International Solidarity Days – May 2020

May 1—International Workers’ Day

Also known as May Day, International Workers’ Day honors laborers and workers around the world whose daily work builds and maintains society, economic systems, and supports families and communities. In this time of the COVID-19 pandemic, we have all become acutely aware of the dangerous conditions that so many workers face each day. It is common around the world for workers to lose their jobs if they miss work, even when they are suffering from serious illness. Many jobs are extremely dangerous, threatening the lives of workers and the wellbeing of their families. Although Catholic social teaching upholds the rights of workers to organize in order to make their needs known to their employers, many workers still do not have this right. In many jobs, workers have little or no job security and can be let go without any due process. In still other situations, workers wages earned after a full day’s labor (often 12 hours or more) do not even amount to a living wage. May 1st is a day to call attention to worker safety issues, to demand fair and just living wages, and to call for paid sick leave not only to protect the health of the sick worker but also his/her coworkers.

God of justice, we thank you for the brave men and women whose work sustains their families and communities and who make our social structures possible. We also remember the struggles of past and present workers for fair wages, a safe workplace and paid sick leave. As workers continue to advocate for their rights, give them job security so that they can continue to earn a living. Bless their labor and inspire us all to express gratitude to those who serve their communities and society, whenever we have an opportunity to do so.

May 15—The 89th Anniversary of Quadragesimo Anno

On May 15, 1931, Pope Pius XI published his encyclical Quadragesimo Anno (QA) on the 40th anniversary of Pope Leo XIII’s encyclical Rerum Novarum. These two encyclicals outlined the moral principles that should inform the just development of the social order that was emerging following the industrial revolution. In QA, Pope Pius XI addressed issues such as private property and the common good, the rights and responsibilities related to capital and labor, the right to work as a human right, and the right for workers to earn a living wage for themselves and their families. QA further highlighted the essential role of labor in creating capital, and capital’s essential role in creating flourishing economies. It also called on governments to ensure the common good by taxation and equitable redistribution of goods and services, and building and maintaining infrastructures needed to support all members of society. We continue today to work toward this balance in societal relationships. We often find that government and the wealthy who own and control capital work hand in hand, with little or no input from the poor and from workers, without regard for the common good. Today is a day to remember the messages of QA, and to call on governments, capital and labor to come together for the sake of the common good and for the good of Earth herself.

Holy One, we pray for the poor who suffer because of the imbalance in power and wealth created by the globalization of indifference. Inspire those who lead governments and those who control capital to listen to the poor and representatives of labor in order to build a sustainable future together that is just and compassionate.
May 21—Feast of Blessed Franz Jägerstätter

Franz Jägerstätter, like St Francis had a rather wild youth, joining a motorcycle gang and often disturbing the peace of his little village. After marrying, he seemed to settle down into his life as a farmer, studying scripture and becoming a third order secular Franciscan. He took the Gospel and Franciscan message of non-violence to heart just as the Nazi party was coming to power in Germany. After the Nazi annexation of Austria, where Franz lived, he quickly learned of their activities and intentions. Based on his religious convictions, he refused to cooperate with their agenda. When he was conscripted into the German army, he refused military service, believing that this would be a form of complicity with the Nazi regime. In spite of the fact that he had a wife and three daughters, he continued to follow his conscience. He was arrested and later beheaded for treason on August 9, 1943 at the age of 33. His life gives testimony to the fact that active nonviolence can demand much of us. Standing up against intimidation, war, injustice and oppression can even cost us our lives. Like Franz, we are called to live Jesus’ message of love, peacemaking and non-violence. May our lives inspire others, just as the life of Franz Jägerstätter inspires us.

Loving God, we pray for an end to injustice, intimidation, violence and war. We recommits ourselves to Gospel love, compassion and peace-making. We ask that you bless us with courage and determination whenever we face threats or hardships because of this commitment. Make us true bearers of Easter light to our suffering world.

May 22—International Day for Biological Diversity

Biodiversity is what forms the web of life of which we are a part. It is a product of billions of years of evolution. Globally, 25% of all plant and animal species are threatened with extinction. This year, the theme for International Day for Biological Diversity is “Our solutions are in nature.” We recognize that to care for our common home requires us to live in harmony with nature. We know that we have the capacity to “bend the curve” on biodiversity loss, for the good of Earth and to create a sustainable future for our planet. Now more than ever, we realize that human health depends upon the health and diversity of Earth’s ecosystems. Species extinctions ultimately lead to the collapse of ecosystems, and will eventually make our planet unrecognizable, and unable to sustain human habitation. Today, let us renew our determination to protect Earth’s biodiversity. Let us evaluate our life choices and begin to live sustainably and responsibly for the good of all creation.

Creator God, awaken us to the urgent need to change our lives in order to protect the biodiversity of our planet. Open our eyes to the wonders of creation which reveal your presence and love. We give thanks for all your creatures, realizing that each is a unique gift. Help us to protect the treasure of biodiversity by living in right relationship with each other and with creation.
May 24—Fifth Anniversary of *Laudato Si: On the Care of Our Common Home*

*Laudato Si—On the Care of Our Common Home* is the encyclical published in 2015 by Pope Francis. It calls on all the people of the world to reflect on the divine love revealed in all of creation and to dedicate ourselves to the care of creation. The Pope calls all of us to recognize the wonder and beauty of Earth and to take time to contemplate its mysteries. He focuses our attention to the destruction of the planet that we are witnessing today, much of which is due to human activity. He also links the care for the poor and the care of creation in what he calls an “integral ecology”. Care for creation demands that we create a future where the needs of the poor are met and the gifts of creation are shared in a sustainable and equitable way. This 5th anniversary of the encyclical is a time to renew our efforts to create a sustainable world together.

Holy One, thank you for the wonder of creation which reveals your beauty, power, and love. We pray that you will open our hearts so that we can discover new vision and new ways of living that will allow us to move forward in harmony with creation. Help us to live sustainable lives for the common good and for the good of Earth, our common home.