

In Celebration of the Feast of St. Francis

OPENING PRAYER...

Prayer for Ecological Conversion

God of the sun and the moon, of the mountains, deserts and plains,
God of the mighty oceans, of rivers, lakes and streams
God of all creatures that live in seas and fly in the air
of every living thing that grows and moves on this sacred Earth.
We are formed by Christ into Your People,
called to bring the world into Your marvelous light.
As the Body of Christ, we are messengers of ecological vocation.
We are entrusted with caring for this Earth which You have created.
Help us to love and respect it; to repair what we have damaged;
to care for what You have made good and holy.
Give us the wisdom and the passion to change our minds, our hearts and our ways.
Let us be mustard seeds in our world bringing about ecological conversion which grows and
spreads to every corner of the Earth.
For our sake now and for every generation which is to come.
We ask this through Christ, Our Lord. Amen.
~Catholic Earthcare Australia, 2002 (used with permission)

READINGS

Reading #1

Parable of the Mustard Seed ~Mark 4:30-32

“He said, “To what shall we compare the kingdom of God, or what parable can we use for it? It is like a mustard seed that, when it is sown in the ground, is the smallest of all the seeds on the earth. But once it is sown, it springs up and becomes the largest of plants and puts forth large branches, so that the birds of the sky can dwell in its shade.”

Reading #2

The theme of this program comes from this Pope John XXIII quote:

“We are not on earth to guard a museum, but to tend to a flowering garden of life.”

Reading #3

A reading from *Laudato Si'* 217

The ecological crisis is also a summons to profound interior conversion. Christians all need an “ecological conversion”, whereby the effects of their encounter with Jesus Christ become evident in their relationship with the world around them.

Reading #4

Pope St. John Paul II in his General Audience Address on 17 January 2001 was the first Pontiff to use the term “ecological conversion”.

“Unfortunately, if we scan the regions of our planet, we immediately see that humanity has disappointed God’s expectations. Man, especially in our time, has without hesitation devastated wooded plains and valleys, polluted waters, disfigured the earth’s habitat, made the air unbreathable, disturbed the hydrogeological and atmospheric systems, turned luxuriant areas into deserts and undertaken forms of unrestrained industrialization, degrading that “flowerbed” - to use an image from Dante Alighieri (*Paradiso*, XXII, 151) - which is the earth, our dwelling-place.

We must therefore encourage and support the “ecological conversion” which in recent decades has made humanity more sensitive to the catastrophe to which it has been heading. Man is no longer the Creator’s “steward”, but an autonomous despot, who is finally beginning to understand that he must stop at the edge of the abyss.... At stake, then, is not only a “physical” ecology that is concerned to safeguard the habitat of the various living beings, but also a “human” ecology which makes the existence of creatures more dignified, by protecting the fundamental good of life in all its manifestations and by preparing for future generations an environment more in conformity with the Creator’s plan.”

Reading #6

Elizabeth Johnson, Professor Emerita of Theology at Fordham University and a member of the Sisters of St. Joseph, writes:

“. . . We all share the status of creaturehood; we are all kin in the evolving community of life now under siege; our vision must be one of flourishing for all. The immediate aim is to establish and protect healthy ecosystems where all creatures, including poor human beings and plants and animals being driven to extinction, can thrive. The longer-term goal is a socially just and environmentally sustainable society in which the needs of all people are met and diverse species can prosper, onward to an evolutionary future that will still surprise.... guide us at this critical time of Earth’s distress, to practical and critical effect”: A flourishing humanity on a thriving planet rich in species in an evolving universe, all together filled with the glory of God.”

(Elizabeth Johnson, *Ask the Beasts: Darwin and the God of Love*, Bloomsbury: London, 2014, pp. 285-86).

REFLECTION

- What stood out/impacted you in these readings?
- How does the Parable of the Mustard Seed speak to you as you consider the need to work to ensure that we “cultivate a flowering garden of life” and a “flourishing humanity on a thriving planet rich in species in an evolving universe, all together filled with the glory of God”?
- What common thread/message do you see in the readings by Pope John XXIII, Pope St. John Paul II, and Pope Francis (in *Laudato Si’*)?
- How can people of faith work toward what Prof. Johnson states as our “longer-term goal of “a flourishing humanity on a thriving planet rich in species in an evolving universe, all together filled with the glory of God”?