

- 1 “The Red Cross” is known as one of the main international aid agencies. Nowadays The Red Cross is involved in helping when there are disasters such as earthquakes, floods, plane crashes.
- 2 In time of war, the Red Cross is neutral, providing help to all who need it - for example in Bosnia during and after the civil war there in the 1990s. Missing people can sometimes be traced through the Red Cross. In a war zone, hospital ships and vehicles carrying wounded people often bear a red cross, informing soldiers that they should not fire.
- 3 How did the Red Cross start? Yesterday, 8th May, is the anniversary in 1828 of the birth of Jean Henri Dunant in Switzerland. Aged 31, in the Franco-Prussian War, he became extremely concerned about the condition of the wounded soldiers he saw. He proposed that there be an international aid agency to help injured soldiers during a time of war.
- 4 He wanted to choose a flag to represent the organisation, and so he simply reversed the colours of his national flag of Switzerland - the white cross becoming red, and the red background of the Swiss flag becoming white. The ‘**International Red Cross**’, as it was called, started in 1864.
- 5 In countries where the religion is Islam, the same aid agency is called ‘**The Red Crescent**’, with its flag of a red crescent-shaped moon on a white background. Whilst the cross is a symbol for Christians, the moon is sometimes a symbol for Muslims (the followers of Islam), and some Islamic countries have a crescent-shaped moon as part of their national flag e.g. Algeria, Pakistan, Singapore, and Turkey.
- 6 The places where Islam started were desert countries. At night time people

would be able to find directions by looking at the position of the moon and the stars. The moon and the stars reminded Muslims that God (Allah) would direct and lead his people.

- 7 A Muslim once said: *“At night you Westerners see thousands of stars in the sky. We Muslims see only a few stars - and God.”*
- 8 *Let us pray:*

**God of all nations and all people,
inspire us
to live in your presence each day.
On our journey through life
lead us to choose
the right direction,
and show us
how to respect and value others,
even if we do not agree with them.
May we find other people
as willing to help us
as we are willing to help them.
Amen.**

This is an excerpt from the page of this date in
'Praying Each Day of the Year',
a 3-volume book
by Nicholas Hutchinson, FSC.

For details:

<http://www.matthew-james.co.uk/>

Could make use of a search engine
to research this topic further.

This material is part of
the prayer and education website
of the De La Salle Brothers
in Great Britain:
www.prayingeachday.org