International Solidarity Days - June 2020

June 5—World Environment Day

Celebrated in 100 countries, the United Nations’ (UN) World Environment Day calls all citizens of the world to raise awareness about the care of Earth. The theme for World Environment Day 2020 is “The Mighty Earth” with a focus on biodiversity. The 2020 host country for the UN celebrations is Columbia in partnership with Germany. Having recently celebrated the 5th anniversary of the papal encyclical Laudato Si, Catholics are now more aware than ever of our responsibility to care for our common home. The encyclical reminds us that we are not only to “care” for Earth, but to recognize ourselves as one with all of creation. This transformational awareness leads to a spiritual conversion from which meaningful and decisive action for the common good emerges. Let us remember:

In the web of earthly life all living beings are intertwined.
Failing to protect healthy ecosystems, disasters stay tuned.
Now and then, nature is cautioning humans, to wake up
So as to reinforce the delicate nature-human relationship.
Yes, let us take a vital lead now, to act together for nature.

It’s time to raise our voices on the crisis facing nature.
It’s time to warn the world to act now and save our future.
People and communities around the world, let us engage
To act with haste on the critical environmental challenges.
Yes, let us take a vital lead now, to act together for nature.

Please see an inspiring video by copying this link into your search engine:
https://www.bing.com/videos/search?q=world+environment+day+2020&docid=13818950656605&mid=C940FEE1627F1A5AB973C940FEE1627F1A5AB973&view=detail&FORM=VIRE

Holy One, we lift our voices to you in praise for the wonders of creation. Mother Earth gives birth to a wondrous diversity of plants and animals, ecosystems and geological features that all sustain life. We humans are but one part of this living, breathing planet. Move our hearts to a spiritual conversion so that we will each choose to act together for nature so that we can create a sustainable future for ourselves and future generations.

June 8—World Oceans Day

This year’s theme for World Oceans Day is Innovation for Sustainable Oceans. Oceans cover about two thirds of the earth’s surface. This day calls on all of us to honor, protect and conserve oceans. The UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) target of protecting 10% of the world’s ocean by 2020. Various governments have acted decisively to reduce over-fishing, reduce marine pollution, address climate change and increase marine protected areas near their shores. On reducing marine pollution, the Ellen MacArthur Foundation, with the support of the Global Environment Facility (GEF), announced a New Plastics Economy initiative to re-think and re-design plastic packaging and replace plastics with sustainable materials. The GEF and the UN Environment
Program (UNEP) announced US$2 million to support the Trash Free Seas Alliance, which aims to prevent plastic from leaking into oceans. Several countries have actually banned the production and use of plastic bags.

Plastic pollutions is not the only major threat to our oceans. Warming ocean temperature and acidification also threaten many species that depend on one another for survival. All of our oceans are connected. Indeed, life on this planet began in the sea and oceans sustain our life and regulate our climate. They provide us with food and medicine. They help to regulate oxygen and carbon dioxide. Every species in the ocean plays a role in keeping the sea balanced and healthy. Scientific innovation and ecological consciousness must work together to protect oceans and ensure sustainable use of marine resources.

Creator of life, we thank you for the oceans of our planet from which all life emerged and which continue to sustain all life! Oceans gift us with food, warming and cooling currents, beauty and awe, power and peace. Oceans are the life blood of our Earth, flowing around its surface and connecting us all to one another. Thank you for calling us at this moment in human history to respect, protect and honor oceans today and every day. We dedicate ourselves anew to this responsibility.

June 12—World Day Against Child Labor

World Day Against Child Labor 2020 will focus on the impact of crisis on child labor. In any crisis, such as COVID-19, children seem to suffer the most worldwide, frequently forcing more and more children into child labor. Presently, there are an estimated 152 million child laborers, 72 million of whom are working in dangerous situations. This year will lead up to 2021, which has been designated as the International Year for the Elimination of Child Labor. The UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) aim at elimination of child labor by 2025. Raising awareness around the world that child labor robs families, communities and nations of future contributions that children’s education can contribute is essential. Ensuring a living wage to adult wage earners is also a basic requirement to elimination of child labor. Many difficult agricultural endeavors depend on child labor. Most child workers work on farms that produce cocoa, coffee, cotton, rubber, tea, tobacco and other crops, often working over 100 hours a week for $1-2 per day. Providing a just wage to adult agricultural workers would substantially decrease child labor and attract adults in need of employment to these jobs. This will undoubtedly raise the price of certain food products, a reality that must be accepted if we are to ever eliminate child labor. Progress has been made in recent years globally:

- 2000: 246 million
- 2004: 222 million
- 2008: 215 million
- 2012: 168 million
- 2016: 152 million

Buying fair trade products helps but ensuring no child labor in any product’s entire supply chain is difficult. Advocacy must be combined with purchasing choices to put pressure on elimination of child labor.

God, we beg you to protect children from the exploitation of child labor. Keep children safe, within their families and communities, so that they can grow up knowing that they are loved and secure. Help us to examine the choices we make so that we can consciously support those working to eliminate child labor. Motivate us to speak out on behalf of just wages for adult workers in all countries so that they can support their families without the need for child labor. Bless those parents who have lost children to child labor, so that they will be comforted and will soon be able to reunite with their children.
June 17—World Day to Combat Desertification and Drought

World Day to Combat Desertification and drought (WDCDD) will be celebrated worldwide on the 17th of June. Desertification is the degradation of land in arid, semi-arid and dry sub-humid areas. It is caused primarily by human activities and climatic variations. It occurs because dryland ecosystems, which cover over one third of the world’s land area, are extremely vulnerable to overexploitation and inappropriate land use. Poverty, political instability, deforestation, overgrazing and bad irrigation practices can all undermine the productivity of the land and lead to desertification. Desertification and Drought Day, in 2020 will focus on changing public attitudes to the leading driver of desertification and land degradation: humanity’s relentless production and consumption. The UN Sustainable Development Goal #15 calls us all to work together to halt and reverse land degradation. This goal states that this is achievable “through sustainable consumption and production, sustainably managing the land’s natural resources and taking urgent action on climate change, so that it can support the needs of present and future generations.”

Mother/Father God, we thank you for Mother Earth from whose dust we are made and who sustains our lives. We thank you for the land on which we live, grow our food, and to which we return when our life’s journey is completed. We are literally made from earth and return to earth. Open our minds and hearts to the reality of our oneness with all creation. Inspire us to find sustainable ways of living on the land with respect and care.

June 20—World Refugee Day

Globally, the world refugee crisis continues to overwhelm many countries as desperate people flee their homes due to war, persecution, flooding or drought due to climate change, hunger, terror and hopelessness. Many millions of people find themselves living in refugee camps for years, awaiting relocation to a host country. Refugees often have no say as to which country of relocation they will be sent. Others risk their lives heading for a distant shore in flimsy boats, only to face more uncertainty when they arrive. During this year of the COVID-19 pandemic, refugees living in camps are particularly vulnerable to the disease because they are living in close proximity, with little or no access to running water and with poor sanitation. Frequent handwashing and social distancing is impossible and quarantine measures for those known to be infected are inadequate at best. This is a day to reach out to refugees living in our communities, making them feel welcomed and offering assistance wherever possible. Those who arrive in our towns and cities with literally nothing but the clothes on their backs need a place to live, work, food, household goods, help with learning a new language, guidance in establishing themselves in society. Most of all, they need the support of their new
neighbors. They need a welcoming smile, a hand reached out in friendship and an understanding listener who is willing to accompany them. In the United States and in some other countries, persistent advocacy is essential to accepting and resettling many more people in desperate need.

God, bless all those who are seeking refuge from violence, oppression and desperation. Open our hearts to hear their cries for assistance and to respond with generosity, compassion and love. Make us true advocates for justice throughout the world, so that future generations can live in peace and dignity in their own homelands.

June 26—International Day In Support Of Victims Of Torture

According to Human Rights Law torture is defined as any act by which severe pain or suffering, whether physical or psychological, is intentionally inflicted on a person in which a public official is directly or indirectly involved for a specific reason. Torturers are seen as the 'enemy of all humankind'. It is considered so barbaric and incompatible with the civilized society that it cannot be tolerated. Torture is not only an illegal act, but immoral as well. It violates the human dignity to which every person has a right. In 1948, the international community condemned torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights adopted by the United Nations General Assembly. In 1975, responding to vigorous activity by non-governmental organizations (NGOs), the General Assembly adopted the Declaration on the Protection of All Persons from Being Subjected to Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment. In 1981 the UN’s Voluntary Fund for Victims of Torture was established to provide assistance to victims and their families. Not only does torture seek to dehumanize its victims, it also robs the torturers of their humanity by robbing them of empathy, compassion and human dignity. NGO’s have been critical to uncovering torture around the world and in bringing perpetrators to justice. They have also been instrumental in creating programs for the treatment of victims so that they can begin to heal physically, mentally and spiritually from the effects of torture. There are no circumstances that can justify the use of torture—neither the “war on terror”, the “war on drugs”, nor any crime or suspected crime. Torture is never acceptable!

God of compassion and love, fill us with your grace, that we may recognize your presence in one another and honor the human dignity of every person. Give us courage to reject any argument that seeks to justify torture. Protect us as we call on governments around the world to condemn all forms of torture and as we act to prevent its use. Touch the heart of those who inflict torture. Cause them to look into the eyes of their victims and see their brother or sister as the human person that they are, deserving of respect and due process under the law. Help us as we struggle to heal all those who have suffered from painful, inhumane or degrading abuse. Restore them to health and bring them the experience of your healing love through the compassion and kindness of others.