

International Solidarity Days-February 2022

February 6—International Day of Zero Tolerance to Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)



Female genital mutilation (FGM) comprises all procedures that involve altering or injuring the female genitalia for non-medical reasons and is recognized internationally as a violation of the human rights, the health and the integrity of girls and women. In addition, the medical risks, including severe blood loss, infections, pain, later complications during childbirth, and possible long-term negative psychological effects, are well recognized. Although primarily concentrated in 30 countries in Africa and the Middle East, female genital mutilation is a universal problem and continues to persist amongst immigrant populations living in Western Europe, North America, Australia and New Zealand. FGM has been declining in recent years, but the covid pandemic has significantly slowed the efforts to educate people about the harmful effects of this practice as well as debunking the myths

about why this procedure is practiced. To eliminate this form of violence against women and girls it will take a coordinated and systematic effort that must engage whole communities and focus on human rights, gender equality, sexual education, and attention to the needs of women and girls who suffer from its consequences.

Holy One, thank you for the wonderful bodies with which you have gifted us. These “earthen vessels” have their origins in the same cosmic stardust that birthed the earth itself. All that you created is good and holy and is to be cherished, protected, and honored. We pray that FGM will end so that no woman or girl is abused in this way. We pray that women and men everywhere will come to appreciate that a woman’s body is holy just as you created it.

February 8—International Day of Prayer and Awareness Against Human Trafficking



The Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace and the International Union of Superiors General (UISG) has designated February 8, the feast day of St. Josephine Bakhita—a former slave and victim of human trafficking, as an annual day of prayer and awareness against human trafficking. Trafficking in persons is a crime against humanity and ultimately a sin. Human trafficking denies the value of human life, exposes victims to serious health risks, endangers the mental well-being of victims and impedes the ability of victims to reach their full God-given potential. In 2018, about 50,000 victims were detected and reported to authorities in 148 countries. Of these, 50% were victims of sexual exploitation, while 38 % were victims of forced labor. Women and girls make up about 65% of those trafficked, and globally, about 1/3 of those trafficked are children. The number of boys is estimated to have increased five times over the past 15 years. For those lucky enough to be rescued, return to their own countries and families may or may not be possible. For all, the process of rehabilitation, education, and psychological support is a long, slow process. Lives of victims have been forever changed, and rebuilding trust and self-esteem requires an ongoing effort. Human trafficking is a form of modern-day slavery and must be addressed by global efforts to eradicate it. This day calls us to become aware of the warning signs of human trafficking and to report suspected cases to authorities.

O God, bless and comfort all those who suffer as victims of human trafficking. Keep their hope alive as they await rescue or escape. Keep them safe on their journey to recovery. Inspire each of us with determination and courage to report suspected situations of human trafficking. Change the hearts of traffickers and those who profit from human trafficking. Help them to see all human beings as their brothers and sisters, and to free those they have ensnared. Let us build a global economy free of human trafficking.

February 11—World Day of the Sick

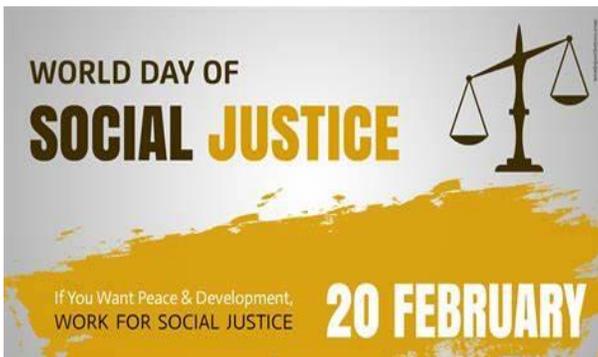


The World Day of the Sick was instituted in 1992 by Pope John Paul II and is celebrated on the feast day of Our Lady of Lourdes. The theme of this 30th World Day of the Sick is: *“Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful”*. Mercy is an “ever-present and active force...combining strength and tenderness.” (30th World Day of the Sick Papal Address) On this day, Catholics over the world pray for those suffering with illness or injury, as well as those who minister to them. We are also called to be attentive to their unique needs through acts of strong and tender mercy. In 2021, Pope Francis reminded us that *“Investing resources in the care and assistance of the sick is a priority linked to the fundamental principle that health is a primary common good.”* In 2022, the Pope calls us to be especially mindful of the many people around the world who live in extreme poverty and still have little or no access to healthcare. We are reminded that we have a long way to go to ensure that those on the margins of society receive the care and support they need. This year, Francis concludes his message by recalling the indispensable service of the health care ministry. We can all share in the healing ministry of Jesus, by making ourselves close to those who suffer because “the ministry of consolation is a task for every baptized person, mindful of the word of Jesus: “I was sick and you visited me” (Mt 25:36)”.

For Pope Francis’ World Day of the Sick address see: [30th World Day of the Sick 2022 | Francis \(vatican.va\)](#)

God of healing, we pray for all who are suffering from illness or injury. May they be blessed with a return to good health and with loving, merciful care from family, friends, and caregivers. Bless, also, those who reach out in love and compassion to care for the sick. May they be supported and strengthened in their ministry as they tirelessly serve those in need of care. Open our hearts as we visit, listen to and support those in need of healing.

February 20—World Day of Social Justice



This day is dedicated to sustainable development, eradication of poverty, equitable economic growth, gender equality, and universal equality for all human beings. It has long been recognized that there can be no peace without justice. And Martin Luther King Jr reminded us that “Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere.” In 2022, the theme for the World Day of Social Justice is “A Call for Social Justice in the Digital Economy”. The lack of access to education, electricity, and technology severely limits employment opportunities for many of the world’s poor, which makes them more vulnerable to labor exploitation. Many struggle to make a living wage. With

no options open to them, many families struggle for adequate nutrition, housing, and basic healthcare. Recently, Pope Francis met with leaders of popular movements around the world and encouraged them to continue their struggle for justice. He called for a universal basic income and the shortening of the working day as a partial solution to the economic crisis being experienced by millions of people. This would allow people to provide for their basic needs and allow more people to find work, since people would no longer have to work 2-3 jobs just to get by. Pope Francis said, “I believe these measures are necessary, but of course not sufficient...but I wanted to mention them because they are possible measures and would point us in the right direction.”

God, we ask you to open our hearts and minds as we struggle to create a more just and peaceful world. Inspire us to creatively address the unjust social structures that perpetuate inequality. As we seek to rebuild our global societies after the COVID pandemic, may we move toward a flourishing future built on social justice and peace.

February 28—International Stand Up to Bullying Day—wear a pink shirt



Bullying is unwanted, aggressive behavior that involves a real or perceived power imbalance. On this day we are all called to take a visible, public stance against bullying by wearing a pink shirt. By doing this, we send a clear message to bullies all over the world that their behavior of intimidation will not be tolerated. Wearers pledge to stand with victims and to intervene on their behalf whenever bullying is witnessed. Wearers also communicate that they are willing to offer support to victims of bullying, and thereby hopefully prevent suicides that can result from the isolation victims often feel. Bullying denies the inherent

dignity of every human person and is unacceptable. We must put an end to such behavior, whether committed by children in the school yard, or by autocratic rulers of nations who intimidate their own citizens and/or neighboring countries.

God, we pray for courage to stand up against all levels of bullying. Whether it occurs in the school yards or in the halls of power, help us to denounce it and actively intervene to stop it so that persons being bullied do not have to stand alone. Help us to treat everyone with dignity and respect. Help us to listen to, honor, and empower one another so that we can all grow to reach our full potential. Inspire us to value our diversity as we enrich one another with our unique giftedness.