

As we remember our theme, PROTECTING ALL OF GOD'S CREATION, on our day of fasting and prayer on **Tuesday, August 11, 2015**, we celebrate Pope Francis's Ecological Encyclical through a prayer service that invites us to action as we care for creation and the poorest among us.



Leader: We give thanks and celebrate the teaching of our beloved Pope Francis in his encyclical that reminds us that Creation is God's gift to all of us. We are a part of a complex ecological web that binds us together with all of Creation. The health of our planet cannot be separated from God's children who inhabit the planet; fullness of life for all depends upon restoration and care of our world. Pope Francis challenges us to take on responsibility for this restoration and care through our daily actions and our advocacy.

Reader 1: We give thanks for the popes and bishops who have contributed to the Church's tradition of concern for the environment and its impact on everyone in the human family; their reflections have shaped Francis' encyclical. May we reflect deeply on these words and respond to them with prayer and action.

Reader 2: From Pope Paul VI, who wrote decades ago:
"This consciousness of the environment around us is more pressing today than ever. For men who have the means and the ability to construct and ennoble the world about them can also destruct it and squander its goods, as we are seeing. Human science and technology have made marvelous gains. But care must be taken that they are used to enhance human life and its environment and not to diminish these." Message for the World Day of Environment, 1977.

All: May we reflect deeply on these words and respond to them with prayer and action.

Reader 3: From Pope John Paul II:
"The most profound and serious indication of the moral implications underlying the ecological problem is the lack of respect for life evident in many of the patterns of environmental pollution. Often, the interests of production prevail over concern for human dignity, while economic interests take priority over the good of individuals and even entire peoples. In these cases, pollution or environmental destruction is the result of an unnatural and reductionist vision which leads to a genuine contempt for humans." World Day of Peace Message, 1990.



All: May we reflect deeply on these words and respond to them with prayer and action.

Reader 4: From Pope Benedict XVI
"In 1990 John Paul II had spoken of an 'ecological crisis' and, in highlighting its primarily ethical character, pointed to the 'urgent moral need for a new solidarity.' His appeal is all the more pressing today, in the face of signs of a growing crisis which it would be irresponsible not to take seriously. Can we remain indifferent before the problems associated with such realities as climate change, desertification, the deterioration and loss of productivity in vast agricultural areas, the pollution of rivers and aquifers, the loss of biodiversity, the increase of natural catastrophes and the deforestation of equatorial and tropical regions? Can we disregard the growing phenomenon of "environmental refugees"...? Can we remain impassive in the face of actual and potential conflicts involving access to natural resources? World Day of Peace Message, 2010

All: May we reflect deeply on these words and respond to them with prayer and action.

Reader 5: From the U.S. Bishops:
“Our mistreatment of the natural world diminishes our own dignity and sacredness, not only because we are destroying resources that future generations of humans need, but because we are engaging in actions that contradict what it means to be human. Our tradition calls us to protect the life and dignity of the human person, and it is increasingly clear that this task cannot be separated from the care and defense of all of creation. . . Created things belong not to the few, but to the entire human family.”
Renewing the Earth: An Invitation to Reflection and Action on Environment in Light of Catholic Social Teaching, 1991.

All: May we reflect deeply on these words and respond to them with prayer and action.

Leader: This legacy of concern for God’s Creation and for entire human family has shaped Pope Francis’ perspective, as has his devotion to St. Francis of Assisi, who so loved the natural world and served the poor and lowly. May we listen to Pope Francis’ words and hear the challenge they offer us.

Reader 6: From the 2015 encyclical by Pope Francis:
“Today we cannot help but recognize that a true ecological approach always becomes a social approach, which must integrate justice in the discussions of the environment, to hear the cry of the earth with the cry of the poor. . . The violence that exists in the human heart wounded by sin is also manifested in the symptoms of the disease we feel in soil, water, air and in the living things. Therefore, among the most abandoned and ill -treated poor we find our oppressed and devastated Earth, which “moans and suffers the pains of childbirth” [Romans 8:22]. We forget that we ourselves are Earth [Genesis 2:7]. Our own body is made of the elements of the planet, its air is what gives us breath and its water gives us life and restores.

Leader: We give thanks for our Church’s teaching and Pope Francis’ leadership on the challenges that confront Creation and the solutions that begin with conversion of the heart and mind. Let us pray together a modern adaptation of St. Francis’ prayer that has inspired our Pope.

All: Be Praised, O Lord, through the interconnected web of Creation, Which binds your children, your creatures and your earth, All that you have woven together so all may exist in Original Goodness.
Be Praised for Sister Sun, that glowing star that warms our world,
Calling seeds to travel in the soil up to the light and bring us food.
Be Praised for Brother Moon, and for all the planets
That reveal your complexity and the scope of your creativity.
Be Praised for Your universes and multiverses, unfolding to us
In endless waves, humbling us in our astonishment.
Be Praised for Sister Wind, which moves with energy
Throughout our planet, carrying our hopes and prayers.
Be Praised for Brother Water,
who has sustained life for all that grows
And whose freshness we can still glimpse
despite the soiled streams.
Be Praised for Mother Earth, the ground beneath our feet,
Who we are called to cherish and not defile.
Blessed be those who suffer and are in need
Because of the injustices done to Creation.
Blessed be those who work for peace on earth
And for Your earth itself, including Pope Francis.
Blessed be those who know our time is short
And we are called in the here and the now.
To tend this earthly garden, to restore the great gift
Given to all for the benefit of all.
Praise our God, and give thanks to our Creator
Through our humility and
Our care of His beloved Creation. Amen.

