

“The Winged Ones”

Leader:

We begin with our land acknowledgement in gratitude given for millennia of care for the lands and waters, now so threatened by human excesses. (Use local acknowledgment)



The theme for the 2023 Season of Creation: **‘Let justice and peace flow like a river’** seeks justice and peace for all of humanity and for all other created beings, including birds, butterflies, bees, dragonflies and insects. The Season draws to a close on October 4, the Feast of St. Francis, who is revered for his love of creation and his ability to connect with so many creatures whom he called brothers and sisters. Today, in the spirit of St. Francis, we pray for the winged members of God’s creation. They are remarkably diverse, yet their diversity and very existence are threatened by human beings.



Opening Hymn: Let All Things Now Living CBW III # 534

Opening Prayer – All:

Gracious and life - giving God, in your wisdom you created a great diversity of birds, bees, butterflies and other winged creatures. For this we give you thanks and praise. Birds reflect your beauty and your song of life. They serve you in so many ways. They are your messengers. They bring joy and hope. It would be a dark and dismal world without them. For your gift of bird-life on earth we give you thanks. Bees gift us with honey. Butterflies gift us with delicate beauty. Both are marvellous pollinators. For their many gifts we say thank you and we commit ourselves to protecting them. Amen

Reader 1:

Pope Francis said: “I believe St. Francis is the example par excellence of care for the vulnerable and of an integral ecology lived out joyfully and authentically. He is the

patron saint of all who study and work in the area of ecology, and he is also much loved by non-Christians. He was particularly concerned for God's creation and for the poor and outcast. He loved, and was deeply loved for his joy, his generous self-giving, his openheartedness. He was a mystic and a pilgrim who lived in simplicity and in wonderful harmony with God, with others, with nature and with himself. He shows us how inseparable the bond is between concern for nature, justice for the poor, commitment to society, and interior peace."¹

Response - All: St. Francis, you had a deep sense of the inter-connectedness of all creation. Please help us to truly understand, value, and live the integral ecology to which we are called today. Pray that we too might have a sense of wonder and awe, of appreciation and care for our brothers and sisters of other species. Amen

Reflection: (brief pause)

How do vulnerability and compassion get revealed through the "inseparable bond" about which Pope Francis speaks?

Reader 2: Pope Francis also said:

It is not enough, however, to think of different species merely as potential "resources" to be exploited, while overlooking the fact that they have value in themselves. Each year sees the disappearance of thousands of plant and animal species which we will never know, which our children will never see because they have been lost forever. The great majority become extinct for reasons related to human activity. Because of us, thousands of species will no longer give glory to God by their existence, nor convey their message to us. We have no such right.²

Response - All: Compassionate God, we grieve with you the loss of so much life, so much beauty and goodness. We see so much destruction and loss of the magnificent diversity of creatures now dead because of our greed and carelessness. Lord, forgive us.

Reflection: (Brief pause)

How do we learn to value other species of creation?

How do we grieve their loss and ours?

¹ Laudato Si' on Care for Our Common Home Encyclical letter of Pope Francis © 2015 Libreria Editrice Vaticana # 10

² Ibid. # 33

Reader 3:

Many Indigenous people see, and value, animals as their teachers. From careful observance, they have come to know the behaviours and patterns of animals, birds and fish and they have recognized the relationships that exist between them and humans.

The elders tell us that the clans existed before humans and that humans are the most dependent of creatures. Before we came the Creator told the animals, fish and birds that we would be coming and that we would be pitifully needy, although that's not the story we tell ourselves about ourselves. In reality, we need them far more than they need us. When they heard this the fish, birds and other animals said: "We will take care of them and show them how to live in harmony with all of Creation. We will sacrifice



ourselves as food so they won't starve and we will supply them with our skins so they will be warm. We will teach them what medicines and ceremonies to use to heal themselves."³

Among the bird clans are the eagle, the crane and the red-tailed hawk. Each of them has a unique role and particular gifts to share. The eagle has a place of honour as the one who at a time of suffering, brought the prayers of the people to the Creator. Eagle

returned with Creator's call to conversion and Creator's healing response to the people. Eagle is also the one who, when it circles over gatherings, brings blessing to the people.

Leader: Jesus, too, observed the birds of the air and reminded us of their Creator's care for them, and us. Jesus said: "Look at the birds in the sky. They do not sow or reap, they gather nothing into barns; yet your father in Heaven feeds them. Are you not more important than they?"⁴

³ <https://mushkiki.com/our-programs/clans/>

⁴ The new American Bible ©1970 Benizger; Collier MacMillan, Canada. Matt. 6: 27

Reflection: (Brief Pause) What touches you about the way Indigenous people value vulnerable creatures? How does God's care for the winged ones of creature influence you to act?



Sharing of Reflections:

Leader: I invite you now to share a reflection with someone near you.

Closing Prayer:

O Winged One, Holy Spirit of God, who hovered over creation at its very beginning and continues to hover over it with compassion and mercy, gift all of your creation with love. Let your justice and peace flow like a river upon all creation, especially the most vulnerable. Empower us to act with courage and justice for all, mindful that we are all irrevocably connected no matter how diverse and differentiated we may appear. Help us to remember that you hold each and every one of your beloved creatures in the palm of your hand and that You protect us all from the harm that threatens. May we learn from the winged ones, the swimming ones, the standing ones, the four-legged ones and the crawling ones how to praise you by our very being. May we grow to be like St. Francis, brothers and sisters to all. Praise be to you, Glorious One. Amen.

Closing Hymn: On Eagles Wings – Breaking Bread 2021 # 437 or a hymn of your choice.

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