

Mission Intention

JANUARY

2019 - 2020

Pope's January Prayer Intention

We pray that Christians, followers of other religions, and all people of goodwill may work toward peace and justice



Country Focus: Afghanistan

How many Catholic parishes do you think it would take to serve a country about the same size as the state of Texas?

There are more than 1,000 Catholic parishes in the state of Texas, but in Afghanistan, this month's country focus, there is just one Catholic church in the entire country.

Built inside the Italian Embassy, Our Lady of Divine Providence is the only permanent Catholic Church operating in Afghanistan. Its parishioners are all foreigners as Islam is the state religion in Afghanistan and it is illegal for a Muslim to convert to Christianity. Because it is against the law to evangelize, Catholics in Afghanistan share their faith without using words. The Missionaries of Charity run an orphanage for abandoned children and provide assistance

to families. Catholic Relief Services provides education and agricultural assistance to farmers. These actions serve as a witness of Christ's love to Afghan citizens.

The Church also prays for its Afghan neighbors, asking God to grant the country peace after decades of instability and conflict. Let us join our voices with the Holy Father and the Church in Afghanistan this month and pray that all people of good will work together for peace and justice in the world.



Promoting Knowledge of Faith

God's Word for Mission

"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God" (Matthew 5:9).

"We have to move from our devotion to independence...to a commitment to human solidarity...Love implies concern for all—especially the poor—and a continued search for those social and economic structures that permit everyone to share in a community that is part of a redeemed creation" (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, Economic Justice for All, no. 365).

Education for Community Life

Saint Spotlight: Saint Elizabeth of Portugal



Saint Elizabeth of Portugal has many titles: Saint, Queen, Princess, Peacemaker.

Saint Elizabeth of Portugal began her life as Princess Isabella of Spain in 1271. As a child, she was known for her devotion to God, and she didn't let her royal title and upbringing stop her from dedicating her life to serving Christ. When she married the King of Portugal and became the country's queen, she prayed several times a day, attended Mass every morning, offered shelter to poor travelers, built a hospital and orphanage, and founded a convent.

But perhaps what she is most remembered for is her ability to bring peace to her family and her kingdom. As queen, Elizabeth often helped settle arguments between royal leaders of her day, many of whom were her family members. She repeatedly helped mend the relationship between her husband and son who fought constantly, she helped resolve a misunderstanding between the King of Aragon and his cousin who claimed the crown, and she helped her son, who by that time had become Portugal's king, resolve a disagreement with his son-in-law.

Queen Elizabeth retired to a monastery after the death of her husband. She died around 1336, and about 300 years later became a saint. She was canonized in 1625, and became officially known as Saint Elizabeth of Portugal. We remember Saint Elizabeth of Portugal, and her gift of peacemaking, each year on her feast day, July 4.

Solidarity

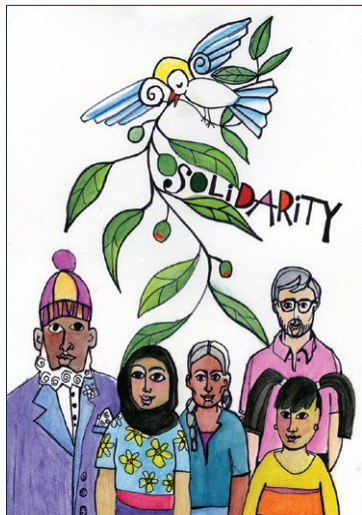


Photo Credit: Br. Mickey McGrath, OSFS

In the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus commands us to love our neighbors as we love ourselves (Matthew 22:39). One way we can do this is to live out the Catholic social teaching theme of solidarity.

Living in solidarity simply means respecting and valuing each other and treating others the way you would want to be treated. It can mean visiting the sick, feeding the hungry, giving drink to the thirsty, and asking government leaders to pass laws that make sure everyone's basic needs are met and that allow everyone in the world to live safely. Solidarity is something all people and communities should strive for, not just those who are Catholic. That is why the Holy Father asks all people to work toward peace and justice in this month's prayer intention. It takes all of us working

together to create the fairness and harmony in society necessary for human development.

In our country focus section, you read that several Catholic agencies are bearing witness to God's love by living in solidarity with the Afghan people. In this month's video, you will learn about the work one of those agencies, Catholic Relief Services (CRS), has done to help provide education for people living in rural Afghanistan. As you watch the video linked below, think about how CRS is living out the Catholic Social Teaching theme of solidarity. How are CRS' actions building peace and justice for the people of Afghanistan? How is this a witness of God's love? How is CRS working with people of other religions and goodwill to build solidarity for the people of Afghanistan, in response to this month's prayer intention?

Community-based Education's Impact in Afghanistan: [Click Here](#)>>

1. What images in this month's video helped you understand more about the lives of people in rural Afghanistan? How do you think their lives are similar or different from yours? Why is education so important in addressing poverty?
2. How is CRS' work in Afghanistan an example of solidarity?
3. How can you respond to this month's prayer intention and work toward peace and justice in your own community?



Mission Petitions

- ✦ Let us pray that we might share Christ's love with the world, one kindness at a time.
- ✦ Let us pray that we might grow in solidarity with all our brothers and sisters, regardless of where they live or what they believe.
- ✦ Let us pray for the Church in Afghanistan and its Afghan neighbors, that they might grow together in peace and justice.
- ✦ Let us pray for a world that values every human being as members of the one human family.

Daily Offering

Dear God,

We thank you for the life and witness of St. Elizabeth of Portugal. Help us to follow the example of St. Elizabeth and always bring peace to those we meet, and be instruments of reconciliation. We ask this through Jesus Christ, who is the Prince of Peace. Amen.