



Cultivating a Culture of Care

Reflection and Prayer for the Season of Creation, September 1 – October 4

Introduction

September 1, the World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation, marks the beginning of the Season of Creation which extends through October 4, the Feast of Saint Francis of Assisi. During this time, Christians throughout the world will unite in special prayer and action on behalf of creation.

The reflection has three sections. We suggest that you allow time for three periods of personal reflection — one for each section — then gather with others to share insights, calls to action, and prayer.

Readings from *Laudato Si: On Care for our Common Home*

First Reading

Many things have to change course, but it is we human beings above all who need to change. We lack an awareness of our common origin, of our mutual belonging, and of a future to be shared with everyone. This basic awareness would enable the development of new convictions, attitudes and forms of life. A great cultural, spiritual and educational challenge stands before us, and it will demand that we set out on the long path of renewal.

(para. 202)

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.

(para. 215)

Suggested Reflection Questions

1. *How would you describe this “new way of thinking about human beings, life, society and our relationship with nature”?*
2. *In your own culture and experience, what values and practices do you see that support this new way of thinking? What do you see that might undermine it?*

Second Reading

“The external deserts in the world are growing, because the internal deserts have become so vast” [*Evangelii Gaudium*, 261]. For this reason, the ecological crisis is also a summons to profound interior conversion. ... Living our vocation to be protectors of God’s handiwork is essential to a life of virtue; it is not an optional or a secondary aspect of our Christian experience.

(para. 217)

Nevertheless, self-improvement on the part of individuals will not by itself remedy the extremely complex situation facing our world today. ... Social problems must be addressed by community networks and not simply by the sum of individual good deeds. ... The ecological conversion needed to bring about lasting change is also a community conversion.

(para. 219)

This conversion calls for a number of attitudes which together foster a spirit of generous care, full of tenderness. ... It also entails a loving awareness that we are not disconnected from the rest of creatures, but joined in a splendid universal communion.

(para. 220)

Inner peace is closely related to care for ecology and for the common good because, lived out authentically, it is reflected in a balanced lifestyle together with a capacity for wonder which takes us to a deeper understanding of life. Nature is filled with words of love, but how can we listen to them amid constant noise, interminable and nerve-wracking distractions, or the cult of appearances? Many people today sense a profound imbalance which drives them to frenetic activity and makes them feel busy, in a constant hurry which in turn leads them to ride roughshod over everything around them. This too affects how they treat the environment.

(para. 225)

Suggested Reflection Questions

1. *To what interior, personal conversion are we being called?*
2. *How can this internal transformation be turned into action?*
3. *Pope Francis maintains that personal conversion is not sufficient without communal conversion. How can we foster and participate in this communal conversion?*
4. *When have you found yourself engaging in frenetic activity? How has living at a frenetic pace led you to behave in ways that are harmful to the environment?*



Third Reading

Love, overflowing with small gestures of mutual care, is also civic and political, and it makes itself felt in every action that seeks to build a better world. ... In this framework, along with the importance of little everyday gestures, social love moves us to devise larger strategies to halt environmental degradation and to encourage a “culture of care” which permeates all of society. (para. 231)

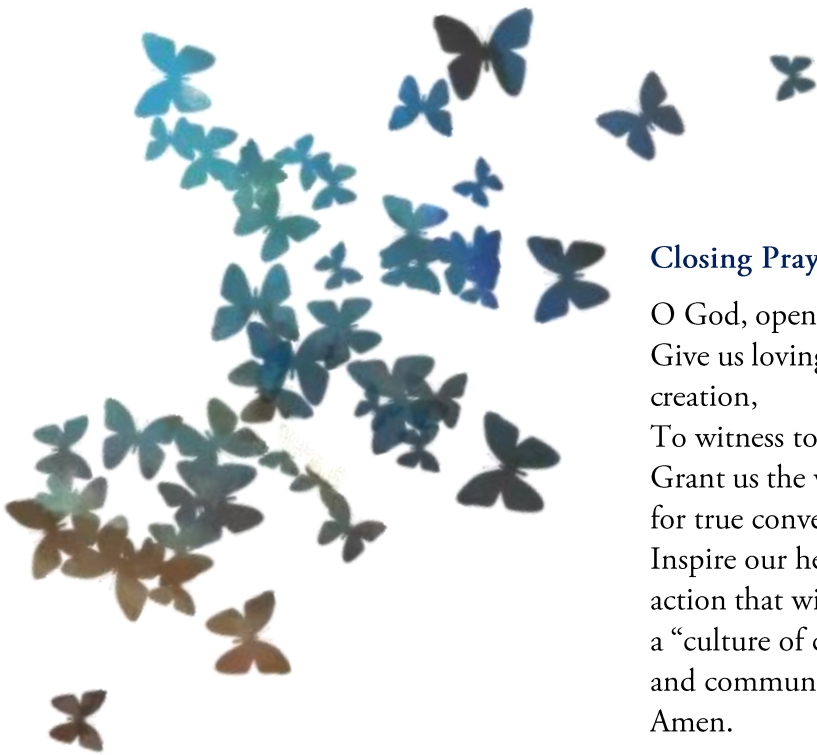
Not everyone is called to engage directly in political life. Society is also enriched by a countless array of organizations which work to promote the common good and to defend the environment, whether natural or urban. Some, for example, show concern for a public place (a building, a fountain, an abandoned monument, a landscape, a square), and strive to protect, restore, improve or beautify it as something belonging to everyone. Around these community actions, relationships develop or are recovered and a new social fabric emerges. (para. 232)

Suggested Reflection Questions

1. *To what kinds of civic and political actions do you feel called?*
2. *How might you engage in communal actions that promote the common good and defend the environment?*
3. *At the recent [International Conference on the 3rd Anniversary of the encyclical Laudato Si': Saving our Common Home and the Future of Life on Earth](#) (July 5-6, 2018), five “larger strategies” were identified: renew our commitment to radical ecological conversion; raise ambition at the UN Climate Conference (“COP24”) for a just transition to achieve the 1.5°C goal and protect the most vulnerable; deepen action among the young and indigenous to ensure long-lasting ecological justice; encourage financial institutions to support decisions towards an integral ecology, including investment and positive social and environmental impact; and engage in the celebration of the Season of Creation to motivate radical conversion and transformative action (For a video summary by the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development click on [English](#) [Spanish](#), [Portuguese](#)).*
 - *How might you impact these priorities personally and communally?*
 - *What other “larger strategies” can you think of?*

Communal Reflection and Discussion

Gather, using appropriate music if desired, and share insights, calls to action and intercessory prayer.



Closing Prayer

O God, open our hearts:
Give us loving eyes to see the beauty of
creation,
To witness to the sacredness of all life.
Grant us the wisdom and humility needed
for true conversion.
Inspire our hearts toward transformative
action that will bring about
a “culture of care,”
and communion with Earth and each other.
Amen.



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