

Celebrating Holy Days & Feast Days Year Round

*Over 150 Faith-Filled Activities
and Prayers for Kids*

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Contents

Introduction	1
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SEPTEMBER

World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation	3
World Day of Migrants and Refugees	7

OCTOBER

Respect Life Sunday	11
World Mission Sunday	15

NOVEMBER

All Saints' Day	19
World Day of the Poor	23
Thanksgiving Day	27

DECEMBER

First Sunday of Advent	31
Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe	34
Christmas Day	38

JANUARY

World Day of Peace	42
Epiphany of the Lord	45
Ordinary Time	49
Sunday of the Word of God	54

FEBRUARY

World Day of the Sick	59
Ash Wednesday	63

MARCH

Feast of the Annunciation	67
Triduum	71

APRIL

Easter Sunday	76
Earth Day	80

MAY

Pentecost Sunday	85
Mary, Mother of the Church	90

JUNE

Feast of the Body and Blood of Christ	93
---------------------------------------	----

JULY

World Day for Grandparents and the Elderly	98
--	----

AUGUST

The Assumption of Mary	102
------------------------	-----

INTRODUCTION

The ideas in this book help busy catechists, teachers, and families explore twenty-five special days with children throughout the church year. This encourages children to make the connection between their lives, their God, their church, and their world. Walking through the year together lets children experience God's love for them and shows them ways to share that love with other people.

Celebrating special days—including new ones such as World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation, Sunday of the Word of God, and Mary, Mother of the Church—with child-friendly activities is important. We must help children connect their lives to the Sunday liturgy beyond the classroom.

This book is a one-stop resource. There are more than 150 child-friendly ideas and activities to engage children in learning so they can live their faith in God. These include action prayers, small-group projects, service ideas, posters, echo pantomimes, crafts, sharing questions, community-building activities, and many others. The activities encourage children to live as disciples of Jesus Christ.

Ideas in this book invite children ages 5 to 11 to follow Jesus Christ throughout the year. The ideas are easily adapted for other ages or abilities. Choose the activities for each day that fit the inter-

ests and abilities of your group of children. A calendar of dates for the current year is always found on the website for the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (uscgb.org) under “Events.”

These activities do not need to be done with children on the exact day being celebrated. Children can participate in activities ahead of time to prepare them for the special day or afterward as a reminder to live the meaning of the day in their lives. Special days have an impact beyond the day itself. The values should echo through our lives.

It is important for children to learn that God calls each of us to make a difference in the lives of others. Everyone can do something. Celebrating special days helps children and all of us have hope in God, hope in one another, and hope in the future.

World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation

POPE FRANCIS CHOSE SEPTEMBER 1 AS A DAY TO REMEMBER THAT GOD CALLS US TO TAKE CARE OF CREATION. The beauty of creation shows us how much our God loves us now and forever. In *Laudato Si': On Care for Our Common Home* (vatican.va), Pope Francis says, "The world is a gift which we have freely received and must share with others." On this World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation, we remember that God created our world to be shared by all people. Caring for creation also means caring for one another.

Patron saint of ecology

World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation is a good time to share with children the story of St. Francis of Assisi, who is a patron saint of ecology. St. Francis loved God and all of God's creation.

Tell children how St. Francis gave praise to God for creation, including the sun, stars, moon, water, oceans, animals, and people. He was from a wealthy family but gave everything he had to the poor. His life story reminds us to care for our world and for one another.

Creation craft

Children enjoy making crafts and having something to take home. Show them how to put together a creation craft with a quote from St. Francis of Assisi. This activity for World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation reminds children to give thanks to God for all creation. On card stock, add the words “All praise be yours, my Lord, through all that you have made.” Place the name of St. Francis of Assisi at the bottom.

Each child gets a copy of the quote. Provide creation stickers such as leaves, flowers, animals, and stars so children can make a border around the words. Children can draw small creation pictures instead of using stickers. Encourage them to follow the example of St. Francis of Assisi in giving praise to God for the wonders of our world.

Share resources

God created each one of us and created our world for people to enjoy. Remind children that God gave us our world to share with all people and all generations. We are to take care of creation. It is not right for us to waste or destroy the resources God has given as a gift to all of us.

What we do matters. When we cause harm to our world, people suffer. People living in poverty use less of the earth’s resources but are suffering more from the damage done to our environment. When climate change causes drought, many people do not have enough to eat.

Talk with the children about sharing resources on the World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation and beyond. Stress to children that we can work together. Our God is a God of all people. The time to do something is now.

Care of creation tree

A great project for children is a care of creation tree. Before children gather, put a large tree shape on a wall or bulletin board. Simply cut out a brown paper trunk and branches or purchase a paper tree from a teacher supply store. Put a sign on the trunk that says “Care of Creation Tree.”

When you gather with children for World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation, talk with them about ways to save our environment. Following are some ideas for children.

Ways to help our environment:

- Use reusable water bottles.
- Recycle cans and paper.
- Use less air conditioning.
- Plant a tree.
- Take shorter showers.
- Put trash in a container.
- Start a vegetable garden.
- Learn about climate change.



Ask each child to cut out a green paper leaf and print a way to help the environment on it. Children tape or pin their individual leaves to the tree. The tree is a visual reminder of ways we can protect our planet. Encourage children to share their ideas with their families.

Fill-in-the-blank prayer

Even younger children can write their own creation prayers with a fill-in-the-blank prayer. This is a way to guide children into connecting God, creation, and their lives. Stress that God made all of

creation out of love for us. Give children a half-sheet form with blanks to help them write their prayer.

My Creation Prayer

Awesome God,
thank you for the world you created,
especially _____, _____, and _____.
Thank you most of all for your unending love for us.
Amen.

Ask children to take home their completed prayer to give thanks to God with their family. This activity invites children to give praise to our God on World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation.

Praise God for creation

**Creator God,
we praise you for the amazing world you made
and the love you have for each one of us.
On this World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation,
open our eyes to see you in creation and in one another.
Help us to appreciate the world you created
and the wonder of each person made in your image.
Show us how to work together to care for your creation
and share the resources of our world. Amen.**

World Day of Migrants and Refugees

OUR GLOBAL CHURCH OBSERVES THIS SPECIAL DAY ON THE LAST SUNDAY OF SEPTEMBER EACH YEAR. As we focus on World Day of Migrants and Refugees, we remember that each person is created for life with God. We are to treat each person with dignity and respect. Many refugees flee their countries in fear for their lives. We must also be aware of migrant workers who move from place to place, helping with the harvest, and immigrants who seek a better life. In the United States, this special day is part of National Migration Week.

Explore the lives of refugees

Refugees around the world face many problems. Explain to children that refugees must leave everything behind when they flee for their lives. They seek to escape from violence, war, gangs, and poverty. Across the globe, millions of people are on the move every day. Many refugees are children.

Explain that each year, we have a World Day of Migrants and Refugees so we can remember that God created all of us, and we are to help one another on our life journey. We are called to share our blessings with others. Encourage children in your group to pray for refugees and to think of creative solutions to the problems in our world on this day and beyond.

Reach out to refugee children

We are all one people created by God for life with God. Explain this to your group of children. In the New Testament we hear, “Welcome one another, then, as Christ welcomed you” (Romans 15:7). Stress the importance of welcoming newcomers to our country. Suggest that children reach out to new children in their school or neighborhood who are refugees from other countries. In this way we share God’s love on World Day of Migrants and Refugees and beyond.

Encourage children to see different cultures as something to be celebrated. We all can learn from one another. Talk about how our different ideas and customs enrich our world, our communities, and our lives. Remind everyone that Jesus came for all people and all nations.

Ideas to help refugee children

- Invite a refugee child to join in a game at recess.
- Say hello to new children at your school.
- Show a refugee child where to sit at lunch and eat with them.
- Learn about customs of other cultures.

Litany prayer for refugees

In some parts of the world, life is very difficult. Remind children that Jesus calls us to be people of compassion. We are also to pray for others on World Day of Migrants and Refugees.

Help children pray a litany prayer for refugees. The catechist is the leader. Ask five children to each read a petition. The rest of the group responds with the refrain, “Lord, hear our prayer.”

Litany for refugees

LEADER: Loving God, we come before you today to pray for refugees around the world.

READER 1: For families who face violence:

ALL: *Lord, hear our prayer.*

READER 2: For people who live in fear each day:

ALL: *Lord, hear our prayer.*

READER 3: For children who go to bed hungry:

ALL: *Lord, hear our prayer.*

READER 4: For those who have to leave everything behind:

ALL: *Lord, hear our prayer.*

READER 5: For refugees who must start a new life:

ALL: *Lord, hear our prayer.*

LEADER: God of compassion, open our hearts to live in peace and share what we have been given with one another. Amen.

Patron saint of immigrants

St. Frances Cabrini is a patron saint of immigrants. Share her story with children of all ages. She was an amazing woman who grew up in Italy but came to the United States to make life better for Italian immigrants who were living in poverty. She faced many hardships in this new country, but she kept on going.

She started hospitals for the sick and homes for children whose parents had died in the yellow fever epidemic. Tell children that St. Frances loved God with all her heart. She shared the love of Jesus Christ with everyone she met. On World Day of Migrants and Refugees, we are to be people of compassion, as she was. We are to welcome people who are new to our country and seeking a better life.

Books for migrant children

In many areas of our country, migrant workers work long hours to harvest crops each year. Explain to children that workers pick many fruits and vegetables by hand in the hot sun. During this time, children in migrant families may not be able to go to school because they have no way to get there.

We must open our hearts to the needs of others beyond our own neighborhoods. See if your diocese has an outreach program for migrant workers and families. Sometimes there is a reading program for children while their parents work in the fields. Ask the children and families of your group to donate books to the reading program. This is a great way for children to help other children on World Day of Migrants and Refugees.

Pray for refugees around the world

**God of all people,
we know that you created each one of us.
May we share what we have been given
and stand up for the rights of others.
On World Day of Migrants and Refugees,
we pray for refugees around the world
who face violence and poverty at home.
Give them the strength to endure
and to remember how much you love them.
May we welcome them with open hearts. Amen.**