

## International Solidarity Days-January 2022

### January 1—World Day of Peace



2022 marks the 55<sup>th</sup> annual World Day of Peace. The theme is “Education, work and dialogue between generations: tools for building lasting peace.” In this year’s address, the Pope Francis outlines three paths for building a lasting peace: promoting dialogue between generations, investing in education, and improving labor conditions. Francis observes that in recent years, there has been a significant reduction in education funding, while military spending has escalated, now surpassing even cold war levels. He calls for educational spending to be viewed as an investment, rather than as an expenditure. This investment in our future should far surpass military spending since educational investment, accompanied by the promotion of a culture of care, will make the world far safer than weapons have ever made us.

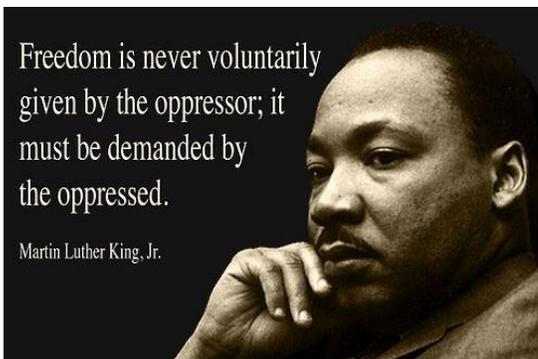
This year, the pope also calls for a new alliance between the young and elderly to address the problems of isolation and self-absorption that have been growing due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The creation of intergenerational partnerships will enrich the young with the wisdom and experience of the elderly, while the elderly will experience the life-giving support, affection, creativity, and dynamism of the young. He believes that this level of intergenerational sharing can become an effective force for creating healthy politics that work for the common good.

The third component for building a lasting peace is the global promotion of “decent and dignified working conditions, oriented to the common good and to the safeguarding of creation.” Pope Francis points out that “labor, in fact, is the foundation on which to build justice and solidarity in every community. ... The freedom of entrepreneurial initiatives needs to be ensured and supported; at the same time, efforts must be made to encourage a renewed sense of social responsibility, so that profit will not be the sole guiding criterion.”

In concluding his message, Pope Francis urges: “May more and more men and women strive daily, with quiet humility and courage, to be artisans of peace. And may they be ever inspired and accompanied by the blessings of the God of peace!”

*Merciful God, we ask you to bless us as we strive to truly become artisans of peace. Open us to intergenerational dialogue so that we may learn from one another how to live our truth, informed by wisdom and experience and animated with creativity and mutual support. Let our work always be directed toward the common good, realizing that what affects one affects all. On this World Day of Peace, bless us with peace-filled and compassionate hearts.*

### January 15—Birthday of Martin Luther King, Jr.



The birthday of Martin Luther King, Jr. has become a global celebration of hope. Doctor King’s commitment to active non-violence in the face of racial discrimination, hatred and violence has inspired freedom movements throughout the world. His peaceful resistance to war and oppression has become a beacon of love that continues to guide the way toward true and lasting peace. His life also reminds us that the price of Christian discipleship lived in love and non-violence can be high, perhaps even costing one’s life. But we also know that each step we take toward building the beloved community of justice brings us closer to lasting peace.

*God, we thank you for the life and inspiration of Martin Luther King Jr. As we journey through life, bless us with the courage and strength to face whatever life presents, returning only blessing. Where there is hatred, let me sow love; where there is injury, pardon; where there is doubt, faith; where there is despair, hope; where there is fear, compassion; where there is darkness, light; where there is sadness, joy.*

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

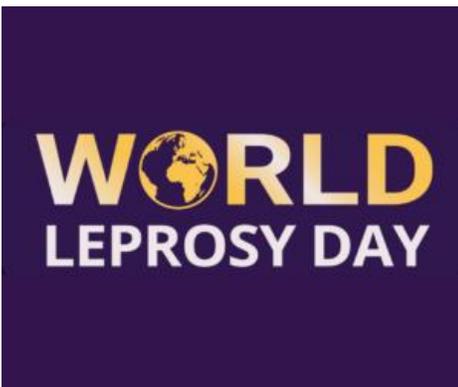


International Day of Commemoration of the Victims of the Holocaust is held on January 27, the date in 1945 when Soviet troops liberated the Nazi concentration camp at Auschwitz-Birkenau in Poland. Traditionally, this was a day to listen to the stories of holocaust survivors, as a way of remembering the 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 Romanians, 3 million ethnic Poles, 5 million Slavs and 6 million Jews by the Nazi regime and its accomplices. We do this sacred remembering so that we can learn what bigotry, hatred, prejudice and

racism can lead to. We realize that we must never be silent in the face of such evils but must resist these attitudes whenever and wherever we recognize them. This day also 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 guard against all attempts to divide people from one another and realize that we are all brothers and sisters. Today, as the last survivors become fewer and fewer, let us retell their stories and study the lessons of the past so that such history is never repeated. In honor of all those lost through such violence and inhumanity, let us build a world of justice, peace, and love that honors diversity and lifts up the gifts of every person in gratitude.

*God, we pray for all victims of genocide, hatred, bigotry, and racism. Help us to treasure diversity and to honor the life of every person. Give us the courage to stand in solidarity with one another in the face of hatred, violence, bigotry, and injustice. As we keep the stories of the holocaust alive as a lesson for all of us, help us to be vigilant so that such horrors will never happen again.*

### **January 30<sup>th</sup> —World Leprosy Day**



World Leprosy Day is held on the January 30<sup>th</sup>, to raise consciousness about leprosy, also known as Hansen’s Disease. Every day, about 30-40 people are diagnosed with this treatable disease. However, many victims fail to get early diagnosis and treatment due to persistent myths and stigma associated with this illness. If left untreated, the disease can have disfiguring and debilitating life-long effects. This day is a day dedicated to raising awareness of the treatable nature of this disease and to remove the discrimination that patients continue to face, even after they are treated and cured. In some communities, a person with leprosy may be removed from family and from the community. Many are refused jobs or access to education, even though they may be totally cured following a course of antibiotic therapy. Because of this, many infected patients hide their illness, sometimes for long periods

of time. Leprosy can be eradicated globally, with early treatment. This day of awareness raising is another step in this direction.

*Divine healer, we pray for all those who suffer from leprosy. May the good news of healing treatment dispel the fear and stigma that still surrounds this disease. Transform the age-old fear of leprosy into a new hope for ridding the world of this illness through early diagnosis and treatment. Most of all, inspire all of us to reach out in compassion to all who suffer because of leprosy or other illnesses that are shrouded in stigma. Help us to do whatever we can to “embrace the leper” as Saint Francis did, overcoming our own fears and extending love.*