



National Tree Day

On Care for Our Common Home

National Tree Day is celebrated on the first Sunday of August, and since its beginning in 1996, it has become the largest annual tree-planting event in Australia. Events pop up all over the country to invite individuals, families and groups to get their hands in the soil, learn more about the value of Indigenous plants and have a positive experience in their local community. Over the years millions of trees have been planted on National Tree Day.

Local ecological restoration group activities continue all year round, and it's not necessary to be an expert on plants to be involved. Established groups offer support for anyone to start up. Activities such as weeding, planting and identifying species appeal to people of all ages, and the commitment of adults to ecological restoration supports the hopes and dreams of young people for a safe and healthy Earth community into the future. Around the world, Columban missionaries are involved in care for creation activities through works of advocacy, education and grassroots action.

Being together for a common cause helps boost our awareness of God's great gifts. People and the Earth community are connected, we are all part of God's creation. As local lands and waterways are given the care needed to renew themselves, delight in the transformation is shared. In turn, birds, animals and insects make their return to feed, nest and find habitat, creating more interest and joy, as life flows on. In this way, people and places are renewed together.

As Christians, we are called to read the signs of the times and be inspired to see with the eyes of faith. Around the world, species of plants and animals are being lost at unprecedented rates and habitats have been fragmented as a result of climate change and major changes to land use. The suffering of God's creation calls us to respond and draws on values such as empathy, dignity, respect and responsibility. As we listen to the Holy Spirit we are empowered to be co-creators in the Earth community.

In the Encyclical letter, *Laudato Si'*: On Care for Our Common Home, Pope Francis says, "God, who calls us to generous commitment and to give him our all, offers us the light and the strength needed to continue on our way. In the heart of this world, the Lord of life, who loves us so much is always present. He does not abandon us, he does not leave us alone, he had united himself definitively to our earth, and his love constantly impels us to find new ways forward."

REFLECTION

1 How can you help to protect and grow the trees in your local community?

2 What species do you think will benefit from your actions?

