International Solidarity Days – April 2020

April 4—International Day of Landmine Awareness & Assistance in Mine Action

The effort to stop the production and use of landmines as weapons of war continues to be an urgent issue around the world. Thousands of people are maimed or killed by landmines each year, in 84 countries. In some of these countries armed conflicts have already been resolved, and yet undetected landmines still threaten children at play, farmers attempting to replant dormant fields, women going to collect water, and other innocent victims. Governments continue to seek out and destroy these buried weapons of war, but the process is painstakingly slow. In areas of the world where conflicts continue, more and more of these explosives continue to be deployed, threatening innocent civilians both now and into the future. This day is dedicated to calling on all countries to abandon the use of landmines and to assist affected nations with their location and removal efforts. In Angola, Africa Prince Harry has taken up this cause, following in the footsteps of his mother, Princess Diana. His goal is to rid Angola of all landmines by 2025. Diana’s and Harry’s efforts have helped raise awareness of this issue globally and citizens everywhere are now demanding that their governments join in the effort to rid the world of landmines.

God of peace, open our hearts to one another so that dialogue and mutual understanding can replace armed conflict as a way to resolve our differences. Strengthen our resolve to rid the world of landmines that threaten innocent lives long after armed conflicts have stopped. Teach us to treat each other and Earth with respect and care.

April 7—World Health Day

2020 marks the 72nd anniversary of the founding of the World Health Organization (WHO) and is the International Year of Nurses and Midwives. So on April 7, 2020 the WHO is dedicating World Health Day to nurses and midwives who deliver healthcare to millions of people around the world, often at great risk to their own health and wellbeing. This heroism is especially evident as the world faces the devastating effects of COVID-19 worldwide. Healthcare workers care for the sick, often without adequate personal protective equipment (PPE), and some have died in the effort to care for those infected. On this day, the first ever assessment of the world’s nursing workforce will be published. It will also shed light on the global nursing needs in the near future. A similar report on the midwife workforce will be released in 2021. On this day we call on all of us to thank these dedicated healthcare professionals for their loving and committed service in ordinary times as well as during healthcare emergencies and pandemics. We also call on governments and healthcare institutions to include nurses and midwives in decision-making regarding healthcare policy and delivery. Further, we ask that investment in nursing and midwife education and availability of PPE increase in order to strengthen their ability to serve the needs of all the people.

Holy One, we pray for all those who care for the sick throughout the world. This year we especially pray for the health and safety of nurses and midwives who are the frontline caregivers in many parts of the world. Bless them as they willingly put themselves at risk in order to care for those in need of comfort and healing. We also pray for all healthcare workers that they will continue their lives of service and that more young people will be inspired by their dedication to follow in their footsteps.
April 12—International Day for Street Children

Children are the future of the world. Every child needs security and love in order to grow, learn and develop to their fullest potential. In every country, children can be found living on the streets in dire poverty, not knowing where their next meal will come from. These children are often treated by others as less than human. They are feared, taken advantage of and treated with disdain. Many are forced to live on the streets by poverty, parental deaths from AIDS or other illnesses, abusive family situations, or by displacement due to war and family separations. Because they lack proper identification documents, they are often unable to enroll in school. Even in counties with “free” primary education, identification documents are needed, a uniform to wear to school is required, and books and other supplies must be purchased. Without access to education, street children are forced to utilize their own resourcefulness to survive, without adult supervision and guidance. Once they are living on the streets, very few programs exist to help street children. Every child is precious and deserves love, guidance, protection, food, basic access to education and healthcare, and a safe place to live. We have a long way to go toward this goal, but on this day, we must recommit to doing whatever we can to protect and reach out to these children.

Loving God, protect all street children struggling to survive in impossible situations of poverty and neglect. Surround them with caring and generous people who will reach out to them with food, clothing, shelter, healthcare and education. Inspire governmental leaders to develop identification documents that can ensure access to services that these children need, and programs that can care for and protect them.

April 22—Earth Day

April 22 marks the 50th anniversary of Earth Day. This year’s theme is: "Climate Action." Climate change presents the biggest challenge to life on planet earth. There is no doubt that climate change due to human activity will require human action in order to stabilize the climate and protect life support systems that make our Earth home inhabitable. On this day we call on people throughout the world to action, in order to create a cleaner, safer, more just and sustainable world that protects and supports all of us. Earth Day challenges citizens of the world to come together and demand that our governments join us and lead the efforts to address climate change and to uphold the goals of the Paris Climate Agreement of 2015.

Creator God, we thank you for the gift of Earth, our Mother, whose diversity sustains life. Bless all our efforts to make the changes necessary to address climate change that threatens our planet. Inspire climate actions by individuals and governments so that future generations can continue to experience the beauty and wonder of your creation and to praise you night and day!