



Living the Faith – Step 5 Continuing God’s Creation

Alternative resource

The prayer below is an acknowledgement of the many different facets of creation, and the need to give due praise and thanks to God for the beautiful tapestry they produce.

In Genesis, the first book of the bible, we find inspired stories and traditions that reveal Israel’s understanding of God’s nature and purpose and of their special relationship with God. The two accounts of the creation story portray the beauty and wonder of the natural world, emphasising the goodness and harmony God intended in creation. Creation culminates in the creation of human beings, created in God’s image, who are given stewardship of the earth and all that lives on it.

Lets take a look at what that means for us today, how care for creation is central within Catholic Social Teaching and some recent Church teaching relating to the environment.

Opening Prayer: *(Using the Prayer of the Church general format)*

Leader: O God come to our aid.

All: O Lord make haste to help us.

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit, Amen

All: Sing a hymn of praise to God, praise him for evermore

Leader: Canticle: Daniel 3:57-88,56 **Let every creature praise the Lord** Verses read from the prayer book: *Week 1 Sun Morning Prayer*

Antiphon: Sing a hymn of praise to God, praise him for evermore

Prayers of Intercession:

Let us praise our loving Redeemer, who gained for us this season of grace, and pray to him, saying: **Response:** Lord, may your spirit be alive in us.

Christ, our life, through baptism we were buried with you and rose to life with you - may we walk today in newness of life. **Response:** Lord, may your spirit be alive in us.

Lord you have brought blessings to all humankind – instill in us the need to share your concern for the good of all people. **Response:** Lord, may your spirit be alive in us.

May we work together to build up your kingdom on earth – with our eyes fixed on the kingdom that reigns for ever. **Response:** Lord, may your spirit be alive in us.

Healer of body and soul cure any sickness in us, our family members and friends – that we may grow in holiness through your loving care. **Response:** Lord, may your spirit be alive in us.

We join these with our personal petitions offering them to you Lord as we pray: Our Father ...

Stewardship

- What do we understand this to be?
- Of what do we have stewardship in our daily lives, in the Church and in the world in general?
- What might be a concern about stewardship?

Stewardship: is shared / devolved responsibility. A steward pledges to take care of what ever has been entrusted. In the old Testament there are many examples of the people of Israel appreciating creation, praising God for it and acknowledging their role in caring for it, especially in Genesis and the Psalms. Sadly, there are also many bible writings which show humanities lack of care for one another and for other aspects of creation including the environment.

Gn 1:1-28-Creation Story

Gn 9:8-17-God's Covenant with Noah and All Creation

Ps 8-The Majesty of God

Ps 65- Thanksgiving for God's Blessings

Ps 104-Praise of God the Creator

Ps 146- Trust in God Alone

Ps 147-Zion's Grateful Praise to Her Bountiful Lord

Ps 148-Hymn of All Creation to the Almighty Creator

Dn 3:52-90-Praise of God; Praise of God's Creation

Jn 1:1-5-In the Beginning Was the Word

Rv 21:14-New Heavens and New Earth

St. Francis's Canticle of the Sun - also a very famous outpouring to God the creator

How should we treat the environment?

- We fulfill God's commission with regard to creation when we care for the earth, with its biological laws, its variety of species, its natural beauty, and its dwindling resources, as a living space and preserve it, so that future generations also can live well on earth.
- In the book of Genesis, God says, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth" (Gen1:28).
- Having "dominion over the earth" does not mean having an absolute right to dispose arbitrarily of animate and inanimate nature, animals, and plants.
- Because man is created in God's image, he should care for God's creation as a shepherd and steward. For the first book of the Bible also says, "The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to till it and keep it" (Gen 2:15). CCC # 2414-2415

Catholic Social Teaching

- Catholic Social Teaching focuses on the inter-responsibility of all to care for one another and the planet. We are all part of God's creation and need to respect that personally and socially.
- It has been handed down to us through history by the Prophets, Jesus and Church Leaders and is constantly being reaffirmed in keeping with the current realities that exist in the world.

Activity: View One Body One Spirit in Christ. – resource Produce by Catholic Bishops of the English Speaking World 2009 - Sec 5_Ch 4 *The Church in the World*

While viewing the clip, make a note anything you see or hear:

- that is new
- which is affirming
- that raises a question or particular response in you

Laudato Si

Laudato Si (Praise be to you) is the title of 2015 Encyclical of Pope Francis, focuses on Care for our Common Home. Pope Francis asserts that ‘nothing in the world is indifferent to us.’ The encyclical picks up the banner carried by previous pontiffs over the past century expressing concern for the way humans are impacting creation.

- In the 1960’s, with the world teetering on the brink of nuclear crisis, Pope Saint John XXIII wrote an Encyclical which not only rejected war but offered a proposal for peace. He addressed his message *Pacem in Terris* to the entire “Catholic world” and indeed “to all men and women of good will”.
- Eight years later, in 1971, Blessed Pope Paul VI referred to the ecological concern as “a tragic consequence” of unchecked human activity: “Due to an ill-considered exploitation of nature, humanity runs the risk of destroying it and becoming in turn a victim of this degradation”.
- During his pontificate Saint Pope John Paul II became increasingly concerned about the issue, and in response penned a number of Encyclicals. In the first he warned that human beings frequently seem “to see no other meaning in their natural environment than what serves for immediate use and consumption”. He later called for a global ecological conversion and commented that little effort had been made to “safe-guard the moral conditions for an authentic human ecology”.
- Pope Francis acknowledges that the destruction of the human environment is extremely serious, not only because God has entrusted the world to us men and women, but because human life is itself a gift which must be defended from various forms of debasement. Concurring with the sentiments of Saint Pope JP II he agrees that every effort to protect and improve our world entails profound changes in “lifestyles, models of production and consumption, and the established structures of power which today govern societies”. (JP II)
- Pope Benedict XVI likewise proposed “eliminating the structural causes of the dysfunctions of the world economy and correcting models of growth which have proved incapable of ensuring respect for the environment”. He observed that the world cannot be analyzed by isolating only one of its aspects, since “the book of nature is one and indivisible”, and includes the environment, life, sexuality, the family, social relations, and so forth. It follows that “the deterioration of nature is closely connected to the culture which shapes human coexistence”. Pope Benedict asked us to recognize that the natural environment has been gravely damaged by our irresponsible behaviour.
- In *Laudato Si*, Pope Francis highlights the fact that it is the world’s poorest communities who are affected by the changes to our planet. It is for this reason that the environment is central within Caritas Australia’s Social Justice work. Their development programs are attentive to environmental concerns and seek to promote care for the earth and its resources.

Stewardship of Creation

Our changing environment prompts us to stop and think about how we live on our planet. We are called to respond and to adopt new ways of living. *Questions to ponder:*

- How do I show respect for Creation?
- What steps do I take to help lessen the negative impact of modern life on the environment?
- What more could I do?

Activity View One Body One Spirit in Christ – video clip: Sec 5_Ch 5 Handing over the Good Earth. Invite group members to share their responses.

Closing Prayer

The earth and all life on it are part of God's creation, which is a gift to us. We must show respect for the gift by taking care of the planet and all its inhabitants. We are also called to share with others the wonders and resources the earth showers on us.

The words spoken by Jesus in St John's gospel, are also addressed to us here today.

"I have made known to you everything I have heard from my Father. You did not choose me but I chose you. And I appointed you to go out and bear fruit, fruit that will last, so that the Father will give you whatever you ask of him in my name. I am giving you these commandments so that you may love one another." (**John 15-16-17**) - and the whole of creation.

Prayerful Reflection:

We bring these reflections to God in prayer:

Leader: Let us offer to God any worries or concerns that dull our hearts. *Pause*

Leader: Let us offer to God the people who are most important in our lives. *Pause*

Leader: Let us pray for our own needs. *Pause*

Leader: Let us pray for the needs of our world. *Pause*

Individuals are invited to share a prayer aloud as the candle is passed around.

Leader: Lord, give us wisdom before we speak, understanding while we listen, sensitivity towards those we meet, and the perspective of your kingdom, in which to see the things of earth.

All: God of all things, accept our humble prayers, offered in hope and trust. Through our prays and our actions may we draw closer to you each day. We make this prayer in the name of Jesus Christ our saviour, who lives and reigns with you, Amen

Song: The Kingdom – Darrell Evans, Hosanna Music
<https://youtu.be/UIU7Tt87B1Q> or
You raise me up – A Cappella Cover version BYU Vocal Point
<https://youtu.be/rcLI0A-IXIc>