



CARE FOR THE EARTH

"All of us can cooperate as instruments of God for the care of creation, each according to his or her own culture, experience, involvements and talents" ("Laudato Si", #14).

OPENING PRAYER

Loving God, You fashioned us in Your own image and likeness. You call us to be like your Son Jesus, who did all things for the love of You. As we dare to break through the gates, go towards, and encounter those in need, keep us open to Your loving plan and gracious will. Help us to recognize Your Son Jesus in everything. Strengthen our awareness of the treasures you have given us - the gifts of the earth in water, land, air, and other creatures. We gather now in humble praise and thanksgiving of these gifts and ask for the courage to care for them well. As we share our reflections, open our hearts to hear and notice Your handiwork in new and surprising ways. Amen.

EXCERPTS FROM LAUDATO SI

In silence, with soft instrumental music in the background or read aloud slowly, take a moment to consider these words.

Excerpt #1

If someone has not learned to stop and admire something beautiful, we should not be surprised if he or she treats everything as an object to be used and abused without scruple. If we want to bring about deep change, we need to realize that certain mindsets really do influence our behaviour. Our efforts at education will be inadequate and ineffectual unless we strive to promote a new way of thinking about human beings, life, society and our relationship with nature. Otherwise, the paradigm of consumerism will continue to advance, with the help of the media and the highly effective workings of the market...(215)

Excerpt #2

Yet this education, aimed at creating an "ecological citizenship", is at times limited to providing information, and fails to instill good habits. The existence of laws and regulations is insufficient in the long run to curb bad conduct, even when effective means of enforcement are present. If the laws are to bring about significant, long-lasting effects, the majority of the members of society must be adequately motivated to accept them, and personally transformed to respond. Only by cultivating sound virtues will people be able to make a selfless ecological commitment. A person who could afford to spend and consume more but regularly uses less heating and wears warmer clothes, shows the kind of convictions and attitudes which help to protect the environment. There is a nobility in the duty to care for creation through little daily actions, and it is wonderful how education can bring about real changes in lifestyle. Education in environmental responsibility can encourage ways of acting which directly and significantly affect the world around us, such as avoiding the use of plastic and paper, reducing water consumption, separating refuse, cooking only what can reasonably be consumed, showing care for other living beings, using public transport or car-pooling, planting trees, turning off unnecessary lights, or any number of other practices. All of these reflect a generous and worthy creativity which brings out the best in human beings. Reusing something instead of immediately discarding it, when done for the right reasons, can be an act of love which expresses our own dignity....We must not think that these efforts are not going to change the world....(211)

WHAT CAPTURES YOU?

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER AND SHARING

- What environmental issue is closest to my heart at this time?
- What did the passages on the previous page highlight for me with regard to care of the earth?
- What small thing am I trying to do to become more aware of what affects our care of the earth: spending habits, consumption, waste?
- Is there anything in the news I've read or seen lately that inspires a broadening of conscience, challenges a perspective, or jolts my faith?

- Share a way that *your ministry* is responding to systemic issues that affect care of the earth.
- Share a way that *your house* is responding to systemic issues that affect care of the earth.
- Tell the story of a time when you encountered a creative response to caring for the earth.
- Recall an encounter that changed your mind or broadened your perspective.

**With and for our brothers and sisters living in poverty, we pray the prayer Jesus taught us.
Our Father...**

CLOSING

Loving God, we pray to see you more clearly, to love you more dearly and to follow you more nearly. Let us seek to love you in our care for the earth. It needs our love and care. Bless us with the courage to break through the gates, to go towards, and to encounter You wherever You will lead us. We pray in the name of Jesus. Amen.

"The universe unfolds in God, who fills it completely. Hence, there is a mystical meaning to be found in a leaf, in a mountain trail, in a dewdrop, in a poor person's face. The ideal is not only to pass from the exterior to the interior to discover the action of God in the soul, but also to discover God in all things"
(#233).