

International Solidarity Days - July 2019



July 11—World Population Day

July 11th, World Population Day, seeks to raise awareness of issues around world population. The world's population has grown from 3 billion in 1960, to 5 billion in 1987, to about 7 billion now. Despite having the Earth capacity to produce enough food for everyone, the increasing environmental degradation, armed conflicts, and population displacements cause by both of these, makes food growth and distribution difficult. With food and water crises comes additional human rights abuses and further losses of biological diversity needed to maintain a healthy environment. Increasing

population also brings growing demands for energy. Even renewable, clean energy sources have limited capacity to meet the growing needs of this planet's growing population. The Catholic Church has not yet addressed the rate of population growth and its long-term affect on the planet. We pray that the Church will seriously reflect on this crisis and exert moral leadership on how best to respect human dignity and human life, while also protecting Earth and its limited resources.

God, we thank you for the gift of all the great diversity of people on planet Earth. We are grateful for the unique gifts of each person. We thank you, too, for Earth, our common home. She sustains us with water, food, and air. We know her resources are not limit less and we know that population growth cannot continue at a limitless rate. Help us to live responsibly on this earth with respect for human dignity, while cherishing all creation.



July 18—Birthday of Nelson Mandela

Nelson Mandela was born on July 18, 1918 in Mvezo, to the Thembu royal family. Educated as a lawyer, Mandela joined the struggle against apartheid in 1943. In 1964 he was sentenced to life at hard labor at the notorious Robben Island Prison in S Africa for attempted violent overthrow of the government. Mandela became an international symbol of the oppression of racism and apartheid. While continuing his struggle for racial justice and an open and free democracy in South Africa, even during his prison sentence, he also became a symbol of persistence and hope. He helped to negotiate an end to apartheid and was finally released from prison in 1990. After an open and free political campaign, he was elected and inaugurated in 1994 as the first black president of South Africa. Although the transition from apartheid to an open and inclusive democracy was not without violence, Mandela's commitment to nonviolence and a peaceful transition

prevented all-out civil war. South Africa became a shining example of how hope, persistence, nonviolence and reconciliation can transform a society.

Holy One, we ask for your loving care for all those throughout the world who suffer from racial discrimination, political exclusion or social rejection. We pray that all men and women will be treated with respect and dignity. May we listen to each other's hopes and dreams with open hearts and accept each other with compassion. Like Nelson Mandela, inspire us to hold on to what we know is right, to work for what we know is possible, and to create the world we wish to live in.



International Friendship Day July 30

July 30—International Day of Friendship

The International Day of Friendship was proclaimed in 2011 by the UN General Assembly. It is a day dedicated to promoting friendship between individuals, countries, and cultures that can inspire peace efforts and build bridges between communities. This day calls us to reach out to those different from ourselves with open listening and sharing, in order to promote

personal relationships. By so doing, we strengthen the bonds of human solidarity and strike at the root cause of violence, war and division. This helps create understanding, which can lead to true friendship. Recognizing the blessings of our diverse gifts and creating personal bonds with one another help to create the peaceful world that we all desire.

God, we thank you for creating the human family with all its wonderful diversity. Please forgive us for all the times when we have let our differences divide us from one another and from you. Bless us with open and respectful hearts, to share and listen to each other's stories. Lead us to understanding and solidarity, appreciation and friendship.



July 30—World Day Against Trafficking in Persons

On July 30th every year, the United Nations promotes World Day Against Trafficking Persons. Human trafficking is a form of modern-day slavery. The definition of human trafficking is:

•**Sex trafficking:** the recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, obtaining, patronizing, or soliciting of a person for the purpose of a commercial sex act, in which the commercial sex act is induced by force, fraud, or coercion, or in which the person

induced to perform such act has not attained 18 years of age; (and)

- **Labor trafficking:** the recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, or obtaining of a person for labor or services, through the use of force, fraud, or coercion for the purpose of subjection to involuntary servitude, peonage, debt bondage, or slavery.

Traffickers use force, fraud, or coercion to subject victims to engage in commercial sex or forced labor. Anyone can be a victim of trafficking anywhere. However, the poor people, refugees and asylum seekers are especially vulnerable. We all need to be alert to signs of trafficking and report it to proper authorities. In many countries, “hot lines” are available for reporting suspected trafficking.

Holy One, we pray for an end to human trafficking. Give hope, courage and help to those caught in the snare of traffickers. Help them to seek and find a safe way out, so that they can live in freedom and security. Change the hearts of those who enslave others against their wills. Help them to see the dignity and humanity of every person and to reject coercion, violence and exploitation of the most vulnerable among us. Open our eyes to see, report and reach out to those being trafficked. Fill us with courage and compassion for those suffering from modern-day slavery.