



Connecting People to Nature

5 June 2017
World Environment Day
A Day of Prayer and Reflection

Sponsored by
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Connecting People to Nature is the theme for World Environment Day 2017. This theme invites us to be outdoors today, to appreciate the beauty of nature and to protect the earth that we share, our “common home” as Pope Francis refers to it.

In that spirit, if possible, pray outdoors today, in a patio or garden or park---anywhere you can physically feel connected to nature.

Everything is Related...

Take a few moments before beginning this prayer to sit quietly, attentive to the air that flows in, around, and through you, to the ground on which your feet rest, to the song of the birds, to the sunlight or rainfall, to the rippling of a river or the roar of the sea, to the hum of life beneath all of your thoughts.



Opening Antiphon:

Everything is related, and we human beings are united as brothers and sisters on a wonderful pilgrimage, woven together by the love God has for each of his creatures and which also unites us in fond affection with brother sun, sister moon, brother river and mother earth.

---- *Laudato Si'* 92

Opening Song: All Creatures of Our God and King

All creatures of our God and king
Lift up your voices, let us sing:
Alleluia, alleluia!
Bright burning with golden beams;
Soft silver moon that gently gleams.
O praise God! O praise God!
Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!

Great rushing winds who are so strong;
You clouds above that sail along
Alleluia, alleluia!
Fair rising morn with praise rejoice
Stars nightly shining, find a voice,
O praise God! O praise God!
Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!

(There are several YouTube versions of this song available.)

Reading I

There is in all visible things an invisible fecundity, a dimmed light, a meek namelessness, a hidden wholeness. This mysterious Unity and Integrity is Wisdom, the Mother of all, *Natura naturans*. There is in all things an inexhaustible sweetness and purity, a silence that is a fount of action and joy. It rises up in wordless gentleness and flows out to me from the unseen roots of all created being, welcoming me tenderly, saluting me with indescribable humility. This is at once my own being, my own nature, and the Gift of my Creator's Thought and Art within me, speaking as Hagia Sophia, speaking as my sister, Wisdom. I am awakened, I am born again at the voice of this my sister, sent to me from the depths of the divine fecundity.

----Thomas Merton, "Hagia Sophia," 1963

Silent Reflection

Response:

There is in all things a hidden wholeness, a mysterious unity and integrity---wisdom my Sister.

Prayer:

Gracious God,
you have called us into being,
linking us together by unseen bonds,
forming a kind of universal family,
a sublime communion which fills us with a sacred,
affectionate and humble respect for all living beings.

May our concern for the environment be rooted in tenderness, compassion and concern for our sisters and brothers and in an unwavering commitment to protecting our common home.

---- adapted from *Laudato Si'*

Reading II

(Jesus uses the image of a vine, intimately related to earth, to water, and to air to image our connection with the divine present in all of creation.)

“I am the true vine, and my Father is the vine grower...Remain in me, as I remain in you. Just as a branch cannot bear fruit on its own unless it remains on the vine, so neither can you unless you remain in me. I am the vine, you are the branches. Whoever remains in me and I in him will bear much fruit, because without me you can do nothing.”

----Jn. 16:1,4,5

Silent Reflection

Response:

There is in all things a hidden wholeness, a mysterious unity and integrity.

Prayer

Lord Jesus,
as you made your way throughout the land,
you often stopped to contemplate the beauty sown by your
Father.
In constant touch with nature,
you lent it an attention full of fondness and wonder;
you lived in harmony with creation and
invited us to see within it the divine message...
Praise to you, O Risen One,
you who mysteriously hold all
creatures of this world to yourself
directing them toward your fullness through which
the very vines and fruit of the earth are imbued with your
radiant presence.

---- adapted from *Laudato Si'*

Reading III

Another morning and I wake with thirst for the goodness I do not have. I walk out to the pond and all the way God has given us such beautiful lessons. O Lord, I was never a quick scholar but sulked and hunched over my books past the hour and the bell; grant me, in your mercy a little more time. Love for the earth and love for you are having such a long conversation in my heart.

--- Mary Oliver, "Thirst"

Silent Reflection

- Take a few moments again to be aware of the beauty that is surrounding you.
- What lessons is nature teaching you.
- Let your love for the earth and your love for God have a conversation with each other.

If you are praying with others, share your reflections. If alone, take some time to record these reflections.

Closing Prayer

Creator God, our sister, Mother Earth, now cries out because of the harm we have inflicted on her. Burdened and laid waste, among the most abandoned and maltreated of our poor; she groans in travail. We have forgotten that we ourselves are dust of the earth; our very bodies are made up of her elements. Forgive our disregard, our destructiveness, our greed. Recreate in us your Spirit, O God.

As we breathe Earth's air and receive life
and refreshment from her waters,
may we be strengthened to care more faithfully
for our common home.

--- adapted from *Laudato Si*, 2

Ways of Connecting People to Nature

- Take a walk everyday if possible and notice the living beings around you.
- Plant a vine.
- Plant a summer garden.
- Buy food products locally grown and harvested.
- Reduce water consumption.
- Avoid the use of plastic and paper.
- Use public transportation or car-pool.
- Advocate for legislation which protects our environment.
- Read (or re-read) *Laudato Si'* Pope Francis' encyclical on the environment



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The **Carmelite NGO**, a non-governmental organization in Special Consultative Status with the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) of the United Nations, a member of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), affiliated to the Department of Public Information (DPI) of the United Nations, and a member of the the Catholic Covenant on Climate Change is comprised of the men and women from around the world who are members of the Carmelite Order or its affiliated Congregations, Institutes and ministries within the Catholic Church.

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