

Reflective Prayer: Mercy and the Degradation of Earth – 'Everything is Connected'

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Context for the Reflective Prayer:

In Mercy we enter into this reflective time with each other as we continue to struggle with the shared global experience of the illness and destructive action of the COVID-19 pandemic.

At the same time, we experience the heroism of health care workers, the brilliance and dedication of scientists as they develop a vaccine, the bravery of public leaders holding families, communities and the vulnerable in a social network of care and concern, as well as the selfless dedication of front-line workers and volunteers who are caring for society's ongoing and practical needs.

We are learning that indeed ... *'Everything is connected. Concern for the Environment thus needs to be joined to a sincere love for our fellow human beings and an unwavering commitment to resolving the problems of society.'* (Pope Francis, Laudato Si' N.91)

As Paul says in our first Reading ... *'Creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and will obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God.'* (Romans 8:21)

We hold this in tension with profound hope, based on the belief which we celebrate in these Easter Season days, that *'the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory...'* (John 1:14)

'...The point in terms of divine revelation to the world is that through the incarnation the incomprehensible mystery of God acquires a genuine human life, a story in time, even a death, and does so as a participant in the history of life on our planet. Hence [Karl] Rahner argues, "the climax of salvation history is not the detachment from earth of the human being as spirit in order to come to God, but the descending and irreversible entrance of God into the world, the coming of the divine logos in the flesh, the taking on of matter so that it itself becomes a permanent reality of God."' (Elizabeth Johnson *'Ask The Beasts'* p. 197)

Everything is indeed connected; care for earth and care for each other are central to the healing energy of the Risen Presence. *'It is good for humanity and the world at large when we believers better recognise the ecological commitments which stem from our convictions.'* (Laudato Si' N. 64)

As we enter into this Reflective Prayer, we are aware of the call to live both aspects of the new 8th Work of Mercy in relation to 'Our Common Home' - both in our 'Corporal' or practical action and in our 'Spiritual' or inner reflection.

Pope Francis described the **8th Corporal Work of Mercy** in relation to practical action: *'Care for Our Common Home requires "simple daily gestures which break with the logic of violence, exploitation and selfishness"...*

The **8th Spiritual work of Mercy** could be described as inner-reflection *'As a spiritual work of mercy, care for Our Common Home calls for "a grateful contemplation of God's world" ...*

It is through these two aspects of living Mercy, the 'practical-active' and the 'reflective-spiritual', that we can make a committed and integrated response to healing the degradation of Earth and its creatures and, in so doing, heal our human community.



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Gathering for Prayer:

Preparation suggestions.

- *Set aside time and a reflective space for prayer on screen or in person where appropriate*
- *Invite people to gather (when it is possible, either online virtually or in community, with safe social distance).*
- *You might like to place before you on the table or your area of prayer focus, a candle and a symbol of the life of your local environment such as a leaf, bark or a flower, a pebble, stone or shell or a container of local river, lake or sea water.*

Opening Prayer:

Refrain - All: ***God of life, of Mercy, justice and compassion, bring healing to our world.***

Leader:

- We gather in Mercy across our world with a profound consciousness of the death and severe illness of thousands of people as a result of the COVID-19 Virus.
- We live with remarkable awareness of the inter-connection between all forms of life across Earth and of our total interdependence with each other.
- We are newly conscious that our world's borders mean nothing in the face of a living virus that does not differentiate, nor respect, nation-states, race, gender, age or socio-economic status.

Refrain - All: God of life, of Mercy, justice and compassion, bring healing to our world.

Leader:

- We ask your protection and healing for our world and for each other, as we recognise in a new way, the deep connection of all creation.
- We experience the power and energy of the Creator Spirit of this land on which we gather.
- We acknowledge the First Peoples who have cared for this land for thousands of years.
- We acknowledge our slowness to understand the gift of deep connection between all creation, all peoples and the land as our common home.

Refrain - All: God of all life, of Mercy, justice and compassion, bring healing to our world.

Leader:

- We are learning anew, each day, of the profound web of inter-connectedness in our world.
- We are one on this planet and, from wherever we stand, we are all in this together.
- We acknowledge our interdependence with the natural environment in which each of us lives and breathes.
- We understand, as we live through this pandemic, that nature and people are now in a reverse relationship with the air we breathe - as those sick with the virus struggle for breath while the newly rested earth breathes deeply.

*Refrain - All: **God of life, of Mercy, justice and compassion, bring healing to our world.***

The Word of God

First Reading: Romans 8:18-24

'I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory about to be revealed to us. ¹⁹For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the children of God; ²⁰for the creation was subjected to futility, not of its own will but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope ²¹that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and will obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. ²²We know that the whole creation has been groaning in labour pains until now; ²³and not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly while we wait for adoption, the redemption of our bodies. ²⁴For in hope we were saved.'

Response - All: **'Creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and will obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God.'**

Second Reading: John 1: 1-14

'In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ²He was in the beginning with God. ³All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being.

What has come into being ⁴in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. ⁵The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it...

¹⁰He was in the world, and the world came into being through him; yet the world did not know him. ¹¹He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him. ¹²But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God, ¹³who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God. ¹⁴And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth ...'

Response - All: **'And the Word became Flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory.'**

Take some moments for silent reflection

Video Reflection: 'Everything is Connected'

Click on link below to play the video

<https://www.mercyworld.org/about/our-initiatives/mgp-themes/segment-2/reflective-prayer-degradation-of-earth>



You may like to share your reflections after watching the video

Prayer of St Francis

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

*"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' N. 87)*

Sign of Peace and Closing Song

Grateful for the gift of all creation and concerned for the challenges we face as a community, we offer each other a sign of peace and support (*either virtually or by a distanced gesture*) as we listen to or join with the song 'The Prayer' from the Global Citizen event of world-wide support during the Covid-19 Pandemic.

('The Prayer' by Celine Dion, Andrea Bocelli, Lady Gaga, John Legend and Lang Lang. Performed during '**One World:Together At Home**' on April 18 2020).

Click on link below for Video and Song of 'The Prayer'
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SYJCYr1I-Sk>

Blessing

Go now in peace to share the abundance of God's Spirit of mercy, love and healing for the entire Earth Community!

Acknowledgement: Consultant for Prayer Ritual: Sr Anne McMillan RSM, (ISMAPNG).