

Prayer for the 50th Anniversary of Earth Day April 22, 2020

Theme: Climate Action: The most pressing need of our time

(Draft 1)

All readings are from Pope Francis' Encyclical: **Laudato Si: On Care For Our Common Home**

Opening Hymn: Some Ideas: For the Beauty of the Earth (Piermont), Laudato Si (Lundy), All Creatures of Our God and King, Praise Be (Likovich)

Leader Opening Prayer: Earth, and all that is within it, is yours, Lord God. Every creature great and small, you made and cherish them all. We confess, Creator God, that too often we have exploited rather than loved your good Earth. We recognize our selfishness, our shortsightedness, our ungratefulness and our lack of regard for the air and sea, the soil beneath our feet and the living beings dependent upon an unpolluted world. And this coronavirus pandemic has opened our eyes to our precious and healing your earth is and how united we all are as we share it. Forgive us, Gracious God. Pick us up off our knees and enable us to stand and look afresh with wonder at all the beauty you bestow upon us. Give us eyes to see the colors and light that beckon us to care for the sky and land. Grant us ears to hear the birds' songs and the crickets' chirps as they call us to be good stewards of the trees and soil they call home. Give us the wisdom to stop, see, listen and feel your glory made known through the countless variety of flowers, insects, plants and animals in every corner of this your globe. May the beauty of this, your Earth, compel us to act in ways that preserve, protect and sustain your creation so that each and every living being may flourish now and for generations yet to come. Amen.

Reading 1: The Earth herself, burdened and laid waste, is among the most abandoned and maltreated of our poor (2). Never have we so hurt and mistreated our common home as we have in the last two hundred years. (53) Doomsday predictions can no longer be met with irony or disdain. We may well be leaving to coming generations: debris, desolation and filth. The pace of consumption, waste and environmental change has so stretched the planet's capacity that our contemporary lifestyle, unsustainable as it is, can only precipitate catastrophes, such as those which even now periodically occur in different areas of the world. (161) The climate is a common good, belonging to all and meant for all. (23) A very solid scientific consensus indicates that we are presently witnessing a disturbing warming of the climatic system. In recent decades this warming has been accompanied by a constant rise in the sea level and, it would appear, by an increase of extreme weather events....Humanity is called to recognize the need for changes of lifestyle, production and consumption, in order to combat this warming or at least the human causes which produce or aggravate it. (23) If present trends continue, this century may well witness extraordinary climate change and an unprecedented destruction of ecosystems, with serious consequences for all of us. (24) Climate change is a global problem with serious implications...it represents one of the principal challenges facing humanity in our day. (25) The warming caused by huge consumption on the part of some rich countries has repercussions on the poorest areas of the world, especially Africa, where a rise in temperature, together with drought, has proved devastating for farming. (51)

Response (Alternate Sides): (Source: This commitment prayer was adapted from a CHA Statement written by Laura Anderko, Stephanie Chalupka, and Brenda M. Afzal)

Like Pope John Paul II, Pope Benedict, Pope Francis and the US Catholic Bishops we accept the scientific consensus that climate change is upon us and that prudent action to more faithfully care for creation and avoid more severe consequences in the future is essential.

We are aware that its adverse impacts will fall heaviest on the poor at home and abroad.

As committed Christians with a Franciscan heart we recognize that climate change is a moral concern and that our faith demands prudent action to reduce our carbon footprint, protect human life and dignity, care for “the least of these” (Mt. 25) and raise our voice on behalf of creation and the poor.

Our belief that all life is sacred and that our special concern for the poor and our commitment to the common good and stewardship call us to examine the issue and to act to lessen and treat the effects of climate change.

We are people of faith and believe “the Earth is the Lord’s and all it holds.” (Ps 24.1)

We understand there is a substantial body of scientific knowledge showing “warming of the climate is unequivocal.” (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, 2007)

We are committed to the protection of human life and the dignity of all.

We can help reduce our own carbon footprint by reducing our energy usage, reducing emissions and waste, eating less meat, and buying locally to reduce long distance food distribution.

We can show compassion and share our resources with those who are victims of climate change, especially those who are poor and marginal and those who live in areas where drought, extreme, fires, and storms have ravaged whole communities.

We can advocate for public policies and private actions that will bring solutions and we choose to elect leaders who understand the climate crises and are willing to make the hard choices necessary for the future of our planet and the hopes and dreams of our young.

This prayer we bring to you Creator of the Universe and we lean upon one another as we make this commitment so that your gift of creation will no longer be squandered.

Glory be..

Reading 2: Nature is usually seen as a system which can be studied, understood and controlled, but creation can only be understood as a gift from the outstretched hand of the Father of all, and as a reality illuminated by a love which calls us together into universal communion. (76) Creation is of the order of love. (77) A fragile



world, entrusted by God to human care, challenges us to devise intelligent ways of directing, developing, and limiting our power. (78) The entire material universe speaks of God’s love, his boundless affection for us. Soil, water, mountains – everything is, as it were, a caress of God. (84) Each community can take from the bounty of the earth whatever it needs for subsistence, but it also has the duty to protect the earth and to ensure its fruitfulness for coming generations. (67) Intergenerational solidarity is not optional, but rather a basic question of justice, since the world we have received also belongs to those who will follow us. (159)

Response (Please alternate sides) -- Source: Earth Day Prayer: In the Spirit of Indigenous Traditions by Vern Barnet from the Unitarian Universalist Association) <https://www.uua.org/worship/words/meditation/5590.shtml>

Infinite Spirit, sometimes called Grandfather, Grandmother —
Father Sky, Earth Mother, Creator:

We gather to praise your creation,
to honor the swimmers and crawlers,
the four-leggeds and the winged ones;
we give thanks for the beauty and glory of creation
and open our hearts to new ways to understand
our place in the universe—not the center or focus,
but a humble and balanced place,
where every step we take becomes a prayer,
where every word we say
makes harmony with the vast, vibrating cosmos,
and where we know we are singing the song of life.

We pray to know more deeply that we are in the Garden
where every plant and animal and speck of dust
is a living prayer.

Without our brothers and sisters
of the plant and animal and mineral kingdoms,
the human family would end.
So we want to bless them, as they bless us.

We pray for humility—
not to humble ourselves before presidents or priests,
but before the ants and trees—
for if we cannot be in true relation to the ant,
we shall be outcasts of the garden.

Let us cast the pollution from our eyes
so we can see the glory and live with thanksgiving.

Great Spirit, let us remember
it is not how we talk but how we walk.
When we say we love animals, let us protect them.
When we say we love the plant people,
let us honor them by living lightly on the earth.
When we say we love the minerals,
let us use them only in necessity,
and remember their rightful places.
Oil belongs in the ground,
not in the air through our wasteful machines.

Wondrous trees, breathing life into the atmosphere:
your gifts of fire and shelter, fruit,
and sailing are precious to us.
And in many ways you offer us leaves of knowledge.

May the vision of mutual interrelatedness,
cosmic interdependence,
the seamless process of generations,
not end in cough-filled skies blotting the sun,
but rather may clear air, healthy forests,
wholesome water, expansive prairie, and pungent earth
nourish paths for all creatures
through mountain and valley, and the salt sea,
and through a protective atmosphere,
as we rejoice in the inhabitants.

Hear and empower our mantra: reduce, reuse, recycle.

With thanks for the surprise and mystery of it all,
we pray in the name of the Creator and all our relations.

Sending Forth: May Almighty God bless us, protect us from the corona virus, help us to recognize our impact on the earth, give us a strong commitment to Care for our Common Home, and teach us what is ours to do.

All: AMEN

Reflection Questions:

- In these 50 years of Earth Day and in light of our Corporate Stand, how have you responded over the years.
- In what ways are you being called to respond now?
- Although COVID-19 is creating havoc for our world, in what ways has it actually helped our planet?

Some websites that might draw you into action on behalf of the Earth:

- Sunrise is a movement to stop climate change and create millions of good jobs in the process. It is an army of young people working to make climate change an urgent priority across America, end the corrupting influence of fossil fuel executives on our politics, and elect leaders who stand up for the health and well being of all people: They have created a Green New Deal that you might want to view: <https://www.sunrisemovement.org/green-new-deal>. They also are scoring candidates on Climate Justice/Climate Action – take a look: <https://scorecard.sunrisemovement.org/>
- Commit to take action for Climate Justice/ Climate Action at this website. There is a Commitment Tool that will help you evaluate yourself: <https://livingthechange.net/commitment-tool>