

Prayer to Open *Laudato Si'* Week – May 16-24, 2020

in celebration of the 5th anniversary of the letter of Pope Francis to every person living on this planet

Preparation: *This prayer may be done all at once (in about 30 minutes), or it can be spread out over the anniversary week. Whether you pray by yourself, or virtually with others – indoors or outdoors – create a focal point with pictures or objects that speak to you of Earth’s gifts, Earth’s losses, our failures, and your personal hope for our common home; get readers as needed; select music.*

CARE FOR OUR COMMON HOME

Five years ago, on May 24, 2015, Pope Francis sent a letter to every person living on Planet Earth, about the urgent need to take care of earth as our common home. He called his letter *Laudato Si'* which means “praised be,” a title he borrowed from St. Francis of Assisi, known for his great love of nature. On his deathbed, nearly 1000 years ago, St. Francis sang a hymn of praise to Brother Sun, Sister Moon and all creation, singing again and again “praised be”



The Children Are Asking, ©M. Southard, CSJ
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This week on May 16-24, 2020, the people of the world are gathering everywhere to celebrate the letter of Pope Francis, and listen again to his call to renew our commitment to care for Earth as the home we share. So, we gather now to remember the gifts creation has lavished on us, and give thanks for the progress we’ve made in caring for Earth as our mother, and sister, and home. We gather to mourn Earth’s losses and our failures toward her, and to advance our hope for the future of all life on this wonderful planet.

Music: *Choose music that connects you joyfully with Earth — Suggestion: listen to a recording of “What a Wonderful World” by Louis Armstrong — <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A3yCcXgbKrE>*

1 – GRATITUDE

Readings: Let’s listen now to Pope Francis’ vision of Earth in *Laudato Si'* —

“... our common home is like a sister with whom we share our life and a beautiful mother who opens her arms to embrace us.” LS1

“Soil, water, mountains: everything is, as it were, a caress of God ...” LS84

Litany of Gratitude: Let us give thanks for all that Earth has been for us and for the ways in which we care for our common home —

- Reader: Because “God lives and acts in [us] and in our world,” **All: we are grateful.**
- Because we can rejoice in the divine presence penetrating all creation, **we are grateful.**
- Because our love of Earth has increased in recent years and overflows as a love full of action, **we are grateful.**
- Because we have a deeper understanding that the issues we care about affect, and are affected

- by, the health of Planet Earth, ***we are grateful.***
- Because Pope Francis has called every person on this planet to help care for our common home, ***we are grateful.***
 - Because the Paris Climate Accord exists, ***we are grateful.***
 - Because 17-year old Greta Thunberg’s passion and persistence have ignited a global youth movement committed to preserving our planet for future generations, ***we are grateful.***
 - Because some people — Dorothy Stang in Brazil, Ken Saro Wiwa in Nigeria, and others — have given their very lives to protect Earth from being plundered, ***we are grateful.***
 - Because we are learning how everything we do to protect Earth also benefits her most marginalized and vulnerable people, ***we are grateful.***
 - Because countless people all over the planet are quietly, faithfully making efforts every day to live sustainably in their use of all of Earth’s resources, ***we are grateful.***
 - *(Please add your own expressions of gratitude)* Because ... ***we are grateful.***



2 – SORROW

Readings: Listen to Pope Francis’ lament for our world —

“This sister now cries out to us because of the harm we have inflicted on her by our irresponsible use and abuse of the goods with which God has endowed her. We have come to see ourselves as her lords and masters, entitled to plunder her at will.” LS2

“When I look at America, also my own homeland (South America), so many forests, all cut, that have become land ... that can no longer give life. This is our sin, exploiting the Earth and not allowing her to give us what she has within her ...” Pope Francis, to the University of Molise, Campobasso, Italy 2014

Litany of Sorrow and Grief: Let us express our own sorrow for Earth’s losses and our failure to care for her as we should —

- Reader: Because we sometimes fail to acknowledge “the human origins of the ecological crisis,” ***All: we grieve and ask pardon.*** LS 101
- Because we have contributed to climate change by some of our own daily choices – in food, household items, travel, disposal of waste and so on, ***we grieve and ask pardon.***
- Because global warming can cause epidemics and their long-lasting effects, ***we grieve and ask pardon.***
- Because millions of humans, plants and animals lack clean water and sanitation, ***we grieve and ask pardon.***
- Because fires caused by climate change and greed consume magnificent forests and the life within them, ***we grieve and ask pardon.***

- Because climate conditions cause environmental refugees who are then refused welcome elsewhere, ***we grieve and ask pardon.***
- *(Please add your own expressions of sorrow)* Because ... ***we grieve and ask pardon.***

Music – Choose some reflective instrumental music to listen to for a few minutes — Suggestion: listen to a recording of “The Swan” from *The Carnival of the Animals* by Camille Saint Saëns — <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3qrKjywjo7Q>



3 – HOPE

Readings: Listen now to some words of hope that Pope Francis offers in *Laudato Si'* —

Hope would have us recognize that there is always a way out, that we can always redirect our steps, that we can always do something to solve our problems. LS61

All it takes is one good person to restore hope! LS71

The Spirit of God has filled the universe with possibilities and therefore, from the very heart of things, something new can always emerge... LS80

... there is reason to hope that humanity at the dawn of the twenty-first century will be remembered for having generously shouldered its grave responsibilities. LS165

Response: *You may be marking this anniversary alone, or with others, so please adapt this response to your circumstances*

- **Stand together** *(in your imagination)* with the multitudes of people throughout the world who have committed their lives to caring for creation, even giving their lives to do so. Be still for a moment and, realize that, though your feet don't directly touch Earth, still you are standing on sacred soil.
- **Sing a song of hope and unity** – Suggestion: Listen to a recording of “City of God” (St. Louis Jesuits), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-zRAUH8yBcQ>
- **Speak your word** – is there a word of hope from the readings or music that has especially caught your attention during this prayer? – say it aloud, just a word or phrase
(be seated, if you've been standing)

4 – THOUGHTS & ACTIONS THROUGH THE WEEK

Invitation: Give some thought during this special week to how you feel invited to renew your care for our common home. Here are some suggestions that may enrich your response to *Laudato Si'*. Select one or more of the following actions, or create your own:



Commit time this week to **read or re-read some or all of *Laudato Si'***. You can download a PDF copy at <https://laudatosi.com/watch>

Ponder a few paragraphs of the Introduction to *Laudato Si'* — LS 1-16. Notice which parts mean the most to you. Why is that? Plan to return to them again during the week in some way, e.g. by journaling or drawing, by gentle pondering, or active wrestling with whatever ideas feel most challenging to you.

Make it a point to **spend time outdoors** – at your front door, or walking up and down your street, or maybe even in a local green space, if that’s possible. Listen, smell, touch, see . . . What do your senses tell you about the wonder and fragility of “Our Common Home.” Maybe this is the week to get to your spring gardening, if you haven’t already done so.

Watch a video on creation, e.g. “Praised Be,” a home-made 6-minute meditation on the beauty and diversity of creation – <https://vimeo.com/413171413>. Or if you have an hour and want to be swept away by the depths and breadth of the Universe story, watch “Journey of the Universe” (by Brian Swimme and Mary Evelyn Tucker), available on Amazon Prime Video.

Write a short prayer, poem or song, or make a video that captures what you want to remember about *Laudato Si'*.

Create a body prayer/dance to express thanks for our common home and pledge to protect it.

Talk with another person about what this anniversary celebration has meant to you, and what you think it could mean for our own dear planet, especially as we begin to emerge from quarantine.

Closing: Sing or say –

**Glory be to God whose power working in us
can do infinitely more than we can ask or imagine.**

✓MAKE A NOTE:

Starting October 16, 2020, as part of the SHCJ’s 175th anniversary celebration, you’ll find a suggestion in *American Province Newsnotes* each week on ways to care for our “own dear” planet.