

## **International Solidarity Days – May 2021**

### **May 1—International Workers’ Day**

*International Workers’ Day is a special day to honor laborers around the world for their struggle for justice. The struggles over the years have included demands for an 8-hour working day, with the right to overtime pay for work beyond that, safe working conditions, and end to child labor, the right to organize and form unions, the right to share their concerns with management and employers and the right to job security and sick leave. Many of these accomplishments in securing modern labor rights were earned after much struggle and determination, often at the risk of death. In many parts of the world these rights are still not a reality. Many attempts to destroy labor unions and roll back workers’ rights continue today. As we celebrate International Workers’ Day, let us remember how much we all depend on the hard work and labor of others. Let us stand in solidarity with workers around the world to protect their jobs, safety and health. In the midst of COVID 19, let us also insist that workers have the protective equipment and workplace policies to protect them from the pandemic.*



*God of justice, we thank you for the brave men and women whose work sustains our families and communities and who make our social structures possible. Bless all those who work for justice in the workplace to keep workers safe, to be sure everyone has an opportunity to earn a living wage and to have a voice in their own futures. Bless all essential workers in this time of COVID-19. Keep them safe from illness as they serve all of us by their dedicated work. Inspire us to show our appreciation whenever we can, so that all workers feel supported and respected.*

### **May 15—The 90<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Quadragesimo Anno**



*On May 15, 1931, Pope Pius XI published his encyclical Quadragesimo Anno (QA) on the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Pope Leo XIII’s encyclical Rerum Novarum. These two encyclicals outlined the moral principles that should inform a 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. In our present world where many countries have no minimum wage laws, or where the legal minimum wage for workers is not a living wage capable of providing the worker and his/her family with the essentials of life, this encyclical continues to challenge us. 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 while building and maintaining infrastructures needed to support all members of society. The widening gulf between rich and poor highlights the failure of many societies to live up to these principles. 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. Today we recognize that care for creation is an essential moral principle that must guide development, even though it was not included in QA.*

*Holy One, we pray for the poor who suffer most from the imbalance of 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 that is just and compassionate.*

## May 21—Feast of Blessed Franz Jägerstätter

Franz Jägerstätter was born in Austria in the early years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Like St Francis, he 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, working 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. It was not long before the Nazis annexed Austria. Like many Austrians, he quickly learned of their activities and intentions. His commitment to Gospel values led him to refuse mandatory military service, which he saw as 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 36. It is said that when his attorney advised him that other Catholics were serving in the army, Franz responded, “I can only act on my own conscience. I do not judge anyone. I can only judge myself.” He continued, “I have considered my family. I have prayed and put myself and my family in God’s hands. I know that, if I do what I think God wants me to do, he will take care of my family.” The story of his bravery and commitment to nonviolence has inspired many people over the years. His life and death remind us that the price of Gospel living can be great and may even cost us our lives. May we always live with integrity, sowing hope and love in our world. May we recognize that only love can overcome fear, hatred, and violence.



Loving God, we pray for an end to injustice, intimidation, violence and war. We recommit ourselves to Gospel love, compassion and peace-making. Awaken us to the power of your love within us to transform our world. Lead us into the way of peace.

## May 22—International Day for Biological Diversity



This year, the theme for International Day for Biological Diversity is “We’re Part of the Solution.” At this time in human history, global climate change due to human activities poses an extreme threat to biodiversity. We also recognize that biodiversity is essential to maintaining our own health as well as the health of ecosystems. Safeguarding biodiversity is not only the job of governments. We can all make a difference by the choices we make every day. There are 3 objectives of the UN Convention on Biodiversity: the conservation of biodiversity, the sustainable use of its components and the fair and equitable sharing of the benefits arising out of the utilization of genetic resources. Actions can

include large scale actions like restoring degraded ecosystems or setting aside protected areas, to individual actions such as planting pollen and nectar plants and eliminating pesticides that threaten birds and bees. They could also include targeted measures addressing direct or indirect causes of biodiversity loss such as environmental pollution. In many areas of the world, efforts are being made to restore traditional, sustainable farming methods, as well as teaching modern techniques that can help protect biodiversity during extreme weather events. Businesses are also being asked to integrate sustainability into their business models, decision-making, sourcing and production methods.

*Creator God, awaken us to the urgent need to change our lives in order to protect the biodiversity of our planet. Help us to restore our common home (the theme from April 22, 2021 Earth Day) by planting trees and flowers that are native to area in which we live, so that nature's diversity can thrive. Help us to lessen waste through composting organic materials and eliminating single use plastic as much as possible. Open our eyes and our hearts so that we can make personal choices that will protect the biodiversity of our planet.*

### **May 24—Sixth 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. Today is the close of the year-long celebration of the 5<sup>th</sup> anniversary of this momentous wakeup call to all people of the world. Also on this day, the Vatican Dicastery for Integral Human Development officially begins a 7-year process of engaging the entire Catholic Community in implementation of the principles of Laudato Si by calling for commitments to concrete actions to address climate change and transition to an integral ecology by 2030. This effort, called the Laudato Si Action

Platform involves 7 sectors within the Church community: Religious congregations, families, educational institutions (schools and universities and colleges), dioceses and parishes, Catholic healthcare, Catholic Businesses and Agricultural Farms. The Catholic Church has an opportunity to lead the way in showing how living the message of Laudato Si can concretely make a difference in stabilizing our climate, preserving biodiversity, and living harmoniously with all of creation. Let us join with the entire worldwide community in this effort, recognizing that creation is a unique revelation of the divine presence which we are called to recognize, cherish, and protect.

*Holy One, thank you for the wonder of creation which reveals your power, beauty, magnificence, and love. On this day when we complete a 6<sup>th</sup> year of reading and pondering the message of Laudato Si, inspire us and move us to concrete action on behalf of Mother Earth. As we commit ourselves to an ecologically sustainable lifestyle, help us to examine our choices and make changes that will get us to carbon emission neutrality in our personal lives as well as in the institutions in which we participate. We know how urgent this action is and we pray for the wisdom to do what is ours to do.*