

Begin by standing or sitting in silence around a round a simple centre piece and a light candle.

Welcome into the Circle of Prayer:

We come together in prayer to consider our identity as Sisters of Mercy. At the heart of our identity is Catherine's call to us to live relational and action-orientated mercy. In our times this calls us to into *whakawhanaungatanga* – making right relationship with God, with people and with the Earth. This time of prayer draws on Pope Francis' recent encyclical, *Laudato Si* throughout which this triple interconnected relationship integral.

Hymn: Wake up the world with dawning joy <https://youtu.be/OxL7fZPaFuY>

Whakapapa - Genealogy

Each of us has his or her own personal identity and is capable of entering into dialogue with others and with God ... Our capacity to reason, to develop arguments, to be inventive, to interpret reality and to create art, along with other not yet discovered capacities, are signs of a uniqueness which transcends the spheres of physics and biology. (*Laudato Si*, 81)

Each of us has a female family tree: we have a mother, a maternal [paternal] grandmother and great-grandmothers, we have daughters ... Let us try to situate ourselves within that female genealogy so that we can win and hold on to our identity. Let us not forget moreover, that we already have a history, that certain women, despite all the cultural obstacles, have made their mark upon history and all too often have been forgotten by us...

(Luce Irigaray. *Sexes and Genealogies*. New York: Columbia University Press: 1993,19)

Invitation to those gathered to name and pray in gratitude for a significant person(s) in their genealogy.

Whakawhanaungatanga – Making Right Relationship

The creation accounts in the book of Genesis contain, in their own symbolic and narrative language, profound teachings about human existence and its historical reality. They suggest that human life is grounded in three fundamental and closely intertwined relationships: with God, with our neighbour and with the earth itself. According to the Bible, these three vital relationships have been broken, both outwardly and within us. This rupture is sin. (*Laudato Si*, 66)

Silently recall a time when I have ruptured right relationship with God, with people, and with the Earth.

Whakawhanaungatanga ki te Atua - Making Right Relationship with God

A spirituality which forgets God as all-powerful and Creator is not acceptable. That is how we end up worshipping earthly powers, or ourselves usurping the place of God, even to the point of claiming an unlimited right to trample [God's] creation underfoot. (*Laudato Si*, 75)

Once the human being declares independence from reality and behaves with absolute dominion, the very foundations of our life begin to crumble, for “instead of carrying out [our] role as a cooperater with God in the work of creation, [humankind] sets [themselves] up in place of God ...”. (*Laudato Si*, 117)

In the Bible, the God who liberates and saves is the same God who created the universe, and these two divine ways of acting are intimately and inseparably connected: “Ah Lord God! It is you who made the heavens and the earth by your great power and by your outstretched arm! Nothing is too hard for you... You brought your people Israel out of the land of Egypt with signs and wonders” (Jer 32:17, 21). “The Lord is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. [God] does not faint or grow weary; [God's] understanding is unsearchable. [God] gives power to the faint, and strengthens the powerless” (Is 40:28b-29). (*Laudato Si*, 73)

Leader: When we can see God reflected in all that exists, our hearts are moved to praise the God for all creatures and to worship God in union with them. This sentiment finds magnificent expression in the hymn of Saint Francis of Assisi:

All: Praised be you, my Lord, with all your creatures,
especially Sir Brother Sun,
who is the day and through whom you give us light.
And he is beautiful and radiant with great splendour;
and bears a likeness of you, Most High.
Praised be you, my Lord, through Sister Moon and the stars,
in heaven you formed them clear and precious and beautiful.
Praised be you, my Lord, through Brother Wind,
and through the air, cloudy and serene, and every kind of weather
through whom you give sustenance to your creatures.
Praised be you, my Lord, through Sister Water,
who is very useful and humble and precious and chaste.
Praised be you, my Lord, through Brother Fire,
through whom you light the night,
and he is beautiful and playful and robust and strong” (*Laudato Si*, 87)

Whakawhanaungatanga ki te Whenua - Making Right Relationship with Earth

LAUDATO SI, mi' Signore – “Praise be to you, my Lord”. In the words of this beautiful canticle, Saint Francis of Assisi reminds us that our common home is like a sister with whom we share our life and a beautiful mother who opens her arms to embrace us. “Praise be to you, my Lord, through our Sister, Mother Earth, who sustains and governs us, and who produces various fruit with coloured flowers and herbs” (*Laudato Si*, 1)

This sister now cries out to us because of the harm we have inflicted on her by our irresponsible use and abuse of the goods with which God has endowed her. (*Laudato Si*, 2)

All: We have forgotten that we ourselves are dust of the earth (cf. *Gen 2:7*); our very bodies are made up of her elements, we breathe her air and we receive life and refreshment from her waters. (*Laudato Si*, 2)

We have come to see ourselves as her lords and masters, entitled to plunder her at will. (*Laudato Si*, 2)

All: We have forgotten that we ourselves are dust of the earth (cf. *Gen 2:7*); our very bodies are made up of her elements, we breathe her air and we receive life and refreshment from her waters. (*Laudato Si*, 2)

The violence present in our hearts, wounded by sin, is also reflected in the symptoms of sickness evident in the soil, in the water, in the air and in all forms of life. (*Laudato Si*, 2)

All: We have forgotten that we ourselves are dust of the earth (cf. *Gen 2:7*); our very bodies are made up of her elements, we breathe her air and we receive life and refreshment from her waters. (*Laudato Si*, 2)

This is why the earth herself, burdened and laid waste, is among the most abandoned and maltreated of our poor; she “groans in travail” (*Rom 8:22*). (*Laudato Si*, 2)

All: We have forgotten that we ourselves are dust of the earth (cf. *Gen 2:7*); our very bodies are made up of her elements, we breathe her air and we receive life and refreshment from her waters. (*Laudato Si*, 2)

Whakawhanaungatanga ki te Tangata - Making Right Relationship with People

When we fail to acknowledge as part of reality the worth of a poor person, a human embryo, a person with disabilities – to offer just a few examples – it becomes difficult to hear the cry of nature itself; everything is connected. Once the human being declares independence from reality and behaves with absolute dominion, the very foundations of our life begin to crumble, (*Laudato Si*, 117)

... it is essential to show special care for indigenous communities and their cultural traditions. They are not merely one minority among others, but should be the principal

dialogue partners, especially when large projects affecting their land are proposed. For them, land is not a commodity but rather a gift from God and from their ancestors who rest there, a sacred space with which they need to interact if they are to maintain their identity and values. When they remain on their land, they themselves care for it best. Nevertheless, in various parts of the world, pressure is being put on them to abandon their homelands to make room for agricultural or mining projects which are undertaken without regard for the degradation of nature and culture. (*Laudato Si*, 146)

The divine Persons are subsistent relations, and the world, created according to the divine model, is a web of relationships. (*Laudato Si*, 40)

Response: Everything is interconnected, and this invites us to develop a spirituality of that global solidarity which flows from the mystery of the Trinity. (*Laudato Si*, 40)

Creatures tend towards God, and in turn it is proper to every living being to tend towards other things, so that throughout the universe we can find any number of constant and secretly interwoven relationships. (*Laudato Si*, 40)

Response: Everything is interconnected, and this invites us to develop a spirituality of that global solidarity which flows from the mystery of the Trinity. (*Laudato Si*, 40)

This leads us not only to marvel at the manifold connections existing among creatures, but also to discover a key to our own fulfilment. (*Laudato Si*, 40)

Response: Everything is interconnected, and this invites us to develop a spirituality of that global solidarity which flows from the mystery of the Trinity. (*Laudato Si*, 40)

The human person grows more, matures more and is sanctified more to the extent that he or she enters into relationships, going out from themselves to live in communion with God, with others and with all creatures. In this way, they make their own that trinitarian dynamism which God imprinted in them when they were created. (*Laudato Si*, 40)

Response: Everything is interconnected, and this invites us to develop a spirituality of that global solidarity which flows from the mystery of the Trinity. (*Laudato Si*, 40)

All: Triune God, wondrous community of infinite love,
teach us to contemplate you
in the beauty of the universe,
for all things speak of you.
Awaken our praise and thankfulness
for every being that you have made.
Give us the grace to feel profoundly joined
to everything that is. (From Final Prayer. *Laudato Si*)

“I’m doing the best I can!” – Am I?

I will be a hummingbird - Wangari Maathai <https://youtu.be/IGMW6YWjMxw>

An enormous fire breaks out in a huge forest:

All the animals are transfixed as they watch the forest burning.

They feel overwhelmed and powerless, except for the little hummingbird.

It says, “I am going to do something about the fire.”

So it flies to the nearest stream, and takes a drop of water and puts it on the fire.

Up and down, up and down, it does, as fast as it can.

In the meantime, all the other, much bigger animals – like the elephant with the big trunk, which could bring much more water, and the lion, the leopard, and the giraffe – are standing here, helpless.

They say to the hummingbird, “What do you think you can do? Your wings are too little and your beak is too small, and the forest fire is so huge. You can only bring a small drop of water at a time.”

Without wasting any time, the hummingbird tells them.

Well, I’m doing the best I can!”

Wangari Maathai, “The Hummingbird,” adapted from *Replenishing the Earth: Spiritual Values for Healing Ourselves and the World* (New York: Doubleday Image, 2010).

“They were nothing more than people, by themselves. Even paired, any pairing, they would have been nothing more than people by themselves. But all together, they have become the heart and muscles and mind of something perilous and new, something strange and growing and great. Together, all together, they are the instruments of change.”

(From *The Bone People*, 1984 Booker Prize-winning novel by Aotearoa New Zealand writer, Keri Hulme.)

All: God, who calls us to generous commitment and to give our all, offers us the light and the strength needed to continue on our way. In the heart of this, God does not leave us alone, for God has united Godself definitively to our earth, and God’s love constantly impels us to find new ways forward. *Praise be to God!* (cf. *Laudato Si*, 245.