

## International Solidarity Days—September 2021

### September 1—World Day of Prayer for Creation



## LAUDATO SI' Action Platform

For All?—Renewing the Beloved Community of God”. As we begin this special time of prayer, let us reflect on our common home. Is the community of creation truly a home for all? A home is a place of welcome. Do we extend this welcome to everyone, of every race, nation, religion, ethnicity, sexual orientation, political view, etc.? Do we care for creation with respect, not only as our home, but home to all creatures, great and small, inanimate or living beings, water, air, land and even outer space? As we pray for creation, do we recognize that every element of creation reflects the divine presence in a unique and precious way? Today is a time to renew our relationship with our Creator and all creation through celebration, conversion, and commitment. In light of these reflections, we are encouraging awareness-raising initiatives and lifestyle changes to protect the natural environment and address the crisis of climate change. If we are to renew and restore the beloved community of God, we must do so through living in right relationship with all of creation. Our futures are inexorably linked to one another and to Earth itself. Together, let us renew the beloved community of God.

September 1<sup>st</sup>, the World Day of Prayer for Creation, marks the beginning of the 6<sup>th</sup> annual, world-wide **Season of Creation (SOC)**. Around the world, this season culminates on the feast of St Francis, the patron of ecology, on October 4<sup>th</sup>. This year, the theme for the SOC is “A Home

*God, we praise and thank you for the wondrous gift of creation, through which you reveal your beauty and love. We recognize that planet earth is not only our home, but home to the countless creatures with which you inhabit it. We praise you for the blessed diversity that enriches us, sustains us and inspires us with awe and gratitude. Help us to renew the beloved community by welcoming and reverencing all creatures, and by so doing, live in a home open to all. Laudato Si—Praise be to You!!*

### September 8—World Literacy Day

Students in Santarem



World Literacy Day is dedicated to all the children of the world, raising awareness that all children have a right to basic education and literacy in order to develop their gifts fully for the common good. This year’s theme is, “Literacy for a human-centered recovery: narrowing the digital divide”. The United Nations Sustainable Development Goal #4 recognizes that literacy is essential to the elimination of worldwide poverty. The Covid-19

pandemic has globally disrupted learning and literacy programs on an unprecedented scale. While some adults and children have been able to continue to make progress in education due to remote learning, access to these learning opportunities have not been evenly distributed. The persistent digital divide in terms of connectivity, infrastructure, and the ability to engage with

technology, as well as disparities in other services such as access to electricity, has severely limited learning options. Beyond its intrinsic importance as part of the right to education, literacy empowers individuals and improves their lives by expanding their capabilities to the fullest. Literacy can contribute to building a solid foundation for a human-centered recovery, with a special focus on the interplay of literacy and digital skills required by non-literate youth and adults. It is essential that technology-enabled literacy learning be inclusive and leave no one behind. In this way, all will be able to work together to ensure a human and creation centered recovery.

*We praise you, God, for the wonderful gift of literacy. We recognize how much of our day-to-day ability to contribute to the common good requires a sound foundation of education. Thank you for all those dedicated teachers who promote literacy in every corner of the earth. Help each of us to do our part to ensure that children and adults everywhere have an opportunity to achieve literacy so that every person can grow and develop to their fullest potential. Help us to creatively address the needs that hinder remote learning so that all have access to the learning opportunities that remote learning makes possible.*

### **September 10—World Suicide Prevention Day**



According to the World Health Organization, every 40 seconds, someone takes their own life. Suicide is the leading cause of death for people 15-29 years of age. This is a staggering statistic when one considers not only the personal loss that this represents, but the overwhelming sense of loss experienced by family members, colleagues, friends, teammates and acquaintances. The theme of World Suicide Prevention Day 2021 is “Creating Hope Through Action”. By raising awareness, reducing the stigma around suicide, and encouraging well-informed action, we can reduce instances of suicide around the world. One measure that can be taken when someone expresses thoughts about

suicide, or actually attempts it, is to show that you care. A contributing factor to many suicides is the belief that no one cares, and that living is only a burden on everyone. No gesture of caring or kindness is too small. Another action we can take is to try to overcome the stigma that surrounds suicide. Changing the narrative around suicide through the promotion of hope can create a more compassionate society where those in need feel more comfortable in coming forward to seek help. Encouraging someone considering suicide to seek help and assisting them to do so can save a life. Sharing stories of people who have lived with suicide can be a powerful experience and can motivate others to seek help. Personal stories of an individual’s experiences of significant emotional distress, suicidal thoughts or attempts, and their experiences of recovery can inspire hope in others that they too can move through the period of distress or crisis.

*Holy One, we pray for all lonely, hopeless, and suffering people who feel that they have no way out except suicide. Open our hearts and the hearts of those who love them and give us the courage to reach out in support. Help us to guide them to professional help and sustain us all in our efforts to bring healing to the suffering, and comfort to the grieving. Bless the hopeless with hope, those in darkness with light and all of us with the comfort of your love.*

## September 16—International Day for the Preservation of the Ozone Layer



The ozone layer, a fragile shield of gas, protects the Earth from the harmful portion of the rays of the sun, thus helping preserve life on the planet. Past worldwide efforts were successful at banning substances that were proven to be slowly destroying earth's ozone layer and had resulted in a sharp rise in skin cancers (especially the deadliest form, called melanoma). This effort has led to the ozone layer slowly beginning to repair itself. Large holes that had opened over both the northern and southern hemispheres began to shrink when nations around the globe took joint action. As climate change continues to overheat our planet, change weather patterns, and threaten biodiversity, preservation of earth's ozone layer demonstrates to us that

changes in human activity can make a difference. This year, we celebrate 35 years of the Vienna Convention and 35 years of global ozone layer protection. Life on Earth would not be possible without sunlight. But the energy emanating from the sun would be too much for life on Earth to thrive were it not for the ozone layer. This stratospheric ozone layer shields Earth from most of the sun's harmful ultraviolet radiation. Sunlight makes life possible, but the ozone layer makes life as we know it possible.

*Creator God, we thank you for the gift of Earth, our common home. We also thank you for guiding our successful efforts to protect the ozone layer that shields our planet. We know that we have so much more to do. As climate change threatens our earth, lead us and our national and international leaders to take dramatic action that is necessary to address global climate change. Help us to take the message of Laudato Si to heart as we build a flourishing future that truly honors and respects all of creation.*

## September 21—International Day of Peace



The tragedy unfolding in Afghanistan demonstrates once again the futility of war. After 20 years of US and coalition forces waging war in that country, and after many deaths and untold suffering, the end of the war and withdrawal of foreign troops have created chaos and have left the Taliban in charge, just as they were before the war. As Pope Francis says in paragraph 233 of Fratelli Tutti, "Peace is not merely absence of war but a tireless commitment...to recognize, protect and concretely restore the dignity of all of our brother and sisters...who are the principal protagonists of the destiny of their nation." Further, the Pope states in Paragraph 226, "Renewed encounter does not mean returning to a time

prior to conflicts... Pain and conflict transform us... Those who were once enemies have to speak from the stark and clear truth. They have to learn how to cultivate a penitential memory, one that can accept the past.... Only by basing themselves on the historical truth of events will they be able to make a broad and persevering effort to understand one another and strive for a new synthesis for the good of all." The path to true and lasting peace is getting people to work together, side by side, in pursuing goals that benefit everyone. Remembering and acknowledging the pain and suffering caused by conflict is the first step towards rebuilding lives, communities, and countries. War and violence only heap more suffering and injustice on

individuals and societies. Dialogue, truth-telling, forgiveness, and reconciliation can restore justice and allow those who were once enemies to work together for the common good and thus bring about peace.

*Holy One, on this special International Day of Peace, we pray that people will put down their weapons and that once again the sounds of birds singing will replace the deafening cacophony of explosions and gunfire. We pray for understanding, empathy, open dialogue, and honest truth-telling as we join hands with one another to create a more peaceful world. Let non-violent peacemakers become our honored heroes who bravely lead us into the ways of peace.*

## September 18-26—United Nations Global Sustainable Development Goals Week

### September 25—United Nations 6<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Sustainable Development Goals



Adopted on September 25, 2015, the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDG's) outline 17 goals that must be achieved in order to eradicate extreme poverty, address inequalities, and reduce climate change worldwide by 2030. As countries look ahead towards rebuilding their economies and societies after the Covid-19 pandemic, their citizens are calling for them to “build back better”. With the climate crisis resulting in devastating fires in dry places, and unprecedented flooding due to torrential rains in other areas, it is more and more apparent that “sustainable development” will require us to abandon fossil fuels, invest in education and healthcare for the poor and dispossessed, and protect biodiversity. The SDG's must guide international recovery efforts if we are to survive as a species.

*God, inspire us to create systems of recovery that promote and advance the Sustainable Development Goals, creating sustainable systems that will protect human dignity, care for creation, and move us towards eradicating extreme poverty by 2030. Help us to take actions in our daily lives that will contribute to a sustainable future for our planet. We ask you to bless our national and international leaders so that they will have the courage to act now to restore earth, our common home, and to end extreme poverty by 2030.*