

International Solidarity Days-January 2021

January 1—World Day of Peace



2021 marks the 54th annual World Day of Peace. The theme is “Good Politics is at the Service of Peace.” In this year’s address, the Pope Francis appeals to the international community and every individual to foster a “culture of care” by building solidarity, and advancing justice and peace between individuals, communities, peoples and nations through active non-violence. He stresses that there can be no real and lasting peace without a culture of care based on “a common, supportive and inclusive commitment to protecting and promoting the dignity and good of all, a willingness to show care and compassion, to work for reconciliation and healing, and to

advance mutual respect and acceptance.” He calls for civic engagement in order to build this culture of caring where all of us recognize and commit ourselves to caring for the good of all people and all creation. He urges us to put political pressure on leaders of local and national governments to turn away from weapons of war and destruction (particularly nuclear weapons) and to redirect our resources towards the promotion of peace and integral human development, the fight against poverty, and the provision of health care. He says it would be a courageous decision to “establish a ‘Global Fund’ with the money spent on weapons and other military expenditures, in order to permanently eliminate hunger and contribute to the development of the poorest countries!” This message is not an abstract call for peace, but a concrete challenge that calls us to act now for the common good.

Merciful God, grant us merciful hearts so that we can live in right relationship with each other and with all creation. Help us to turn away from war and toward solidarity and the rebuilding of right relationships, so that peace based on respect, healing, dignity, love and compassion will transform our world.

January 15—Birthday of Martin Luther King, Jr.

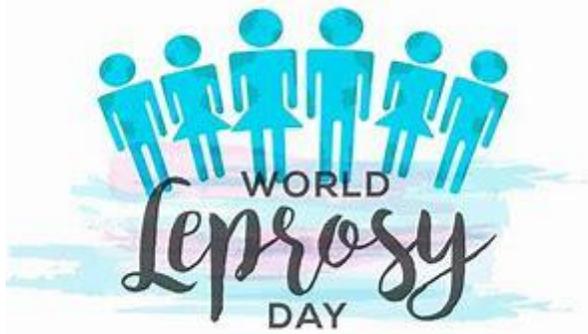


Martin Luther King, Jr. Day has become an international day of hope around the world. Like Gandhi, Dr. King’s non-violent struggle for racial justice and world peace has inspired solidarity movements throughout the world. When he was killed by an assassin’s bullet in Memphis, Tennessee on April 4, 1968, he was working on behalf of the city’s sanitation workers, for safer working conditions and a living wage, after a worker had been killed on the job. Martin Luther King Jr. also spoke out against the Vietnam War which was raging at the time. He recognized that non-violent resistance to war and active peacebuilding were the only paths to justice and lasting peace. This message continues to inspire millions across the globe today.

Holy one, we thank you for the life and legacy of Martin Luther King Jr. Give us the strength and courage to meet fear with understanding, hatred with compassion, injury with forgiveness, despair with hope and violence with love.

January 24th —World Leprosy Day

World Leprosy Day is held on the January 24th, to raise consciousness about leprosy, also known as Hansen’s Disease. Even today, when treatments can cure this dread disease, fear, discrimination and misunderstanding often prevent its victims from seeking treatment early. Such delays can lead to disfigurement and life-long

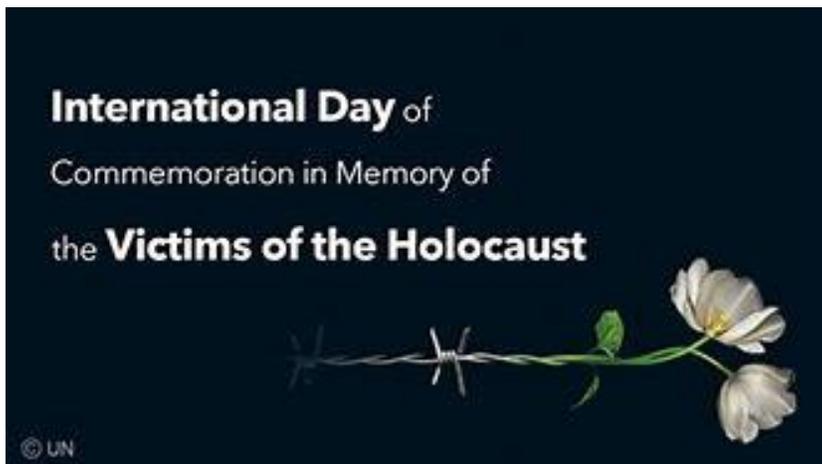


disabilities even after the infection has cleared. In some parts of the world, people who have been cured are still shunned due to age-old fears that persist in their communities. Because of leprosy, there are people who have been separated from their families; who have been unable to continue at school; who have lost their jobs; and who have missed out on the chance of marriage. After they have been cured, they are labeled ‘expatrients’ and continue to face discrimination. The World Health Organization, in cooperation with many humanitarian groups throughout the world is working to educate and to urge people to seek early treatment so that one day leprosy will disappear from

the earth. We still have a long way to go to reach this goal.

Divine healer, we pray for all those who suffer from leprosy. May they be freed from fear and inspired to seek help and treatment early. We pray that treatment efforts be available to everyone so that communities can overcome ancient fears and be willing to care for one another with compassion. We pray also for a world free from the scourge of leprosy and the many disabilities it can bring. Help us to do whatever we can to “embrace the leper” as Saint Francis did, overcoming our own fears and extending love.

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. It is a solemn day honoring the calamity of the Holocaust that took place during the World War II. It is a day on which we remember the brutality and violence that human beings are capable of. We recall the genocide that claimed the lives of nearly 9,000 homosexual men, 250,000 physically and mentally disabled people, 200,000 Romans, 3 million ethnic Poles, 5 million Slavs and 6 million Jews by the Nazi regime and its

accomplices. As we examine history, we realize what horror and violence can result from racism, bigotry, scapegoating, prejudice and hatred. This day calls all of us to examine our own prejudices and hatreds and leads us to conversion of heart so that such atrocities will never happen again. We must never allow such forces of evil to exist and grow unchecked — in our own hearts, in our families or in our communities. Together, we must guard against and condemn all attempts to divide us from one another. As the COVID 19 pandemic has shown us, what affects one of us, affects all. 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. Let us live as brothers and sisters, extending love and compassion to all people. In solidarity, let us work each day to build a world of unity in diversity and hope grounded in justice.

God, we pray for all victims of genocide, hatred, bigotry and racism. Help us to stand in solidarity with one another whenever the forces of hatred and violence threaten us or our neighbors. Give us the courage to act on behalf of all humanity in the struggle against evil, injustice and greed. Help us to keep the stories of the holocaust alive so that we and future generations will remember and learn from history, always being vigilant in order to prevent such horrors from ever happening again.