

SEASON OF CREATION

WEB OF LIFE

01 SEPTEMBER - 04 OCTOBER 2019



This booklet is a resource which we invite you to enjoy over the next five weeks. Each week has its own focus – oceans, plants, animals, land and peoples, and cosmos. You may choose to use all or part of the prayer reflection. You may choose to use it for personal reflection or in small groups or in community. Together let us read this precious book from God whose letters are the multitude of created things!

Introduction

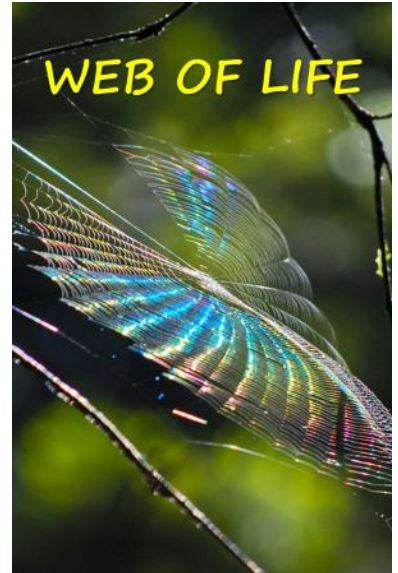
The Season of Creation begins on September 1, the Day of Prayer for Creation, and ends on October 4, the feast day of St. Francis. The suggested theme for this year is “the web of life.” In his *Laudato Si’*, Pope Francis writes, quoting the Canadian and Japanese bishops:

God has written a precious book whose letters are the multitude of created things. From panoramic vistas to the tiniest living form, nature is a constant source of wonder and awe... Alongside revelation in sacred Scripture, there is a divine manifestation in the blaze of the sun and the fall of night.

Laudato Si” #85

During the next five weeks, we will celebrate this beautiful time of the year, bringing together summer and autumn in the northern hemisphere, and winter and spring in the southern hemisphere. Wendell Berry, in a poignant poem entitled “The Wisdom to Survive,” reminds us why this celebration is so important:

If we have the wisdom to survive, to stand like slow-growing trees on a ruined place,
renewing, enriching it,
If we will make our seasons welcome here, asking not too much of earth or of heaven,
Then a long time after we are dead, the lives our lives prepare will live here,
Their houses strongly placed upon the valley sides,
fields and gardens rich in the windows.
The river will run clear as we will never know it. And over it, birdsong like a canopy.
On the levels of the hills will be green meadows, stock bells in noon shade.
On the steeps where greed and ignorance cut down the old forest,
An old forest will stand, its rich leaf-fall drifting on its roots.
The veins of forgotten springs will have opened. Families will be singing in the fields.
In their voices they will hear a music risen out of the ground.
They will take nothing from the ground they will not return,
whatever the grief at parting.
Memory, native to this valley, will spread over it like a grove,
and memory will grow into legend, legend into song, song into sacrament.
The abundance of this place, the songs of its people and its birds,
will be health and wisdom and indwelling light.
This is no impossible dream. Its hardship is its possibility.



Season of Creation ~ Week One

Web of Life: Oceans and Seas



God called the dry land Earth, and the waters
that were gathered together God called Seas.
And God saw that it was good.

Genesis 1:10



INTRODUCTION

This week we celebrate oceans and seas! The oceans, teeming with sea life, vibrant coral communities and vast beauty are part of God's treasured creation. We receive the ocean's bounty on our tables and experience the ocean's beauty all around us.

The ocean's influence is felt by every living thing on earth - transportation, stabilization of climate, source of food, source of oxygen, opportunities for recreational activities and more. The oceans cover more than 70% of our planet.



Our oceans are at risk threatened by coastal development, pollution, overfishing, tourism and a host of other human endeavors. For generations the living oceans have been exploited as a resource, not honored as one of God's gifts!

GATHERING HYMN

Let Me Fish of Cape St. Mary's

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5O-ifmDaUjg>

"Let me take it, when my dory fails to make it."

OPENING PRAYER

How wonderful, O Lord, are the works of your hands!

The heavens declare your glory,

The arch of sky displays your handwork.

In your love you have given us the power

To behold the beauty of your world

Robed in its splendour.

The sun and the stars, the valleys and hills, the rivers and lakes all disclose your presence.

The roaring breakers of the sea tell of your awesome might;

The beasts of the field and the birds of the air bespeak your wondrous will.

In your goodness you have made us able to hear

The music of the world.

The voices of loved ones reveal to us that you are in our midst.

The Divine voice sings through all creation!

Jewish Prayer

READINGS

And behold, there arose a great storm on the sea, so that the boat was being covered with the waves; but Jesus Himself was asleep. And they came to Him and woke Him, saying, "Save us, Lord; we are perishing!" He said to them, "Why are you afraid, you men of little faith?" Then He got up and rebuked the winds and the sea, and it became perfectly calm. *Matthew 8:24-26*

God created the great sea monsters and every living creature that moves, with which the waters swarmed after their kind, and every winged bird after its kind; and God saw that it was good. *Genesis 1:21*



Yonder is the sea, great and wide, creeping things innumerable are there, living things both small and great. There go the ships, and Leviathan that you formed to sport in it.

Psalms 104: 25-26

We must try to be like those rivers which enter into the sea without losing any of the sweetness of the water. *Catherine McAuley, The Spirit of the Institute*

The corporal and spiritual works of mercy which draw religious from a life of contemplation, so far from separating them from the love of God, unite them much more closely to Him and render them more valuable in His holy service. *Catherine McAuley, The Spirit of the Institute*

"I really don't know why it is that all of us are so committed to the sea, except I think it's because in addition to the fact that the sea changes, and the light changes, and ships change, it's because we all came from the sea. And it is an interesting biological fact that all of us have in our veins the exact same percentage of salt in our blood that exists in the ocean, and, therefore, we have salt in our blood, in our sweat, in our tears. We are tied to the ocean. And when we go back to the sea - whether it is to sail or to watch it - we are going back from whence we came.

John F. Kennedy

Someday, after mastering the winds, the waves, the tides and gravity, we shall harness for God the energies of love, and then, for a second time in the history of the world, man will have discovered fire. *Teilhard de Chardin*

Sea Gulls

For one carved instant as they flew,
The language had no simile —
Silver, crystal, ivory
Were tarnished. Etched upon the horizon blue,
The frieze must go unchallenged, for the lift
And carriage of the wings would stain the drift
Of stars against a tropic indigo
Or dull the parable of snow.

Now settling one by one
Within green hollows or where curled
Crests caught the spectrum from the sun,
A thousand wings are furled.
No clay-born lilies of the world
Could blow as free
As those wild orchids of the sea.

E. J. Pratt



REFLECTION

Oceans not only contain the bulk of our planet's water supply, but also most of the immense variety of living creatures, many of them still unknown to us and threatened for various reasons. What is more, marine life in rivers, lakes, seas and oceans, which feeds a great part of the world's population, is affected by uncontrolled fishing, leading to a drastic depletion of certain species. Selective forms of fishing which discard much of what they collect continue unabated. Particularly threatened are marine organisms which we tend to overlook, like some forms of plankton; they represent a significant element in the ocean food chain, and species used for our food ultimately depend on them.

In tropical and subtropical seas, we find coral reefs comparable to the great forests on dry land, for they shelter approximately a million species, including fish, crabs, molluscs, sponges and algae. Many of the world's coral reefs are already barren or in a state of constant decline. "Who turned the wonderworld of the seas into underwater cemeteries bereft of colour and life?" This phenomenon is due largely to pollution which reaches the sea as the result of deforestation, agricultural monocultures, industrial waste and destructive fishing methods, especially those using cyanide and dynamite. It is aggravated by the rise in temperature of the oceans. All of this helps us to see that every intervention in nature can have consequences which are not immediately evident, and

that certain ways of exploiting resources prove costly in terms of degradation which ultimately reaches the ocean bed itself.

Laudato Si' #40-41

Take a walk along a drain, stream, river, estuary or beach (or around your own property) Notice pollution and pick up rubbish. Study the rubbish (in particular, the plastics) you pick up... What type of plastics are they? Can all the different types of plastics be recycled? Does your area recycle its own plastic waste ...if so where/how? If not? Where/who does it go to and why? What is your country's position on single-use plastics (primarily associated with medical waste)? Do they have a policy in appropriate and environmentally friendly waste disposal of single use plastics? What is your country's position on micro plastics (many countries are now banning micro plastics)?

From your walk, draw or take pictures. Write a poem, short story or reflection on what you discover on your journey.

Prayer

Creator God, please forgive us as we throw that straw on the ground.

Please forgive us as we ignore the plastic bag blowing around.

Please forgive us as we watch in horror of the giant plastic island gyres growing out to sea.

Please forgive us as we say how did this come to be.

Thank you, God, for collaboration.

... For providing us with the capacity to see a new creation in all forms in me and you.

... Thank you for tree-planting days and slow-food days.

... Thank you for beach clean-up days and clean stream days

... Thank you for giving me voice to air my concern to councillors on lack of action

... Thank you for marches and, rallies and community days

... Thank you, God, for enabling me to action and our choices to make change.

Creator God, fill us with the sound of seagulls singing out at sea... Fill us with the sound of waves talking to the wind... Fill us with the sound of oohs and ahhs of children, the delight and wonder of life in rock-pools, abundant and clear... Fill us with the sound, of laughter and community of families on the beach... Create in us the capacity...to look at ourselves and our choices...to make change. Create in us the capacity....to ensure we don't have silent beaches. Amen.

Adapted from a Reflection Series prepared by Mercy Global Action at the United Nations

[https://www.mercyworld.org/uploads/ckbl/files/2017/Ocean Reflection Complete Series.pdf](https://www.mercyworld.org/uploads/ckbl/files/2017/Ocean%20Reflection%20Complete%20Series.pdf)

Season of Creation ~~ Week Two

Web of Life:

Flowers, Plants, Trees, Gardens



Introduction:

This week we reflect and give praise for flowers, plant, trees and gardens in the Web of Creation. All are very important to our global ecosystem and form the bottom of our food chain, providing energy to all other organisms. They also act as homes for other animals and regulate mineral content, soil erosion and water availability in the environment. Their importance in nature is everywhere—they can feed insects, birds, animals and humans; provide natural medicines for humans and some animals; and aid in a plant's reproduction. Without flowers, plants, trees and gardens the world we live in would be a much duller and darker place.

For the Beauty of the Earth 3:35 Minutes

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pHFu753X-do>



Opening prayer

O God among the buried seeds, wildflowers, gardens and trees,
I am filled with delight of the scents and brilliant colors that spring forth.
Help me to become mindful of all things that blossom in silent witness to you,
in making my world a garden.

Beautiful Forest Flowers 7:10 minutes

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wZz-xKKAQ08>

Readings:

God spoke: “Earth, green up! Grow all varieties of seed-bearing plants, every sort of fruit-bearing tree”
And there it was. Earth produced green seed-bearing plants, all varieties and fruit-bearing trees of all sorts.
God saw that it was good. It was evening, it was morning the third day.



Genesis 1:11-12

Awake, north wind come, wind of the south!
Breathe over my garden to spread its sweet smell around.
Let my love come into the garden,
let all taste its most exquisite fruits.

Song of Songs 4:16

You will be like a tree,
firmly planted by streams of water.
You will yield your fruit in season;
your leaves will not wither.
And whatever you do will prosper.

Psalms 1:3

Alaska Rainforest Flower Power 4:00 minutes
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tMT_MMp4BFs

Catherine achieved a measure of freedom to attend Mass and pursue her Catholicism, as she found the saving Cross in the windowpanes and door-panels of the house and in the intersecting branches of the trees on the lawns. It was here that *‘the humbled, agonising, abandoned Christ’* became “MY Christ”.

“McAuley, Prophet of Mercy” - *Angela Bolster RSM p.2*



Prayer is a plant, the seed of which is sown in the heart of every Christian, but its growth depends on the care we take to nourish it. If neglected, it will die. If nourished by constant practice, it will blossom and produce fruit in abundance.

Catherine McAuley, *Retreat Instructions*, p.90

The garden orchards, and cornfields of Coolock, the yews, hazel trees, and heather, must have been a delight to Catherine McAuley. Years later, she urged a sickly friend in Birr: “I hope you have the charity to eat some fresh fruit off the trees, walking in the garden – as that is the way fruit is most beneficial to delicate constitutions” *The Path of Mercy – Mary C. Sullivan p.30*

The replacement of virgin forest with plantations of trees, usually monocultures, is rarely adequately analyzed. Yet this can seriously compromise a biodiversity which the new species being introduced does not accommodate.

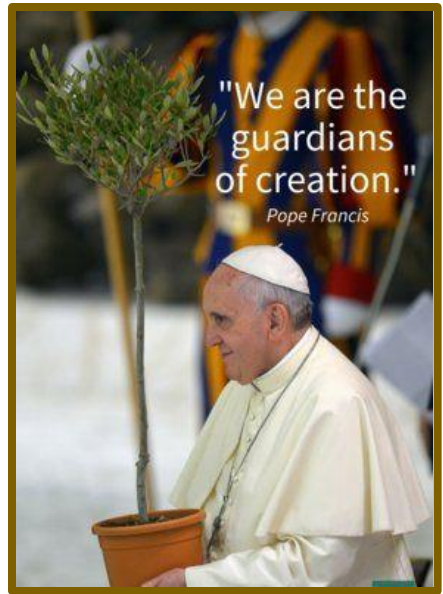
Similarly, wetlands converted into cultivated land lose the enormous biodiversity which they formerly hosted.

In some coastal areas the disappearance of ecosystems sustained by mangrove swamps is a source of serious concern.

So many forests, all cut, that have become land ... that can no longer give life. This is our sin, exploiting the Earth and not allowing her to give her what she has within her.

Laudato Sí #39

Pictures of Nature and Music – 9:30 minutes
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k1oXtpCRRAM>



Going to the mountains is going home.
One touch of nature makes the whole world kin.
In every walk with nature one receives far more than he/she seeks.
The world is big and I want to have a look before it gets dark.
Between every two pine trees there is a door leading to a new way of life.
Come to the woods for here is rest. There is no repose than that of a green deep woods.
Here grow the wallflower and the violet. The squirrel will come and sit upon your knee,
the logcock will wake you in the morning.
Sleep in forgetfulness of all ill. Of all the upness accessible to mortals,
there is no upness comparable to mountains.
The mountains are calling and I must go.

John Muir



Blessing Litany

We call upon our planet home, the earth, with its beautiful depths and soaring heights, its vitality and abundance of life and together we ask that it: *Teach us and show us the way.*

We call upon the mountains, the high green valleys and meadows filled with wild flowers, the wind, rain and snow, the air filled with vast silence and we ask that they: *Teach us and show us the way.*

We call upon the waters that rim the earth, horizon to horizon, that flow in our rivers, ponds, streams, and oceans that fall upon our gardens and fields, and ask that they: *Teach us and show us the way.*



We call upon the land which grows our food, the nurturing soil, the fertile fields, the abundant gardens and wild flowers, and we ask that they: *Teach us and show us the way.*

We call upon the forests, the great trees reaching strongly to the sky with earth in their roots and the heavens in their branches, the fir, maple, pine and cedar, and we ask them to: *Teach us and show us the way.*

We call upon the creatures of the fields and forests; the caribou, bears, eagles and birds, those of the sea; the great whales, salmon and fish of our northeast home, and we ask them to: *Teach us and show us the way.*

We call upon those who have walked and lived on this earth, our mothers and fathers before us, those who dreamed the best for future generations and upon whose lives our lives are built, and with thanksgiving, we call upon them to: *Teach us and show us the way.*

We call upon all we hold most sacred, the presence and power of our creator God who flows throughout the entire universe ... to be with us to: *Teach us and show us the way.*

Adapted from Chinook Blessing Litany, Shannon M.D. Smith

Closing Prayer The Prayer Tree

The tree sends its roots beneath the surface,
Seeking nourishment in the dark soil:
the rich “broken down” matter of life.

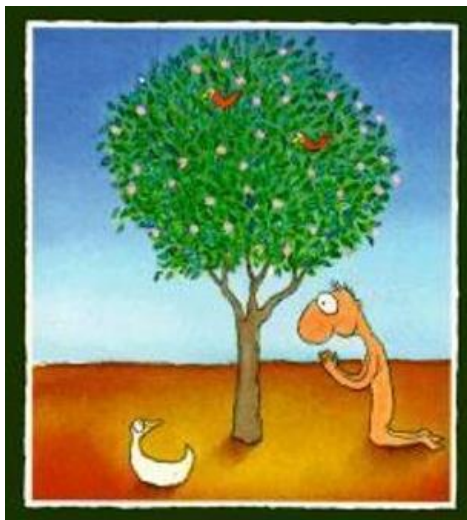
As they reach down and search, the roots hold the tree firmly to the earth.
Thus, held and nourished, the tree grows upward into the light,
drinking the sun and the air and expressing its truth:
its branches and foliage, its flowers and fruit.

Life swarms around and into it. Birds and insects teem within its embrace,
carrying pollen and seeds. They nest and breed and sing and buzz.
They glorify creation.

The tree changes as it grows. It is torn by wind and lightning, scarred by frost
and fire. Branches die and new ones emerge. Its roots reach down into the darkness;
still its branches flow with sap and reach upward and outward into the world.

The person kneels to contemplate a tree
and the person is learning how to pray. Amen

Michael Leunig



Season of Creation ~~ Week Three

Web of Life: Creatures of the Land

Wild and Domestic



Opening Hymn: O God, Your Creatures Fill the Earth

(Melody: "I Sing the Mighty Power of God") Carolyn Winfrey Gillette

O God, your creatures fill the earth with wonder and delight,
And every living thing has worth and beauty in your sight.
So playful dolphins dance and swim; Your sheep bow down and graze.
Your songbirds share a morning hymn; To offer you their praise.

You made the pets we welcome in – They're wondrous blessings, too.
With paws and whiskers, wings and fins, they offer praise to you.
O Lord, you call us to embrace these creatures in our care.
May we show kindness, love and grace to all pets everywhere.

Leader: Our help is in the name of the Lord.

All: Who made heaven and earth.

Opening Prayer:

Lord God, Who made the earth and every living creature, help us to treat with compassion the animals entrusted to our care, that they may not suffer from our neglect nor become victims of any cruelty; and grant that in caring for them we may find a deeper understanding of Your love for creation, through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen

"You have only to ask the cattle, for them to instruct you, and the birds of the sky, for then to inform you. The creeping things of earth will give you lessons, and the fish of the sea provide you an explanation: there is not one such creature but will know that the hand of God has arranged things like this! In God's hand is the soul of every living thing And the breath of every human being!"

Job 12:7-10



God spoke: "Swarm Ocean with fish and all sea life! Birds fly through the sky over Earth! "God created the huge whales, all the swarm of life in the waters. And every kind and species of flying birds. God saw that it was good. God blessed them: Prosper! Reproduce! Fill Ocean! Birds, reproduce on Earth!" It was evening, it was morning – Day Five. God spoke: "Earth, generate life! Every sort and kind: cattle and reptiles and wild animals – all kinds." And there it was: wild animals of every kind, Cattle of all kinds, every sort of reptile and bug. God saw that it was good.

Genesis 1: 20-23 (*The Message version*)

O Lord, how manifold are your works!
In wisdom you have made them all; the
earth is full of your creatures.
They all look to you to give them food in due
season;
when you give it to them, they gather it up;
when you open your hand,
they are filled with good things.

Psalm 104: 24, 27-31



Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=recX1G5vB3A> (8:27) Music and animals pictures

Reading: Among the many things God spoke to them were these words that he added: My brothers, birds, you should praise your Creator very much and always love him; he gave you feathers to clothe you, wings so that you can fly, and whatever else was necessary for you. God made you noble among his creatures, and gave you a home in the purity of the air; though you neither sow nor reap, God nevertheless protects and governs you without any solicitude on your part.

Thomas de Celano, "St. Francis of Assisi"

Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UfWac4yxshA> Bird singing (2:25)

It is not enough, however, to think of different species merely as potential "resources" to be exploited, while overlooking the fact that they have value in themselves. 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 forever. 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.

Laudato Si' #33

Because all creatures are connected, each must be cherished with love and respect, for all of us as living creatures are dependent on one another. Each area is responsible for the care of this family.

Laudato Si' #42

The awareness that each creature reflects something of God and has a message to convey to us, and the security that Christ has taken unto himself this material world and now, risen, is intimately present to each being, surrounding it with his affection and penetrating it with his light. Then too, there is recognition that God created the world, writing into it an order and a dynamism that human beings have no right to ignore. We read in the gospels that Jesus says of the birds of the air that "not one of them is forgotten before God" (Lk. 12:6). How then can we possibly mistreat them or cause them harm? I ask all Christians to recognize and to live fully this dimension of their conversion. May the power and the light of the grace that we have received also be evident in our relationship to other creatures and to the world around us. In this way, we will help nurture that sublime fraternity with all creation which Saint Francis of Assisi so radiantly embodied.

Laudato Si' #221

Video:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YeWalmLpR-4> Birds and animals (10:31)

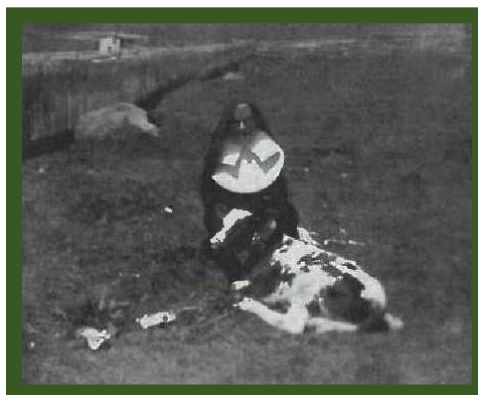
The Lord and Master of our House and Home is a faithful provider. Let us never desire more than enough he will give that and a blessing.

Catherine McAuley to Teresa Purcell, 1841

Such is the mysterious Providence of God... "His ways are not our ways – nor His thoughts like our thoughts (Isaiah 55:8).

Catherine McAuley to Catherine Leahy, 1840

As the Sisters of Mercy Congregation spread throughout Newfoundland we, too, looked to the providence of God in the early years as we took care of the animals in our beloved mission in St. Lawrence, Placentia Bay, so evident in this photograph!



Blessing of the Animals:

You who created them and called them good:
Bless again these creatures who come to us as a blessing
fashioned of fur and feather or fin,
formed of flesh that breathes with Your own breath,
that You have made from sheer delight,
that You have given in dazzling variety.

Bless them who curl themselves around our hearts,
who twine themselves through our days,
who companion us in our labor, who call us to come and play.
Bless them who will never be entirely tamed
and so remind us that You love what is wild, that
You rejoice in what lives close to the earth,
that Your heart beats in the heart of these creatures
You have entrusted to our care.



Jan Richardson

Hymn: O God, Your Creatures Fill the Earth

(Melody: "I Sing the Mighty Power of God")

You made creatures on each farm; you know the things they need.
May they grow healthy, safe from harm, and safe from human greed.
Just as a shepherd loves the sheep, you know their joy, their pain.
Lord, bless the animals we keep; may all farms be humane.

Your creatures live in every land; they fill the sky and sea.
O Lord, you give us your command to love them tenderly.
We're called to have dominion here – to care for them always.
By loving creatures, you hold dear, we offer you our praise.

Carolyn Winfrey Gillette

Season of Creation ~~ Week Four

Web of Life: Lands



*For the Lord your God is bringing you
into a good land . . . Deuteronomy 8:7*



OPENING HYMN

O God of all the many lands, we praise you joyfully
For this fair land, our Canada, a country wide and free:
For mountain heights and northern lights,
For prairie, lake and sea,
In gratitude for all these gifts In their great majesty.
We thank you that from many lands

With varied gifts we came,
To pledge our love and loyalty where scarlet maples
flame.
May justice here belong to all, and may our nation play
Its rightful role in fost'ring peace, the peace for which we pray.
May we be worthy of our land and seek the common good,
Which shapes a future destiny In world and neighborhood.
May this fair land, our Canada, your own dominion be.
Your people bless abundantly With faith from sea to sea.

Source: Catholic Book of Worship III #594



OPENING PRAYER

Lord, the air smells good today,
straight from the mysteries
within the inner courts of God.
Grace like new clothes thrown
across the garden, free medicine for
everybody.
The trees in their prayer, the birds in
praise, the first blue violets kneeling.
Whatever came from Being is caught up
in being, drunkenly
forgetting the way back.

Rumi



READINGS

For the Lord your God is bringing you into a good land, a land with flowing streams, with springs and underground waters welling up in valleys and hills, a land of wheat and barley, of vines and fig trees and pomegranates, a land of olive trees and honey, a land where you may eat bread

without scarcity, where you will lack nothing, a land whose stones are iron and from whose hills you may mine copper. You shall eat your fill and bless the Lord your God for the good land that he has given you.

Deuteronomy 8:7-10

There has been a most Providential Guidance which the want of prudence, vigilance, or judgement has not impeded, and it is here that we can most clearly see the designs of God.

Catherine McAuley

How quietly the great God does all His mighty works! Darkness is spread over us, and light breaks in again, and there is no noise of drawing curtains or closing shutters.

Catherine McAuley

Many of the indigenous peoples in the Peruvian Amazon who live in communal lands still carry out activities according to traditional criteria. These include areas that are considered sacred, are meant for production, recreation, and conservation, and zones dedicated to the cultivation of medicinal plants. However, projects deemed of "national interest," such as infrastructure and hydro-energy ventures, and those linked to the unsustainable extraction of natural resources such as timber, minerals and hydrocarbons put increasing pressure on those lands. Additional strain can come from the agricultural expansion that growing markets such as coffee, cocoa, palm oil, and illegal coca demand.

All those activities could lead to unprecedented deforestation as well as changes in land use that jeopardize the future of the basin's wilderness and the people and species that have lived there in harmony for centuries. Some estimates predict that forests could be reduced by almost 50% over the next 25 years. In addition to the severe impacts on nature, the degradation of the forests would bring suffering to indigenous communities who rely on them for food, protection against incursions and forced displacement, health, and maintenance of traditions and customs.

The Nature Conservancy



The commandment described in Leviticus 25:1-7 mandates letting the land owned by Jews in their own country lie fallow every seventh year. The resemblance to Shabbat, the weekly Sabbath when no work is done, is more than coincidental: The seventh year of “release” (shemitah) is called a “Sabbath of the land.”



But it is more than that, for in an agricultural society, a Sabbath of the land is also a year-long sabbatical for most of the populace. Indeed, the Biblical shemitah is a stirring example of an entire society choosing to live at a significantly lower material standard of living for a year in order to devote itself to more spiritual pursuits than the daily grind. The vision is more revolutionary still, with its radical egalitarian thrust: All the produce of the land that grows by itself must be free to all (even animals have equal access), and all loans are to be forgiven, allowing people sunk in debt an opportunity to start over.

“The People & the Book”, The Jerusalem Report, May 21, 2001

REFLECTIVE PRAYER

Read and Ponder:

Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all their multitude. And on the seventh day God finished the work that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all the work that he had done. So God blessed the seventh day and hallowed it, because on it God rested from all the work that he had done in creation.

Genesis 2:1-3

Take Action:

The Genesis story links God with the acts of creating and resting; it links all of creation — the natural environment and humankind — with a time for holiness. Today take a walk if you are able (alternatively imagine a walk in your community) and look at the creation around you. Think about how it appears in the different seasons. When and where are you most aware of the presence, or the absence, of the rhythm of creating and resting? Stop for a Sabbath moment to focus on one marvelous detail of creation and offer praise and thanksgiving to God the Creator in prayer. When you return indoors, quietly reflect on your walk. What do you want to pray about? We pray to express praise, thanksgiving, repentance, petitions and laments. Record

words or symbols in a notebook to offer in prayer. Ask God to open your heart and mind to creation's needs in the coming days and weeks.

Cheryl Bradbee

Pray:

Our Creator, Sustainer, and Redeemer,
Today, we come together with You, with one another,
and with Your larger family of creation
and ask that you bless:

- All that grows in the land –
that they may continue to grow as blessed
members of Your intricate family of creation
that they may remind all lives they touch of Your
sustaining presence.
- Our hands –
that they may know their strengths and limitations
that they may lovingly touch other members of creation as kin.
- Our hearts –
that they may be open to Your presence in this place, in this community of life
that they be renewed through this work to and render back to you expressions of justice
and joy.
- May this be so! Amen!

Adapted from Prayer for Restorative Work Adapted from Tanya Marcovna Barnett, Earth Ministry.

Closing Reflection: Wildflowers of Newfoundland and Labrador Anita McCann

Video (Ctrl + click) <https://vimeo.com/352301100/5be5490b22>



Season of Creation ~~ Week Five

Web of Life: Cosmos



The Helix or "Eye of God" Nebula

Dance, creation, dance!
Dance with cosmic energy!

Introduction:

We come now to the last week of the Season of Creation for this year. Within the theme, the *Web of Life*, we have reflected on and celebrated oceans and ocean creatures, animals and birds, plants, and the land and people of the land. All seems to come together in the delightful quotation from Elizabeth Johnson, csj, “A flourishing humanity on a thriving Earth in an evolving universe all together filled with the glory of God.”

This last week we reflect on the cosmos which encompasses the entire universe, every dimension of time and space, spiritual and material. The cosmos is both the glittering galaxies that humans have begun to explore and distant domains far beyond our imagination. Indeed, there are unknown domains deep within each minute molecule that we have yet to comprehend. All creation is one sacred cosmos, a spiritual universe filled with God’s presence. The cosmic web is the vast network formed by all the galaxies and the web-like strands linking them together. This week we rejoice in this cosmic web, this sacred web.

GATHERING HYMN: *We Dance for Life* [Jan Novotka]

Go to youtube at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RwUICwnaAIQ>

We hunger, we thirst for the Holy, the Holy One.

All life is sacred – such energy, such mystery. We are one.

We gather together as one family, as one Earth.

We are one in communion, on universe, heaven and Earth. We are one.

We stand as one, full of life, full of love.

In this holy garden, we dance for life, the sacred web. We are one.

WELCOME TO THE CIRCLE OF PRAYER

One: Risen Christ

All: Your presence fills the cosmos.

One: Cosmic Christ

**All: Your presence pulses through all galactic space
across light years of time.**

One: Living Christ

All: In this nano-second we call ‘now’, in this nano-space we call ‘here’

One: We invite the cosmos to worship with us.

**All: We invite glittering galaxies high in the sky to radiate
the splendour of God’s presence.**

One: We call distant domains of space to celebrate with us.

**All: We invite nebula, nova and black holes to thank God
for their fascinating formation.**

One: We summon that piece of stardust called Earth,
**All: To pulse with the rhythm of God's presence
and celebrate God's glory in this planet garden.**

One: We invite millions of living species to dance with life,
**All: The turtle, the toad and the elephant, the earthworm,
the ant and the dragonfly.**

One: We invite every creature in the web of creation
**All: To consciously connect with others
in this community called the cosmos.**

One: Dance, creation, dance!
All: Dance with cosmic energy!

Adapted from a worship service on the seasonofcreation.com website

READINGS:

In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters. ³Then God said, 'Let there be light'; and there was light.
Gen 1:1-2



The LORD created me. Woman
Wisdom, at the beginning, the
first of God's acts of long ago.
Ages ago I was set up, at the
first, before the beginning of the
earth. When there were no depths I was brought forth, when there were no springs abounding
with water. Before the mountains had been shaped, before the hills, I was brought forth — when
God had not yet made earth and fields, or the world's first bits of soil. When God established
the heavens, I was there, when God drew a circle on the face of the deep, when God made firm
the skies above, when God established the fountains of the deep, when God assigned to the sea
its limit, so that the waters might not transgress God's command, when God marked out the
foundations of the earth, then I was beside God, like a master worker; and I was daily God's
delight, rejoicing before God always, rejoicing in God's inhabited world and delighting in the
human race.

Prov 8:22-31

Christ is the image of the invisible God, the first born of all creation.

Col 1:15

O Holy Spirit, you are the mighty way in which everything that is in the heavens, on the earth, and under the earth, is penetrated with connectedness, penetrated with relatedness.

Hildegard

God's first "idea" was to become manifest – to pour out divine, infinite love into finite visible forms. The "First Flaring Forth" (Big Bang) is now our scientific name for that first idea; and "Christ" is our theological name. Both are about love and beauty exploding outward in all direction. Creation is indeed the Body of God!

Richard Rohr

Mercy is the very heartbeat of God resonant in creation; the warmth that pulses through all things as the divine Mystery flows out into created form.

Cynthia Bourgeault

RESPONSE

Statement of Belief

We believe that God creates all things, renews all things and celebrates all things.

We believe Earth is a sanctuary, a sacred planet filled with God's presence,
a home for us to share with our kin.

We believe that God became flesh and blood, became a piece of Earth,
a human being called Jesus Christ, who lived and breathed and spoke among us,
suffered and died on a cross, for all human beings and for all creation.

We believe that the risen Jesus is the Christ at the core of creation
reconciling all things to God, renewing all creation and filling the cosmos.

We believe the Spirit renews life in creation groans in empathy with a suffering creation,
and waits with us for the rebirth of creation.

We believe that with Christ we will rise and with Christ we will celebrate a new creation.

***The Great Turning* [Christine Fry]**

You've asked me to tell you of the Great Turning

Of how we saved the world from disaster.

The answer is both simple and complex. We turned.

For hundreds of years we had turned away as life on earth grew more precarious.

We turned away from the homeless men

on the streets, the stench from the river, the children orphaned in Syria.

We turned away because that was what we had been taught.

To turn away, from our pain, from the hurt in another's eyes.

Yet, on one of those days, someone did turn. Turned to face the pain.

Turned to face the stranger. Turned to look at the smouldering world
and the hatred seething in too many eyes.

Turned to face himself, herself. And then another turned. And another. And another.

And as they wept, they took each other's hands.

As the people turned, they began to spin

Reweaving the web of life, mending the shocking tears,

Knitting it back together with the colours of the earth,

Sewing on tiny mirrors so the beauty of each person, each creature,
each plant, each life might be seen and respected.

And as the people turned, as they spun like the earth through the universe,

The web wrapped around them like a soft baby blanket

Making it clear all were loved, nothing separate.

As this love reached into every crack and crevice,

the people began to wake and wonder,

To breath and give thanks, to celebrate together. And so the world was saved,
but only as long as you, too, sweet one, remember to turn.

May the Spirit of God, who is the cosmic power
above all and in all and through all,
fill us with an awareness of Christ's presence
permeating the cosmos and pulsing within us.
Let us go in peace! Serving Christ and loving Earth!

Conclusion

As we bring our celebration of the Season of Creation to an end on this feast day of St. Francis of Assisi, we hear resounding in our hearts the Martyr Haugen version of Francis' *Canticle of the Sun*:

The heavens are telling the glory of God,
And all creation is shouting for joy!
Come, dance in the forest, come, play in the field,
And sing, sing to the glory of the Lord!

In this October 2019, we have yet another reason to rejoice. Three days from now, the Synod of Bishops will begin their assembly in Rome entitled: *Amazonia: New Paths for the Church and for an Integral Ecology*. The Synod will begin on October 6 and end on October 27. Amazonia, at the heart of South America, encompasses a region of 7.8 million square kilometres. It includes territory that belongs to nine different nations: Brazil, Bolivia, Peru, Ecuador, Colombia, Venezuela, Guyana, Suriname and French Guyana. Its 5.3 million square kilometre rainforest is the largest in the world and is an irreplaceable source of fresh water, oxygen and biodiversity for the planet.

In calling this special Synod on the Amazon, Pope Francis said: "New paths for evangelization must be designed for and with the People of God who live in this region: inhabitants of communities and rural areas, of cities and large metropolises, people who live on river banks, migrants and displaced persons, and especially for and with indigenous peoples." The preamble to the



preparatory document goes on to say: "The Special Synod's reflections transcend the strictly ecclesial-Amazonian sphere, because they focus on the universal Church, as well as on the future of the entire planet. We begin with a specific geographical area in order to build a bridge to the other important biomes of our world: the Congo basin, the Mesoamerican Biological Corridor, the tropical forests of the Asia Pacific region, and the Guarani Aquifer, among others."

We are privileged as a Congregation to have a special link to this Synod because of our presence in Peru for fifty-eight years and because four of our Sisters are Peruvian born. The working document of the Synod calls all of us to participate in this new and energizing moment in our Church: "The entire People of God, along with their bishops, priests, religious men and women, and religious and lay missionaries, are called to enter this new ecclesial

journey with an open heart. All are called to live together with their communities and to commit themselves to the defense of their lives, loving them and their cultures. Indigenous missionaries, as well as those who come from outside, should cultivate a spirituality of contemplation and thankfulness, opening their hearts and seeing the Amazonian and indigenous peoples with the eyes of God.”

The beautiful logo for the Synod was designed by the Brazilian artist Aurélio Fred and has contained within it a leaf, the green of the forest, an indigenous basket, the cross, a river and the Holy Spirit.

As the Synod unfolds, the Leadership Team will send electronically each day to all the Sisters and Associates a simple reflection and update on the unfolding of the Synod. In the ending of the Season of Creation celebrations and the beginning of the Special Synod, we are seeing yet another way of singing and dancing the *Canticle of the Sun*, “The heavens are telling the glory of God, and all creation is shouting for joy!”

