

International Solidarity Days - July 2021

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 7.9 billion in 2021. As the world's population continues to grow, the risks of pandemics increase, and human activities continue to threaten the climate of our planet. Cooperation across borders, continents and states is necessary if these issues are to be addressed effectively. Growing human populations require us to creatively address the climate crisis, loss of biodiversity, the need for efficient food production and distribution, and ways to provide access to clean water.

God, we thank you for the great diversity of the human family and for Earth, which is our common home. Give our Church the courage to evaluate anew the issues around population growth and to speak with moral authority based on realistic assessments of the current global situations and on the sacredness of human life. Help us all to approach these issues with openness.

July 18—Birthday of Nelson Mandela



Nelson Mandela was born on July 18, 1918 in Mvezo, South Africa, son of an advisor to the chief of the Thembu royal family. When his father died, Nelson was only 12 years old and was then raised by the chief. Educated as a lawyer, Mandela joined the struggle against apartheid in 1943. In 1964 he was sentenced to life at hard labor and spent the last 18 years of his imprisonment at the notorious Robben Island Prison for attempted violent overthrow of the government. His struggle for freedom and justice inspired non-violent struggles not only in South Africa, but around the world. His insistence on non-violence was key to his success. Although marred by violent episodes, the transition to democracy free from apartheid was based on truth telling, public accountability, a willingness to face the injustices of the past and restoring the nation's hope in its own future. For his efforts, Nelson Mandela is a symbol of the power of how hope, persistence, non-violence, truth, and reconciliation can transform a society. For many people still living in oppressive situations, Mandela remains a beacon leading the way to freedom.

Holy One, we thank you for the life of Nelson Mandela. His spirit of non-violent resistance to injustice and racism inspires us and shows us the power of peaceful revolution to bring about change. Help us to always meet hatred with love, oppression with solidarity and violence with peace. Give us courage when we feel intimidated and steadfastness when we are ready to give up. As we reflect on Mandela's life today, restore our faith in the human capacity to change and to be transformed.

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 fostering peace through friendship. In Pope Francis' recent encyclical *Fratelli Tutti* he points to the importance of social friendship in building a just and sustainable world. Indeed, social friendship is required for every human person to act for the common good—not only the common good of all human persons, but of all creation.



Pope Francis opens chapter six of the encyclical with a description of what is necessary for social friendship: approaching, speaking, listening, looking at, coming to know and understand one another, to find common ground—summed up in one word: dialogue. Relationship building is the antidote to violence. Once we come to know one another, we are able to recognize our shared common spirit. We are no longer “separate from” but “one with”.

God, we thank you for creating the great diversity of the human family. Help us to recognize the blessings that we each bring to the world and to one another. With each new encounter, may we open our hearts to listen, share, accompany and understand each other. Help us to live as true friends to one another and to our planet.

July 30—World Day Against Trafficking in Persons



On July 30th every year, the United Nations promotes World Day Against Trafficking in Persons. Human trafficking is a form of modern-day slavery and involves every country on earth. Victims are coerced into sex trafficking or labor trafficking, usually under fraudulent pretexts. Human trafficking robs persons of their freedom and dignity. This year’s theme is, “Victims’ Voices Lead the Way.” This theme calls us to listen to and learn from survivors of human trafficking. These survivors play a critical role in

establishing effective measures to end this crime, identify and rescue victims, and support them on the road to recovery and rehabilitation.

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. Let us listen with open hearts to those who have survived trafficking so that our actions to end this scourge will be informed by their experiences and responsive to their needs.