



The
fertile
breeding
ground
of our lives



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THE FRANCISCAN MISSION OFFICE invites you to participate in the fourth edition of World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation by using the celebration that we propose to you. Please feel free to revise, improve and change this document. You can also download it and print it if needed.

This year, we suggest the following theme : **“the fertile breeding ground of our lives”**. When we observe closely the diversity of nature’s components, we will discover the heart of biodiversity and the blossoming of life. In the first part of this prayer, we will focus our attention on the creation of the >

- > world, which should be considered as a true evolving process that was organized in space and time. As human beings, we can be touched by the creation of the world around us, inciting us to act freely and harmoniously in our own communities.

Whatever their spiritual or religious persuasion, everyone can participate in this prayer initiative, which is meant to be a

moment of interreligious and ecumenical happening. So let us join our hearts and voices in care for the Earth's wonders, which are also part of all of us!

We would love to have your feedback on the initiative you will take in your community. You can also share your comments on our Website. We hope to hear from you soon.



Words of Welcome

As soon as all the participants have arrived, you can do a sharing with those that are interested. We suggest talking about one of nature's elements, which are perceived as a demonstration of rare beauty. Thus, each intervention will feed the upcoming discussion and serve as an introduction to the proposed prayer celebration. Once you have finished the sharing, you can continue by reading the following text.

When we consider what lives under water, on the earth and in the sky, we can reach, one day or another and also recently, the environment's quiet strength, its beauty, its complexity and its fragility.

"The indescribable innocence and beneficence of Nature—of sun, and wind, and rain, of summer and winter—such health, such cheer, they afford forever! Shall I not have intelligence with the Earth? Am I not partly leaves and vegetable mould myself?" — Henry David Thoreau excerpt from *Walden or Life in the woods*

Opening Hymn or Song

All creatures of our God and King, from *Lift up your hearts: psalms, hymns and spiritual songs 551, My Soul Cries Out (Canticle of the Turning)* hymnary.org or *Fly* instrumental music by Ludovico Einaudi.

First Reading

Algonquian legend on how the world was created

Here is a text taken from the First Nations' tradition, which bears resemblance to the story of Noah's Ark from the Bible's book of Genesis. Even though some excerpts correspond to both stories, there are also some differences.

Many societies have their own creation legends, but according to the Anishinabeg, this is how the world was created: At the beginning, animals were masters of the world and all lived in harmony. However, an event occurred and the animals began to fight against each other. This angered the Creator, Kichi Manito, who decided to flood the earth into a rebirth. Following the flood, the Earth almost virtually disappeared. There was only one group left. >

- > However, Kichi Manito warned Wisakedjak, whom he considered as his son, of his intention and advised him to get into his canoe, representatives from the animals to save them from drowning. The rain fell in abundance, flooding all of the land and doing away all that existed. Only Wisakedjak and the animals aboard his canoe escaped the flood.

After many days on the ocean, Wisakedjak announced to the animals that one of them had to bring a handful of soil to the surface for plants, trees and grass to grow. This would lead to the rebirth of the world. The first to try was the loon, who was considered the best diver. He dived and remained under water for a full sun and rose to the surface out of breath, almost dead. The duck then decided to try his luck, but he was less successful than the loon was. The otter then dove, and then the mink and then the beaver, but none of them could bring up soil. Finally, the muskrat spoke, he was not easily discouraged, and said that sometimes he had to dive several times to find something to eat. Therefore, he plunged, hoping to save the world.

He was under water for three days and everyone thought he was dead. However, at the end of the third day he reappeared. He looked dead, but he was still breathing and he opened one eye and smiled when he opened his paw to reveal the soil. Wisakedjak took it and put it on the back of the turtle and then the new world took form to become North America, as we know it today. According to the Algonquin's perspective, this legend explains why North America has a turtle shape and is often referred to as the Great Turtle. (Mikinàk)

Psalm of Praise

Psalm 8: *Power of the Divine Name*; Psalm 104 (103): *The splendors of creation*; AT 41 (Canticle of the creatures of Daniel).

Deep inside our hearts, we can find values, good vibrations, which are comparable to humus, the breeding ground that helps plants grow and reproduce. Nature is our shelter and our inspiration. In the drowning world presented in the First Nation legend or in the Bible's great flood, life has become rare. In today's world, we are aware of the many cataclysms that are becoming common because of climate change. An unbalanced nature tends to act with surprising violence. It washes away or burns down what is on its path leaving helpless people in poverty and total distress. In the legend, after many efforts, the muskrat found a handful of earth. Now, all can begin again. We can compare it to the dove that flew back to Noah's ark with an olive branch in its beak. Hope has returned. Plants have rooted in the soil. Once again, natural life cycles are back. Human beings, because of their great resilience, can recover from the worst obstacles. Emancipation becomes possible. The difficulties of yesterday have been replaced by happier times.

Moment of silence

Second Reading

from the Ecclesiastes, 16, 22–28
DIVINE WISDOM SEEN IN CREATION

Hearken to me, my son, take my advice, and apply your mind to my words.

While I propose measured wisdom and impact accurate knowledge.

When at first God created his works and, has he made them, assigned their tasks, >

- > He ordered for all time what they were to do and their domains from generation to generation.

They were not to hunger, nor grow weary, nor ever cease from their tasks.

Not one should ever crowd its neighbor, nor should they ever disobey his word.

Then the Lord looked upon the earth, and filled it with his blessings.

Its surface he covered with all manner of life, which must return to it again.

Times of Sharing and Meditation

This time of sharing could help answer the following questions: What can we do to live a more harmonious life? What can be done to sustain the fertile ground of our lives?

Encyclical *Laudato Si* on Environment (words of pope Francis)

***Laudato Si*, # 220**

This conversion calls for a number of attitudes, which together foster a spirit of generous care, full of tenderness. First, it entails gratitude and gratuitousness, a recognition that the world is God's loving gift, and that we are called quietly to imitate his generosity in self-sacrifice and good works: "Do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing ... and your Father who sees in secret will reward you" (Mt 6:3-4). It also entails a loving awareness that we are not disconnected from the rest

of creatures, but joined in a splendid universal communion. As believers, we do not look at the world from without but from within, conscious of the bonds with which the Father has linked us to all beings. By developing our individual, God-given capacities, an ecological conversion can inspire us to greater creativity and enthusiasm in resolving the world's problems and in offering ourselves to God, "as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable" (Rom 12:1). We do not understand our superiority as a reason for personal glory or irresponsible dominion, but rather as a different capacity, which in its turn, entails a serious responsibility stemming from our faith.

Final Invocation

O God, Provider of life,
Who takes away pain and sorrow,
Who lavishes happiness
O creator of the Universe,
May your supreme light that destroys sin,
Guide our minds in the right direction.

Gayatri mantras

Song of Praise or Instrumental Music

St. Francis's Canticle of the Sun; Brother Sun Sister Moon by Donovan; *Hallelujah (chorus)* by Leonard Cohen, instrumental music: *Menuet in G minor* by Georg Friedrich Haendel...

