

PRAYERS OF HOPE IN TIMES OF TURMOIL: A CATHOLIC SEASON OF CREATION YEAR B

The Covid19 pandemic has turned the world upside down. Media reports on climate disasters have multiplied. Nations are in turmoil as they try to negotiate new ways of living with hope in the future as they face new social, economic and ecological realities. Doubt floods minds when signs of joy are not obvious. But Pope Francis urges us to turn to Christ in our troubles and dream new things - call on Jesus in our pain to grow in hope for the journey. (cf. *Let the Son Shine* <https://www.columban.org.au/assets/files/jpic/LTSS%202013%20version.pdf>)

September has been designated by Christian churches as a time of special prayer called a *Season of Creation*. The loving kindness of God expressed in the outpouring of God's own self in creation is its focus. The Season revolves around the Sunday Scripture Readings that are at the core of this Resource. It offers prayers and ideas to help us reflect on the abiding presence of God for our communal journey on Earth. Every gift of life on Earth displays God's faithful presence, shedding light on our doubts, nourishing and strengthening us. Pope Francis invites us to turn to Jesus as both brother and Cosmic Christ, and pray to God as a caring Father, as the loving Creator of all life.

The Pope teaches that every sphere of life – ecological, economic, political, social – has a spiritual dimension. Faith tells us that the God of Life is with us in this time of turmoil and cares for every facet and form of life on Earth. In his 2020 encyclical *Fratelli Tutti* he reiterates that we are all in this together, called as a human family to openness and deep respect for everything that surrounds us.

Each Sunday resource begins with extracts from the designated Scripture readings of the Catholic Lectionary. It names a grace to remember as part of God's loving outpouring that leads us to thanksgiving and offering prayers of intercession.

The Resource also offers short paragraphs of information as background to celebrating Creation. These help the liturgical team preparing a celebration so that it can best serve in both proclaiming the *integral ecology* message and our absorbing it. Each paragraph reminds us about the breath of the Catholic tradition, past and emerging.

Preparation is key to flow and tone of the liturgy. While the celebrant, like a good conductor, takes a lead in orchestrating the flow of the Mass as outlined in the Missal, commentators, readers, composers



of the Prayers of the Faithful, choirs, ushers, servers and those preparing the space all have important roles to play. By working together, celebrant and liturgical team fill out the flow of the Missal. Together they effectively serve participation of all the faithful in a structured way leading them to a deeper experience of creation.

The priest's role is crucial. According to the Instructions in the Missal, the priest has the leeway, and even the duty, to adapt the initial greetings to the needs of a particular congregation. This goes beyond pro-forma suggestions in the Missal. The celebrant has a strict duty to prepare a homily that applies the designated Sunday Scriptural readings for the spiritual uplift of the congregation and leading into suggestions for daily Gospel living. Pope Francis spelt out this duty in great detail in his 2014 *Exhortation on Mission* #135-159.

Every form of media is full of stories of upheaval from Covid19 and ever more frequent climate disasters. Christians must not be overwhelmed. Similar to counterpoint in music, these traumas can be juxtapositioned against the Sunday Scripture

Readings to find God present in a crisis. Sunday liturgy can become good music for the congregation if liturgy planners and the celebrant set up this interplay.

Local creativity needs to be encouraged. A key suggestion is for each congregation to look seriously at its local situation, its unique ecology niche and social make up. Planners can mix Resource suggestions with insights from their local parish context. Every Eucharist is local. The congregation may be a

small farming town or multi-cultural suburb, living with many migrants or with a local industry under treat. Including local detail enhances its sense of belonging in a particular place on *Earth as our common home*.

In schools, teachers can adapt these suggestions into weekday liturgies. The loving outreach of God in all creation can enlighten the journey of emerging young adults or a sense of calling to hone their abilities that serve an



evolving new world. Flexibility is key.

These two page collections are but one way to help prepare celebrations. They are guidelines.

Some guidelines for creating a Catholic Season of Creation Resource:

- 1 CREATION** – with the world in multiple states of crisis, a pastoral need arises to systematically help Catholics address these crises in prayer, and Sunday Eucharist offers a familiar framework.
- 1 CATHOLIC SEASON OF CREATION** – it is called Catholic to avoid confusion with existing Protestant schemas and emerging Orthodox ones.
- 1 SEPTEMBER** – the Season will run for the four Sundays of September each year. This aligns with Protestant schemas. It also aligns with the Orthodox liturgical calendar which begins 1 September. Some communities finish celebrations on the Feast of St Francis 4 October.
- 1 EXISTING CATHOLIC LECTIONARY** – to create a link with the present Catholic liturgical cycle, the existing Lectionary is taken as the guiding spirit for each Sunday. The designated readings set the tone and grace to be remembered in relation to creation.
- 1 THE SEASON** runs for only four Sundays of September in most calendar years. Resource suggestions exist for six possible sets of Readings for the Years A, B and C in the 2017 book *Eucharist and Laudato Si'*.
- 1 GRACE TO CELEBRATE RATHER THAN THEME** – Liturgy remembers God's action in prayer. To focus on 'the theme' in response to a crisis, environmental or other, could turn the liturgy into an educational session 'about', overly moralistic or even become a campaign slogan. The mystery of creation could be overshadowed. The Eucharist itself supplies the primary model: remembrance leading to offering thanks to God and intercession.
- 1 BREADTH OF GRACES** - God's grace is active in both the goodness of creation and in addressing human abuse of creation. An emphasis on the 'nice' parts of creation is not enough. Remembrance of God's graces in the totality of creation history leads humanity to feel grief in suffering and lament for abuses, to ask for forgiveness and guidance to heal. The God-Earth-Humanity relationship is the touch stone (*Laudato Si'* #66).



JESUS THE COSMIC WORD

Praise the Lord, my soul Ps 145

READ LECTIONARY ECOLOGICALLY

[Is 25; Ps 145; Jm 2; Mk 7]

*Draw us into the circle of your life
 Courage, do not be afraid
 Blind see... deaf hear... lame leap... dumb sing
 Waters gush in the desert
 Protects the stranger ... upholds the widow
 Have used two different standards in your mind
 Jesus preached the Good News of the kingdom
 Done all things well ... deaf hear and dumb speak
 I am the light of the world*

***each human life is not adrift in the midst of
 hopeless chaos ... The Creator can say to each
 one of us: "Before I formed you in the womb, I
 knew you"***

(Jer 1:5) Pope Francis Laudato Si' #65

GREETING

Today's Readings remind us that God's grace combines works of justice and mercy in every cycle of life. We ask forgiveness for the times we have been blind and dumb to justice and mercy.

PRAYERS OF THE FAITHFUL

1. Web of Life – God is the author of billions of years of cosmic and Earth's evolution. That we be open to being amazed as scientists unravel the process of the galaxies and Earth systems ... we pray
2. Complacent - Justice and mercy meet in God. That we avoid scape-goating people in times of disaster while seeing clearly what structural challenges we face in acting for the common good ... we pray
3. Water - For the Chosen People in the desert, the blessing of water was a sign of God's care. . That we aid all nations to provide drinking water and toilets for their peoples ... we pray
4. Carers – Jesus reached out to people on the margins. That we acknowledge with just wages and work conditions our health care workers in aged care homes and rangers in nature reserves ... we pray
5. Death - Jesus faced the reality of death as part of God given cycles of life. That we have the courage not to fly from our own decay or from accompanying the final days of others ...we pray

DISMISSAL

God has a special love for the outsider. Given courage by this Eucharist we go forth unafraid to reach out to the stranger or to be known as people who try to do all things well.

SEASON OF CREATION

A bold plan to officially include a *Season of Creation* within a revised liturgical year and compiling a new Sunday Lectionary gives the opportunity to address related challenges: giving better voice to women in the Church; reinvigorating dialogue with the world of science; deepening interfaith dialogue; giving scope for greater local Church 'inculturation'; correcting 'clunky' liturgical language.

COVENANT

Ultimately God gives us the new 'Jesus Covenant' – teacher and prophet, healer and saviour. God takes on a human body, the Word made flesh (Lk 2:34). Jesus was called Teacher and the crowds were amazed at his wisdom (Lk 4:16-22). As Prophet ordinary people welcomed him (Mt 21:6-11). Jesus was Healer of bodies, the possessed and the mean spirited (Mt 4:23-25). Peter preached Jesus as the Christ and Saviour, and the people were converted (Ac 2:22- 24, 36-39).

***...we may prove capable of responding with a
 new vision of fraternity and social friendship that
 will not remain at the level of word.***

Pope Francis Fratelli Tutti #6



CHAMPIONS AND SAINTS

Jesuit priest Teilhard de Chardin (1881-1955) was the first Catholic in modern times to theologically link the Earth sciences and faith. As a scientist he explored the wonder of God's cosmos and the Word present there as the Cosmic Christ. His prayers reflected infatuation with God's Earth. He celebrated Eucharist on the altar of the Earth. He was the first of many ecological theologians who emerged in all continents, like Australian Charles Birch.

<http://oa.anu.edu.au/obituary/birch-louis-charles-16919>

Where profits alone count, there can be no thinking about the rhythms of nature, its phases of decay and regeneration, or the complexity of ecosystems which may be gravely upset by human intervention.

Pope Francis Laudato Si' #190

MYSTICISM

Deep-Incarnation is a phrase used by theologians, such as the late Denis Edwards, opening Christians to the spiritual depth of all creation. We are made from Stardust. Geological science gives a source of wonder and joy, reasons for belonging and hope. But deeper reflection has led many to stark realisation that some human actions are altering the very physics and bio-system of the planet. Cosmic spirituality grows.

<https://lsri.campion.ox.ac.uk/impact>



ECOLOGICAL INSIGHT

Exploring the unknown in a methodical way is at the heart of science. It requires humility in the face of evidence and not being afraid of uncertainty. It is sceptical of outcomes, not in the sense of denial, but knowing that results are provisional. The history of scientific discoveries is the story of its methodical way of exploring hypotheses and testing them to replicate the results - bringing both humility and joy born of knowledge.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Scientific_method

LOCAL CULTURE

Vatican II promoted respect for the insights of faith and rituals of local churches under the tag *inculturation*. Preparing liturgies during the *Season of Creation*, or even in personal reflection, encourages us to local creativity. We look seriously at our own local situation, its unique ecological niche and social make up. Each city, town or countryside where we live is unique and a stage where the Holy Spirit is the main actor. This is what poets and artists, musicians and dancers do. We can all express our sense of belonging in a particular place on *Earth as our common home*.

self-improvement on the part of individuals will not by itself remedy the extremely complex situation facing our world today ... end up prey to an unethical consumerism bereft of social or ecological awareness.

Pope Francis Laudato Si' #219



THE WAY GOD THINKS

I will walk in the presence of the Lord Ps 114

READ THE LECTIONARY ECOLOGICALLY

[Is 50; Ps 114; Jm 2; Mk 8]

*Look upon your people in their moments of need
The Lord has opened my ear
I set my face like flint
Walk in the presence of the Lord
The Lord protects the simple hearted
I have faith by showing you my good deeds
My only glory is the cross
The way you think is not God's way but man's
Take up the cross and follow me
Lose life ... for the sake of the Gospel will save it.*

GREETING

The Scripture today reminds us that we are graced to think as God thinks. In our joys and hopes, anxiety and pain; in every crisis of our human journey have we set our face like flint to choose the way of God and even to suffer for that good?

His divine presence, which ensures the subsistence and growth of each being, "continues the work of creation".

Pope Francis Laudato Si' #80

PRAYERS OF THE FAITHFUL

1. Church Leaders – The prophets raised up by God corrected Israel's leaders. That our churches preach Pope Francis' environmental encyclical Laudato Si', in working with society leaders to grow worthwhile jobs for the common good of people and country ... we pray
2. The Cross - Jesus transformed the meaning of suffering. That our parish members not fly from suffering but freely choose it as part of serving Earth and people ... we pray
3. Science – Humans are created in the likeness of God. That in crisis we be open to scientific arguments as responsible citizens within creation, sustainably managing Earth's resources for the long-term good ... we pray
4. Cumulative Impacts – God's ways were only gradually revealed within the history of Israel. That we confront the gradual erosion of values upholding our community while promoting ongoing changes for good ... we pray

5. Big History – God is present in all events of history. That we respect the ways of pandemics and climate change to understanding a bigger story of an evolutionary Universe ... we pray

DISMISSAL

Jesus tested the leadership of Peter. We go from this Eucharist resolved to think as God thinks as we serve the good of neighbours and Earth itself.

SEASON OF CREATION

Creation Time focuses on the human vocation to be humble servants within all creation (Mk 10:41-45). The human role is not to lord it over either people or Earth. Our vocation rejects the model of industry captains who exploit Earth's natural resources and make workers into modern slaves. Reflection during Creation time has us purposely design investment options in the light of ecological science and technologies that serve God's creation.

The Spirit of life dwells in every living creature and calls us to enter into relationship ... Discovering this presence leads us to cultivate the ecological virtues.

Pope Francis Laudato Si' #88



COVENANT

Jesus passed on his Father's way of thinking to fulfil the story of the 'Adam Covenant' (Gn 2:5-10). The People of Israel told of God loving creation and mothering their nation (Ho 11:3-4). Jesus as the New Adam heals all broken relationships with the Creator God (1 Co 15:45-49). Every generation of believers faces its own reality to live with its choices (Rm 6:12-14) striving to be co-creators with the Risen Christ bringing a New Creation (1 Co 1:4-9).

CHAMPIONS AND SAINTS

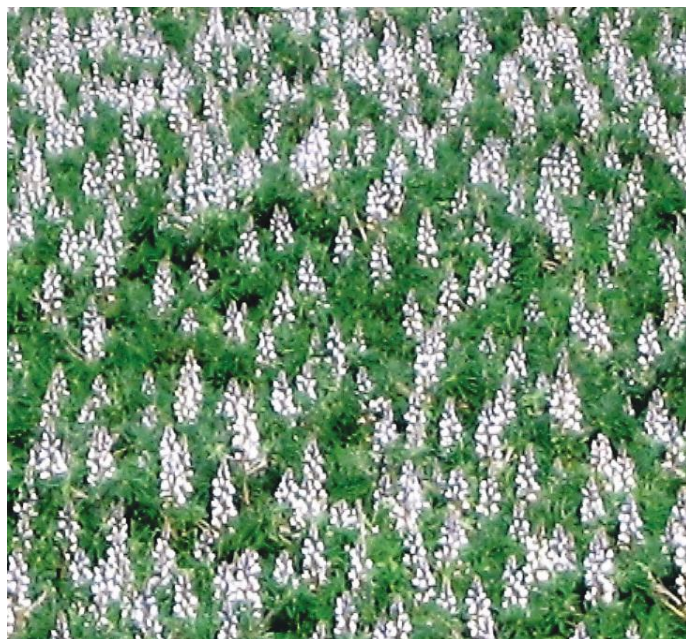
Like many indigenous people pushed to the margins of society, Miriam Rose Ungunmerr-Baumann was born a Ngangiwumirr Aboriginal woman. She was baptised a Catholic while slowly working to become a teacher. Keenly interested in painting, her unique imagery informs her *Australian Stations of the Cross*. Her focus was to integrate traditional and western education for Aboriginal children and adults. Miriam Rose encouraged other women to study as teachers.

...globalized indifference, born of illusion: thinking that we are all-powerful.

Pope Francis Fratelli Tutti #30

MYSTICISM

Seeking the truth has been a spiritual pathway in every religious tradition – from the Jewish Decalogue to the teachings of the Buddha. But denial and deception contend with truth. Jesus confronted the Father of Lies (Jn 8:44). Even world economists and national leaders can be fooled by misinformation coming from



paid lobbyists and fad-think. It is a spiritual calling for parents to form their children to pursue truth. Learning the systems of Earth embodies the physics and chemistry of truth.

ECOLOGICAL INSIGHT

Earth is a complex system of interacting physical, chemical and biological 'spheres' - predictable even if complex. The impact of human choices on these spheres is also predictable. All these processes overlap and no part of the holistic Earth system can be considered in isolation. Knowledge of these systems is an unfolding story, a source of mystery and delight. <http://serc.carleton.edu/introgeo/Earthsystem/nutshell/index.html>

LOCAL CULTURE

The 2019 Synod of the Amazon set a church benchmark in respect for the ecology of place and culture of a local people. Lament over the clearing of the forests and displacement of native people was deep. The Synod encouraged churches in Africa to lament the impact of arm sales that fuel local conflict, conscript *boy soldiers* and bankrupt nations. The Synod encouraged the churches of Asia and Oceania to focus on how water affects their lives, from rising sea levels to more frequent and severe typhoons. <https://www.raoan.org/> The churches globally makes their prayers its own.

contemplating the Creator who lives among us and surrounds us, whose presence "must not be contrived but found, uncovered.

Pope Francis Laudato Si' #225



SERVANTS TO LIFE

The Lord upholds my life Ps 53

READ THE LECTIONARY ECOLOGICALLY

[Ws 2; Ps 53; Jm 3; Mk 9]

*The godless say ... let us lie in wait
God will take his part
The Lord upholds my life
Sow the seeds which will bear fruit in holiness
Find jealousy and ambition, you find disharmony
You have an ambition you cannot satisfy
Prayed for something to indulge your own desires
They did not understand what he said
To be first ... last of all and servant of all
Welcomes not me but the one who sent me
Put into action the mystery we celebrate*

[damaged] natural environment ... social environment. Both are ultimately due to the same evil: the notion that there are no indisputable truths to guide our lives, and hence human freedom is limitless.

Pope Francis Laudato Si' #6

shun the darkness of ignorance and self-doubt to rejoice with scientists, cooperating with them as they discover new ways of caring for life ... we pray

...great numbers of lives are at stake. Many migrants have fled from war, persecution and natural catastrophes.

Pope Francis Fratelli Tutti #37

DISMISSAL

This celebration has given us a new understanding about the struggle for good in the human journey. We go out confident of God's providence in every struggle.

SEASON OF CREATION

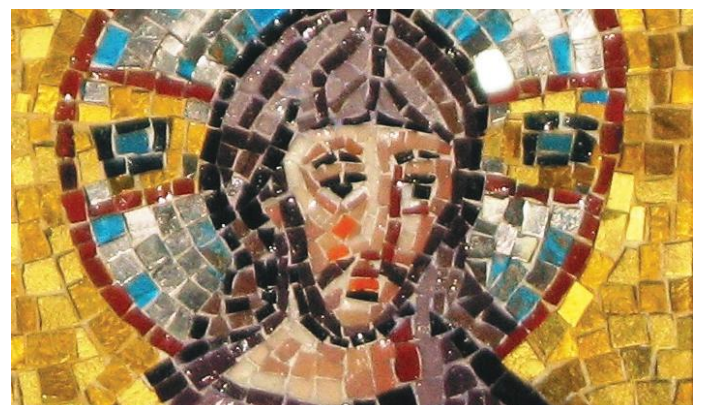
Pope Benedict XVI called for 'a new understanding of the inseparability of Creation and Redemption' (20.08.08). Bringing ecological insights about cycles of death and new life into a liturgical Season of Creation leads believers to a deeper appreciation of the Cross as part of Transformation. From the beginning of creation life contended with death. Liturgical prayers view Cross and Resurrection as a continuum, both endlessly probing the mysteries of life.

GREETING

Today's Readings remind us God graces cosmic and human evolution with purpose. The death of Jesus is not some punishment arbitrarily imposed but freely chosen. Have we chosen to live a life with purpose or fallen into escapism?

PRAYERS OF THE FAITHFUL

1. Ambition - God's truth becomes clouded by ambition and self-indulgence, like air pollution. That our Church not be swayed by status or grow inertia but joyfully serve life in the Earth community where ever it is found ... we pray
2. Systems - God raised up leaders with integrity to serve the life of Israel. That political and company leaders not hide behind faceless systems of control but be publicly accountable in growing future opportunities for all ... we pray
3. Equinox – God gives Spring and Autumn as seasons of change and refreshment. That Christians monitor the rhythm of their lives by reading the Pope's life giving message of integral ecology ... we pray
4. Ridicule - Humanity insults the Wisdom of God with self-important plans. That we stop ridiculing campaigners for good, especially women as prophets and leaders ... we pray
5. Serve Life – God created all life on Earth. That we



COVENANT

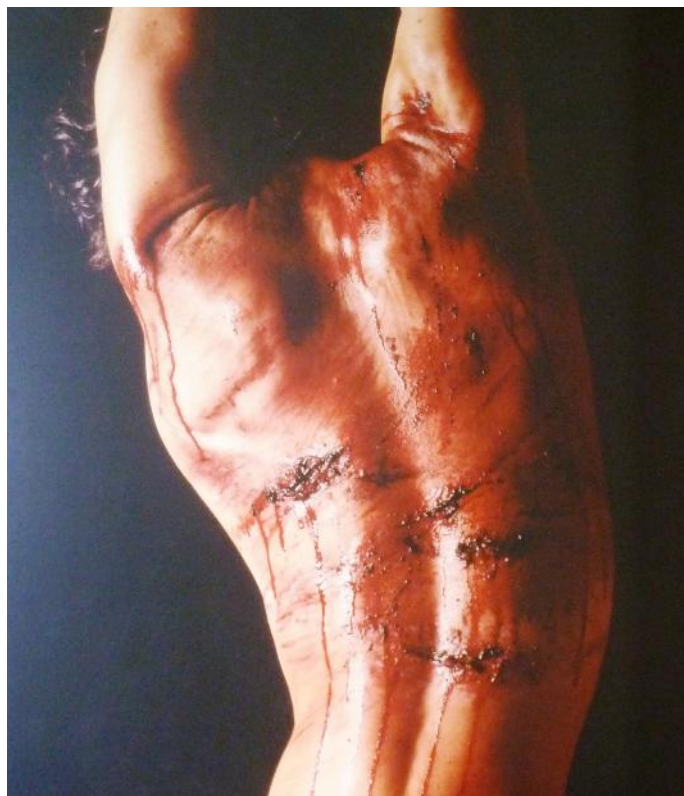
An 'Apocalyptic Covenant' of calamity and dark days is part of Scriptural writings (Mt 24:15-21) often written of because the people have broken God's covenant (Is 24:1-6). Famine and floods feature in apocalyptic literature as signs calling for a change of heart (Rv 16:8-9). Living life in the presence of God in Paradise was written about in apocalyptic terms of a New Jerusalem (Rv 21:3). Disasters and calamities are real on the human journey but all things can be made to work for good for those who love God (Rm 8:28).

(Mary Mother of God) grieves for the sufferings of the crucified poor and for the creatures of this world laid waste by human power

Pope Francis Laudato Si' #241

CHAMPIONS AND SAINTS

Rachel Carson (1907-1964) growing up in Pennsylvania USA enjoyed the river-lands near her home and later studied marine biology. A good communicator, she wrote radio scripts such as *Romance Under the Waters* to popularize the emerging science of ecology and was recognised as a lyric poet. But darkness began to cover the land and oceans with the widespread spraying of synthetic pesticides such as DDT developed under military funding. In 1962 she published *Silent Spring* which is often seen as launching the environmental movement.



MYSTICISM

The Cross of Jesus twins with the Resurrection in the spiritual lives of martyrs, including ecological martyrs. Nikolai Vivilov and staff protected a seed bank during the 1942 siege of St Petersburg even though themselves starving. In 2016 Berta Caceres was murdered for helping protect a local community's water supply in Honduras. These people embraced suffering to protect the life of others. Eco-activists often suffer ridicule for their stances and need the spiritual courage of the Cross.

ECOLOGICAL INSIGHT

Silviculture is a science that helps to balance the struggle between the needs of forest owners and of society. It works from the primary value of forest sustainability and resilience – setting clearing rates and stopping fragmentation of old growth forests; preserving habitat to preserve wildlife for biodiversity and water catchments. Forests are fragile and can become deserts. Humanity must picture itself as servant of forest life rather than exploiters.

The emptier a person's heart is, the more he or she needs things to buy, own and consume.

Pope Francis Laudato Si' #204

LOCAL CULTURE

Poetry and song often distills a spiritual awareness of nature in animistic religions and can be taken into the liturgy. Celtic saints become missionary wanderers for Christ and often expressed their new experiences in nature poetry, including St Columban. *Missa Luba* is a Latin Mass from the Congo. Jesuit poet Gerard Manley Hopkins wrote of the *grandeur of God*. Music from Sibelius' *Finlandia* to Vivaldi's *Four Seasons* have texts that praise the gifts of nature. Every language and culture has its unique poetry and music that connects God, Earth and People.



PROCLAIM GOSPEL JOY

The precepts of the Lord give joy to the heart Ps 18

READ THE LECTIONARY ECOLOGICALLY

[Nm 11; Ps 18; Jm 5; Mk 9]

*You have revealed the beauty in your power
The spirit ... on the seventy elders
If only the whole people of the Lord were prophets
The precepts of the Lord give joy to the heart
The Law ... gives wisdom to the simple
From presumption restrain you servant
Your wealth is all rotting
Listen to the wages you kept back
Your word Lord is truth ... make holy in truth
If your eye should cause you to sin, pluck it out.*

GREETING

Today's Readings remind us that we are graced to live honestly. Sadly, our comfortable lifestyle often rests on the back of slave-like wages in countries removed from our sight and the ecological ruin of their land. Let us confess our complicity.

The joys and sorrows of each of its members are felt by all. That is what it means to be a family!

Pope Francis Fratelli Tutti #230

PRAYERS OF THE FAITHFUL

1. Rejoice – God wills that we soar on eagle's wings. That our Church never stop proclaiming a prophetic wisdom that rejoices in the goodness of every being on Earth as our kin ... we pray
2. Consumerism – God has led people in every age to avoid the distractions of wealth. That our financial planners reject using the allure of consumerism to facilitate lives of fulfilment while living lightly on the earth ... we pray
3. Mission – Jesus came to bring life to the full. That believers live out their baptism as missionaries of hope attuned to this time of pandemic and ecological crisis ... we pray
4. Prophets – God's prophets challenged Israel. That we listen to ecological scientists and social workers, naming them as prophets of truth and heroes in our times ... we pray
5. Birds and Animals – God created all that lives on Earth. That we be happy to visit parks and forests, rivers and shore lines, listening to the rangers dedicated to caring for the wildlife there ... we pray

DISMISSAL

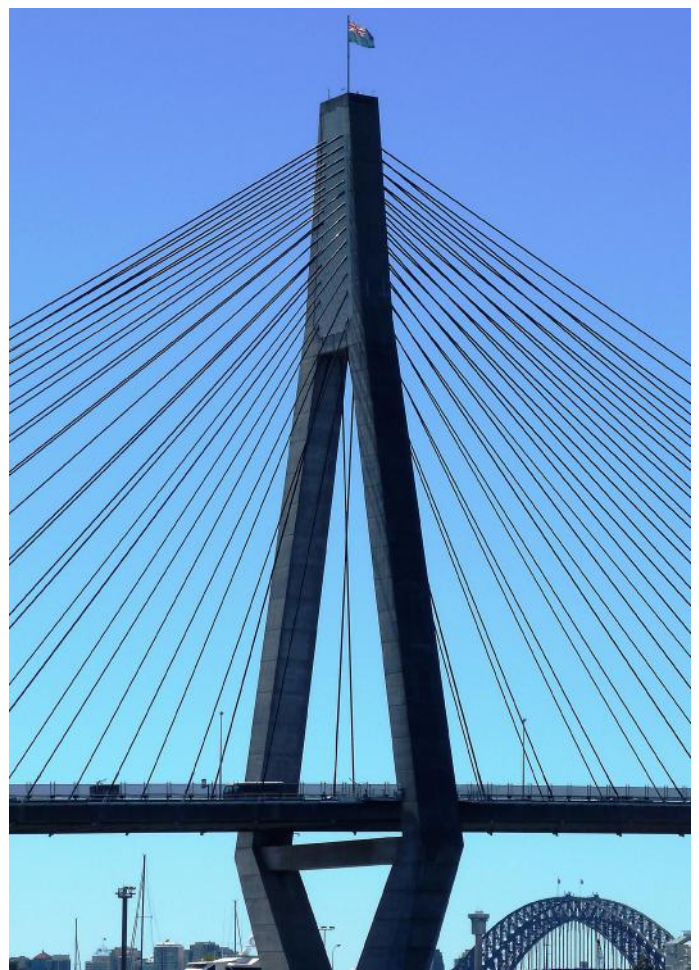
Empowered by the truth preached by Jesus we can go out to evangelise, confident in a Gospel that is good for ourselves, the planet and future generations.

SEASON OF CREATION

Pope Francis introduces a new phrase into Church teaching, *integral ecology* and connect ecological insights with the radical way of life of St Francis in his environmental encyclical *Laudato Si'* (#10-11). It embraces a bundle of connected spheres - ecology, human fulfilment, care for the poor, economics, politics and life style. Believers can proclaim with joy the integral link between *Justice, Peace and Care for Earth* (JPIC). It offers a new spiritual package to inform our Sunday Mass and a guide to daily living that we can bring to prayer.

The establishment of a legal framework which can set clear boundaries and ensure the protection of ecosystems has become indispensable

Pope Francis Laudato Si' #53



COVENANT

Jesus left the 'Holy Spirit Covenant' as his abiding companion until the end of time (Jn 16:7-8, 13). God's spirit is near in all events on Earth (Is 58:1, 21). The Spirit accompanies the followers of Jesus into the world, gracing them with power to boldly preach Good News and witness before judges (Ac 5: 25-26, 40-42). Outsiders praised their good deeds of healing and sharing their goods in common (Ac 2:42-45). Wisdom and justice join in confronting greed (Ac 5:9). The breath of God keeps renewing the world (Ps 104:27-30).

Where profits alone count, there can be no thinking about the rhythms of nature, its phases of decay and regeneration, or the complexity of ecosystems which may be gravely upset by human intervention.

Pope Francis Laudato Si' #190

CHAMPIONS AND SAINTS

Thomas Berry (1914-2009) was cultural historian, cosmologist and 'geo-logian'. His priestly mission was to preach God's activity in the evolving cosmos. The titles of his books convey his thinking about 'the great work' of God: *The Dream of the Earth* and *Earth as Sacred Community*. Professor David Christian developed a similar view with the *Big History Project*. It aims to empower students to locate them and their studies within the wider trajectory of the universe. <http://bighistory.mq.edu.au/>

MYSTICISM

Following one's vocation is a spiritual journey when life is embraced with love. It is an up-lifting calling from God to love unreservedly – *covenant love*. To be a nurse or factory worker, married or single, can be a God given calling to use one's talents in a life of dedication, creativity and nurturing. People find happiness and fulfilment in following their vocation. Sometimes difficult and seemingly endless, a vocation is upheld by God's grace as a story of unending love. The life of an eco-scientist, or eco-campaigner, can be regarded as an *ecological vocation*.

ECOLOGICAL INSIGHT

To grow in appreciation of the diverse gifts of the natural world is a primary aim of many UN Environmental Programs. They explain the life cycles of species and the conditions under which they flourish. The Programs detail the threats to the life cycles of many species. Biodiversity underpins ecosystems that support the services they provide. Human existence



fundamentally depends on Earth's natural services. The UN's vision of Earth's life cycles becomes alive in local school and citizen projects. Many believers see participation in these programs as acting in God's name as loving co-creators.

it is no longer enough to speak only of the integrity of ecosystems. We have to dare to speak of the integrity of human life, of the need to promote and unify all the great values.

Pope Francis Laudato Si' #224

LOCAL CULTURE

Gardening and growing fruit trees is a source of pleasure for many people. A harvest festival is a part of many church communities - singing traditional songs and dancing, displaying paintings and local produce. In many lands, cultivating a small plot is the primary source of food for a family and their crops a source of cash to send children to school. Some cultures sing work songs as they cultivate the soil or craft goods. All such activities can be included in proclaiming *God the Creator, Source of Life*.

