

The Commission of Religious Leaders

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COMMISSION OF RELIGIOUS LEADERS EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE Commemorates Universal Children's Day, November 20th

Every child has been created in the sacred image of the Divine and has a right to dignity, safety and peace. However, we have failed the children of the world, as millions of children are in harm's way, abuse and exploitation are the daily threats that face millions of young people. Across the globe, nearly 50 million children have had to leave home, with 28 million fleeing brutal conflict and millions more escaping extreme poverty.ⁱ The challenges facing children today are overwhelming, but the suffering children face is not inevitable.ⁱⁱ It is our responsibility to act, work together and ensure a brighter future.

Universal Children's Day was established in 1954 by the United Nations and is celebrated on November 20th each year to promote "international togetherness, awareness among children worldwide, and improving children's welfare."ⁱⁱⁱ In many parts of the world, religious communities come together to commemorate this day. Today we remind ourselves that we are only caretakers for the world that our children will inherit.

On this 20th day of November 2017, we recall the timeless teaching of the prophet Isaiah, "All of the children shall be taught about the Almighty, and great shall be the peace of your children." (Isaiah 54:13). The Hebrew text can be read that "your children" may also be read as "your builders" for our children are the builders of tomorrow.

Our parents bequeathed to us a legacy of love. May we perpetuate their memory in providing our young people with a hand to hold, a shoulder upon which to lean and above all an example from which to learn. The flowers of tomorrow are born of the seeds we plant today. May we protect the sacredness of our children who hopefully will blossom and become the courageous leaders of tomorrow.

His Eminence Timothy Cardinal Dolan
Archdiocese of New York

Rev. Dr. A.R. Bernard, Sr.
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Rabbi Joseph Potasnik
New York Board of Rabbis

Rev. Dr. Jimmy Lim
Commission of Religious Leaders

In this spirit we appeal to our communities to join hands in this call to action on behalf of all children:

1. Educate ourselves about the violence that children experience around the globe.
2. Convene discussions about the needs of children with experts in child welfare and safety.
3. Promote the rights of children and study the religious texts that teach about protecting children.
4. Teach non-violent forms of discipline and education to parents, teachers and care-givers.
5. Undertake an awareness campaign to inform ourselves and our sacred communities about the extent of the dangers facing our children worldwide using social media and all forms of outreach.
6. Mobilize faith leaders and their communities to work in partnership to protect the world's children by recognizing November 20th annually in our sermons, programs and events.
7. Advocate for laws that will better protect children in our Cities, States and Country.
8. Engage technology leaders to develop new tools to protect children from online exploitation.
9. Expand the programs to meet the needs of victims of child abuse and exploitation.
10. Make a commitment to ending violence against children by signing the 2017 Panama Declaration on Ending Violence Against Children^{iv} and The Declaration of Rome at 2017 World Congress: Child Dignity in the Digital World^v.

i <https://www.unicefusa.org/mission/emergencies/child-refugees>

ii https://www.unicef.org/publications/files/Hidden_in_plain_sight_statistical_analysis_Summary_EN_2_Sept_2014.pdf

iii <http://www.un.org/en/events/childrenday/>

iv <https://gnrc.net/en/component/zdocs/document/download/1173>

v

https://www.childdignity2017.org/fileadmin/downloads/press_releases/20170531/Child_Dignity_World_Congress_Declaration_ENG.pdf