

## Prayer for Earth Day 2023



Saturday, April 22, 2023, marks the 53rd anniversary of Earth Day. The secular Earth Day organization is continuing the theme of “Investing in Our Planet”. The Catholic Climate Covenant has chosen as the theme for this year’s Earth Day “Simple Living: God’s Vision of Abundant Life.” This theme is intended to activate the Catholic community to complementary concrete action against over-consumption, materialism, and the throwaway culture. It also provides an opportunity to explore how we can engage with the “Adoption of Sustainable Lifestyles” goal of the Vatican’s *Laudato Si’* Action Platform. In *Laudato Si’* Pope Francis calls us to ecological conversion through contemplation and compassion, reminding us that an integral ecology requires taking time to reflect on creation and our own lifestyle, “contemplating the Creator who lives among us and surrounds us” (LS225). He calls us to imitate Jesus by being wholly present to the cries of the earth and the cries of the poor.

**Leader:** As we begin our prayer, let us take a few moments to contemplate the abundant blessings God showers on us through the richness of the natural world around us. Settle in to a comfortable position. Close your eyes. What is your sacred place where you can connect with the beauty of creation and feel gratitude for this gift? Place yourself there in your imagination. Breathe in the joy this scene gives you. Breathe out your thanks to your loving Creator God. Rest in God’s vision of abundant life. *(Take 5 or 10 minutes of silent reflection.)*

**Leader:** O Lord, how lovely it is to be your guest. Breeze full of scents; mountains reaching to the skies; waters like boundless mirrors, reflecting the sun's golden rays and the scudding clouds. All nature murmurs mysteriously, breathing the depth of tenderness. Birds and beasts of the forest bear the imprint of your love. Blessed are you, mother earth, in your fleeting loveliness, which awakens our yearning for happiness that will last forever, in the land where, amid beauty that grows not old, the cry rings out: Alleluia!

**All:** You have brought us into life as into an enchanted paradise. We have seen the sky like a chalice of deepest blue, where in the azure heights the birds are singing. We have listened to the soothing murmur of the forest and the melodious music of the streams. We have tasted fruit of fine flavor and the sweet-scented honey. We can live very well on your earth. It is a pleasure to be your guest.

*(adapted from the Akathist of Thanksgiving, "found among the effects of Protospesbyter Gregory Petrov at his death in a prison camp in 1940. The title is from the words of Saint John Chrysostom as he was dying in exile. It is a song of praise from amidst terrible sufferings attributed to Metropolitan Tryphon of Turkestan.)*

**Reader:** In an address to members of *Laudato Si’* communities in Italy in 2020 Pope Francis remarked: "Compassion is not a beautiful feeling, it is not pietism; it means creating a new

bond with the other. The world needs this creative and active charity, people who do not stand in front of a screen to comment, but instead, people who get their hands dirty to remove degradation and restore dignity."

**Optional Reflection or Sharing:** *How have I exhibited compassion toward the earth and all its creatures in my actions? What else can I do now to strengthen that bond? How can I get my hands dirty to remove degradation and restore dignity?*

**Leader:** Let us acknowledge our failures in heeding the cries of the earth and the cries of the poor and pray for the grace of conversion.

How many and wonderful are your works, O God. In wisdom you have made them all. But we confess that as creatures privileged with the care and keeping of your Creation that we have abused your Creation gifts through arrogance, ignorance, and greed.

**All:** (Alternate sides or rotate).

We confess risking permanent damage to your handiwork; we confess impoverishing Creation's ability to bring you praise.

We confess that we often are unaware of how deeply we have hurt your good earth and its marvelous gifts.

We confess that we often are unaware of how our abuse of Creation has also been an abuse of ourselves.

How long will it take before we awaken to what we have done? How many waters must we pollute? How many woodlots must we destroy?

How many forests must we despoil? How much soil must we erode and poison?  
How much of Earth's atmosphere must we contaminate?

How many species must we abuse and extinguish? How many people must we degrade and kill with toxic waste before we learn to love and respect your Creation, before we learn to love and respect our home?

For our wrongs, O God, we ask forgiveness. In sorrow for what we have done we offer our repentance.

**Together:** We promise to reverence your Creation as a gracious gift entrusted to us by you, our God. We promise anew to be stewards and not pillagers of what you have entrusted to us. Creator God, you have given us every reason to learn and promote the wisdom of lives lived in harmony with Creation. May we your servants, increasingly serve. May we, your servants, increasingly come to love your Creation as we increasingly come to love you, through Christ Jesus, our Lord. Amen.

*(North American Conference on Christianity and Ecology, abridged)*