



PRAYING WITH NATURE

SUGGESTED SETTING: Have flowers, plants, leaves, stones, tree bark, pictures of nature arranged as a focal point for prayer.

Every year, from September 1st – the first day of the Orthodox Church year – to October 4th – the feast of Saint Francis of Assisi in the catholic tradition – churches and, we the people, are called to reflect and pray for the protection of God's creation and the promotion of sustainable lifestyles.

SONG: Canticle of the Sun (Marty Haugen)

CHORUS:

The heavens are telling the glory of God,
And all creation is shouting for joy.
Come, dance in the forest, come, play in the field,
And sing, sing to the glory of the Lord.

Praise for the sun, the bringer of day,
Who carries the light of the Lord in its rays;
The moon and the stars
Who light up your way unto your throne. (Chorus)

Praise for the wind that blows through the trees,
The seas mighty storms, the gentlest breeze;
They blow where they will,
They blow where they please to please the Lord. (Chorus)

Praise for the rain that waters the fields,
And blesses our crops so all the earth yields;
From death unto life
Her mystery revealed springs forth in joy. (Chorus)

Praise for the earth who makes life to grow,
The creatures you made to let your life show;
The flowers and trees
That help us to know the heart of love. (Chorus)

READING 1: When the Trees Say Nothing: Writings on Nature (Thomas Merton)

In the silence of the countryside and the forest, in the cloistered solitude of my monastery, I have discovered the Western Hemisphere. Here I have been able, through the grace of God, to explore the world.

The forms and individual characters of living and growing things, of inanimate beings, of animals and flowers and all nature, constitute their holiness in the sight of God.

Their inscape is their sanctity. It is the imprint of His wisdom and His reality in them.

The special clumsy beauty of this particular colt on this day in the field under these clouds is a holiness consecrated to God by His own creative wisdom and it declares the glory of God.

The pale flowers of the dogwood outside this window are saints. The little yellow flowers that nobody notices on the edge of that road are saints looking up into the face of God.

This leaf has its own texture and its own pattern of veins and its own holy shape, and the bass and trout hiding in the deep pools of the river are canonized by their beauty and strength.

The lakes hidden among the hills are saints, and sea too is a saint who praises God without interruption in her majestic dance.

The great, gashed, half-naked mountain is another of God's saints. There is no other like him. He alone is in his own character; nothing else in the world ever did or ever will imitate God in quite the same way. That is his sanctity.

REFLECT on nature and some of your experiences in nature over the past few months. What kind of a day was it, what were the colors, the smells, the temperature, were you alone or with someone, etc.

READING 2: Canticle of Praise – Daniel 3: 57 – 82)

RESPONSE to each statement: Praise and exalt Him above all forever.

Bless the Lord, all you works of the Lord, **(Response)**

Sun and moon, bless the Lord;

Stars of heaven, bless the Lord,

All you winds, bless the Lord,

Frost and cold, bless the Lord,

Hoarfrost and snow, bless the Lord,

Nights and days, bless the Lord,

Lightnings and clouds, bless the Lord,

Let the earth bless the Lord,

Mountains and hills, bless the Lord,

Everything growing on the earth, bless the Lord,

Seas and river, bless the Lord,

You sea monsters and all water creatures, bless the Lord,

All you birds of the air, bless the Lord,

All you beasts, wild and tame, bless the Lord,

All you mortals, bless the Lord,

READING 3 – Matthew 6: 25 – 34

Therefore, I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink, or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds in the sky; they do not sow or reap, they gather nothing into barns, yet their heavenly Father feeds them. Are not you more important than they? Can any of you by worrying add a single moment to your lifespan? Why are you anxious about clothes? Learn from the way wild flowers grow. They do not work or spin. But I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was clothed like one of them. If God so clothes the grass of the field, which grows today and is thrown into the oven tomorrow, will he not much more provide for you, O you of little faith? So do not worry and say, “What are we to eat?” or “What are we to drink?” or “What are we to wear?” All these things pagans seek. Your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things be given to you besides. Do not worry about tomorrow; tomorrow will take care of itself. Sufficient for a day is its own evil.

REFLECT:

How much do you worry about the material things of this life?
What are some ways your life reflects your trust in God’s care for you.
In what ways does nature/creation bring you closer to God?
What is your responsibility to the care for the earth?

SHARE your reflections:

READING 4: Rest Your Dreams on A Twig (Joyce Rupp)

A green shoot grows
out of an old tree stump,
announcing to the world
that power lies within death.

All the resurrection
ever birthed in this world
find a sister
in this green shoot growing
from the old wooden stump.

Things in me that have died,
the worn-out and the worthless,
they are waiting to give rise
to some green shoot
of a sister.
They are inviting me
to faith in resurrection
and reverence
for old tree stumps.

SONG: Touch the Earth Lightly (Tony Alonso and Shirley Erena Murray)

Touch the earth lightly, use the earth gently,
Nourish the life of the world in our care;
Gift of great wonder, ours to surrender,
Trust for the children tomorrow will bear.

We who endanger, who create hunger,
Agents of death for all creatures that live,
We who would foster clouds of disaster
God of our planet, forestall and forgive.

Let there be greening, birth from the burning,
Water that blesses and air that is sweet,
Health in God's garden, hope in God's children,
Regeneration that peace will complete.

God of all living, God of all loving,
God of the seedling, the snow and the sun,
Teach us, deflect us, Christ connect us,
Using us gently and making us one.