

First Sunday **OF THE SEASON OF CREATION**

September 1, 2024 | 22nd Sunday in Ordinary Time

SCRIPTURES

Deut. 4:1-2, 6-8

Ps. 15:2-5

James 1:17-18, 21b-22, 27

Mark 7:1-8, 14-15, 21-23

Integral Ecological Sign of the Cross

We begin our celebration of the 1st Sunday of the Season of Creation...

In the name of our Creator God from Whom this universe flared forth in fiery birth,

And of the Word of God Who took on our flesh, working to give healing and hope to all Creation,

And of the Wisdom of God Who presided over the forming of atoms and galaxies and the birth of stars through billions of years. **Amen.**

May the grace and peace of our Creator God who cherishes us be with you!

Introductory Comments

Today is the First Sunday of the 2024 Season of Creation. This liturgical season is a time of prayer and action stretching from September 1st, the World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation, to October 4th, the feast of St. Francis of Assisi. The Season celebrates God as Creator of the vast cosmic universe, God's revelation in Creation, and our calling to care for Creation, to protect its rich diversity and to address the urgent, destructive crises threatening its health and future - including our own.

This year's theme calls the Christian community to address the discouragement growing as the climate crisis, biodiversity loss, and pollution worsen, the global human

response is falling short, and the urgency is growing. The theme, **To Hope and Act with Creation**, calls for profound Christian hope rooted firmly in faith in the resurrection of Christ and urges us to re-energized action with Creation for the healing of Earth.

This theme builds on the 2021 theme that emphasized that Earth is the home of every creature that lives on it and in it. The theme of Earth as our Common Home invites the global Christian community to recall that every creature of God upon Earth is loved by God for itself. It reminds us that the current exploitation of Earth is making it "a means to economic or political ends" and is destroying its ability to be the nurturing home for millions of species that God has created it to be. It invites us to ask what we must do to restore the planet to being the life-giving home God intends it to be for all that dwell here.

Penitential Rite Suggestion

(It should be noted that although the Roman Missal gives various optional formulations for the penitential rite, it also allows for "other invocations." These are intended to help shape the community's repentance in accord with the scriptural message of the day.)

As we begin our celebration of this 1st Sunday in the Season of Creation, let's enter into the quiet of our spirits... conscious of Earth, our Common Home ... aware of the dramatic and destructive changes in our climate ... the

more frequent and too-often deadly crises of floods and fires, storms, hurricanes and tornadoes, droughts and more ...

Loving Creator God, we often lose hope in the face of the widespread devastation of climate change, the threats of far worse to come, the urgency of the needs, and the slowness of our response....

Creator Spirit of God, have mercy.

Christ Jesus, you remind us that the crises bringing so much suffering to Earth begin within us, from our hearts....

Christ Jesus, have mercy.

Holy Spirit of God, you plant the word of truth in each of us and call us to be doers of the word and not hearers only....

Holy Spirit of God, have mercy.

May God, who has birthed the vast web of life in which we live through billions of years, have mercy on us, free us from our sins, and guide us into the fullness of divine Life.

Amen.

Gloria: In conscious awe, we join our voices with all Creation to praise and glorify God.

As noted in the Introduction, the orations offered in these materials are not currently allowed to replace the orations given in the Catholic Roman Missal. They may be used for private prayer or by ecclesial Christian communities freer to adjust the language of their liturgies.

Opening Prayer

Loving Creator God, giver of every good gift that has ever been, is now, and ever will be,

Bring to fruition the word of truth sown in our hearts by your Spirit.

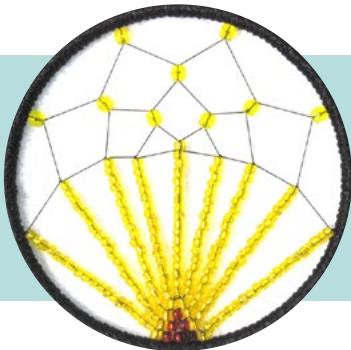
Open our minds and hearts to understand the laws that govern and guide all Creation and to live your law of love wisely with undivided hearts.

We ask this through Jesus, the Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God for ever and ever. **Amen.**

Points for Reflection on the Scriptures

The 2024 Season of Creation begins at a critical and very delicate time for the human community as we face the climate crisis threatening Earth and its future. UN Secretary General António Guterres and Pope Francis have both added their voices to the overwhelming global consensus of scientists in warning that there is less than a decade left for the nations of the world to take the steps needed to reduce carbon emissions and keep the average temperature of the planet from rising more than 1.5 degrees Celsius.

If those steps are not taken with a sense of urgency and global solidarity, irreversible turning points will bring great devastation with lasting destructive impacts. **In some of the worst-case scenarios**, Earth's ability to sustain the human population could be reduced from its current capacity [a little over 8 billion people] to about 1 billion people. It is hard to imagine the suffering that the loss of 7 billion people and countless other living beings to fires, floods, droughts, other forms of violent weather, starvation, and more would impose.



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It is widely acknowledged that the nations of the world are failing seriously to take adequate steps to meet the true urgency of the planetary crisis. This Season of Creation must help to build the sense of urgency and commitment to serious change that are essential for the future wellbeing of our common home. And yet, too great an emphasis on the severe threats of devastation can lead to discouragement, depression, and inaction.

Can the scriptures help us, as people of faith, to face and embrace the urgency of the situation threatening Earth and all creatures with **hope** and ready **commitment to the changes** so desperately required?

Today's gospel focuses on the first essential step that must be taken: acknowledgement of the sources of the crises. Scribes and pharisees want to know why Jesus's disciples don't follow the customs of the elders but eat their meals with unclean hands. In anger, Jesus summons the crowd (and us) and is clear:

Hear me, all of you, and understand. Nothing that enters one from outside can defile that person; but the things that come from within are what defile. From within the people, from their hearts....

This is an important message in facing ecological crises today. James Gustave Speth, an accomplished environmental lawyer and advocate, known for his important work at the United Nations and in co-founding and leading

the Natural Resources Defense Council in the United States, said in an interview on the BBC in 2013:

I used to think the top global environmental problems were biodiversity loss, ecosystem collapse and climate change. I thought that with 30 years of good science we could address these problems. But I was wrong. The top environmental problems are selfishness, greed and apathy, and to deal with these we need a spiritual and cultural transformation, and we scientists don't know how to do that.

In *Laudato Sí*, Pope Francis quotes Pope Benedict XVI as saying something basically the same:

The external deserts in the world are growing because the internal deserts have become so vast.

What kind of spiritual and cultural transformation can help us respond effectively to our contemporary climate crises? In the [Laudato Sí Action Platform](#), launched at the Vatican during [Laudato Sí Week](#) in 2021, the Catholic community identified seven practical goals. One of them is foundational and is important for our reflection and prayer here and into the future: **Ecological Spirituality**.

Ecological Spirituality.

This goal aims to recover a religious vision of Creation and urges more contact with Nature in a spirit of wonder, praise, joy, gratitude. Actions could include Creation-centered

liturgical celebrations, ecological retreats and formation programs, praying in Nature.

Does this type of action speak to my/our lives at this time? Do actions like these resonate with my/our sense of calling at this time? Can they help us and our communities face and overcome the "selfishness, greed and apathy," the "internal deserts," the sources of ecological destruction and ecosystem crisis that "come from within," from our hearts? Are there other people, communities, networks with whom I/we can join in this type of action?

How can we help each other grow in what Pope Francis calls "integral ecological conversion?" Can we trust that God is with us in these times, working to save us and our planet?

How are we being invited, as individuals, as communities, to share in this saving work? What is God inviting us to do?

There is a basic principle of spirituality implicit here. When we experience God as loving us and surrounding us with the gifts of Creation, stirring wonder, gratitude, and joy in our hearts, those are the times that we will find the peace and security to face and acknowledge our sinfulness and to want to begin significant change.

How might we embrace a deeper ecological spirituality? How might we incorporate

that spirit more in our personal prayer? In our liturgies? In the retreats and formation programs available to us? Do the awesome beauty and greatness of Creation and the generosity of God open us to our failures to care for Creation? How do they invite us to change how we live?

In the second reading, James reminds us that God has planted the word of truth in us that is able to save us. But we must be willing to welcome this word humbly and act on it, “be doers of the word and not hearers only.”

Actions must clearly be personal and involve our families and faith communities, as the questions above indicate. But climate is global and the crises we face are institutional and global. Responses must be national, regional, and global as well. What further actions might we take to foster and take part in larger efforts to address climate change?

This year, the Season of Creation ecumenical steering committee is recommending a common Global Advocacy Action as part of the Laudato Sí Action Platform goal of **Community Engagement**.

Community Engagement and Participatory Action.

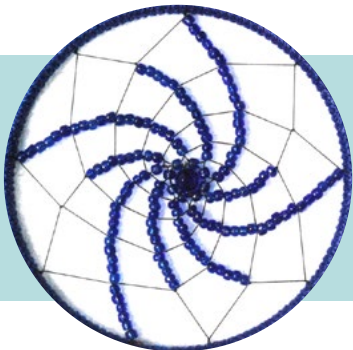
This goal seeks community engagement and action to develop cultures and policies that protect our common home and all who live in and on it. Actions could include advocacy, people’s campaigns, engaging decision makers and encouraging rootedness in local communities.

Does this type of action speak to my/our lives at this time? Do actions like these resonate with my/our sense of calling at this time? Are there other people, communities, networks with whom I/we can join in this type of action? Have some of our organizations or communities given us helpful examples that can give others hope and encourage their participation?

The particular Community Engagement action proposed for this year is based on the global scientific consensus that the human community must move to clean, renewable energy and phase out carbon emissions as soon as possible. This is essential in order to prevent the catastrophic climate change that threatens the survival of the intricately interconnected and interdependent web of life of which humanity is but one strand. It is a step the human community must take for the common good of all.

Phasing out carbon emissions requires the human community to end its dependence on fossil fuels with urgency. There are already more fossil fuels produced and processed than can be used without widespread ecological destruction.

The 2024 Season of Creation recommendation for global Community Engagement calls for a joint Christian advocacy initiative to support the **Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty**. This treaty offers “a concrete, binding plan to end the expansion of new coal, oil and gas projects and manage a global transition away from fossil



"...climate is global and the crises we face are institutional and global. Responses must be national, regional, and global as well."

fuels” in ways that are just and protective for all people impacted by the transition.

Global Advocacy Action

The section on Advocacy in the 2024 Season of Creation Celebration Guide, pp, 23 to 25, recommends a sign-on letter for parishes, faith communities, faith leaders, and other individuals which is available at fossilfueltreaty.org/faith-letter. The Advocacy section includes other useful action recommendations and refers readers to the [resources page of the SeasonofCreation.org](https://resources.page.of.the.SeasonofCreation.org) website as well as to the [Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty website](https://FossilFuelNonProliferationTreaty.website). On the Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty site, there is more information on the treaty, its history, its major pillars and where it is possible for endorsements to be made by national governments, cities, organizations and individuals. All signatures and endorsements will be used to influence decision makers at upcoming United Nations conferences on climate change.

Faith Reflections

Are you among those who believe in God, who through billions of years has evolved Earth as a nurturing home for all creatures, all members of the Earth family?

Are you among those who believe in God who is bringing forth all Creation, cherishing every creature, and inviting us to care for each other wisely and with love?

Are you among those who believe in Jesus, God become flesh and blood, a human part of Earth, who lived and breathed and spoke among us, suffered and died on a cross?

Are you among those who believe in Jesus, who through his dying and rising bears faithful witness to God’s loving care for all human beings and for all Creation?

Are you among those who believe in Jesus, the risen Christ, who is at the heart of the New Creation, reconciling all things to God?

Are you among those who believe in the Holy Spirit who renews life in Creation, groans in empathy with suffering Creation, and is working with us to renew the face of the Earth?

This is our faith. Through it we see God’s revelation emerging in new ways among us. Through it we embrace the promise of God’s saving love and our mission to restore our Common Home. **Amen.**

“This is our faith. Through it we see God’s revelation emerging in new ways among us.”



ECO-MARTYR

Gloria Capitan
(1959-2016) Philippines

EXTINCT SPECIES

Schomburgk's Deer
(declared extinct 2015) Asia



General Intercessions

For ever-deepening trust in the faithful presence and loving work of God in us, among us, and through us, we pray...

For the success of the work of ecumenical and interfaith communities to promote global unity, to stir hope, and to restore Earth as a nurturing home to all its inhabitants, we pray...

That we may take up our prophetic responsibilities in this time of urgent crisis to speak God's Truth to each other and to call each other into ways of living on Earth wisely, sustainably, justly, and reverently, we pray...

That we may grow strong in hope and active in efforts to heal and renew Earth, we pray...

Prayer over the Gifts

Loving Creator God, you inspire awe in our hearts. Through your love this Universe flared forth in fiery birth billions of years ago. Through all time, you have patiently prepared for us these gifts of bread and wine and community. We offer them in gratitude as simple signs of your faithful care for all our needs.

Through them we offer our lives, our talents, and our commitment to care for all in need on planet Earth and to work for the renewal of our Common Home itself. Receive them and transform our gifts and our energies into your true Bread of Life for our world. We ask this in the name of Christ, Jesus. **Amen.**

Prayer after Communion

Gracious, Loving God, we have shared this Eucharist in thanksgiving for your sacred Creation in which we share and where we find our Common Home.

Now may the power of Christ's body and blood reach deep into our hearts, our minds, and our bodies to deepen our hope and stir us to action for the healing and renewal of Earth. We make our prayer in Jesus' name. **Amen.**

Final Blessing

May the Spirit of God, who is above all and in all and through all, fill us with the knowledge of God's faithful presence and healing work on Earth and of the vibrant life of Christ within us. **Amen.**

And may almighty God bless us, God who is our Creator, Jesus the Word of God planted within us, and the Holy Spirit in whom we live and move and have our being now and forever. **Amen.**

"I used to think the top global environmental problems were biodiversity loss, ecosystem collapse and climate change.... But I was wrong. The top environmental problems are selfishness, greed and apathy, and to deal with these we need a spiritual and cultural transformation...."

James Gustave Speth, Environmental Lawyer and Advocate

First Sunday **MUSICAL SELECTIONS**

September 1, 2024 | 22nd Sunday in Ordinary Time

Hymns

E - Entrance | O - Offertory | C - Communion | D - Dismissal
OCP - Oregon Catholic Press | WLP-World Library Publications

- E, O A Place at the Table
Shirley Erena Murray, ©1998 Hope Publishing Co.
- E, O All Things Bright and Beautiful
Cecil F. Alexander
- E All Creatures of Our God and King
Francis of Assisi, tr. By William H. Draper
- E,D Let All Things Now Living
Katherine K. Davis, ©1939 E.C. Schirmer Music Co.
- E,D Praise to You, O Christ, Our Savior
©1986 Bernadette Farrell, published by OCP
- O For the Beauty of the Earth
Folliet S. Pierpoint
- O We Give You But Your Own
William W. How
- C Life-giving Bread, Saving Cup
James Chepponis, ©1987 GIA
- C Taste and See
James E. Moore, Jr., ©1983 GIA
- C Take and Eat
James Quinn and Michael Joncas, ©1989 GIA

D God, Whose Giving Knows No Ending
Robert Edwards, ©1961, 1989 Hymn Society.

D Light Dawns on a Weary World
Mary Louise Bringle, ©2002, GIA Publications

Psalm Settings

Psalm 15: The One Who Does Justice,
Owen Alstott, ©1970, 1990 OCP

Psalm 15: The One Who Does Justice,
Paul M. French, ©1999, 2010 WLP

Psalm 15: Those Who Do Justice,
©2005 The Collegeville Composers Group, adm. Liturgical Press

Psalm 15: One Who Does Justice,
Michel Guimont, ©1994, 1998, GIA Publications

Psalm 15: The One Who Does Justice,
Ken Canedo, ©2023 OCP