



As we move through August, two dates invite us into deep reflection and renewed commitment:

August 19 – World Humanitarian Day

On this day we honor the countless men and women who venture into conflict zones, refugee camps, disaster sites and forgotten corners of our world to bring food, medicine, shelter and—most of all—hope. Their witness reminds us that compassion is not passive sympathy but active solidarity: we do not stand apart from suffering, but stand with the suffering, bearing one another’s burdens.

August 25 – Anniversary of Slavery and Racism

August 25 marks the landing in 1619 of the first ship carrying enslaved Africans to Point Comfort (now Fort Monroe), a moment that unleashed centuries of brutality and entrenched racial hierarchies across the Americas. Today we remember this original sin, lament the generations of injustice it spawned, and acknowledge how its legacy still shapes our communities—our institutions, our laws, and even our hearts.

Though these observances arise from very different contexts, they converge in a single call: to see the face of the divine in every human being, to refuse indifference, and to work tirelessly for justice. The humanitarian who distributes water in a parched desert and the activist who dismantles racist policies alike testify that love must be embodied — through presence, through advocacy, through sacrificial service.

As chaplains and caregivers, we are invited into this work of remembrance and repair. We accompany those traumatized by violence and exclusion; we challenge systems that deny dignity; and we cultivate communities where every person can flourish. May our prayers be more than words, but fuel for the hard work of healing our world.

A Prayer of Lament and Petition

Spirit of Compassion, Source of All Life,
You who accompany the refugee and bind up the brokenhearted,
We confess the sin of slavery that began on our shores in August 1619,
and the racism that followed in its wake.
We grieve the stolen lives, the shattered families,
and the silence of those who stood by.

We uphold the memory of our ancestors—enslaved, courageous, and resilient—
and we recommit ourselves to uprooting every vestige of their oppression.

We give thanks for every humanitarian soul, on this August 19 and always,
who crosses borders of fear and apathy to bring aid and dignity.
May their courage kindle our own,
and may we, too, bear witness with word and deed.

Grant us strength and multiply our numbers,
that we may pursue justice as passionately as we pursue mercy;
that we may uplift the oppressed with both policy and prayer;
and that, by your grace, a world once broken may be made whole.

Amen