birkenau in Poland. This worldwide day of remembrance serves as a somber reminder of the horror that human beings are capable of. This day calls all of us to conversion of heart so that such atrocities will never happen again. The holocaust resulted in the deaths 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. This is a day to recount the stories so that the lessons of history are not forgotten. The powerful forces of bigotry, racism, prejudice and hatred are still with us and

must be guarded against and condemned. Let us stand against all attempts to divide us from one another. Let us live as brothers and sisters, extending love and compassion to all people. As survivors of the holocaust die, let us keep their stories alive and realize that silence is never an option in the face of such evil.

God, we pray for all victims of genocide, hatred, bigotry and racism. Give us the courage to stand up and speak out whenever these forces threaten us, or anyone, with harm. Help us to treat every person with respect, dignity, compassion and love. Give us compassionate hearts and a steadfast determination to never let such a holocaust happen again to anyone.