

A PRAYER FOR EARTH DAY, 2023

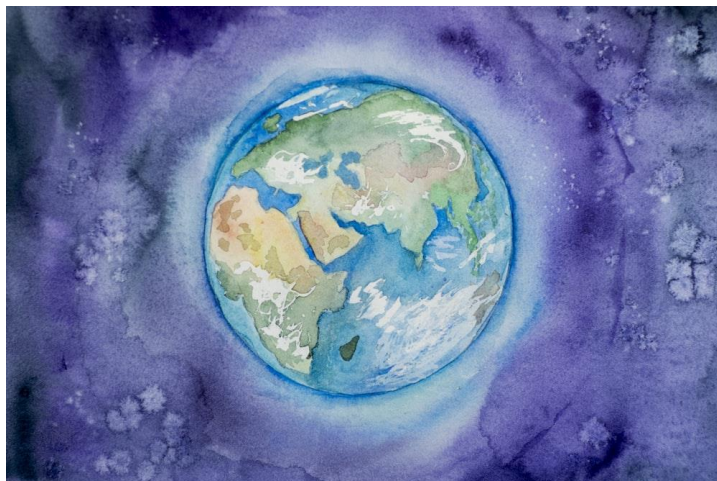


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Suggestions to accompany this prayer: Bring with you some element of the natural world that speaks to you e.g. a leaf, rock, flower etc.) Have a nature display in the place of your prayer. For those praying together each person is given a pencil or pen and a piece of paper that will be placed in a basket during the prayer

All: Opening Prayer:

Creating God, we come together to thank you for all of creation; for its beauty, for our belonging in it and for all the ways in which the whole of creation gives us life and sustains us in beauty, love and hope. We ask your forgiveness for the many ways we have failed to care for your gift of life. Today, we ask for your guidance in restoring the face of the earth. May we learn to live in harmony, peace and justice, sharing your resources among all so that all may live to praise you. Amen.

Suggested Hymns:

Morning has Broken, CBW 651

For the Beauty of the Earth, CBW 531

or a song/hymn of your choice

Reading 1 (Isaiah 24: 4-5)

The earth dries up and withers
the world languishes and withers,
the heavens languish together with the earth.
The earth lies polluted
under its inhabitants;
for they have transgressed the laws,
Violated the statutes,
broken the everlasting covenant.

A Moment of Reflective Silence

Prayers of Lamentation (Rev. Matt Lortie – Willowdale Church, Winnipeg - adapted)

God, our Creator I stand here recognizing that everything that is, comes from you and is yours. I confess that I have not always been mindful of this in action and thought and acknowledge that the faith tradition of which I am a part of has been amongst the worst offenders.

In your mercy, grant us forgiveness.

You provided good air, freshwater, and fertile soil and we have corrupted it.

In your mercy, grant us forgiveness.

Your creativity provided us a cacophony of creatures, birds, mammals, flowers, plants, fish – yet we have erased so many from the canvas.

In your mercy, grant us your forgiveness.

You called us to care for the most vulnerable among us, the least of these, yet we have trampled on them to get ahead, to get more for ourselves and to live lives of convenience.

In your mercy, grant us your forgiveness.

You called us to be just and fair, to respect the land, its history, and legacy, yet we also disregarded that because we wanted more.

In your mercy, grant us your forgiveness

Creator God, we lament that greed, profit and power have led the way in place of sustainable concern.

We lament the exploitation of land and people in place of tender care.

We lament the abuse of resources, animals, and people.

We lament the loss of any species that you created.

We lament the hurt and pain we caused to peoples and cultures through cultural genocide.

But God, we know that the story does not have to end like this.

Grant us hope as we work for restoration and justice!

Grant us the courage to stand up for right relationships and peace!

Grant us the strength to resist ideologies of exploitation and abuse.

Restore us and make us agents of your continuing creativity in your World and for all that is within it. Through the cruciform power of Christ and in the hope of resurrection, we pray,

Amen.

A moment of silent Reflection: What one thing can I change and/or do so as to contribute to the healing of the earth? Write it on your piece of paper and place it in the basket. Have someone then read all the ideas and commitments placed in the basket.

Reading 2 (Norman Wirzba, "Agrarian Spirit: Cultivating Faith, Community and the Land)

Once you say it's (care for the earth) is optional, you've denied embodiment. Because you can't make sense of the human body apart from all bodies – soil, water, microbes, fish, birds, weather patterns – we are connected to. This is a scientific fact but also a theological fact because God's covenant from the beginning is with the whole of creation.

Pause

Recited side-to-side "The Sheltering Tree" (Black Elk)

Hey! Learn to hear my feeble voice.
At the center of the sacred hoop
You have said that I should make the tree to bloom.

With tears running, O Great Spirit,
With running eyes I must say
The tree has never bloomed

Here I stand, and the tree is withered.
Again, I recall the great vision you gave me.

It may be that some little root of the sacred tree still lives.
Nourish it then
That it may leaf
And bloom
And fill with singing birds!

Hear me, that the people may once again
Find the good road
And the shielding tree.

Leader reads the questions

In silence now reflect on the item from nature that you brought to prayer or in your imagination reflect on an aspect of nature that is special to you.

How does it speak to you?

How does it call you?

How does it reflect God the Creator to you?

What does it teach you?

Leader: Invite some sharing together

Reading 3 (Job 12: 7-10)

But ask the animals, and they will teach you,
or the birds in the sky, and they will tell you;
or speak to the earth, and it will teach you,
or let the fish in the sea inform you.
Which of all these does not know
that the hand of God has done this?
In God's hand is the life of every creature
and the breath of all humankind.

All: A Prayer for the Earth (Pope Francis, *Laudato Si'*)

All powerful God, you are present in the
whole universe and in the smallest of your creatures.
You embrace with your tenderness all that exists.
Pour out upon us the power of your love
that we may protect life and beauty.

Fill us with peace, that we may live
as brothers and sisters, harming no one.

O God of the poor
help us to rescue the abandoned and forgotten
of
this earth, so precious in your eyes.
Bring healing to our lives that we may protect
the world and not prey on it
that we may sow beauty, not pollution and
destruction.

Touch the hearts of those who look only
for gain at the expense of the poor and the
earth.

Teach us to discover the worth of each
thing, to be filled with awe and contemplation
to recognize that we are profoundly united
(with every creature as we journey towards your
infinite light. We thank you for being with us each day.
Encourage us, we pray, in our struggle
for justice, love and peace. Amen.



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Leader: We give thanks and we ask for your blessing that we may make Earth Day,
everyday!

Closing Hymn:

For the Fruit of All Creation CBW 532
or a hymn of your choice

This work has been compiled by Sister Mary Rowell C.S.J. and Sister Linda Gregg C.S.J., members of the Ecology Committee of the Federation of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Canada.

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