

Vigil for the World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation

We invite you to use this service to celebrate the World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation on 1 September. Pope Francis calls us all to celebrate this opportune moment to “reaffirm [our] personal vocation to be stewards of creation, to thank God for the wonderful handiwork which he has entrusted to our care, and to implore his help for the protection of creation, as well as his pardon for the sins committed against the world in which we live.”

NB: This service outline may be freely adapted for your own use in parishes, groups and communities. This liturgy includes passages from Laudato Si', which are to be read aloud slowly and prayerfully. You may wish to use this liturgy from 1 September until 4 October (the feast of St Francis of Assisi).

Preparation: Please prepare enough mustard seeds for everyone in the congregation.

Opening hymn: O Lord, my God, when I in awesome wonder (Laudate 721)
or Seek ye first the Kingdom of God (Laudate 820)

Words of welcome and opening prayer

Leader: *(Makes the sign of the cross)* We gather today in thanksgiving for the glorious gift of creation, and we ask for the Lord’s help to care for our world. We say together:

All:

God of all creation,
your spirit dances throughout the earth.
You give drink to the trees,
shade for the birds,
bread for the hungry.
You bring life and make all things holy.
Flood our hearts with your grace,
so we may sow seeds of love, justice and beauty,
and reflect your kingdom here on earth.
We ask this through your Son, our Lord Jesus Christ,
Amen.

Call of repentance

Leader: From the rising sun to the smallest of creatures, all of the earth is good. Yet, we see how our fragile world is being robbed by the hand of greed. In many countries, water is no longer safe to drink. Forests are stripped bare. And parents fear for their children’s future.

Reader one: Susana is a mother of twelve and she lives on the mountains of Bolivia in South America. Since she was a child, she has relied on nature’s

signs to predict when the rains would come. This way, she would always know when to sow potatoes for the harvest. But now there is no rain, and Susana struggles to grow enough food for her family.

Reader two: Under the scorching sun, the crops are withering from a lack of water. Susana says, "These poor little plants, when they are just seedlings, how can they survive? The plants are suffering."

Reader three: Susana perceives other changes, too. The river nearby is littered with plastic bags. Sadly, this waste is poisoning the fish. She says, "There are people in the world who don't care for the earth. So I always say that they need to collect their rubbish - they shouldn't make the earth cry."

Reader one: In his encyclical letter *Laudato Si'*, Pope Francis reflects on the cry of the earth. "Each year sees the disappearance of thousands of plant and animal species which we will never know, which our children will never see, because they have been lost for ever. The great majority become extinct for reasons related to human activity. Because of us, thousands of species will no longer give glory to God by their very existence, nor convey their message to us. We have no such right."¹

Leader: We recognise our part in harming the earth and our neighbours, and we ask for the Lord's forgiveness. In the silence of our hearts, let us reflect on how to change our lives and care for God's wonderful gift of creation.

Silent reflection

Hymn: O, the love of my Lord (Laudate 967)

First reading: *Laudato Si'* #228

Care for nature is part of a lifestyle which includes the capacity for living together and communion. Jesus reminded us that we have God as our common Father and that this makes us brothers and sisters. Fraternal love can only be gratuitous; it can never be a means of repaying others for what they have done or will do for us. That is why it is possible to love our enemies. This same gratuitousness inspires us to love and accept the wind, the sun and the clouds, even though we cannot control them. In this sense, we can speak of a "universal fraternity".

Responsorial psalm: *Psalm 103:1-2, 5-6, 10, 12-14, 24, 35. R. Cf. v.30*

**R. Send forth your spirit, o Lord,
and renew the face of the earth.**

Bless the Lord, my soul!
Lord God, how great you are,

¹ *Laudato Si'* #33

clothed in majesty and glory,
wrapped in light as in a robe! **R.**

You founded the earth on its base,
to stand firm from age to age.
You wrapped it with the ocean like a cloak:
the waters stood higher than the mountains. **R.**

You make springs gush forth in the valleys:
they flow in between the hills.
On their banks dwell the birds of heaven;
from the branches they sing their song. **R.**

From your dwelling you water the hills;
earth drinks its fill of your gift.
You make the grass grow for the cattle
and the plants to serve people's needs. **R.**

How many are your works, O Lord!
In wisdom you have made them all.
The earth is full of your riches.
Bless the Lord, my soul! **R.**

Gospel reading: *Matthew 13: 1-3; 31-33*

That same day, Jesus left the house and sat by the lakeside, but such large crowds gathered round him that he got into a boat and sat there. The people all stood on the shore, and he told them many things in parables.

He put another parable before them, 'The kingdom of Heaven is like a mustard seed which a man took and sowed in his field. It is the smallest of all the seeds, but when it has grown it is the biggest of shrubs and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air can come and shelter in its branches.'

Leader: The Gospel of the Lord.

All: Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

Homily (optional)

Prayers of intercession

Leader: A mustard seed; small enough to hold in the palm of your hand. Yet, Jesus tells us that this precious little seed is like the kingdom of Heaven. We ask the Lord our God to open our eyes to the wonders of creation, and we offer our hearts in hope that all things may flourish.

Reader: We pray for the Church, that she may bring healing to the earth and to people living in poverty. Sanctified by the love of God, may she guide

us all on the path of wisdom. Lord, in your mercy,

All: Hear our prayer.

Reader: We pray for world leaders, that the Lord may move them to act with respect and urgency for the sake of the earth and the most vulnerable. Lord, in your mercy,

All: Hear our prayer.

Reader: We pray for Susana and all our sisters and brothers who are affected by the changing climate. May the Holy Spirit inspire communities to hold onto hope for the goodness of creation. Lord, in your mercy,

All: Hear our prayer.

Reader: We pray for our local community, that we may sow gestures of love and friendship for each other and the world around us, ever grateful for the gift God has entrusted to us. Lord, in your mercy,

All: Hear our prayer.

Leader: We ask these prayers through our Lord Jesus Christ, Redeemer of all creation,

All: Amen.

Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament

The Blessed Sacrament is brought to the altar in a monstrance. This is followed by a procession of natural gifts- such as candles, flowers, seeds and water- which are placed on a side-altar near the Blessed Sacrament. A period of silence follows to allow for reflection on "the Eucharist [which] joins heaven and earth".²

Silent contemplation

Hymn: In bread we bring you (Laudate 609) or Sweet sacrament divine (Laudate 663)

Leader: In the Eucharist, fulness is already achieved; it is the living centre of the universe, the overflowing core of love and of inexhaustible life. Joined to the incarnate Son, present in the Eucharist, the whole cosmos gives thanks to God. Indeed the Eucharist is itself an act of cosmic love... The Eucharist joins heaven and earth; it embraces and penetrates all creation. The world which came forth from God's hands returns to him in blessed and undivided adoration: in the bread of the Eucharist, "creation is projected towards divinization, towards the holy wedding feast, towards unification with the Creator himself". Thus, the Eucharist is also a source of light and motivation for our concerns for the environment, directing us to be stewards of all creation.³

² *Laudato Si'* #236

³ *ibid*

Litany of creation

Leader: Loving God, we give you thanks and praise, for you embrace with tenderness all that exists. Let us pray:

Reader: Heavenly Father, source of light and life,

All: Let all the earth praise you.

Reader: Son of God, Jesus, risen in fullness,

All: Let all the earth praise you.

Reader: Holy Spirit, infinite bond of love,

All: Let all the earth praise you.

Reader: Triune God, creator of resplendent beauty,

All: Let all the earth praise you.

Reader: God of our own hearts, you draw all creatures to yourself,

All: Give us the grace to care for your gift.

Reader: Living Lord Jesus, you open our eyes to the dignity of all,

All: Give us the grace to care for your gift.

Reader: Holy Spirit, you inspire us to do what is good,

All: Give us the grace to care for your gift.

Leader: God's bountiful love unites us as one family, and so together we dare to say:

All: Our Father...

Act of commitment

Leader: We remember Susana in Bolivia who, thanks to your generosity, is learning how to grow crops in a greenhouse. She is happy to provide rich and nutritious food for her family. We think of the birds who sing in the trees, and the fish who swim through the waters. By opening our hearts to God's grace, we are able to cherish the goodness which surrounds us.

Now, as a sign of commitment, please come up to the front and take a mustard seed. As you do so, think of one action you can do this week, to make a step towards our vision of creating a heavenly place to call home.

Quiet music plays

Closing prayer and final blessing

Reader: Lord, allow my ears to listen to the cry of the earth, the voices of my sisters and brothers,

those who face the harsh reality of climate change.

All: Lord, I come to do your will.

Reader: Lord, allow my eyes to see the beauty of creation,
in flowers, creatures, forests, and cities alike.

All: Lord, I come to do your will.

Reader: Lord, allow my voice to speak out for justice
and ensure people living in poverty are heard.

All: Lord, I come to do your will.

Reader: Lord, allow my hands to care for the earth,
to toil, to reap, to celebrate.

All: Lord, I come to do your will.

Reader: Lord, allow my feet to take the path less trod,
to walk the extra mile,
to take your message out to the world.

All: Lord, I come to do your will.

Father Michael Fitzsimmons/CAFOD

Leader: Through the blessing (+) of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit,
may you go forth with joy to care for creation.

All: Amen.

Closing hymn: Here I am, Lord (Laudate 865) or Be thou my vision
(Laudate 970)