



2023 SEASON OF CREATION

# Let Justice & Peace Flow

A CATHOLIC LITURGICAL GUIDE

# 2023 Season of Creation Prayer

Creator of All,

From your communion of love life sprung forth like a mighty river and the whole cosmos came into being.

On this Earth of overflowing love, the Word was made flesh and went forth with the life-giving waters proclaiming peace and justice for all creation.

You called human beings to till and keep your garden. You placed us into right relationship with each creature, but we failed to listen to the cries of the Earth and the cries of the most vulnerable. We broke with the flowing communion of love and sinned against you by not safeguarding the conditions for life.

We lament the loss of our fellow species and their habitats, we grieve the loss of human cultures, along with the lives and livelihoods that have been displaced or perished, and we ache at the sight of an economy of death, war and violence that we have inflicted on ourselves and on the Earth.

Open our ears to your creative, reconciling and sustaining Word that calls to us through the book of Scripture and the book of creation. Bless us once again with your life-giving waters so that the Creator Spirit may let justice and peace flow in our hearts and overflow into all creation.

Open our hearts to receive the living waters of God's justice and peace, and to share it with our suffering brothers and sisters, all creatures around us, and all creation.

Bless us to walk together with all people of good will so that the many streams of the living waters of God's justice and peace may become a mighty river all over the Earth.

In the name of the One who came to proclaim good news to all creation, Jesus Christ.

Amen.

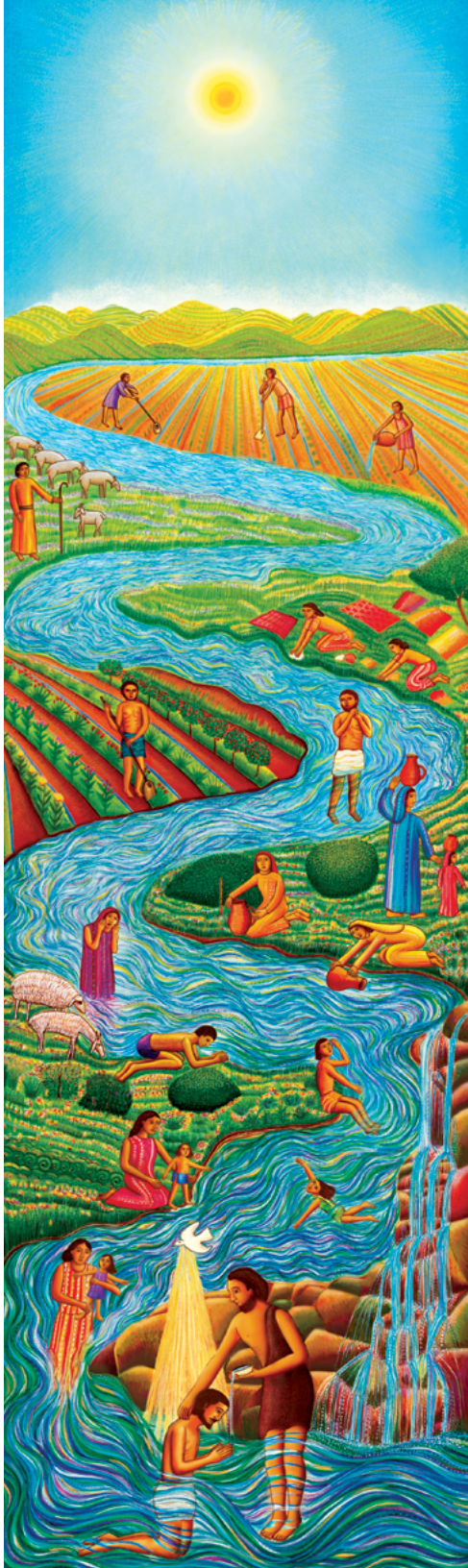
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## CONTENTS

- 3 Preface
- 4 Introduction
- 12 Music Suggestions Introduction
- 13 World Day of Prayer for the Care of Earth
- 14 First Sunday
- 19 Second Sunday
- 23 Third Sunday
- 28 Fourth Sunday
- 33 Fifth Sunday
- 38 Feast of St. Francis of Assisi

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- 40 A Nonviolent Path to Ecological Justice: the Condoraque Community and Mother Earth
- 42 Music Reference List



## Preface

Peace and Blessings this Season of Creation. As we celebrate the fifth year of publication of this liturgical guide, it continues to evolve and expand as we live into our ecological vocation as individuals and as communities around the world. The theme, *Let Justice and Peace Flow*, helps us navigate a flowing together of the three tributaries of nonviolence, justice, and care for creation. It creates a singular river of life-giving water. As always, our hope is that this liturgical guide will bring spiritual and formative depth to our prayer and liturgical lives, leading to inner and outer transformation.

An integral part of this year's guide, as always, is the artistic representation of the themes. We are privileged to include the work of John August Swanson. The piece we have chosen is *The River*, selected for the way it invites the viewer to take a journey of the soul to a world in which nonviolence, justice, and creation care are the way of life. Gentle, playful, life-giving, relational, intergenerational are all ways that Swanson depicts a new heaven and new earth.

In his own words, John describes his artistry this way:

*In exploring the place of the artist—my place—in our diverse culture, I found that traditional societies have very different attitudes about artists and creativity. I am attracted to those attitudes and feel they provide a more meaningful role for artists than does our society. I feel I can learn from them to formulate my own place as an artist. Following are some thoughts about what I am trying to do with my art and a glance at sources of inspiration important to me.*

*The images I make are not for “art’s sake,” nor are they for pure self-expression. I want to speak to you in everyday terms as if you were sitting here beside me. I pull from old roots to make a new thing that I hope will catch some of the light of our archetypal beacons. ([www.johnaugustswanson.com](http://www.johnaugustswanson.com))*

We join you in this Season of Creation with longing in our hearts for the flowing of justice, nonviolence, and care for all creation that we may ride the river of the Gospel to parched hearts and lands everywhere.



# Introduction

Once again, in 2023, a global Ecumenical Advisory Committee for the Season of Creation, including important representation from the Vatican, has invited faith leaders around the world to join in the ecumenical celebration of the Season of Creation. This season unites the world's 2.6 billion Christians in prayer and action to protect Earth, our common home and to discern the guidance it offers us for bringing about the New Creation.

The annual celebration takes place from September 1st, the World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation, to October 4th, the feast of St. Francis of Assisi. The Season of Creation is a liturgical season dedicated to prayer, reflection, and celebration of God as Creator. It also celebrates and reflects prayerfully on the gifts of creation and the mission given us by God to care for creation and respond to its needs and crises today.

## Urgent Crises Facing Earth

These crises are severe and urgent. Already three years ago in its [Season of Creation 2020 Celebration Guide](#), the Season of Creation Ecumenical Advisory committee wrote:

We are in the midst of a climate emergency. Several studies have indicated that the world is nowhere near meeting pledged

emission reduction rate targets. The latest IPCC [Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change] report highlights that “only with rapid and far-reaching” transitions in the world economy, on a scale and at a rate without historical precedent, can the 1.5°C limit be achieved. It is therefore a time to reconcile ourselves with creation through concrete repentance and urgent action. The Season of Creation is a time to acknowledge that tipping points are being reached, threatening the lives of the most vulnerable and putting the lives of future generations in jeopardy. As people of faith we are being called to stand up against climate injustice in prophetic ways.

The [updated IPCC report released in 2022](#) confirms the worsening impacts of climate change and the failure to avoid many tipping points toward destructive and irreversible changes. The summary of the report for policymakers notes,

Approximately 3.3 to 3.6 billion people live in contexts that are highly vulnerable to climate change (*high confidence*). A high proportion of species is vulnerable to climate change (*high confidence*). Human and ecosystem vulnerability are interdependent (*high confidence*). Current unsustainable

development patterns are increasing exposure of ecosystems and people to climate hazards (*high confidence*).

The report for policymakers goes on to detail risks “in the near-term (2021-2040), the mid (2041-2060) and long term (2081-2100), at different global warming levels and for pathways that overshoot 1.5°C global warming level for multiple decades.”

## Catholic Participation in the Season of Creation

The Season of Creation has been added to the Catholic calendar by Pope Francis over the last several years as a natural way to collaborate with the global ecumenical community on this critical matter and to implement the faith vision, analysis and mission laid out in his 2015 encyclical, [Laudato Sí](#).

In 2021, the Vatican launched the [Laudato Sí Action Platform](#) (LSAP) designed to call all parts of the global Catholic community – from families to parishes to businesses, schools, healthcare institutions, religious communities, and more – into extensive coordinated action over many years to address the complex socio-ecological crisis facing Earth at this time and to restore reverent respect and care for the sacredness of creation. At the time, the Vatican Dicastery for



Promoting Integral Human Development wrote that the world needs, above all, “a peoples’ movement” from below, an alliance of all people of good will.

Action plans from around the world are being posted on the LSAP website to offer ideas, encouragement, and to help build that global “peoples’ movement.” Information on how to take part is also available on the [Laudato Si Action Platform](#) website.



The identification of the Season of Creation as a new liturgical season invites the whole Christian community into focused prayer and action. The Catholic community, however, does not yet have official seasonal liturgical texts proper to the Season of Creation, and many pastors may not feel free to use the ecumenical texts of other participating Christian communities.

The materials in this booklet have been prepared to help Catholic communities read and pray with the scriptures of the Catholic lectionary for the Sundays in Ordinary Time during this period through the lens of the Season of Creation. This year, 2023, this period includes the 22nd through 26th Sundays in Ordinary Time for Cycle A.

### Themes: Elements of a Vital Spirituality

Each year the Ecumenical Advisory Committee recommends a theme for the season to guide prayer and reflection. Over time, these different themes are helping to build up an integral ecological vision and spirituality that nurtures nonviolence in relationships with each other and with the natural world. Each theme and the interconnections of the themes richly reward contemplation.

**In 2019**, the theme focused on **The Web of Life**, stressing the interdependence of all life on the planet and the importance of its vast but endangered biodiversity. This theme resonates with the important and often-repeated message of Pope Francis that **everything is connected**. We are all strands in the one great Web of Life.

**In 2020**, the theme called for **A Jubilee Time for the Earth**. The Advisory Committee noted that climate change results from the intersection of greed, inequality, and the destruction of Earth through overconsumption and economic systems that demand constant economic growth on a limited planet at the expense of the poor. The biblical concept of Jubilee calls for rest for the land, restoration of ecosystems, and restitution from those who have profited most to those who have suffered most. Earth needs Jubilee!

**In 2021**, the theme, **A Home for All?**, called for prayerful recognition of all the species of life beyond the human who also make their homes on this planet. Human-produced climate change is destroying their habitats and driving millions of species into extinction. Both the Ecumenical Advisory Committee and Pope Francis have stressed that all the other-than-human life has as much right to a safe and secure home on Earth as humans do. They do not exist just for human exploitation and enjoyment. And theirs is a religious right: God loves them for themselves and they, in their own ways, give glory to God. As Pope Francis wrote, “Because of us, thousands of species will no longer give glory to God by their very existence, nor convey their message to us. We have no such right.” (*Laudato Si*, #33)

**The 2022 theme** chosen by the Ecumenical Advisory Committee picks up on this judgment. It calls the whole human community to **Listen to the Voice of Creation**. It calls us to learn to pay attention to the messages that creation is trying to convey to us. It focuses special attention on

the voices, human and other-than-human, that are no longer heard.

These voices hold a variety of important messages. There are messages of suffering, diminishment, and loss as they show us the cost of destructive violence toward our common home and the impacts of climate change and ecological degradation. There are messages of thriving, beauty, and vital, reciprocal service - messages the scriptures speak of as glorifying God. There are messages of wisdom harvested through millennia on healthy living and mutuality throughout the Web of Life, messages that can guide us to more sustainable and resilient ways of living together within the limits of Earth.

**The 2023 theme** takes up the cry of the prophets to [Let Justice and Peace Flow...](#) In a brief [“Invitation to Join Season of Creation 2023”](#), ecumenical leaders state simply and forcefully:

The world humans have known, enjoyed and celebrated is changing rapidly beyond repair. Biodiversity is being lost at a rate not seen since the last mass extinction. The hope of keeping average temperature increases to 1.5 degrees Celsius is fading. The futures of young people are threatened by the

cascading impacts of the loss of biodiversity and a changing climate. Industrialization, colonization and the extraction and consumption of resources have created great wealth, unequally distributed. We are presently more aware than ever of the link between fossil fuels, and violence and war.

The urgency grows and we must make visible peace with Earth and on Earth, at the same time that justice calls us to repentance and a change of attitude and actions. Instead of despair, hope can be created if we work together as the People of God. By the Creator’s infinite love and mercy, streams can rise in the desert. An economy of peace can be built instead of an economy based on conflict.

The changing world and the growing ecological crisis threatening us and all who share Earth are the fruits of injustice and violence. The Cry of Earth and the Cry of the Poor are desperate calls for justice and the peace that it can bring. The wisdom and courage of the prophetic Spirit must flow in us and through us....

As we enter into this Season of Creation, we are invited, then, to listen again to these thematic messages with deeply contemplative seriousness.

They carry sacred revelation from the Holy Spirit of Truth for these times. They are calling the family of creation to a new, compassionate consciousness, a commitment to Gospel nonviolence, and healing work that has the power to restore a life-giving flow of justice and peace to all the living of Earth. From a deep contemplative presence, let’s listen from the heart:

We are all members of a vast and profoundly interdependent **Web of Life**,  
The precious gift of God.  
Imagine, feel the countless connections....

There is great need for a  
**Jubilee Time for Earth**

A time of rest, restoration, and restitution from the destructive damage from climate change and extensive ecological degradation.  
Grieve with the suffering Earth....

Earth is **Home for All** who share it,  
not just humans.

And all have the right to live, to thrive, and to glorify God on it and in it.  
Let that Spirit flow through you....

**“Listen to the Voice of Creation,”** the essential prophetic wisdom all around us,  
Stretching us, urging deeper,  
more contemplative presence



to the sacred revelation present but unheard,  
ignored throughout our Common Home...

The Cry of Earth, the Cry of the Poor are pleading  
“**Let Justice and Peace Flow...**”

These prophetic voices are calling us to action:  
To overcome the injustice and violence of our  
treatment of Earth and all who make it home,  
To bring peace to all Creation.

This is the spirit, the emerging integral ecological  
spirituality, in which we are invited to approach  
the scriptures and liturgical prayers of the 2023  
Season of Creation, living into a transformed  
future to which God is calling us.

### **The Bigger Picture: Assumptions Behind This Liturgical Guide**

Drawing on Pope Francis’s important encyclical,  
*Laudato Sí* and the rich background of Catholic  
Social Tradition, these resources assume that  
the human family is not facing various separate  
and distinct crises – social, economic, political,  
cultural, ecological – that are competing for our  
time, attention, and resources. There is only  
one complex and integrated social-economic-  
political-cultural-ecological crisis requiring prayer,  
an integral ecological conversion, and effective  
nonviolent action for the healing of the vast web  
of life. It is possible to identify several dimensions  
and facets to this integral crisis, but everything is  
connected. All of our struggles are related.

**Ecological Dimension.** The ecological dimension  
of this complex crisis has two important facets:  
climate change, or what some are calling

“climate collapse,” and ecological degradation,  
including pollution and biodiversity loss, through  
overproduction and overconsumption.

**Climate change/collapse.** Fossil fuel use and  
industrial production over the last century and  
a half by what are now often referred to as the  
“developed nations” has, through the emission  
of heat-trapping greenhouse gases, produced  
a warming of the planet that is changing the  
climate everywhere in dynamic and dangerous  
ways. Increasingly, scientists and religious  
leaders are referring to the situation as a human-  
produced **climate crisis** that is destroying vast  
numbers of species and threatening the whole  
web of life on the planet. Storms and wildfires  
are already more violent, heat waves, droughts,  
and floods more frequent and damaging, sea  
levels rising and islands disappearing, and human  
suffering and tragedy more severe, especially  
among people who are poor and marginalized.

**Ecological degradation.** At the same time, it has  
become apparent, as ecological awareness has  
grown, that the human community is now using  
more of Earth’s resources in a few months than  
the planet can replenish in a full year. In 1970,  
the first attempts were made to measure human  
production and consumption against Earth’s  
regenerative capacities. The efforts resulted in  
the birth of **Earth Overshoot Day**, a calculation  
of the point at which as much of Earth’s resources  
will have been used in a particular year as it can  
replenish in a full year. In 1970, Earth Overshoot  
Day was determined to be December 29th. Since  
then, it has been occurring earlier and earlier.

This year, 2023, Earth Overshoot Day occurred  
between July 27th and August 2nd. In 7 months,  
the human community has consumed what it will  
take Earth a year to replenish: resources such  
as water, food, clean air. For the next 5 months,  
we will be consuming from the reserves built up  
by Earth over millennia. This - a form of violence  
to Earth and to future generations - obviously  
cannot go on forever. Those reserves are limited.  
It is a death spiral.

Through the years, the sophistication of the  
measurement process and the collection of data  
have improved and increased immensely. It is  
now possible to find out your **Country Overshoot  
Day** based on national lifestyles and standards of  
living. The details and the comparisons they make  
possible are sobering.

**Economic-Social-Political Dimensions.** In each  
of these dimensions of human life around the  
planet, there are serious issues of injustice that  
must be addressed if the human community is to  
avoid the worst of the destructive environmental  
scenarios confronting us.

**Economic Justice.** Inequality of resources is stark  
and dangerous around the world. A small number  
of extremely wealthy people control as much  
wealth as half the human community of more  
than 8 billion people. While there is currently  
more than enough food produced globally to feed  
everyone on the planet, up to 783 million people  
lack adequate food and are chronically hungry,  
even malnourished. And climate change is  
continuing to reduce Earth’s ability to be fruitful.



But hunger is just one of the issues. Poor nations - those that have historically contributed least to the forces producing climate change - do not have the resources to prepare for more violent storms and other destructive manifestations of climate change. Nor do they have the resources to help their communities recover from worsening climate tragedies.

It is a foundational principle of the Catholic social tradition that God's gifts in creation are meant for the wellbeing of all for whom this creation is home. Those who accumulate more than they need while others lack the most basic necessities have been criticized for stealing the resources from the poor since the earliest Christian centuries. In *Laudato Sí*, Pope Francis wrote:

In the present condition of global society, where injustices abound and growing numbers of people are deprived of basic human rights and considered expendable, the principle of the common good immediately becomes, logically and inevitably, a summons to solidarity and a preferential option for the poorest of our brothers and sisters.... It demands before all else an appreciation of the immense dignity of the poor in the light of our deepest convictions as believers. We need only look around us to see that, today, this option is in fact an ethical imperative essential for effectively attaining the common good. [L.S. 158]

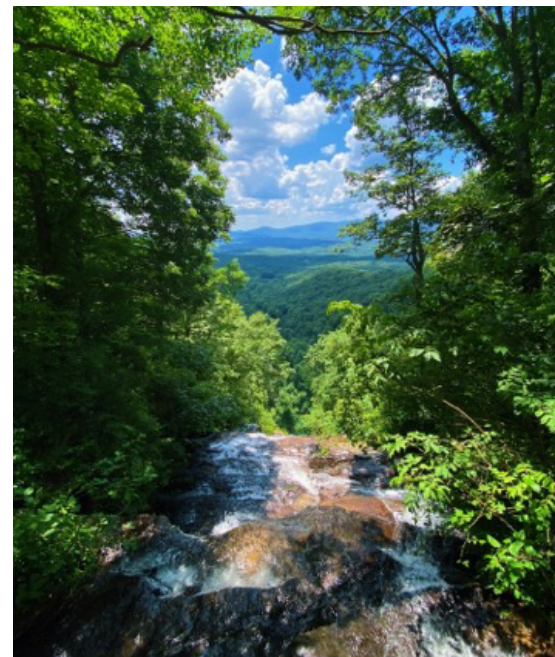
**Social Justice.** Justice also demands solidarity with and attention to the needs of people of

all races, nations, and diverse communities, all genders, and all generations yet to come. Without justice and care for all, there can be no peace, no healing and renewal of the Earth. Again, Pope Francis writes:

Underlying the principle of the common good is respect for the human person as such, endowed with basic and inalienable rights ordered to his or her integral development... [T]he common good calls for social peace, the stability and security provided by a certain order which cannot be achieved without particular concern for distributive justice; whenever this is violated, violence always ensues. Society as a whole, and the state in particular, are obliged to defend and promote the common good. [L.S 157]

Droughts, floods, fires, storms, and other severe weather-related events are creating desperate poverty and deepening hunger. The poor suffer most from climate change/collapse and are increasingly forced to migrate in search of food, security, and other essentials. Millions of people are now climate migrants or refugees, adding to the social pressures and unrest in so many parts of the world. Solidarity with our sisters and brothers in their deepest needs and a deep commitment to end the violence toward creation at the heart of their suffering are essential to the justice that alone can bring permanent healing and transformation to life on Earth.

The 2023 Season of Creation prophetic call to "Let Justice and Peace Flow" is clearly asking the human community to take another important



step toward conversion from the root causes that are creating the current dangerous crisis. It is calling us to embrace the global common good, Gospel nonviolence, and global solidarity that are essential to bringing about healing responses to the Cry of Earth and the Cry of the Poor.

**Some Basic Inferences to Guide Our Responses.** These dimensions of the current complex crisis support some basic conclusions which will be reflected in these liturgical materials and upon which our responses must be based.

- First, the human community must move to clean, renewable energy and phase out carbon emissions as soon as possible to prevent catastrophic climate change that threatens the survival of the intricately interconnected and

interdependent web of life of which humanity is but one strand. The justice to which we are being called requires an end to climate change denial. It demands that truth replace disinformation on climate too often used to protect profits or garner political gain. It calls us all to committed concern for the common good of all.

- Second, even with clean, renewable energy, we cannot grow our way out of the severe poverty and great maldistribution of resources in which so many live globally. Those who hold up economic growth as the only way to overcome poverty and hunger are failing (or refusing) to face the reality of Earth's resource limitations and the current death spiral of overproduction and overconsumption laid bare by the data behind Earth Overshoot Day.
- Third, this requires critique and rejection of the current dominant economic model with its assumptions about "development", "progress", economic growth, and "the good life." These guide and govern the current destructive patterns of life. The human community needs instead to adopt a way of being that gives priority to dignified human life for all, especially the most vulnerable, and care for the environment. The quality of relationships, commitment to the universal common good, nonviolence, and global solidarity characterize authentic human development, the true "good life," in Catholic Social Tradition, not the accumulation of industrial and political power, material goods, and wealth.
- Fourth, these changes demand what Pope Francis has called "integral ecological conversion." That conversion will require cross-cultural encounter and dialogue as well as careful inter-species listening to feed a spirituality of global solidarity, freedom from consumerism, growing consciousness of the interconnectedness of all creation, nonviolence, gratitude, and contentment with what is simply necessary.
- Fifth, wealthy communities need to be open to welcoming climate migrants and refugees, to creating just migration policies for their own communities as well as for use by others that may need them, and to advocate with their governments for adequate and just support for poor nations to enable them to respond to climate change with resilience and adequate care for their communities. Our solidarity must stretch to become global.

In short, the human family must reduce its global consumption and waste, return to patterns of living compatible with Earth's resources and regenerative capacities, rethink what constitutes the good human life and how to reach it, and redistribute or redirect available wealth and resources to meet the basic needs of the whole human family, especially the poorest and most vulnerable, and the full web of life.

## Diversity of the Communities of Faith

Resources such as these, prepared for a global Church, must be adaptable to many different social, cultural and economic contexts. No single text can be expected to speak to such vast diversity without careful and prayerful local interpretation and adaptation.

The communities joining in the prayer, celebration, and activities of the Season of Creation this year will range from Indigenous peoples to those marginalized, poor, and struggling to survive; from working and middle class communities to the wealthiest elites around the planet. They will include youth, young adults, middle-aged, and elders; powerful and vulnerable peoples, weak and oppressed. They will include those extremely conscious of the current interrelated web of crises, those suffering from them, and those who are in compassionate solidarity with those suffering. They will also include those who are unconscious of it all and those self-absorbed who don't care.

The call to integral ecological conversion and its commitment to nonviolence will be different for each of these communities and individuals. Local liturgical/pastoral teams will need to be conscious of the characteristics and social location of their own specific communities as they work to discern God's Word to them. Only then will they be able to use and adapt the materials included here effectively.

But this much is clear from the nature of the complex crisis confronting the global human community and all for whom Earth is home. The way to a better life for all cannot be through widespread economic growth and technological progress as modeled by the so-called “developed” nations of the industrial world. It cannot rely on the current economic systems built on consumerism, growth, and constant upward mobility defined by material goods. It must be through greater justice for all, sustainability, solidarity, nonviolent relationships, and attentive care to the voices of creation, the needs and wisdom of all Earth’s creatures, and Earth itself.

### The Materials

The five Sundays of the 2023 Season of Creation [22nd through 26th Sundays in Ordinary Time in the Catholic lectionary] have a certain thematic flow that helps us to integrate them as a season. They speak powerfully to the contexts we have just reviewed.

**The first Sunday’s scriptures** call the human family to challenge the injustices creating the ecological crises threatening life on Earth by proclaiming the burning prophetic word of God for these times. Jesus challenges his disciples to think as God thinks, face the suffering before us, and take up our cross to follow him.

**The second Sunday’s scriptures** challenge Christians to take up the prophetic responsibility in love to invite each other gently and prayerfully to conversion and care for creation in these times of ecological crisis.

**The scriptures of the third Sunday** recall that while the seriousness of the ecological crisis demands urgent and passionate prophetic action, it must remain non-judgmental and forgiving. They invite reflection on how much we have been forgiven and still need forgiveness so that we may be patient and forgiving of others.

**The fourth Sunday’s scriptures** remind us that God’s ways are not our ways and they invite us to contemplate some of God’s Jubilee ways of living on Earth, giving birth to the New Creation.

**The fifth Sunday texts** put the focus squarely on personal responsibility for embracing the integral ecological conversion essential to healing Earth, caring for the Web of Life.

So in simple, summary form, the message of the Season of Creation for 2023 is this:

- God is sending us on a painful prophetic mission. Be ready to take up the cross.
- You must pass on the prophetic word given to you about care of Earth.
- Do it with a forgiving heart, as you have been forgiven.
- Pay attention to God’s ways of living, Jubilee ways, in all dimensions of life.
- Each person is ultimately responsible for his or her own ecological conversion.

**The materials for each of the liturgies** of the Sundays of the 2023 Season of Creation that follow will include these elements:

- **Examples of Creation-themed Signs of the Cross.** These will reflect a consciousness of the vastness of the universe, God’s evolutionary process of creating, and thematic elements from the particular day’s scriptures. They are not currently approved for official Catholic liturgical use, but hopefully they will help those who choose to use them to experience more consciously the awesome reality of what we are doing when we turn to the real Creator God.
- **Short Introductory Comments.** These will set the context briefly, focusing on the messages of the scriptures as they relate to the Season of Creation’s themes. These introductions could be published in a parish bulletin, read as they are, or adapted for brief introductory comments at the beginning of a liturgy.
- **Suggestions for the Penitential Rite.** Although the Roman Missal gives various optional formulations for the penitential rite, it also allows for “other invocations” to be used in public Catholic liturgies. The suggestions included in these materials, then, could be used in Catholic liturgies to focus the community’s repentance on the issues addressed by the scriptural messages of the day in the context of the Season of Creation.
- **Orations.** Alternative orations (the opening prayer, the prayer over the gifts, and the prayer after communion) are offered that reflect the themes of the Season of Creation



*“Because of us, thousands of species will no longer give glory to God by their very existence, nor convey their message to us. We have no such right” – Pope Francis (Laudato Sí, #33)*

and the scriptures for the given Sunday. While they are not currently sanctioned for use in public Catholic liturgies, they may be useful for private prayer or for use in ecclesial Christian communities that have greater freedom. They could also be useful for those in the Catholic community entrusted in the future with the task of preparing proper liturgical texts for the Season of Creation.

- **Points for Reflection on the Scriptures.** These points are not offered as an outline or text for a homily. Local contexts, cultures, and issues are too diverse to permit that kind of presentation. They are points for reflection drawn from the Sunday scriptures read against the background of the Season of Creation. They are meant to inspire or suggest issues for homilists to consider in their preparations or for anyone's personal reflection and prayer. The questions included can help homilists reflect on their own experience. In addition, they may, in many cases, be fruitfully posed to their congregations for their own prayerful consideration.
- **Faith Reflections.** The creed at Mass can take the form of questions of faith, as for example during the Easter Vigil. The questions offered here are not currently approved for use in official Catholic liturgies, but they can serve as helpful invitations to faith raised by

the scriptures and prayers of the particular Sunday of the Season of Creation. They are offered as helps to personal prayer and faith development and could be useful in homilies.

- **General Intercessions Petitions.** A few related petitions suitable or adaptable are offered for use in the General Intercessions.
- **Final Blessings or Prayers over the People.** The Final Blessing or Prayer over the People too can reflect the themes of the Season of Creation and of the particular liturgy. These examples are offered to feed the imagination and to bring the liturgy to an integral conclusion, blessing all involved for the work ahead in the Spirit.
- **Music Suggestions.** Musical suggestions related to the themes for each particular Sunday are offered for consideration by music planners and musicians.

#### **Final Note**

*Among the official Catholic Eucharistic Prayers, Eucharistic Prayer IV is generally considered the most appropriate in creation-themed liturgies. However, early in the prayer it has these words in the English translation:*

*“You formed man in your own image  
And entrusted the whole world to his care,  
So that in serving you alone,  
He might have dominion over all creatures.”*

*In addition to the problematic use of exclusive male language, the claim of human “dominion over all creatures” tends to suggest what Pope Francis identifies as a distorted interpretation of our relationship with Earth. He writes:*

*Although it is true that we Christians have at times incorrectly interpreted the Scriptures, nowadays we must forcefully reject the notion that our being created in God's image and given dominion over the earth justifies absolute domination over other creatures. The biblical texts are to be read in their context, with an appropriate hermeneutic, recognizing that they tell us to “till and keep” the garden of the world (cf. Gen. 2:15). [Laudato Sí, ## 66-67]*

*He closes the following paragraph with the strong statement:*

*Clearly, the Bible has no place for a tyrannical anthropocentrism unconcerned for other creatures. [Laudato Sí, # 68]*

*This authoritative teaching suggests that the prayer should be changed to reflect the Church's true intent with language such as:*

*“You formed us in your own image  
And entrusted the whole world to our care,  
So that in serving you alone,  
We might care for all creatures.”*



## Music Suggestions Introduction

This summer, in North America, we have realized our climate connection. Wildfire smoke from Canada has traveled far, and affects much of the continent, even traveling to Europe. Events in one environment have repercussions that flow to other environments and affect world climate. We are all connected on our Earth.

Ezekiel said, "...I must cry out..." We must continue to speak, and to act. The words we sing and share can raise awareness and make a difference. Although we cannot always control aspects of the climate from natural causes, we can control our actions that contribute to natural disasters. And we can help those who are affected, whose homes are threatened or destroyed.

As your community of faith prays for renewal, guidance, and a call to action, included in this publication are some musical suggestions to help in planning worship services. Planners may wish to have a "theme song" and some of the hymns and songs suggested for entrance or dismissal would work beautifully for a theme throughout the season.

There are also many musical and liturgical resources online; [hymnary.org](http://hymnary.org) is just one example. It is always useful to consider the community carefully, choosing songs to which they can relate culturally and socially, and teaching new songs in a way that enhances learning. This list is definitely not exhaustive—there are still many possibilities! Creativity should be a large part of musical planning for the Season of Creation.

For hymns, text authors only are listed—in some cases the author is also the composer. Depending on the meter, some hymns may have more than one tune possibility. For psalms, the composer of the musical setting is listed. In the Additional Resources at the end of this booklet, there is a complete list of all songs used, with additional possibilities. The hymn suggestions for October 4, the Feast of St. Francis, could also be used on any previous Sundays.

As we pray, plan, and act, may God's wisdom guide and sustain us all!

- Denise Mathias



An aerial photograph of a vibrant blue river flowing through a dense, green forest. The river is surrounded by tall evergreen trees and is set within a deep, narrow valley. In the background, there are rolling mountains under a cloudy sky.

# World Day of Prayer for the Care of Earth

September 1, 2023

September 1, the World Day of Prayer for the Care of Earth, opens the Season of Creation each year. Since adding this day to the Catholic liturgical calendar in 2015, Pope Francis has regularly issued an official message promoting the Season of Creation theme.

Pope Francis's [Message for the World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation](#) underlines the 2023 theme "Let Justice and Peace Flow," a theme inspired by the prophet Amos: "Let justice flow on like a river, righteousness like a never-failing stream" (Amos 5:24). This theme focuses attention on the significant role of injustice and violence in the contemporary climate crisis. In his message, Pope Francis urges people around the world to contribute to this river of justice and peace "by resolving to transform our *hearts*, our *lifestyles*, and the *public policies* ruling our societies" for the healing of Earth.

An ecumenical prayer service will be offered online on September 1st for a shared celebration of this crucial and sacred common cause. Once plans are complete, more information and directions for joining it will be available at [SeasonofCreation.org](https://SeasonofCreation.org).

For those who would prefer to celebrate a local ecumenical prayer service to launch the Season of Creation, a draft text is offered as Addendum 1 in the [Season of Creation Celebration Guide](#), pp. 22-32.

*"People around the world must resolve  
'to transform our hearts, our lifestyles,  
and the public policies ruling our societies'  
for the healing of Earth."*

*- Pope Francis: Message for the World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation*

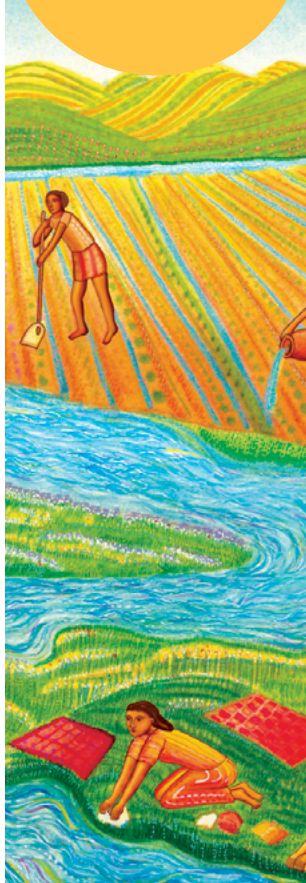


# First Sunday of the Season of Creation

September 3, 2023 | 22nd Sunday in Ordinary Time

## SCRIPTURES

Jeremiah 20:7-9  
Ps. 63:2, 3-4, 5-6, 8-9  
Romans 12:1-2  
Matthew 16:21-27



## Opening Sign of the Cross

In the name of God our Creator, whose prophetic Word can burn within us,

And of the Word of God, who suffered, died, and rose again to redeem creation,

And of the Wisdom of God who calls us to help create a more just, peaceful, and life-giving creation. **Amen.**

May the fire of God's prophetic and transforming Word fill our hearts and guide our actions to renew the face of the Earth. **Amen.**

## Introductory Comments

The Season of Creation is a relatively new Liturgical Season for the Catholic community globally as it joins the more than 30-year ecumenical/orthodox history of celebration. It extends from September 1st, the World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation, to October 4th, the feast of St. Francis of Assisi.

The Season focuses on God as Creator of the vast cosmic universe, God's revelation in creation, and our calling to care for God's creation, protect its rich diversity and address the urgent, destructive crises threatening its health and future.

These crises are increasingly undeniable, threatening the whole community of Earth: the massive loss of biodiversity, the inexorable record-breaking warming of the planet, the

increasingly violent storms, worsening droughts bringing hunger and famine, wildfires, floods, rising sea levels, and more. It is urgent that the human community renounce the violence of planetary overconsumption by some and economic systems based on constant economic growth at the cost of the Earth, a limited planet, and those who are poor, often lacking basic necessities.

The ecumenical committee leading the Season of Creation notes that climate and biodiversity crises result from the intersection of greed, inequality, violence, injustice of many kinds, and destruction of God's Earth. The 2023 ecumenical theme for the Season of Creation takes up the challenges this creates, raising a prophetic call: Let Justice and Peace Flow....

It calls for the human family to challenge the injustices and violence creating and supporting the ecological crises threatening us. And it holds out an image of hope: the efforts for justice and peace all around the planet flowing together into a mighty life-giving river for all who share our common home.

On this 1st Sunday of the Season of Creation, the scriptures raise this call to justice, challenging us to accept our responsibility in love to proclaim God's burning prophetic Word in these times of ecological crisis.

## Penitential Rite

Let's enter into the quiet of our spirits.... Praying that justice and peace may flow through us....

Loving, Creator God, the injustice in our world weighs heavy on our hearts, bringing ecological destruction and great suffering all around Earth.

### Loving Creator God, Have Mercy

Christ Jesus, you came among us as the Living Word of God, offering yourself to guide us into God's ways of thinking.

### Christ Jesus, Have Mercy

Holy Spirit of God, you are at work among us inviting us, energizing us to discern what is the will of God, giving ourselves to build the New Creation in love.

### Holy Spirit of God, Have Mercy

May the grace and peace of our Creator God, who has mercy on us, forgives us our sins, and sends us on a challenging prophetic mission, bring us together to the fullness of Life!

**Amen.**

Grateful for this mission and from the love that is the deepest reality of our being, let's sing out our gratitude and love for God.

**Gloria.**

## Opening Prayer

*And we continue our prayer in the words of Pope Francis for this celebration of creation:*

"O God of the poor, help us to rescue the abandoned and forgotten of this Earth, who are so precious in your eyes...."

God of love, show us our place in this world as channels of your love for all the creatures of this earth."

God of mercy, may we receive your forgiveness and convey your mercy throughout our common home.

We ask this in the name of Jesus and in the power of your Spirit where we live now and forever.

**Amen.**

## Points for Reflection on the Scriptures

**The Gospel.** In the increasingly destructive impacts of the changing climate and the ecological degradation affecting so many, could Earth be trying to show us what Jesus was trying to tell his disciples? That increasing suffering and even death are coming? That in that suffering and death, the results of the sinful actions of the human community are being revealed? That light is being shed on the conversions so desperately needed and the paths of redemption and healing that are still open before us?

Despite the personal experience of worsening storms, wildfires, droughts, floods, and heat

waves, despite the ever more disturbing warnings from the global consensus of scientists studying what is happening to Earth, far too many people follow Peter's assumptions and mindset: "No, it couldn't happen. Earth is too vast.... God wouldn't let that happen.... It is untrue...."

For some this is simply the result of lack of imagination or information. For others it can be the result of disinformation and marketing spin. For still others, it may come from unwillingness to face the truth and to embrace the ecological conversions, lifestyle and policy changes so urgently needed. For still others it comes from valuing profits more than care for our common home.

But what Jesus tells Peter fits us here. Think as God thinks! God lets us see what's happening in all its cruel brutality. Seeing the truth should set us free to act, to change, to find ways to avoid the suffering and destruction that are looming, ways to heal Earth. Showing us the truth is God's invitation to "those who have eyes to see" to help create a more Godlike, healthy, sustainable, nonviolent and loving world.

Carrying that prophetic message to the contemporary world too often meets the resistance that the **Reading from Jeremiah** expresses. The more we see and warn against the urgent, destructive threats of climate change to life on Earth, the more we are dismissed as extremists. The more we learn about the violent forces destroying the planet and warn of them, the more overwhelming the

threats can seem, both to us and to those we approach. The reports of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change reveal how the worsening threats touch practically every dimension of life and can bring about massive destruction of life as we know it.

The refusal of people to listen or take the warnings seriously enough stirs frustration, fear, rage, and discouragement. Jeremiah's bitter complaint can burn within frustrated environmental prophets today.

For that very reason, the responsorial psalm, **Psalm 63:2-6, 8-9**, offers a crucial balance to Jeremiah's despair. Its focus on the power and glory of God revealed in creation brings us back to the contemplative nourishment that can restore our gratitude and awe, renew hope, trust, and joy in God's healing, redemptive work in and through creation.

Finally, **St. Paul's warning to the Romans** speaks directly to these crises of our time:

Do not conform yourselves to this age but be transformed by the renewal of your mind,

That you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and pleasing and perfect.

This age has embraced violent economic policies promoting and supporting constant growth on this limited planet, ignoring Earth's inability to replenish vital resources fast enough to keep up with overproduction and overconsumption, and failing in solidarity with the billions of people in desperate need globally.

In his [Message for the World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation in 2023](#), Pope Francis wrote,

Let us heed our call to stand with the victims of environmental and climate injustice, and to put an end to the senseless war against creation.

The effects of this war can be seen in the many rivers that are drying up. Benedict XVI once observed that: "the external deserts in the world are growing, because the internal deserts have become so vast". [2] Consumerist greed, fueled by selfish hearts, is disrupting the planet's water cycle. The unrestrained burning of fossil fuels and the destruction of forests are pushing temperatures higher and leading to massive droughts. Alarming water shortages increasingly affect both small rural communities and large metropolises. Moreover, predatory industries are depleting and polluting our freshwater sources through extreme practices such as fracking for oil and gas extraction, unchecked mega-mining projects, and intensive animal farming. "Sister Water", in the words of Saint Francis of Assisi, is pillaged and turned into "a commodity subject to the laws of the market" ([Laudato Si'](#), 30).

Pope Francis goes on to urge us to "contribute to the mighty river of justice and peace in this Season of Creation ... by resolving to transform our hearts, our lifestyles, and the public policies ruling our societies." And he warns, "Economic policies that promote scandalous wealth for a privileged few and degrading conditions for many others, spell the end of peace and justice."

In what ways can we transform **our hearts** in order to care more effectively for creation? How do our attitudes and our hopes about wealth and consumption for ourselves and for others need to change for life on the planet to become more just and sustainable for all? What can we do now? In the months to come?

In what ways can we change **our lifestyles** in order to care more effectively for creation? What day to day changes can reduce the throwaway culture Pope Francis condemns? What changes in how we live will affect consumer demand and reduce global overproduction?

What **public policies** in our societies contribute to overproduction or overconsumption, inequality, oppression, economic racism, or other forms of ecological degradation? What groups or communities are working to change them? What nonviolent strategies are likely to bring about the deep change that is necessary? What can we do to help in the work of policy justice?

### Faith Reflections

Are you among those who believe in God who creates all things, renews all things, and celebrates all things?

Are you among those who believe in God who has given Earth as a sanctuary, a sacred planet filled with God's presence, as a home for us to share with all members of the Earth family?



Are you among those who believe in Jesus, God become flesh and blood, a human part of Earth, who lived nonviolently, breathed and spoke among us, suffered, and died on a cross for all human beings and for all creation?

Are you among those who believe in Jesus, the risen Christ, who is at the heart of creation, reconciling all things to God, renewing all creation nonviolently, and filling the universe?

Are you among those who believe in the Holy Spirit who renews life in creation, groans in empathy with a suffering creation, and waits, working with us, for the rebirth of creation?

Are you among those who believe that with Christ we will rise and with Christ we will celebrate a new creation?

This is our faith. Through it we see God's revelation emerging in new ways among us. Through it we embrace the promise that our deepest spiritual longings will come to fulfillment through the Spirit in the ages to come. **Amen.**

### General Intercessions

That we may grow in consciousness of the great gift of creation and all of its elements, we pray....

That we may deepen our gratitude for nature's rich Web of Life within which we live and may grow in openness to wiser and more just, nonviolent ways of caring for it and sharing it, we pray....

That we may take up our prophetic responsibility in this time of crisis to speak God's Truth to each other and to call each other to conversion and to ways of living within creation wisely, sustainably, justly, and reverently, we pray....

That the Synod currently in process will bring wise discernment of the guidance of God's Spirit to the People of God, effective widespread healing to Earth, and new life and energy to all Earth's communities, we pray....

### Prayer over the Gifts

Our loving Creator God, through your love you have given us these gifts and so much more to share. Accept our grateful offerings and our commitment to care for all in need, your people around the planet and all creatures with whom we share Earth, our Common Home. We ask this in the name of Christ Jesus. **Amen.**

### Prayer after Communion

Our loving God, at the table of your word and sacrament, you nourish your faithful and give us life. Grant that through these gifts of your son, we may come to see and love your creation as you see and love it. Help us to discern your will and to reverence and care for Earth and all for whom it is home. We ask this through Jesus Christ your Son, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God forever and ever. **Amen.**

### Final Blessing

May the Spirit of God, who is above all and in all and through all, fill us with the knowledge of God's presence on Earth and the vibrant life of Christ within us. **Amen.**

May almighty God bless us, God who is Creator, Word, and Holy Spirit, now and forever. **Amen.**



# First Sunday – Musical Selections

September 3, 2023 | 22nd Sunday in Ordinary Time

## Hymns

**E - Entrance | O - Offertory | C - Communion | D - Dismissal**

- E, D How Can I Keep From Singing  
Robert Lowry
- E, D God, Whose Giving Knows No Ending  
Robert Edwards, ©1961, 1989 Hymn Society.
- E, D Lord, You Give the Great Commission  
Jeffery Rowthorn, ©1978 Hope Publishing Co
- E, D O God Beyond All Praising  
Michael Perry, ©1982 The Jubilate Group
- E, D O Spirit All-Embracing  
Delores Dufner, ©2003, GIA Publications, Inc.
- O Healing River  
Fran Minkoff, © 1964 Appleseed Music (Theme possibility)
- O For the Healing of the Nations  
Fred Kaan, ©1968 Hope Publishing Co.
- O Seek the Lord  
Roc O'Connor ©1975, 1996 Robert F. O'Connor, SJ, and OCP.
- C At the Table of the World  
Brian Wren, ©1989 Hope Publishing Co.
- C Life-giving Bread, Saving Cup  
James Chepponis, ©1987 GIA
- C Now In This Banquet  
Marty Haugen, ©1986 GIA Publications, Inc.

D O God, Our Help in Ages Past  
Isaac Watts

D Thank You, God, for Water, Soil, and Air  
Brian Wren, ©1975 Hope Publishing Co.

## Psalm Settings

Psalm 63: My Soul Is Thirsting  
Tony Alonso, © 2008 GIA Publications, Inc.

Psalm 63: My Soul Is Thirsting  
Michael Joncas, ©1987 GIA Publications, Inc.

Psalm 63: My Soul Is Thirsting for You  
Owen Alstott, ©1977, 1990 OCP Pub.

Psalm 63: My Soul Is Thirsting  
Gerard Chuisano, ©1998, pub. OCP Publications

Psalm 63: For You My Soul Is Thirsting  
The Collegeville Composers Group, ©2006 Liturgical Press

***“Let us heed our call to stand with the victims of environmental and climate injustice, and to put an end to the senseless war against creation.”***

- Pope Francis: Message for the World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation

# Second Sunday of the Season of Creation

September 10, 2023 | 23rd Sunday in Ordinary Time

## SCRIPTURES

Ezekiel 33:7-9

Ps. 95:1-2, 6-9

Romans 13:8-10

Matthew 18:15-20



## Opening Sign of the Cross

In the name of God, our Creator, who gives birth to the entire universe of creation in love,

And of the Word of God, who came among us in Jesus to embody God's love and forgiveness for us all,

And of the Wisdom of God, who weaves the evolving web of life, revealing her wisdom through the many different voices of creation. **Amen.**

May the grace and peace of our Creator God, who loves us, forgives us, and sends us on a challenging prophetic mission, be with you!

## Introductory Comments

Today we celebrate the Second Sunday of the Season of Creation. As you will remember from last week, this season celebrates God as Creator of the vast cosmic universe.

It explores God's revelation in creation and our calling to care for Earth, to protect its rich diversity, to end the destructive violence of humans, and to address the urgent crises threatening Earth's health and future - and our survival.

The readings today remind us of the essential importance of calling each other to conversion. And Jesus offers guidance in approaching each other with gentle respect in these times of deep social division and too-often violent conflict.

## Penitential Rite

Conscious of God's loving presence and great gifts to us in creation, let us enter into the quiet of our spirits, praying for prophetic courage, wisdom, and deeper love for God, for all people, and for creation which gives us life and sustains us. *[silent pause]*

Loving Creator God, you have entrusted the human family with the richly diverse gifts of creation, asking us to receive them with gratitude and care for them wisely and well.

**Loving Creator God, have mercy.**

Christ Jesus, you have entrusted us with a mission to warn those whose actions abuse and are destroying Earth, its life, and its peoples, to invite them and ourselves to more loving, protective and life-giving ways.

**Word of God, have mercy.**

Holy Spirit of God, you are at work in us and among us making us more conscious of the sacredness of all creation, raising up global movements in these times to care for Earth and each other.

**Wisdom of God, have mercy.**

May God, the Creator of all time and space and the vast Web of Life in which we live, have mercy on us, free us from our sins, and guide us into the fullness of divine Life. **Amen.**

**Gloria**



## Opening Prayer

Our Loving God, in you justice and mercy meet. With unmatched love and forgiveness, you have drawn us into the circle of your life. You send us to invite our sisters and brothers to stop abusing each other and creation itself, and to embrace your ways, ways of love and care for you, for each other, and for all creation. Open our eyes to the wonders your creation sets before us that we may serve you free from fear and address you with grateful love. We ask this in the name of Jesus the Lord. **Amen.**

## Points for Reflection on the Scriptures

In the first reading, **Ezekiel** describes God's warning to himself and to us: we are responsible for each other. If we hear and fail to relay God's Word, God's call to conversion to those for whom it is intended, we will be held responsible and complicit in their sin and in the suffering and punishment it brings.

One of Pope Francis's central beliefs at the heart of **Laudato Sí** is that everything and everyone is connected, interdependent. We are responsible for each other. God speaks to us and calls us to conversion in many ways. In the context of the Season of Creation, we need to listen to that Word of God in "the cry of the Earth and the cry of the poor." (L.S. 49)

The cry of the Earth, heard in increasingly powerful storms and fires, melting ice and rising sea levels, heat waves, droughts and

floods, pollution of air and water, loss of rich biodiversity and ecological degradation.

The cry of the poor, heard and seen in widespread hunger and malnutrition, in homelessness and ill health, exploitation and vast migration and refugee flows, violence and ecological destruction of the most marginal regions where the poor are so often forced to struggle for survival.

How do we, how can we educate and warn ourselves and each other about the ecological crises facing us and threatening life as we know it on the planet? What reliable and understandable sources of information are most helpful? What ecological education programs are available through the **Laudato Sí Action Platform** and other trustworthy sources?

How do we, how can we understand and warn each other about our part, our responsibility for the destructive forces at work?

What is the conversion in ways of thinking, acting, and living together on Earth that God is calling us to? What are the changes in lifestyle and relationships with each other and with creation?

What individuals, groups, communities, parishes, institutions, corporations, media, social movements, etc. will help me/us to grow in this mission?

To what individuals, groups, communities, parishes, institutions, corporations, media, social movements, etc. am I called to speak

out, educate, warn of God's prophetic Word in the cry of the poor and the cry of Earth?

**St. Paul's letter to the Romans** puts this prophetic education and invitation to care for creation in their deepest context: they are expressions of the great commandments that sum everything up: Love God. Love your neighbor.

All is interdependent, all is interconnected. We cannot say we love God if we do not love our neighbor. We cannot say we love our neighbor if we do not care for the air, the water, the land, the ecological systems, the intricate Web of Life upon which our neighbors and we depend for life itself.

Nor can we say we love God if we do not care for God's gift of creation in all its wonders and richness.

How can we, how do we express this prophetic, nonviolent love in our families? In our parishes and dioceses? In our religious communities? In our schools and universities? In our hospitals and health care centers? In our businesses and farms?

In the gospel, Jesus lays out a way to convey the urgent prophetic warnings in this time of great violence and ecological crisis, an approach that shows respect for those who need to hear these truths and invites conversion gently but persistently.

At the same time, the approach is realistic: there will be those who will not listen. The prophetic

word around these issues is far too important and urgent to get bogged down in endless arguments with those who, in the words of the psalm, have hardened their hearts. Move on to where the work of conversion to nonviolence, ecological conversion, and the growth of the new creation can find fertile ground and produce a hundredfold.

Christ calls us together too in prayer, promising to be with us, promising us that our prayer will be heard. Let our prayer deepen our awe and reverence before God, who is revealed so powerfully in creation.

### Faith Reflections

Are you among those who believe in God who creates all things, renews all things, and celebrates all things?

Are you among those who believe in God who has given Earth as a sanctuary, a sacred planet filled with God's presence, as a home for us to share with all members of the Earth family?

Are you among those who believe in Jesus, God become flesh and blood, a human part of Earth, who lived and breathed and spoke among us, who taught us in the Sermon on the Mount to live nonviolently, who suffered and died on a cross for all human beings and for all creation?

Are you among those who believe in Jesus, the risen Christ, who is at the heart of creation reconciling all things to God, renewing all creation, and filling the universe?

Are you among those who believe in the Holy Spirit who renews life in creation, groans in unity with a suffering creation, and waits, working with us, for the rebirth of creation?

Are you among those who believe that with Christ we will rise and with Christ we will celebrate a new creation?

This is our faith. Through it we see God's revelation emerging in new ways among us. Through it we embrace the promise that our deepest spiritual longings will come to fulfillment through the Holy Spirit in the ages to come. **Amen.**

### General Intercessions

That we may grow in consciousness of the great gift of creation and all of its elements, we pray....

That we may deepen our gratitude for nature's rich Web of Life within which we live and may grow in openness to wiser and more just ways of caring for it and sharing it, we pray....

That we may recognize the consequences of human violence on all of creation and learn to live the way of Gospel nonviolence, we pray ....

That we may take up our prophetic responsibility in this time of crisis to speak God's Truth to each other and to call each other to conversion and to ways of living within creation wisely, sustainably, justly, and reverently, we pray....

That the Synod currently in process will bring wise discernment of the guidance of God's Spirit

to the People of God, effective widespread healing to Earth, and new life and energy to all Earth's communities, we pray....

### Prayer over the Gifts

God of peace and love, may our offering of ourselves, our energies, and our prayers through these gifts of bread and wine bring you true worship and make us one with you in bringing to birth your new creation. Grant this through Christ the Lord. **Amen.**

### Prayer after Communion

Our loving God, at the table of your word and sacrament, you nourish your faithful and give us life. Grant that through these gifts of your son, we may advance in holiness, in love of our neighbor, and in reverence and care for your creation. May we look forward with joy to sharing Christ's life forever. We ask this through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

### Final Blessing

May God bless us all with a clear vision of truth and the courage to speak it with love, God who is our Creator, Christ Jesus our brother, and the Holy Spirit in whom we live and move and have our being now and forever. **Amen.**

# Second Sunday – Musical Selections

September 10, 2023 | 23rd Sunday in Ordinary Time

## Hymns

**E - Entrance | O - Offertory | C - Communion | D - Dismissal**

- E,D Journey of Faith  
Delores Dufner, © 2012 Sisters of St. Benedict, pub. WLP
- E,D For Everyone Born (A Place at the Table)  
Shirley Erena Murray, ©1998 Hope Pub. Co.
- E,D For the Beauty of the Earth  
Folliet S. Pierpoint
- E Litany for the Earth  
©2016 Barbara Bridge, published by OCP
- O Abundant Life  
Ruth Duck, ©1992 GIA Publications, Inc.
- O The Thirsty Cry for Water, Lord  
Herman Stuempfle, ©1997 GIA Publications, Inc
- O We Give You But Your Own  
William W. How
- C In the Breaking of the Bread,  
©1984 Bob Hurd, published by OCP
- C Take and Eat  
James Quinn and Michael Joncas, ©1989 GIA
- C Alleluia No. 1  
Donald Fishel ©1973, International Liturgy Publications
- D God, You Spin the Whirling Planets  
©1980 Jane Parker Huber (admin. Westminster John Knox Press)

## Psalm Settings

- Psalm 95: Listen! Listen! Open Your Hearts!  
©2005 The Collegeville Composers Group, pub. Liturgical Press
- Psalm 95: If today you hear his voice  
Owen Alstott, ©1977 OCP
- Psalm 95: If today you hear his voice  
Paul Tate, ©2013, 2014, 2015 by GIA Publications, Inc
- Psalm 95: If today you hear his voice  
Michel Guimont, ©1994, 1998, GIA Pub. Inc.
- Psalm 95: If today you hear his voice  
©2016 Ben Walther, published by OCP





# Third Sunday of the Season of Creation

September 17, 2023 | 24th Sunday in Ordinary Time

## SCRIPTURES

Sirach 27:30-28:9

Ps. 103:1-4, 9-12

Romans 14:7-9

Matthew 18:21-35



## Opening Sign of the Cross

In the name of our Creator, God of the universe, who looks on us with patience, compassion, and love,

And of Christ Jesus who warns us to forgive each other from the heart as we are forgiven by God,

And of the Holy Spirit who weaves the evolving web of life through kindness, compassion, and love. **Amen.**

May the grace and peace of our loving Creator God be with you! **Amen.**

## Introductory Comments

On the 2nd Sunday of the Season of Creation, the scriptures called us to accept our prophetic responsibility in love to invite each other to conversion and care for creation in these times of ecological crisis.

The readings today remind us not to let our prophetic call to others turn into anger or vengeance against them. If we do not forgive each other, embracing a spirit of nonviolence, we cannot expect God to forgive us.

We are invited to reflect with gratitude on all the failings, sins, and abuse of creation that God has forgiven us and is now calling us to confront, heal and transform.

The call to be prophetic, yet patient, non-judgmental, and forgiving with each other if we hope God to forgive us extends to all the dimensions of the “integral ecological conversion” which Pope Francis identifies as the prophetic

word of God to our world at this time: the interconnected environmental, economic, and social dimensions.

## Penitential Rite

Conscious of God’s mercy, patience, kindness and compassion in our lives, let us enter into the quiet of our spirits ... asking for forgiveness ... and for a forgiving spirit with each other. *[silent pause]*

Creator God, you have entrusted the human family with the richly diverse gifts of creation, asking us to receive them with gratitude, share them generously, and care for them wisely and well. Too often we abuse your gifts and your trust.

**Creator Spirit of God, have mercy.**

Christ Jesus, you came to show us God’s loving forgiveness and you have taught us to forgive each other as we long to be forgiven.

**Word of God, have mercy.**

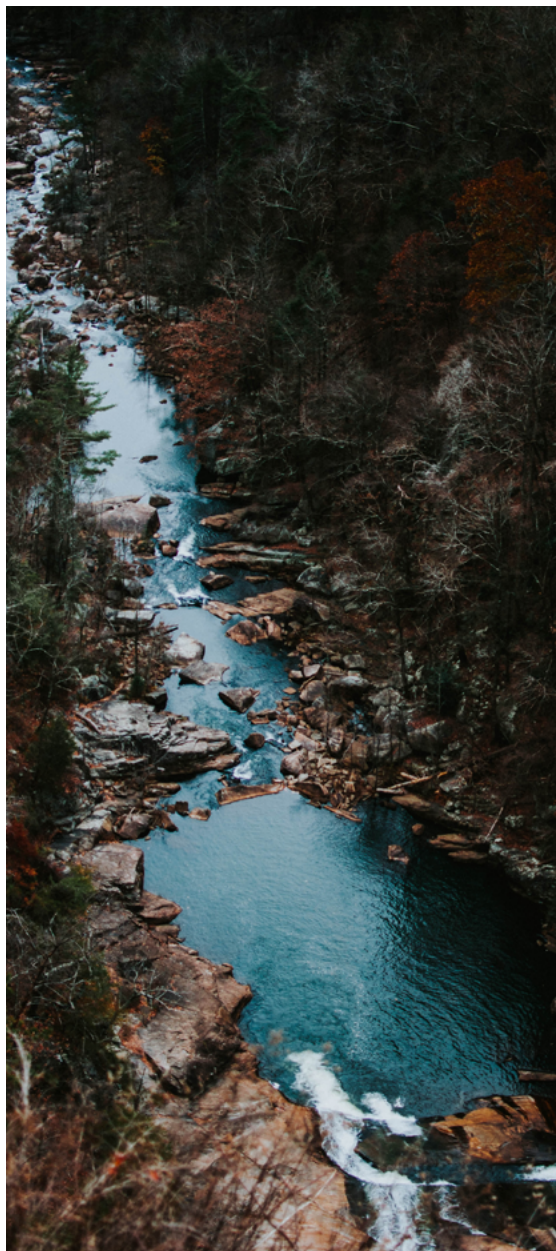
Holy Spirit of God, you are at work in us and among us making us more conscious of the sacredness of all creation, raising up global movements in these times to care for Earth and for each other.

**Wisdom of God, have mercy.**

May God, the Creator of all time and space and the vast Web of Life in which we live, have mercy on us, free us from our sins, and guide us into the fullness of divine Life.

**Amen.**

**Gloria**



### Opening Prayer

Our loving God, Creator of all that is, human ignorance, violence, and sin have brought great destruction upon Earth, your awe-inspiring and gracious gift with its vast web of life.

You are slow to anger and rich in compassion. Keep alive in us the memory of your mercy, that our angers may be calmed, our resentments dispelled, and our care for creation channeled into creative nonviolent action. May we grow in gratitude for your forgiveness and become a people also rich in mercy. May your Holy Spirit continue to draw us together into one human family working together with urgency and hope to heal and renew our common home.

We ask this through Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God for ever and ever. **Amen.**

### Points for Reflection on the Scriptures

**Reading from the Book of Sirach,** The mission of relaying God's call to "integral ecological conversion" in these times can lead to frustration and anger when people refuse to listen, deny the truth and evidence, resist acting, and even actively oppose the work of caring for and healing Earth and all its Web of Life out of greed for wealth or power.

When crises are as urgent and destructive as the ecological/climate crises today, it is hard to be patient and gentle with those causing them who do not see the truth and the need or are

not willing to change. When we watch families starve, the Amazon burn, floods ravage, arctic regions melt, nations wage wars, and crucial waters evaporate in rising heat, anger about the thoughtlessness and destruction seems just and called for. When people we love suffer from the changing climate or various forms of environmental racism and injustice, the desire to strike out against those responsible rises quickly. The human costs to those alive now and to future generations can be devastating. Earth is even now going through the Sixth Great Extinction with massive costs to all life.

Still, Sirach warns that clinging to anger and vengeance will bring God's anger and vengeance upon us. We must forgive others' injustice if we hope to have God forgive our own.

Legitimate righteous anger, on the other hand, can provide energy and courage to speak out and work for change, but this kind of anger seeks understanding, conversion, and reconciliation, not vengeance or destruction. It does not become bitter. As we nurture a spirituality of nonviolence, the frustration and fear for the future that we feel can move us to join and strengthen nonviolent movements for the societal transformation essential to creation care.

**Psalm 103** celebrates God's forgiveness, mercy, patience, and compassion for us. As we pray this psalm in the context of the Season of Creation, the Spirit is working with us to deepen our felt gratitude for countless wonderful gifts of

creation and for God's mercy and forgiveness for the abuse of these gifts. The Spirit longs to heal us and rescue our lives from the destruction threatening us all.

How have we experienced God's patience and forgiveness for the ways we receive, live in, and treat God's gifts of Earth, of creation? As individuals? As a community?

**This passage from Paul's letter** to the Romans, in its fuller context, serves to encourage Christians not to judge one another. Each one lives or dies for Christ and "each of us shall give an account to God." [Romans: 14:12]

**Matthew's gospel** answers two questions: How often must we forgive someone who seeks forgiveness? And what will happen if we don't forgive each other?

Jesus could not be clearer: We must forgive not 7 times but 77 times - a metaphor in his time and culture for a number without limit. Every time they ask forgiveness sincerely, we must give it from our hearts. If we do not forgive each other when we have been forgiven so much by God, we will lose God's forgiveness.

To recognize how precious God's forgiveness for the misuse of the gifts of creation is, we need to be conscious of how precious and sacred those gifts are.

How has God patiently increased our awareness of the preciousness of the gifts of creation? Of land and water, clean air and life and...?

What do we most appreciate, enjoy and rely on in nature? How can we come to recognize it more as a gift from God? How can we grow in appreciation of these gifts as we contemplate their loss to climate change, to more violent storms, floods, fires, heat waves...?

How can we contemplate God present in these gifts? How can we grow in discerning God's Self-gift in and through them?

As we have grown in consciousness of God's gifts in creation and of our destructive use and abuse of them, we have experienced God's patience, mercy, and call to conversion in our lives - a conversion to Gospel nonviolence and to what Pope Francis has called an integral ecological conversion.

How have we been forgiven in our individual journeys thus far? In our community life? For what are we still in need of forgiveness now?

How can we expand our consciousness of the ways we continue to live unaware of or unconcerned about the violence to creation from waste, pollution, a "throw away culture," overuse of resources, inequality, and poverty?

Acknowledging our sins, failures, slowness to change, and asking forgiveness, we need to contemplate and give profound thanks to God for this patience, gentleness in forgiving us, teaching us, drawing us to work for the new creation.

How can we express and live out our gratitude for God's patient forgiveness to us personally? As a community?

How can we work at deepening and nurturing that gratitude of spirit? What type of liturgies, prayers, actions together can nurture this spiritual growth?

How can that gratitude call forth in us patience and forgiveness for those "behind us" in this journey? For those resisting or denying the cry of the poor and the cry of the Earth?

## Faith Reflections

Are you among those who believe in God who creates all things, inviting our contemplation, wonder, and awe at their rich diversity, beauty, and goodness in the unimaginable vastness of space and time?

Are you among those who believe in God who entrusts Earth in all its richness, diversity, and goodness to the care of the Earth community and is patient and forgiving of our failures and sins against its health, survival, and flourishing?

Are you among those who believe in Jesus, who reminds us of God's patient, faithful love and forgiveness for us each and calls us to unflinching forgiveness toward each other?

Are you among those who believe in Jesus, God become flesh and blood, a human part of Earth, who lived and breathed, worked, prayed, and preached among us, who taught us in the Sermon on the Mount to live nonviolently,



## *How can we work at deepening and nurturing our gratitude of spirit? Through liturgies, prayers, actions together?*

who suffered, died on a cross, and rose again, glorified, to show clearly the extent and power of God's forgiving love?

Are you among those who believe in the Holy Spirit who renews life in creation, groans in unity with a suffering creation, and waits, working with us, for the rebirth of creation?

This is our faith. Through it we see God's revelation emerging in new ways among us. Through it we embrace the promise that our deepest spiritual longings will come to fulfillment through the Spirit in the ages to come. **Amen.**

### **General Intercessions**

That we may grow in consciousness of the great gift of creation and all of its elements, we pray....

That we may deepen our gratitude for nature's rich Web of Life within which we live and may grow in openness to wiser and more just ways of caring for it and sharing it, we pray....

That we may take up our prophetic responsibility in this time of crisis to speak God's Truth to each other and to call each other into nonviolent ways of living within creation wisely, sustainably, justly, and reverently, we pray....



For forgiveness for our own part in the sins against creation and for patience in forgiving others, we pray....

That the Synod currently in process will bring wise discernment of the guidance of God's Spirit to the People of God, effective widespread healing to Earth, and new life and energy to all Earth's communities, we pray....

### **Prayer over the Gifts**

Our loving God, hear our prayer and receive with favor these gifts of our energies and service.

May what each of us has offered to the glory of your name advance the healing and salvation of us all and of Earth our common home. We make our prayer through Jesus, the Christ, now and forever. **Amen.**

### **Prayer after Communion**

Our Loving God, may the eucharist you have given us nourish us and guide our thoughts and actions. May your Holy Spirit direct us in your ways in bringing to birth your new creation. We ask this in the name of Jesus and in the power of your Holy Spirit where we all are one now and forever. **Amen.**

### **Final Blessing**

We are blessed with the great gift of creation and with God's patience and forgiveness for our failures to care for it wisely and lovingly.

May God bless us all with deep, contemplative gratitude for the beauty and richness of creation and patient understanding and forgiveness with each other, God who is our Creator, Christ Jesus our Savior, and the Holy Spirit in whom we live and move and have our being now and forever.

**Amen.**

# Third Sunday – Musical Selections

September 17, 2023 | 24th Sunday in Ordinary Time

## Hymns

**E - Entrance | O - Offertory | C - Communion | D - Dismissal**

- E Sing to the Mountains  
©1975 Robert J. Dufford, SJ, and OCP
- E Sing Out, Earth and Skies  
Marty Haugen, ©1985 GIA
- E,D The Earth Is the Lord's  
Erik Routley, ©1978 Hope Publishing Co.
- E Laudato Si! Be Praised, O God  
©2015 Ricky Manalo, CSP, published by OCP.
- O There's a Wideness in God's Mercy  
Frederick W. Faber
- O Where Charity and Love Prevail  
Paul Benoit, ©1960 WLP
- O Love Divine, All Loves Excelling  
Charles Wesley
- C Ubi Caritas  
©1979 Les Presses de Taizé, GIA, agent
- C Ubi Caritas  
©1996, 2004 Bob Hurd, published by OCP
- C Ang Katawan ni Kristo/Behold the Body of Christ  
©2003, published by OCP
- D Here I Am, Lord  
Daniel L. Schutte, ©1981 OCP
- D God Is Love  
Timothy Rees

## Psalm Settings

- Psalm 103: The Lord Is Kind and Merciful  
Michel Guimont, ©1998 GIA
- Psalm 103: The Lord Is Kind and Merciful  
Charles Thatcher, ©2001 WLP (GIA)
- Psalm 103: The Lord is kind and merciful  
Paul Tate, ©2013 GIA
- Psalm 103: The Lord Is Kind and Merciful  
Owen Alstott, ©1997, 1990 OCP
- Psalm 103: Merciful and Tender  
©2005 The Collegeville Composers Group, Liturgical Press

*If we do not forgive each other,  
embracing a spirit of nonviolence,  
we cannot expect God to forgive us.*

# Fourth Sunday of the Season of Creation

September 24, 2023 | 25th Sunday in Ordinary Time

## SCRIPTURES

Isaiah 55:6-9

Ps. 145:2-3, 8-9, 17-18

Philippians 1:20c-24, 27a

Matthew 20:1-16a



## Opening Sign of the Cross

In the name of our Creator God, whose thoughts and ways are far higher than our own and who is generous in forgiving,

And of Christ Jesus, who teaches us the Way of justice and peace,

And of the Holy Spirit who is drawing us together into one global family. **Amen.**

May the grace and peace of our God of justice be with you all!

## Introductory Comments

Today we will hear God's message from Isaiah: "As high as the heavens are above the Earth, so high are my ways above your ways and my thoughts above your thoughts."

In this Season of Creation, we are being called to recognize the global climate emergency in which we are living. The planet is warming dangerously because of our use of fossil fuels and our systems of production and consumption. The ways our economies function and the values they serve are violently depleting and wasting Earth's resources, creating great inequalities, suffering and injustice, feeding brutal conflicts, and exceeding Earth's regenerative capacity. Earth is crying out, the poor are crying out. The existence and wellbeing of future generations is threatened.

Climate experts continue to warn of devastating, severe and destructive changes to all dimensions of life becoming

unpreventable within less than a decade unless the global community makes dramatic changes urgently.

In this Season of Creation, we are being called to take up our prophetic responsibility in love to spread the word and to transform the ways we are living upon Earth. We must acknowledge our failures to care for creation and embrace God's ways.

## Penitential Rite

Conscious of God's mercy, patience, compassion, and call, let's enter into the quiet of our spirits... asking for forgiveness, protection from the crises of this and future times, and the grace to see and understand God's ways for us in this time and context... *[silent pause]*...

Loving Creator God, our ways of living on Earth as a human family, woven into the vast, complex web of life, have not been your ways and are now threatening all life as we know it with suffering and destruction.

**Creator Spirit of God, have mercy.**

Christ Jesus, your teaching is calling us to imagine a more just and less violent way of working and living, one that provides justice to all, generosity to those most in need, and can bring healing and peace to Earth.

**Word of God, have mercy.**

Holy Spirit of God, you are at work in us, among us, and through us, teaching us your ways and preparing a time of sacred Jubilee in response to the cry of the Earth and the cry of the poor.

**Wisdom of God, have mercy.**



May God, the Creator of time, space and the vast Web of Life in which we live, have mercy on us, free us from our sins, and guide us into the fullness of divine Life. **Amen.**

## Gloria

### Opening Prayer

Our Loving God, great Mystery, your ways are not our ways. Your kindness and love are lavished equally upon all and guide all creation. Teach us to welcome your mercy toward others even as we hope to receive your mercy ourselves. Teach us to love and care for all creation wisely and well. It is your gift to us all. We ask this through Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God for ever and ever. **Amen.**

### Points for Reflection on the Scriptures

**Reading from the Prophet Isaiah.** God is near to all who call upon God.

We are invited to enter into contemplative reverence in the midst of creation before the greatness of God, the source of Earth and all the universe. Contemplation of God's creation in all its beauty, intricacy, and lavish goodness can spark love in our hearts and guide us in caring for it as it needs to be cared for.

In what ways can we grow in consciousness of God's gifts and presence in creation?

How can we grow in an [ecological spirituality](#), discover and deepen our sense of wonder,

praise, joy, and gratitude before God in creation? Ecological spirituality is one of the seven main goals developed in *Laudato Si'* and featured on the [Laudato Si' Action Platform](#).

How can we become less violent in the ways we approach Earth, each other, and all Earth's other inhabitants? Nonviolence is a process for nurturing conversion to right relationships within ourselves, among humans and between humans and the rest of the natural world - away from the common ways of domination and exploitation toward a "civilization of love." (*Laudato Si'* #231)

The [Laudato Si' Movement](#) website offers many [resources](#) for personal and community prayer and study, as does the [Education for Justice](#) website, a project of the [Ignatian Solidarity Network](#), and the website of Pax Christi's [Catholic Nonviolence Initiative](#).)

How might we develop and promote creation-centered liturgical celebrations? Retreats? Education programs?

Do we call upon God for forgiveness? For wisdom in living more sustainably, more justly, and more generously upon Earth? In what ways do we and our communities contribute to the current ecological crises? In what ways do we contribute to overcoming the crises and bringing healing and new life to the communities of creation?

Isaiah's urgent call to seek God while God is near and can be found resonates deeply with the

warnings of climate experts for these times: that "only with rapid and far-reaching transitions in the world economy, on a scale and at a rate without historical precedent," can humanity avoid the tipping points that will bring great devastation to life around Earth.

Do we understand and feel the sense of urgency? Do we see and experience the dangers? What study and other ways of growing in understanding do we need to undertake?

How can we and our communities reconcile ourselves with God, with each other, and with creation through concrete repentance, conversion and urgent, organized, nonviolent action?

In our lifestyles? Through social outreach, social media? By studying the needs of our localities, regions, ecosystems? Through joining peoples' campaigns and nonviolent social movements locally and globally? Through political advocacy locally, nationally, globally?

In our families? In businesses and organizations? In our schools, educational institutions, and faith communities? In our financial activities and organizations? In our health care systems? As part of the global [Laudato Si' Action Platform](#) movement? By deepening our understanding of and commitment to nonviolence as a spirituality, a way of life in relationship with all creation, and a spectrum of diverse, effective approaches to healing and protecting Earth?

### **The parable of the Landowner and the Workers.**

God's ways are not our ways. The parable in the gospel in which the owner of the vineyard gives a full day's wage to all, regardless of how long they worked, often stirs complaints about fairness.

But those who worked the longest, the whole day, received what they had agreed was a just wage.

The wages of day laborers are often all that their family has to survive on for a given day; and so the generosity of the vineyard owner served to meet the people's basic daily needs.

This parable shows us a compensation system based on the agreed-upon value of certain work and care to meet the basic needs of all workers. It is not based upon comparative, competitive, unlimited accumulation.

God's ways challenge us. A central belief of the Catholic Social Tradition confesses that the Earth is God's and everything in it. Creation is a gift of God to all people and living creatures, a gift to provide for the needs of all for survival, growth, and flourishing.

The right to private property is not absolute. To accumulate and cling to more than one needs while others live in desperate poverty is a serious sin against creation and the Creator. It is the situation of human life on Earth today: a grave pattern of injustice that is itself a type of violence, undermining peace and survival planet-wide.

Climate change today is a result of the coming together of violent economic and social systems driven by greed and accumulation, governed to

protect inequality, and built upon domination and destruction of Earth. Those systems, as already noted, exploit far more resources in a few months than Earth can replenish in a year.

The biblical vision of Jubilee was chosen as the theme for a previous year's celebration of the Season of Creation because, in the words of the international ecumenical steering committee, "Jubilee is a time to renounce overconsumption and economic systems based on constant economic growth at the cost of the Earth and those who are poor."

"Jubilee is a time of rest for the land from constant exploitation, to restore ecosystems and people."

"The theme of Jubilee affirms the need for equality, justice and sustainability, and a transition of sustainable economies."

In his message for the World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation, Pope Francis reflects on the 2023 theme for the Season of Creation, "Let justice and peace flow," and asks:

How can we contribute to the mighty river of justice and peace in this Season of Creation? What can we, particularly as Christian communities, do to heal our common home so that it can once again teem with life? We must do this by resolving to transform our hearts, our lifestyles, and the public policies ruling our societies.

He goes on to conclude, "Economic policies that promote scandalous wealth for a privileged few

and degrading conditions for many others, spell the end of peace and justice."

How can we and our communities embrace God's ways of justice, peace, and jubilee here, now? How can we do more to heal our relationships with God, with people, with Earth in ways that respond with love and care to the cry of the poor and the cry of Earth? How can we practice Gospel nonviolence in all our relationships?

In our lifestyles? Through social outreach, social media? By studying the needs of our localities, regions, ecosystems? Through joining peoples' campaigns and social movements locally and globally? Through political advocacy locally, nationally, globally?

In our families? In businesses and organizations? In our schools, educational institutions and faith communities? In our financial activities and organizations? In our health care systems? As part of the global [Laudato Sí Action Platform](#) movement?

One of the seven major goals of **Laudato Sí** featured on the [Laudato Sí Action Platform](#) is known as Ecological Economics and calls for "sustainable production and consumption, ethical investments, divestment from fossil fuels and any activity harmful to the planet and the people, supporting circular economies, and prioritizing care labor and protecting the dignity of workers." Learning nonviolence and practicing to live nonviolently will help us to understand and accept such a major shift in economic life.

## Faith Reflections

Are you among those who believe in God who creates Earth and the Universe with all their rich diversity, beauty, and goodness, inviting our contemplation, wonder, and grateful awe?

Are you among those who believe in God who entrusts Earth to the care of Earth community, inviting us to live together in justice, compassion, peace, and loving care?

Are you among those who believe in Jesus, who teaches us that love of God, each other, and creation sums up the meaning and value of life?

Are you among those who believe in Jesus, who calls us to live in ways that provide justice to all and generous compassion to those most in need?

Are you among those who believe in Jesus, God become flesh and blood, a human part of Earth, who lived and breathed, worked, prayed, and preached among us, suffered, died on a cross, and rose again, glorified, to show clearly the extent and power of God's life and love?

Are you among those who believe in the Holy Spirit who renews life in creation, groans in empathy with a suffering creation, and waits, working with us, for the rebirth of creation?

This is our faith. Through it we see God's revelation emerging in new ways among us. Through it we embrace the promise that our deepest spiritual longings will come to fulfillment through the Holy Spirit in the ages to come. **Amen.**

## General Intercessions

That we may grow in consciousness, awe, and praise of the mystery of God in creation and of the great gift of creation and all of its elements, we pray....

That we may deepen our gratitude for nature's rich Web of Life within which we live and may grow in openness to wiser and more just ways of caring for it and sharing it, we pray....

That we may take up our prophetic responsibility in this time of crisis to speak God's Truth to each other and to call each other into ways of living within creation wisely, sustainably, justly, and reverently we pray....

For a deep sense of urgency in responding to the cry of the Earth and the cry of the poor, we pray....

That the nations of the world will find ways together to rebuild from climate change and ecological degradation in accord with God's ways, God's vision of economic, social and ecological justice, nonviolence and peace, we pray...

That the Synod currently in process will bring wise discernment of the guidance of God's Spirit to the People of God, effective widespread healing to Earth, and new life and energy to all Earth's communities, we pray....

## Prayer over the Gifts

Loving and gracious God, all that we are and all that we have are gifts from you. Receive these gifts of bread and wine, our energies, our hopes, and our commitments to return our love to you through our care for and sharing of creation with grateful and generous hearts. Grant this in the name of Jesus, the Christ. **Amen.**

## Prayer after Communion

Our loving God, you have nourished us with this sacrament. Support us with your unfailing help that we may embrace your ways, caring wisely and generously for the human family and the family of creation. Grant this through Christ, the Lord. **Amen.**

## Final Blessing

May God bless us all with deep reverence and love for creation in all its beauty, intricacy, and lavish goodness and guide us in caring for it wisely and well,

God who is our Creator, Christ Jesus our brother, and the Holy Spirit in whom we live and move and have our being now and forever. **Amen.**



# Fourth Sunday – Musical Selections

September 24, 2023 | 25th Sunday in Ordinary Time

## Hymns

**E - Entrance | O - Offertory | C - Communion | D - Dismissal**

- E,D    How Great Thou Art  
Stuart K. Hine, ©1949, 1953 The Stuart Hine Trust, Hope Pub. Co.
- E,D    God, Who Stretched the Spangled Heavens  
Catherine Cameron, ©1967 Hope Pub. Co.
- E        Many and Great  
Dakota hymn, para. Philip Frazier
- O        When We Are Living/Pues Si Vivimos  
Roberto Escamilla, ©1989 United Methodist Pub. House
- O        Christ Has No Body Now But Yours  
St. Teresa of Ávila/Stephen C. Warner, ©2003 WLP
- C        Life-giving Bread, Saving Cup  
James Chepponis, ©1987 GIA
- C        Amen. El Cuerpo de Cristo  
©1995, 2016 John Schiavone, published by OCP
- C        Pan de Vida  
Bob Hurd and Pia Moriarty, ©1988 by Bob Hurd, pub. by OCP
- D        Creating God, Your Fingers Trace  
Jeffery Rowthorn, ©1979 Hymn Society of America
- D        Glory and Praise to Our God  
©1972, 1974, 2008 Daniel L. Schutte, pub. by OCP

## Psalm Settings

- Psalm 145: The Lord Is Near  
©2004 Tom Booth, pub. by OCP
- Psalm 145: The Lord is Near  
Stephen R. Janco, ©2001, WLP (GIA)
- Psalm 145: The Lord is Near  
Michel Guimont, ©1998, GIA
- Psalm 145: The Lord is Near  
Kathleen Harmon ©2013, GIA
- Psalm 145: Lord, You Are Close  
©2007 The Collegeville Composers Group, Liturgical Press



# Fifth Sunday of the Season of Creation

October 1, 2023 | 26th Sunday in Ordinary Time

## SCRIPTURES

Ezekiel 18:25-28

Ps. 25:4-9

Philippians 2:1-11

Matthew 21:28-32



## Opening Sign of the Cross

In the name of our Creator who has entrusted Earth to our care from of old,

And of Christ Jesus who calls us beyond words to action, caring for Earth and all for whom it is home,

And of the Holy Spirit who guides us in truth into the ways of justice and peace. **Amen.**

May the grace and peace of our God of justice be with you.

## Introductory Comments

In this Season of Creation, we have prayed over our calling to recognize the global climate emergency in which we are living and spread the word about the call to conversion and change that it presents.

The ways the human family is living on the planet, the ways our economies function and the values they serve are depleting and wasting Earth's resources, creating great inequalities, suffering and injustice, and exceeding Earth's regenerative capacity.

Earth is crying out. The poor are crying out. The existence and wellbeing of future generations are threatened. This all constitutes a strong and urgent call to conversion in all dimensions of life - an integral ecological conversion infused with Gospel nonviolence.

In today's readings, we hear clearly from Ezekiel that this conversion is the personal responsibility of each of us. God will judge us in the end upon the choices we each make of how we will live with each other in the community of creation. It is never too late to choose God's ways. God is always compassionate and forgiving, ready to teach us the way.

St. Paul reminds us that Christ Jesus is that teaching, is God's demonstration of the Way to live: serving everyone compassionately and generously, not competing for attention, appreciation, wealth or glory, humble and self-sacrificing, nonviolent even to the point of death on a cross. For this God exalted him, glorifying him above every other.

And in the gospel, Jesus warns that simply saying the right things is not enough. Our actions must show our conversion, a conversion that in these critical times in the history of our planet must be integral, a conversion to nonviolent action in the ecological, social, economic, cultural, and political dimensions of our lives.

*The ways the human family is living on the planet, the ways our economies function, and the values they serve are destroying Earth, our common home.*

## Penitential Rite

Conscious of God's mercy, patience, compassion, and call, let's enter into the quiet of our spirits... asking for forgiveness, protection from the crises of this time, grace to see and understand God's ways for us, and the courage and commitment to choose and live in those ways... [silent pause]...

Creator Spirit of God, our ways of living on Earth as a human family woven into the vast, complex web of life have not been your ways and now are threatening all life as we know it with suffering and destruction.

**Creator Spirit of God, have mercy.**

Christ Jesus, your teaching warns us that words are not enough. Our actions must reveal our inner conversion and commitment to live peacefully, with the same attitude that guided you.

**Word of God, have mercy.**

Holy Spirit of God, you are at work in us, among us and through us, teaching us your ways and preparing a time of your justice and peace in response to the cry of Earth and the cry of the poor.

**Wisdom of God, have mercy.**

May God, the Creator of time, space, and the vast Web of Life in which we live, have mercy on us, free us from our sins, and guide us into the fullness of divine Life. **Amen.**

## Gloria



## Opening Prayer

Our Loving God, you alone judge rightly and search the depths of the human heart. You alone offer the grace and courage to transform our lives and renew Earth. Make us quick to do your will, slow to judge our neighbor, and eager to care for your creation with wisdom, compassion, and love. Grant that we may walk with those who follow the nonviolent way of repentance and faithfulness in caring for the family of creation and Earth, our common home. We ask this through Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God for ever and ever. **Amen.**

## Points for Reflection on the Scriptures

### Reading from the Book of the Prophet Ezekiel.

Our decisions for evil or for good matter to God.

The message Ezekiel is affirming is that the major decisions affecting the direction of our lives – even late in life – are matters of life and death for us. Our decisions matter. God pays attention to personal responsibility.

It is never too late in life to respond to God's call to conversion. God is compassionate. But it can become too late to respond to the cry of Earth and prevent the devastating destruction that unjust, violent and sinful lifestyles abusing Earth and continuing planetary warming will bring about.

How can we become more attentive to the cries of Earth reported in nearly every scientific study of the condition of our planet?

How can we become more conscious of our economic and social values, our consumer patterns, our care for the poor and marginalized among us, and for future generations?

And how can we turn that consciousness into effective action to limit the devastation and heal Earth?

**Psalm 25** recalls God's compassion and mercy, asking God to forget the sins and frailties of our past and show us the way we are to live. Conversion requires growing in knowledge of our



violence, our sinfulness and failings. It evokes prayer for forgiveness and willing trust in God's compassionate forgiveness.

**The passage from the Letter to the Ephesians** describes God's response to the prayer to know the Way: urging unity of mind and heart, doing nothing out of selfishness, having the same attitude of humility, nonviolence and obedience that Jesus lived even to the point of death on the cross.

The example of Christ Jesus is challenging, as is his teaching on what is truly important in life. The beatitudes and the parable of the last judgment put down-to-Earth examples before us.

How do the example and teaching of Jesus call us to what Pope Francis calls an integral ecological conversion? A conversion able to bring about change in the ecological, social, economic, cultural, and political dimensions of our lives?

As we contemplate the extent of the humility and sacrifice that Jesus embraced, do we grow in gratitude and courage?

**In Matthew's parable of the two sons**, Jesus calls attention to the all too familiar reality that we may learn the right things to say, but that what matters is what we actually do, our actions. He challenges the chief priests and the elders to change and act in the way of righteousness and justice that John preached.

In this Season of Creation, what are our actions showing about how we are responding to God's call to integral ecological conversion, to Gospel

nonviolence in our relationships with Earth and with each other?

**The environmental dimensions** of an integral ecological conversion:

What are we doing to reduce the pollution of air, water and land that have resulted from our ways of living in creation? What are we doing to address the violence of indifference and domination, war and militarisation that are destroying our common home?

How can we grow in a spirituality that will help us better to acknowledge, reverence, care for, and share the gifts of creation within which we live? Upon which we and all others rely for life itself?

**The economic dimensions** of an integral ecological conversion:

What changes are we undertaking in the economic dimensions of our lives? How are we resisting the idolatry of wealth and possessions so common around the world?

What are we doing to help ourselves and others better understand the systems of economy and development, of production and distribution and consumption which have abused and overused the resources of the planet, are threatening its resilience, and are destroying its regenerative capacities?

Do we need to reevaluate our habits of accumulation? How can we act to address the terrible inequalities in our society? In the global human community where billions of people live in devastating poverty? What can we do to change the unjust ways our

economies distribute the resources given by God for all, to meet the basic needs of all life?

How can we grow in a spirituality that nurtures simplicity in lifestyles, structures of justice for all in our economies, and sustainable, nonviolent relations with the natural world?

**The social dimensions** of an integral ecological conversion:

How can we work together to overcome the many expressions of violence in our societies? Poverty and marginalization? Racism, discrimination in our communities, our institutions, our countries?

How can we work to overcome divisions that lead to violent conflict, war, and destruction of creation?

How can we develop a more socially conscious spirituality, one that is attentive to the injustice in our institutions and culture, one that works to transform conflict nonviolently, one that works to raise up the New Creation?

## Faith Reflections

Are you among those who believe in God who creates Earth and the Universe with all their rich diversity, beauty, and goodness, inviting our contemplation, wonder, and grateful awe?

Are you among those who believe in God who entrusts Earth to the care of the Earth community, inviting us to live together in justice, compassion, peace, and loving care?

Are you among those who believe in Jesus, who teaches us that love of God, each other, and creation sums up the meaning and value of life?

Are you among those who believe in Jesus, who insists that our love must be expressed in the nonviolent actions of compassion, nurture, and loving care?

Are you among those who believe in Jesus, God become flesh and blood, a human part of Earth, who lived and breathed, worked, prayed, and preached among us, suffered, died on a cross, and rose again, glorified, to show clearly the extent and power of God's life and love?

Are you among those who believe in the Holy Spirit who renews life in creation, groans in empathy with a suffering creation, and waits, working with us, for the rebirth of creation?

This is our faith. Through it we see God's revelation emerging in new ways among us. Through it we embrace the promise that our deepest spiritual longings will come to fulfillment through the Holy Spirit in the ages to come. **Amen.**

### General Intercessions

That we may grow in consciousness of the great gift of creation and all of its elements, we pray....

That we may deepen our gratitude for nature's rich Web of Life within which we live and may grow in openness to wiser, more nonviolent and just ways of caring for it and sharing it, we pray....

That we may take up our prophetic responsibility in this time of crisis to speak God's truth to each other and to call each other into ways of living within creation wisely, sustainably, justly, and reverently, we pray....

That our conversion and nonviolent actions may help to bring about urgent and far-reaching transformations all around Earth to restore the health of the planet and prevent the dramatic climate changes and grave devastation to life that threaten the future, we pray....

That the Synod Assembly about to open in Rome this week will bring wise discernment of the guidance of God's Spirit to the People of God, effective widespread healing to Earth, and new life and energy to all Earth's communities, we pray....

### Prayer over the Gifts

Our loving God, look with favor upon these gifts. They express our offering of ourselves, our energies, our hopes to respond to your urgent call for us to heal and renew Earth, turning from our sinful ways to share in the birthing of the New Creation. In this eucharist, open to us the Source from which all blessings flow. We make our prayer through Jesus, the Christ. **Amen.**

### Prayer after Communion

Gracious and loving God, through our sharing in this holy mystery, restore us in mind and heart, that we may live with energy and joy the rich and integral conversion to which you are drawing us and rejoice in your Spirit at the

birthing of the New Creation. We make our prayer in the name of Jesus and in the power of your Holy Spirit where we live and move and have our being now and forever. **Amen.**

### Final Blessing

Based upon "A Christian Prayer in Union with Creation" by Pope Francis from *Laudato Sí*.

We believe that all creatures come forth from the all-powerful hand of the Creator, evolving through time and space, filled with God's presence and tender love.

May God awaken our praise and thankfulness for every creature and bless us with the grace of feeling profoundly joined to everything that is. **Amen.**

Through Christ all things were made. Formed in the womb of Mary our Mother, Christ Jesus became part of this Earth, gazing upon this world with human eyes.

May Christ bless us with eyes to see him alive in every creature in his risen glory. **Amen.**

The Holy Spirit guides this world toward the Creator's love and accompanies creation as it groans in travail.

May this Holy Spirit dwell in our hearts and inspire us to do what is good, to care wisely and with love for Earth, our common home. **Amen.**

And may our Triune God, wondrous community of infinite love, bless us all with justice, peace, love and beauty, God who is Creator, Word and Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

# Fifth Sunday – Musical Selections

October 1, 2023 | 26th Sunday in Ordinary Time

## Hymns

**E - Entrance | O - Offertory | C - Communion | D - Dismissal**

- E God, Our God of Distant Ages  
Omer Westendorf ©1984, WLP (GIA)
- E I Sing the Mighty Power of God  
Isaac Watts
- E Joyful, Joyful We Adore You  
Henry van Dyke
- E The Stars Declare His Glory  
Timothy Dudley-Smith, ©1981 Hope Publishing Co.
- O Litany for the Earth  
©2016 Barbara Bridge, published by OCP
- O The King of Love My Shepherd Is  
Henry W. Baker
- O,C O Beauty, Ever Ancient  
© 2004 Robert F. O'Connor, published by OCP
- O,D All Good Gifts  
Matthias Claudius (We plow the fields and scatter)
- C Bread for the World  
©1990 Bernadette Farrell. Published by OCP.
- C Bread to Share  
Marty Haugen, ©1995 GIA
- C Gift of Finest Wheat Omer Westendorf  
©1977 Archdiocese of Philadelphia, International Liturgy Pub.

- D Day of Delight  
Delores Dufner, ©2010 GIA Publications, Inc.
- D Healing River  
Fred Hellerman, arr. Michael Joncas ©1964, Appleseed Music, Inc.

## Psalm Settings

- Psalm 25: Remember Your Mercies, O Lord  
Paul Tate, © 2013 GIA
- Psalm 25: Remember Your Mercies, O Lord  
Michel Guimont, © 1998 GIA
- Psalm 25: Remember Your Mercies, O Lord  
Steven R. Janco, © 2001 WLP
- Psalm 25: Remember, Lord  
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*How can we grow in a spirituality  
that nurtures simplicity in lifestyles,  
structures of justice for all in our  
economies, and sustainable nonviolent  
relations with the natural world?*





# Feast of St. Francis of Assisi

October 4, 2023

October 4th, the feast of St. Francis of Assisi, marks the formal closing of the 2023 Season of Creation. St. Francis's great love of God's creation, commitment to peace, global popularity, and ecumenical and interfaith importance all combine to make him an important inspiration for the Season of Creation, one capable of keeping its focus and energy dynamic through the rest of the year.

As at the beginning of the Season, people of faith around the world are invited to participate in an online prayer service on October 4th. It will be prepared and led by the Season of Creation Ecumenical Youth Committee. Once plans are complete, more information and directions for joining it will be available at [SeasonofCreation.org](https://SeasonofCreation.org).

For those who would prefer to celebrate a local ecumenical prayer service to celebrate and close the Season of Creation, a draft text is offered as Addendum 1 in the [Season of Creation Celebration Guide](#), pp. 22-32.

# Feast of St. Francis – Musical Selections

October 4, 2023

## Hymns

**E - Entrance | O - Offertory | C - Communion | D - Dismissal**

- E All Creatures of Our God and King  
Francis of Assisi, tr. By William H. Draper
- E Canticle of the Sun  
Marty Haugen ©1980 GIA
- E Journey of Faith Delores Dufner  
© 2012, Sisters of St. Benedict, pub. by WLP
- E,O,D All Things Bright and Beautiful  
Cecil F. Alexander
- O,D For the Fruits of This (All) Creation  
Fred Pratt Green ©1970 Hope Publishing Co.
- O,D For the Beauty of the Earth  
Folliet S. Pierpoint
- O,C Christ Has No Body Now But Yours  
Teresa of Ávila/Stephen C. Warner, ©2003 WLP
- C One Bread, One Body  
© 1978, John B. Foley, SJ pub. by OCP
- C Gift of Finest Wheat  
Omer Westendorf ©1977 Archdiocese of Phila., Interntl. Lit. Pub.
- C Take and Eat  
James Quinn and Michael Joncas ©1989 GIA
- D Stewards of Earth  
Omer Westendorf, © 1984 WLP
- D Touch the Earth Lightly  
Text: Shirley Erena Murray, ©1992 Hope Publishing Co.

## Psalm Settings

Psalm 80: The Vineyard of the Lord  
Steven C Warner, ©1995, WLP

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Michel Guimont, © 1994, GIA

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The People of God Are the Vineyard  
©2007 Collegeville Composers Group, pub. Lit. Press





## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

# A Nonviolent Path to Ecological Justice: The Condoraque Community and Mother Earth

Marie Dennis | Pax Christi International's Catholic Nonviolence Initiative

The Cry of the Earth is a global, anguished call for nonviolent solutions to the violence of climate change, loss of biodiversity, destruction of habitat, the lack of access to clean water, and [the enormous impact of human violence](#) on the biosphere. Violence is assaulting our common home and compounding the growing crisis that threatens the very survival of our planet.

The Cry of the Poor calls us to engage in a nonviolent struggle for the well-being of the most marginalized people and communities of life around the world, recognizing and addressing the violence that threatens human life and the planet.

Around the world, Indigenous communities have been heavily affected by the activities of companies exploiting natural resources, such as oil, gas, gold, silver, iron, copper, and tin, as well as by other large-scale development projects in their territories.<sup>1</sup> These extractive activities often disregard the cosmivision of Indigenous people with respect to Mother Earth and lead to the violation of their social, economic and environmental rights through contamination

of their water and destruction of their lands, animals, and health. The resulting social-environmental conflicts have often led to deaths, injuries, detentions, imprisonment, and lawsuits against Indigenous peoples.

Unfortunately, in most cases the right of Indigenous people to participate in decision-making processes and to Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC) with regard to extractive projects in their territories are not respected, despite the fact that they are explicitly stipulated in ILO Convention 169 and the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People. In many countries, institutional and legislative structures do not defend the rights of communities but instead seem to favor the agenda of corporations. In addition, Indigenous environmental defenders who are threatened and treated as criminals often have no access to justice and protection.

The Aymara and Quechua Indigenous communities of the Puno region in southern Peru sustain their lives principally through agricultural activity and animal husbandry



and by striving to be true to the traditional Indigenous “buen vivir” way of life, that is living in harmony with each other and with Mother Earth, also known as the “Pachamama”. They participate in their community life and in other grassroots organizations protecting and defending their way of life, territory, water, and environment. In recent years, the Peruvian government increased mining concessions exponentially, without regard for the rights of Indigenous peoples, nor the rights of Mother Earth. The Aymara in the region of Puno

<sup>1</sup> Based on [A Policymaker's Tool for Effective Nonviolent Strategies for Sustainable Peace](#)





have seen the water of the Condoraque River contaminated by a tungsten mine that opened in their community territories in the 1970s. The pollution caused by the mining company affected not only the environment, but also the health of people and animals. The Indigenous people in the area were not consulted before the mining operations began their activities. When the mining company left in the 1990s, it did not repair the damage it caused. Another mining company later began operations in the area on the condition that it repair the environmental damage caused by the first mine, but that did not happen.

For years, the Indigenous people and the company were in conflict, forcing leaders of the Condoraque community to seek help from public institutions by showing the contamination in their territory and asking unsuccessfully for sanctions and remediation. In April 2009, the community blocked the road which served as an entrance and exit for the mining company. In response, the mining company denounced Condoraque community leaders as criminals, trying to intimidate them and undermine their protest.

In that same year, the association Human Rights and Environment (DHUMA), a member of Pax Christi Peru visited the community in conflict. DHUMA organized multiple human rights and environmental training events for the Condoraque community, district authorities, the water users board, lieutenant governors, and the general population. Community members were informed about their rights and helped to strengthen their capacity to undertake nonviolent actions to claim their rights, including through legal defense cases in court.

After years of advocacy, the Condoraque community won several appeals ordering the immediate remediation of the impacted water sources; the mining company finally launched a plan to restore the Condoraque River back to a healthy state; and some promised restorative steps were taken. A water quality monitoring commission, including three members of the Condoraque community, representatives from the mining company, the local water authority office, the municipal government,

and communities located downstream from the river, was established to check the water on a permanent basis.

The achievements related to the remediation of environmental damages and respect for the rights of the Indigenous population in the Condoraque “Burning Waters” case now serve as a precedent for all similar cases in the country. The mining company was forced by many nonviolent actions to respect the dignity of the Condoraque community and to honor their right to be consulted about projects that would impact their land, water, or way of life.

Pope Francis urges us to defend Mother Earth, and to do so in a powerful, nonviolent spirit: “peacefully, but firmly.” Nonviolence is not simply a stance or an ideal; it is a relentless process of struggle and transformation that resolutely challenges violence without using violence; transforms and resolves conflict; and seeks justice, peace, and reconciliation for all. As a universal ethic, nonviolence offers the Church a theological, pastoral, and strategic foundation for the long-term work of building the future envisioned in ***Laudato Si’***.

Photos:  
DHUMA – Derechos Humanos y Medio Ambiente  
[facebook.com/dhumapuno](https://facebook.com/dhumapuno)

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### AUTHOR

James E. Hug, S.J., Adrian Dominican Sisters

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### MUSIC GUIDE

Denise Mathias, Adrian Dominican Sisters

### CONTRIBUTORS

Marie Dennis, Pax Christi International's Catholic  
Nonviolence Initiative

Amy Woolam Echeverria, Columban Missionaries

### TRANSLATORS

Cecile Azard (French)

Ana Maria Guzman (Spanish)

### DESIGN AND LAYOUT

Beth Ponticello, CEDC

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## 2023 SEASON OF CREATION

# Let Justice & Peace Flow

## A CATHOLIC LITURGICAL GUIDE

FOR INFORMATION ABOUT THE SEASON OF CREATION AND THIS LITURGICAL GUIDE PLEASE CONTACT:

Amy Woolam Echeverria, [amywe@columban.org](mailto:amywe@columban.org)

