



TOGETHER WE

GLOBAL YEAR OF ACTION



INTRODUCTION

As the earth warms at an alarming rate, with July 2023 as the hottest July ever recorded, UN Secretary-General António Guterres has announced that the “era of global boiling has arrived”. Sadly, this comes as no great surprise to those of us who have been campaigning and raising awareness of the climate emergency for many years. Despite humanity’s knowledge and understanding of the climate crisis, and what we ought to do, it seems what we are lacking is the political will for change. Or rather, motivation.

Our collective lack of motivation to take action on serious issues that concern us all is not restricted just to the climate crisis. We also see a lack of motivation and political will to address many global issues such as social inequality, extreme poverty, environmental degradation, pollution, and species loss, to name but a few.

Rather than viewing all these complex global problems in isolation, or as discrete problems that need to be solved and addressed individually, our Catholic faith teaches us to view them through the lens of integral ecology, where we approach and treat all these crises as deeply interconnected, which together they all make up one single crisis which we call the ecological crisis.

When viewed through this perspective, we can begin to see how all aspects of this complex and deeply interconnected crisis are actually symptoms of a much deeper crisis, which is a spiritual crisis - a crisis of the heart. This is expressed as the broken relationship between God, our global neighbours and creation.

This broken relationship underpins each element of the ecological crisis, where our sense of alienation from each other drives poverty and social inequality, our sense of separation from our natural world drives environmental degradation, and the broken relationship we have with God and our own selves drives our lost sense of purpose and our vocation towards fraternal love.

This is why addressing the spiritual dimension of the ecological crisis is so important. Because without doing so we continue our collective shift towards individualism, indifference, cynicism, isolationism, materialism, racism, and all aspects that strain the bonds of fraternal love and prevent us from caring for our common home. When this shift occurs, creating the motivation and political will for real change becomes all the more challenging.

As Pope Francis reminds us,

“In today’s world, the sense of belonging to a single human family is fading, and the dream of working together for justice and peace seems an outdated utopia.” Fratelli Tutti, 30

At Caritas, we believe that it is not naïve to dream of a world together of a world as a united family. That is why we work hard to overcome the culture of indifference with the culture of care.

As the delicate threads that bind us together, are slowly being broken and torn, our work is to simply restore, mend and bind the social bonds that have been broken.



The Trinity teaches us that one can never be without the other. We are not islands, we are in the world to live in God’s image: open, in need of others and in need of helping others.

- *Pope Francis*

This means overcoming the illusion that we are separate and independent from each other, and that we can bring about positive change in our world all by ourselves.

That is why Caritas Internationalis’ global campaign, **Together We**, is not just a call to action, but also a call to inner conversion and social change. It is a call to restore the broken relationships we have with ourselves, each other, and the natural world around us. It is a campaign to remind us that no one is an island, that we are all dependent on each other and the delicate eco-system of God’s creation which sustains all life.

By building community, by creating a culture of encounter, by working towards the common good, not only do we flourish, so does our global family, and so does the earth. This is the nature of the integral ecology, for everything is connected.

That’s because it is in togetherness that we belong.

#TogetherWeBelong

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PASTORAL REFLECTION

As we come together to care for people and our planet during our Global Year of Action let us contemplate these words of Jesus:

I tell you, look up and see the fields ripe for the harvest.

The reaper is already receiving his payment and gathering crops for eternal life, so that the sower and reaper can rejoice together

For here the saying is verified that 'One sows and another reaps.'

I sent you to reap what you have not worked for; others have done the work, and you are sharing the fruits of their work.

(Jn 4:35-38)

Through this parable, each of us can see how intricately interconnected we are with each other and with the land on which we live and work. "One sows and another reaps" yet both sower and reaper wait patiently together for the time of harvest to share "the fruits of their works".

Can you imagine the hopeful expectation of workers who are working together to yield a rich harvest that will fulfill their needs and those of their families?

Can you imagine their anxieties when signs of bad weather appear on the horizon? Or their fear at the sight of weeds, pests and predators that could destroy all their work and threaten the quality and fruitfulness of their crop?

Can you then imagine their relief and joy at seeing the first shoots and the abundance of crops at harvest time?

Jesus said:

"I came so that they may have life and have it more abundantly"

(Jn 10:10).

He wants every person to share a life of abundance with others "so that the sower and reaper can rejoice together."

Every person is called to a life of shared abundance! Together with the old and the young, women and men, we share the work, expectations, anxieties, joys and hopes in caring for the earth and, in turn, being nourished and fulfilled by it.

Though we experience our own fragilities, as well as those of the environment, we sense that we are not isolated. We realise that, even in times of trial and uncertainty, we are not alone when facing the challenges of our world.

St Paul reveals to us this mystery of connection we have with one another when he spoke to the community in Corinth:

"But as it is, there many parts, yet one body."

(1 Cr 12:19-20)

With clarity, St Paul exhorted the Corinthians to consider

"that the parts may have the same concern for one another"

(1 Cr 12:25)

and that

"indeed the parts of the body that seem to be weaker are all the more necessary"

(1 Cr 12:22).

Let these challenging words of St Paul also penetrate our own minds and hearts!

We pray that we see the world with new eyes, where we see our deep interconnection to all peoples, and to God's creation. And in that seeing our hearts are stirred into action, so that together we care for our common home.



No one is useless and no one is expendable.

- Pope Francis, Fratelli Tutti

'TOGETHER WE' PRAYER

Lord, you came into our world so “that we may have life and have it more abundantly” (Jn 10:10).

We pray that every person in the world has a share in this life of abundance to which you have called us.

We pray that our hearts and our eyes be open and attentive to sensing the cry of the poor and the cry of our world, particularly within our own communities.

We pray that our minds be open to recognising our own poverty and fragility, and to seeing the riches and strength that those considered weak or insignificant have to offer our world.

We pray that our hands be open to give generously to the poor in our world and, in turn, receiving the many gifts they offer us.

We pray that our feet walk steadily forwards, alongside our brothers and sisters, our elders and our youth, as we face global challenges that impact on our common home.

Lord, you call each of us to share in your work of creation and, little by little, when we choose to care for others and our Earth, we see that the world is indeed very good!

Awaken within us our longing for fraternal love, so that our hearts stir us into action, so that we work to eliminate the poverty, sadness, hunger, tyranny, injustice, greed, selfishness and war caused by our disregard for people and our common home.

Today, we pray together for greater faith, hope and love in living out Jesus' call and blessing to care for our world and one another!

AMEN



DOWNLOAD THE PRAYER CARD
togetherwebelong.caritas.org

INVITATION TO ACTION

TREE OF LIFE

In the spirit of a culture of encounter, we invite communities from around the world to take action with our Tree of Life campaign action. Simply write a message to leaders and decision-makers on how we can care for our common home together with them, in the language and spirit of fraternal cooperation.

At the heart of the ecological crisis lies a broken relationship, which is expressed as the broken relationship between God, our global neighbours and creation. This isolated and independent 'I' is in fact an illusion. We exist in community, we depend on each other, and we need each other if we are to bring about positive change in our world.

As the fragile bonds of community are stretched and broken, we are reminded by Pope Francis that "None of us is an island, autonomous and independent from others". As the South African saying states, "I am because we are". This is the philosophy of Ubuntu, the idea that we cannot be separated from the communities that made us who we are, and the same communities that sustain us.

We have replaced this rich philosophy with "I think, therefore I am", where we see ourselves as isolated, the result of our own thinking, independent from others. The result of this has been the slow erosion of community, a sense of alienation, and the false belief that our actions don't affect the well-being of other people and of our planet. It is this culture of alienation that leads to indifference, and it is this culture which we seek to overcome through this campaign.

Tree of life campaign action

Whether we are seeking to alleviate poverty, respond to the climate emergency, or work towards any other aspect of caring for our common home, our campaign action is designed to support you in your work and create a powerful message for change.

The Tree of Life campaign action is a simple activity that embodies the teachings of our Catholic faith. This action can be rolled out in parishes, community groups, schools, as well as online. Simply use one of the leaves to write a message to leaders and decision-makers from around the world, stating what needs to change if we are to care for our common home together.

To create the motivation and the political will for change, we will seek to deliver every aspect of this campaign through the spirit of fraternal cooperation – where we treat everyone as our sister and brother.

This means that the messages that we create will be written in a way in which we treat the leader or decision-maker that we are addressing the same way that we would address a close family member. In other words, the culture and values that we want to see in our world, will be the culture and values we express in this campaign action.

This is to overcome the culture of indifference, cynicism and alienation that we see too often today. It is hard to build positive change in our world within this culture, where we treat each other with mutual suspicion. Our campaign action is deliberately designed to feel different and seeks to contribute in some small way to restoring the bonds of fraternal love on which to build positive change in our world.

This cultural shift must start with us, and within the communities that we belong to. While there is much to complain and be critical about in our world, to care for our common home is also to care for our global family, which includes the leaders and decision-makers that we are seeking to engage. Now is the time to build, not to tear down, to restore and heal, not to criticise and complain.

Campaign action summary

Identify what you love about our Common Home

- Write how what you love about our Common Home is being affected by social and environmental degradation
- Direct your message to public figures, decision makers or your own community to state what we can change together
- Sign your message with your name and country.

You can engage online at

togetherwebelong.caritas.org

Or you can [download additional resources](#) to run in your community.

You can also contact us at campaigns@caritas.va

TREE OF LIFE ACTION

How to write your message

The purpose of this campaign is to promote the values and culture of our faith, as guided by the teachings of Pope Francis in [Fratelli Tutti](#) and [Laudato Si'](#). Rather than criticising leaders and decision-makers, we are looking to engage with them within the spirit of fraternal cooperation.

We are asking you to write a message to leaders and decision-makers on how we can care for our common home together. This can include any aspect of the ecological crisis, including taking action on the climate emergency, working to overcome social inequality and poverty, addressing local community concerns like pollution or social injustices, or any other aspect of working towards the common good.

For these messages to have power, they must come from a community perspective. Rather than thinking about 'I', think about 'We'. Think about the community you belong to, and how your voice is representing a real community need. This way your message will have more authenticity.

An example may include writing to a local leader about a polluted river that is harming your community, or writing to a political leader to address local community issues around reducing our carbon footprint, or writing to a decision-maker about how we can help climate displaced communities.

When writing your message, think about the tone and style. We are trying to overcome the culture of indifference and alienation. Rather than complaining, criticising or telling the recipient of your message exactly what you think they should be doing, think about how you can address the person in the spirit of fraternal cooperation.

This means explaining the problem you are asking them to address, and how together we can work to bring about positive change. Think less confrontationally, and more collaboratively.

Speak to them like you would a sister or brother.

How to take action

There are different ways you can engage with this campaign action.

Community engagement

You can create a community display, with the Tree of Life display pack (available online). Simply print off and piece together the Tree of Life to make a visual display in your community space. This might be displayed somewhere in your parish, school, office or any other community space. Think about displaying this somewhere where it can engage as many people as possible.

Cut out leaves and make them available for people to write their messages on. Or you can use our template included in this pack.

Stick the leaves to the tree, and leave them there for others to read the messages.

When your display is complete, please take a photo and share with us on social media using the following two tags: #TogetherWeBelong @iamCaritas

Online engagement

Go to togetherwebelong.caritas.org to write your message online. Think about what community message you want to write, and how it follows the writing style as stated above.

You will be invited to share your message with the leader or decision-maker you are seeking to address. We will also share your message with others around the world, and we encourage you to share your message on social media.

Together We Belong

All the messages will be collated and shared with others around the world. At the end of the campaign we will collate these messages and present them to Pope Francis to represent the many voices and communities that are all working towards positive change in our world.

To find out more, or for inspiration on what type of message to write, visit our website

togetherwebelong.caritas.org



EXAMPLES

Dear [Community /
faith leader's name],

I write to address the urgent issue of river pollution that threatens our environment and poses a severe risk to the health of our community, particularly women, in [your town/country]. Our river, once a source of life and serenity, now bears the heavy burden of pollution. But we can fix this together. We must unite as a community to raise awareness, promote responsible practices, organise clean-up efforts, collaborate with experts and empower women. Our river's well-being is inseparable from our own, and together, we can be the stewards of change, guardians of our environment and champions of a healthier, more prosperous community. Let us join hands to heal our river and secure a brighter future for all.

With hope and determination,
[Your name]

Dear [Public decision
maker's name],

I urge you to address the critical issue of climate change's impact on cultural heritage and Indigenous knowledge. Climate change threatens not only our environment but also the deep cultural roots and wisdom passed down through generations. I firmly believe that we can tackle this together by involving local and Indigenous Communities as active participants in climate adaptation and mitigation efforts, as well as by encouraging local initiatives that celebrate and protect our diverse cultural traditions. I know we can work together to safeguard our environment and the invaluable cultural heritage it nurtures. Let us be the generation that not only confronts the climate crisis but also cherishes and preserves the wisdom of those who came before us. Together, we can ensure that future generations inherit a world rich in both natural wonders and cultural treasures.

With deep appreciation and a shared
commitment, [Your name]

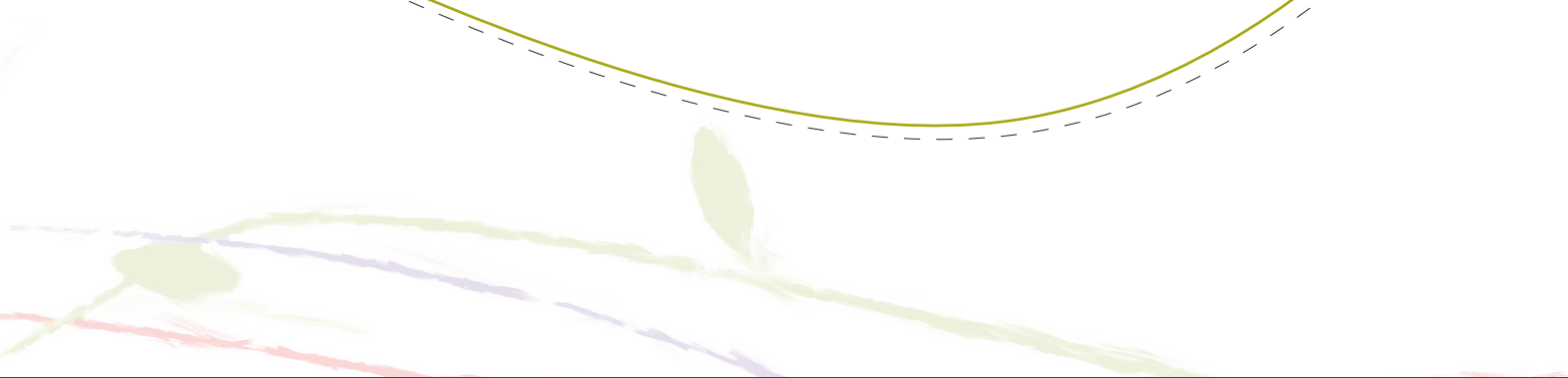
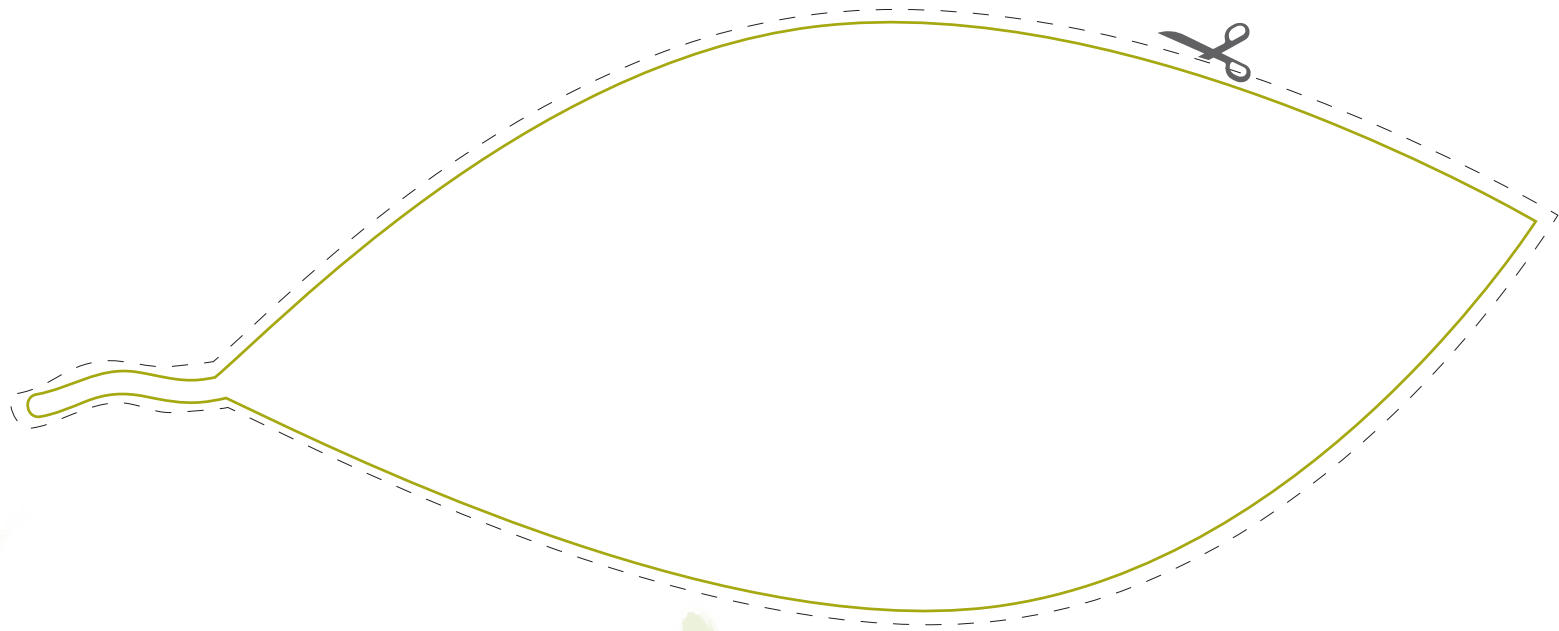
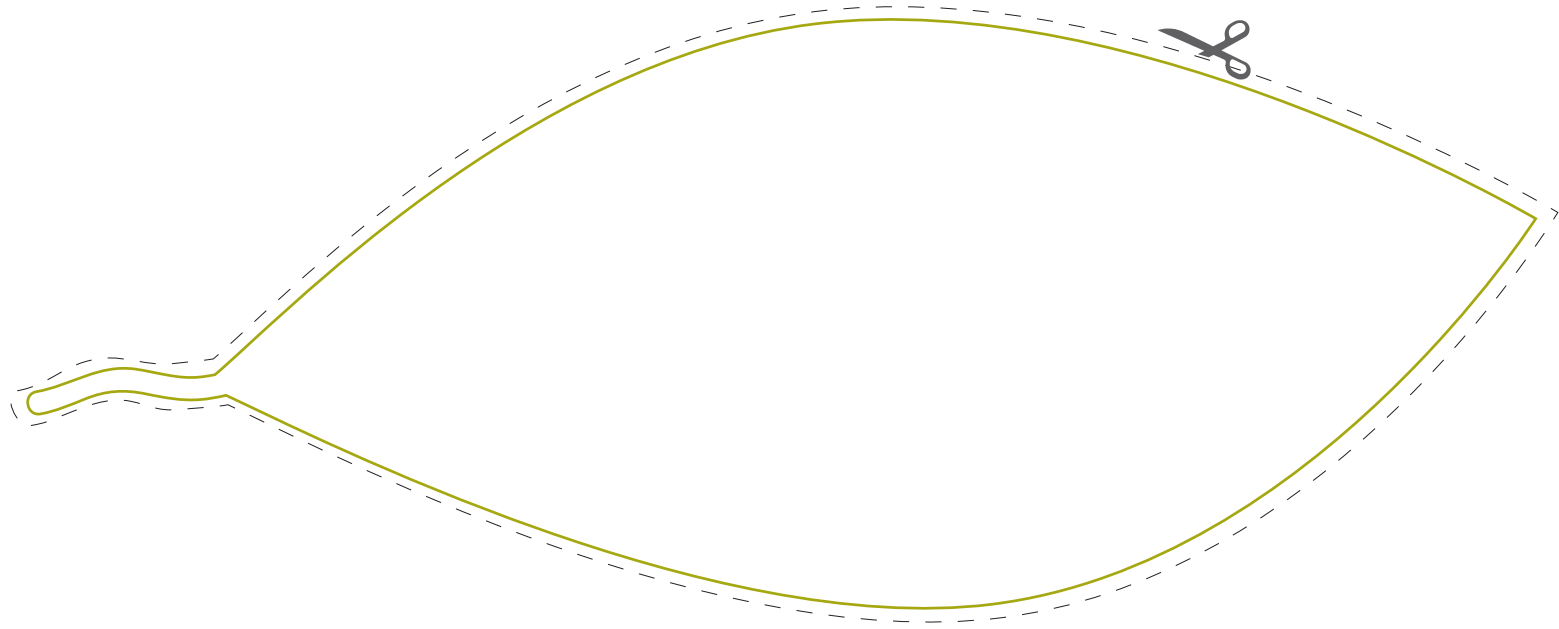
Dear [Decision maker],

I write to you to address the issue of the lack of resources and links to global and environmental education in our curriculum. Climate change is one of the biggest threats we face, and has huge implications for the wellbeing of our generation, as well as future generations to come. That is why global and environmental education cannot be disregarded as a side or specialist issue. The purpose of our learning, and the curriculum that shapes our learning, must be able to prepare us for the future we face, of which climate change will play a significant role. I know that we can work together to create a more meaningful and coherent curriculum that helps us to prepare for the future we face, and to help us to understand how we can work together to address some of the huge challenges we all face.

With hope, [Your name]

ACTION TEMPLATE

Please print off and write a message in each leaf, and attach to your tree to display.



WEEK OF ACTION

We will launch the Global Year of Action globally during a Global Week of Action, every day for a week from 23 to 29 October 2023.

Each day offers a different theme, which relates to the Laudato Si' Action Platform goals which can be found at

laudatosi.actionplatform.org

Each day offers a short input as an inspiration to write a message on our Tree of Life on togetherwebelong.caritas.org which you can post to your social media.

MONDAY: Ecological Spirituality

Together we are connected



To care for our common home requires that we undergo an 'ecological conversion'. This is where we discover God in all things, and overcome the illusions of separation and isolation to rediscover the deep interconnection we have with each other and with God's creation.

TUESDAY: Ecological Education

Together we learn



Building positive change requires an ecological education, helping to link awareness with ecological action. An understanding of what the ecological crisis is and how to respond, is a necessary requirement if we are to build a consensus of care for our common home.

WEDNESDAY: Ecological Economics

Together we invest



Ecological Economics acknowledges that the economy must be in service to the needs of caring for our common home. How to create sustainable production and consumption, how do we divest from all that is harmful to our common home, and how do we protect the dignity of workers?



THURSDAY: Community resilience and empowerment

Together we belong

How do we envisage a synodal journey of participatory action at different levels of community engagement? Why is our sense of belonging and rootedness so important for developing a spirituality of care for our common home?



FRIDAY: Sustainable lifestyles

Together we care

The Adoption of Sustainable Lifestyles is grounded in the idea of sufficiency, and promoting sobriety in the use of resources and energy. How can we reduce waste and recycle? How can we adopt sustainable dietary habits, use public transport, walk and cycle more, and avoiding single use items?



SATURDAY: Response to the cry of the poor

Together we share

How do we respond to the cry of the poor and stand in solidarity with those in need? How do we work towards a world where poverty is not seen as inevitable, but viewed as an unjust distribution of wealth and resources? How can we bring about real changes to those in need?



SUNDAY: Response to the cry of the earth

Together we heal

The Response to the Cry of the Earth is a call to protect our common home for the wellbeing of all, as we equitably address the climate crisis, biodiversity loss, and ecological sustainability. How can we achieve carbon neutrality, promote sustainable practices and access to clean water for all?

WEEK OF ACTION

To engage with our week of action and beyond, up until October 2024, follow us on:

@iamCaritas



togetherwebelong.caritas.org

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

There are many additional resources to help you promote and engage with the Together We campaign in your community. Our resources are designed to be as adaptable as possible, so that you can make them work for your context, wherever you are in the world.

Social media pack

To help you spread the message, we have a full social media pack for you to download and use in your work. This pack includes visuals, banners, logos and a range of materials to assist your promotion of the Together We campaign.

Posters

We have a range of posters to help you promote the campaign at work, school, college or out and about in your respective communities. Simply download the pack, tailor the text to your context or translate it into the language of your choosing, and print. We have made these as adaptable as possible, to ensure that they work for your needs.

Tree display

We can download and print out a tree template, which you can use as part of your display. You may want to draw or paint your own tree, or even make a model tree out of paper mache (papier mâché). It is up to you how you may want to display this tree of life.

Online engagement

You can engage with our campaign action through our website. You can write your message, direct it to the leader or decision maker you want to share it with, and share it on your social media channels as well. Go to our website to find out more.

Animation

Watch our campaign animation *Together We Belong*, and share with others to spread the message of the importance of creating a culture of encounter and working towards fraternal cooperation.

Social Media sharing

We would love to know what you do, so that we can share

#TOGETHERWEBELONG

@IAMCARITAS

