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Kwanzaa Calls Us All To Be Better

I have been aware of our national observance of Kwanzaa for several years. My awareness has been heightened this year by our Pittsburgh Mercy Sister Jean Murin's monthly calendar of daily intentions for prayer. She has been including the Kwanzaa intention each day December 26–January 1.

James C Anyike in *African American Holidays* notes that Kwanzaa is most important on the African American calendar. Its observance transcends religious, ideological, regional and class boundaries.

Kwanzaa is a recently developed celebration, first observed in 1966 and founded by cultural nationalist Dr Maulana Karenga in San Diego, California. It highlights seven principles.

These principles are of great value for our African American community, as well as for all of us in the United States and global communities.

The Kwanzaa principles and some reflections about them follow.

Unity: this has growing importance in our fracturing global community, building on the reality that we are all created and loved by God. At root we are all sister and brothers; blessed are we when we act accordingly!

Self-determination: Given our origin and the dignity that flows from that, we actually are all first class citizens on planet Earth. We are wise to be proud of this and respectful of it in everyone else. Respecting self-determination is especially important for powerful people and groups to heed, side-stepping "It's our way or no way!!" It takes a lot of energy to really listen to one another and truly deliberate on issues.

Collective Work and Responsibility: Kentucky's motto, "United we stand, divided we fall" seems like

a similar expression of this value. Life will only be in right relationship if we work together, with each of us taking responsibility for our contributions to the general welfare. It now sounds trite but is fundamentally true that "it takes a village" to accomplish anything worthwhile.

Cooperative Economics: With our Earth home getting warmer too fast, this value calls us all to do our part to keep it more livable. Sir Richard Stern, a renowned economist, has alerted us to a very unsustainable economic bill if we don't start working hard now to slow greatly our onslaught on our beautiful planet. An economic goal is justice for all, not just for some powerful interests. For example, much current United States energy policy seems faulty because several stake-holders were kept out of the room during the policy decision-making. Who was in the room has still not become public information!

Purpose: How can we truly live without it?

Creativity: Our growing challenges, not to mention the speed of change we are experiencing, demand all the creativity we can muster and cultivate in our young people.

Faith: Faith in God and faith in one another, drawing out our best qualities.

For all of us starting yet another new year on the calendar we use and feel called to make resolutions to guide us through it all. This Kwanzaa observance and the principles highlighted are well timed!

Thanks to our United States Postal Service for a special stamp in honor of Kwanzaa!

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