

International Solidarity Days – March 2021



Educate. Enlighten. Empower.

March 8—International Women’s Day

International Women's Day (IWD) on March 8 is a global day celebrating the social, economic, cultural, and political achievements of women. The day also marks a call to action for accelerating women's equality. Recognizing that challenge is necessary in bringing about change, the theme for IWD 2021 is #ChooseToChallenge—a challenged world is an alert world! We are all called to be aware of our gender bias and inequality wherever and whenever we encounter it. On this day we also seek out and celebrate the achievements of women over the world. We recognize that women’s contributions to society are

essential to progress for the common good. We join action to our prayers for building an inclusive world, where every person is honored and encouraged to live up to their fullest potential, so that all may fully live.

Oh, Holy One, we thank you for the inspiration, creativity, and dedication of women everywhere as they lead the way in the struggle for justice and equality. Bless all women who continue to work to have their voices heard, their lives valued, and their wisdom expressed. Help us to stand together for the common good of all, as we create a more inclusive world.

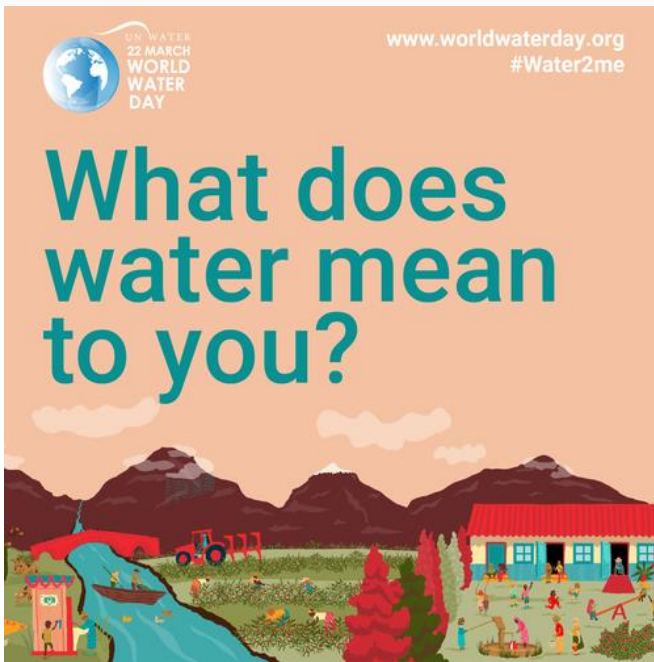
March 21—Week of Solidarity Against Racism and Racial Discrimination

March 21st begins the UN week of solidarity against racism and racial discrimination. Following the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights by the United Nations (UN) in 1948, the **International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination** was the first of the major international agreements on human rights adopted by the UN General Assembly. It was adopted in 1965 and entered into force in 1969. Unfortunately, to this day, racial discrimination continues to plague the world, leaving many victims of violence and poverty in its wake. Recent world-wide events have brought attention to the often brutal results of racism, such as the deaths of African Americans in police custody in the United States, “ethnic cleansing” in Myanmar of their Rohingya minority, racial discrimination or violence in Europe, exploitation of foreign laborers from poor developing countries in Saudi Arabia, etc. Pope Francis’ recent encyclical Fratelli Tutti calls us to recognize that we are all brothers and sisters to one another. Universal human rights are based on innate universal human dignity. Using race to divide us from one another is an artificial construct based on the lie that one group is somehow superior to others. We are called to create a worldwide culture of encounter where “dialogue is the path, mutual cooperation is the code of conduct, and reciprocal understanding is the method.” (Abu Dabi address on February 3, 2019 by Pope Frances: “*Human Fraternity: For World Peace and Living Together*”)



Oh God, strengthen us as we continue the journey to root out all forms of racism that lingers within our own hearts. Open us to a culture of encounter, where every person is recognized as our brother or sister. Help us to actively engage in listening and sharing our stories so that we can respond to one another with compassion and understanding. As we confront racism in our own hearts, help us to also collaborate in dismantling social structures and policies based on racial discrimination.

March 22—World Water Day



This Day was established in 1993 by the UN to raise awareness among all people about the need to protect and conserve the precious gift of water. Increasingly severe droughts and disruption of long-established seasonal weather patterns have raised consciousness about the essential role of clean water sources for the survival of life on Earth. This day reminds us of our responsibility to conserve and protect fresh water sources. Rising sea levels have already contaminated the fresh water sources of many coastal communities. As glaciers and polar ice caps continue to melt, this threat is anticipated to worsen in the coming years. Even if global climate change can be stabilized, it will take decades to restore fresh water sources. Climate change also threatens the biodiversity of our oceans. Water in all its forms needs protection and conservation.

God, we praise you for sister Water. We witness Water's power to shape earth's canyons and coastlines. Water surrounds us with warmth and safety in our mother's womb. Water blesses the earth with rain and sustains our life. She cleanses and refreshes us, washing over us in gentle streams. Water awes us with her beauty as waves crash against rocks or gently roll onto the shore; as she cascades down a waterfall or blankets a mountain with a soft white cloak; as she reflects the beauty of the sky and trees in her clear lakes or shrouds a valley in an early morning mist. God, we thank you and give you praise for sister Water.

March 25—International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade



This UN day of remembrance has been held annually since 2008. Over 17 million Africans were transported to the Americas during the 16th to the mid-19th centuries, with many millions more dying in route. This day is for honouring those who suffered, for remembering those who lived and those who died, and for addressing societal disparities that continue to affect their descendants and whole societies. In the UN resolution 62/122 which created this day of remembrance, we seek to create a growing awareness of the extreme consequences of racism and discrimination. This day is also a time for recognizing that hope in the midst of despair and suffering makes human survival possible. The brutality and horror of the transatlantic slave trade was only made possible by denying the full human dignity of a whole race of people. It seems fitting that this day falls in the middle of the week of solidarity against racism and racial discrimination. It reminds us that our shared humanity makes us all brothers and sisters.

God, we ask forgiveness for the suffering caused to so many people by the transatlantic slave trade. Heal us all of the racism that continues to divide us from one another. Help us to respect, honor and support one another as brothers and sisters, so that we never again deny the full and equal humanity of anyone based on race, ethnicity, religion, or gender. Help us to work tirelessly to create a world of justice where all people are respected. Help us to repair the social structures that continue to affect descendants of former slaves and to restore equal opportunities for growth and social flourishing which have been too long denied.