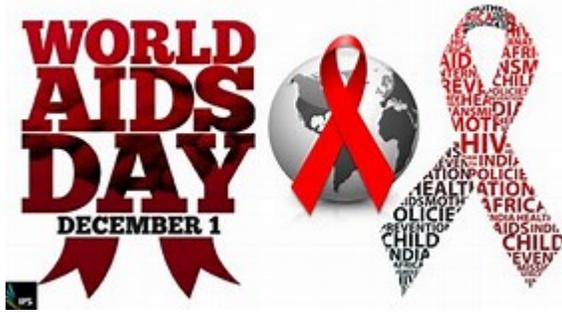


International Solidarity Days-December 2020

December 1—World AIDS Day



December 1, 2020 marks the 32nd global World AIDS Day to raise awareness about the continued epidemic affecting over 38 million people currently living with HIV worldwide. In 2019, there were over 1.7 million new cases reported, and over 690,000 deaths. On this day, we remember all those who have died since the disease was first recognized in 1981. We honor the loved ones who cared for the dying in the early days of the pandemic, when no treatment was available and where an AIDS diagnosis usually meant swift and certain death. We are grateful care givers, healthcare workers and scientists who worked tirelessly to bring comfort and love to those infected, who sought to dispel the stigma that often surrounded the diagnosis and who searched for effective treatment and prevention. Today, over 68% of adults living with HIV are being treated with anti-retroviral agents. However, in many communities, the new corona virus pandemic has hampered distribution and access to these life-saving medications, putting many more lives at risk. The 2020 theme for World AIDS Day is “Global Solidarity-Resilient Services”. The World Health Organization (WHO) is calling on global leaders and citizens to rally for “global solidarity” to maintain essential HIV services during COVID 19 and beyond.

Holy One, bless all those living with HIV. May they know that they are cherished and loved. Bless the healthcare workers as they provide access to nutrition and medication that is necessary to control the virus. Keep them safe from COVID 19 as they reach out to those in need. Help each of us to continue to educate others on AIDS -prevention, the importance of early treatment and adequate nutrition, and the critical role of solidarity with those living with HIV and AIDS. Most of all, we pray for a world free from this virus.

December 3—International Day of Persons with Disabilities



Much depends on the context in which persons live, and whether they have equal access to health, education and employment, etc. In February the WHO held a global gathering of rehabilitation experts entitled "Rehabilitation 2030". There, they garnered the commitment of participants to help governments build comprehensive service delivery models, develop a strong multidisciplinary workforce, expand financing mechanisms and enhance health information systems, all in an attempt to meet the ever-increasing demand for rehabilitation services. Hopefully, these efforts will lead to greater quality of life for all people. Disability inclusion is an essential condition to upholding human rights, sustainable development, and peace and security. It is also central to the promise of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development to leave no one behind. The commitment to realizing the rights of persons with disabilities is not only a matter of justice; it is an investment in our common future. When building back world economies following COVID 19, let us build back better so that all persons with disabilities can live fully!

God, we thank you for our health. We pray for all those living with disabilities. Whether disabilities are great or small, everyone deserves to be a participant in their own lives and in their communities. To contribute to the common good, all must have access to the means of participation. Help us to listen and respond to the needs of others so that everyone can share in building our common future for the good of all.

December 9—International Anti-corruption Day



Corruption involves an abuse of entrusted power by dishonest or unethical conduct that leads to personal gain. Corruption at all levels is a global problem that affects not only small communities, but societies as a whole. It robs organizations of their present security and wellbeing, and often makes building the future impossible. It is estimated that nearly a trillion dollars in bribes is paid worldwide annually, and much more is lost due to fraud and deceit. Terrorism and violence are often used to sustain corruption, robbing communities of the will to invest in their common future. Ridding the world of corruption is no small task and calls for active resistance by everyone. Refusing to participate in mechanisms to address it, are the first steps towards

corruption and having safe places to report it and addressing this pervasive global problem.

God, we ask you to help us create just and free societies where every person and the environment are protected by just laws applied with transparency. Help each of us to have the courage to refuse to cooperate with corruption, so that all people may live in security and freedom. Inspire elected leaders to govern with integrity and to protect their people from corruption. Help us to expect and demand ethical behavior from all elected and religious leaders, employers, and civil servants.

December 10—World Human Rights Day



This day marks the beginning of a year-long celebration of the 72nd anniversary of the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights on December 10, 1948. This document proclaims that certain inalienable rights are inherent in every human being. Although it does not have the force of law, it has become the international standard by which nations have agreed to judge their own progress toward building equitable, just, peaceful and prosperous societies. It establishes the equal dignity and worth of every person as the foundation for a more just world. In the Christian tradition, this principle recognizes that every person is sacred. This year's Human Rights Day theme relates to the

COVID-19 pandemic and focuses on the need to **“build back better”** by ensuring that Human Rights are central to recovery efforts. We will reach our common global goals only if we are able to create equal opportunities for all, address the failures exposed and exploited by COVID-19, and apply human rights standards to tackle entrenched, systematic, and intergenerational inequalities, exclusion and discrimination.

We pray for all our brothers and sisters, that we may live in peace, without fear, and in harmony with one another and with creation. We pray for open hearts, that we may honor and cherish one another as brother and sisters and provide for the common good. May we stand up for human rights everywhere so that all people may live in peace and safety.

December 18—International Migrants Day



On December 18, 1990, the UN General Assembly adopted the international convention on the protection of the rights of migrants and members of their families. There are now nearly 275 million people who have been displaced from their homes because of violence, war, racial or ethnic discrimination, religious repression, or climate change leading to starvation due to floods or drought. It is estimated that 1 of every 10 migrants are children under the age of 15. Unfortunately, many destination countries have closed their borders due to COVID 19. Others have done

so as a policy choice to deny migrants entry. This is a day to call on all countries to increase the number of migrants that they will accept, and to put in place procedures for adjudicating their cases in an equitable, timely and just manner. It is also a day to recognize that all people have a right to life and safety.

Holy One, we pray for your protection and blessing on migrants throughout the world. Bless all those who seek a safe haven in which to live and to raise their families. Open our hearts to welcome migrants into our countries and communities. Open our hands to offer them welcome and assistance. Open our minds to understanding and compassion. Most of all, help us to address the situations and policies in our own countries that cause war, violence, climate change, oppression and discrimination which are the root causes of migration.

December 20—International Human Solidarity Day



Since 2005, International Human Solidarity Day is a day dedicated to celebrating global human solidarity that is centered on people & planet, underpinned by human rights and supported through global partnerships. This solidarity is essential in achieving the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) which are built on a foundation of international cooperation and solidarity. COVID 19 has confirmed what we already know: that what affects one, affects all.

International Human Solidarity Day is a day:

- to celebrate our unity in diversity;
- to remind governments to respect their commitments to international agreements

- to raise public awareness of the importance of solidarity
 - to encourage debate on the ways to promote solidarity for the achievement of the SDGs
- This is a day to recognize that we are all sisters and brothers to one another!

God, we ask that you bless all your people throughout the world in their desire for justice, peace, freedom, and protection of the environment. Continue to inspire solidarity among us so that together we can face the many challenges of our global community. Help us to listen to the myriad perspectives that our diversity brings to the conversation. Open us to new ways of thinking and being in solidarity with one another.

December 25

Merry Christmas!

***May the Infant of Bethlehem, whose birth we celebrate today,
Bless us all with peace, joy, love and compassion.***