

# Third Sunday **OF THE SEASON OF CREATION**

September 15, 2024 | 24th Sunday in Ordinary Time

## SCRIPTURES

Isaiah 50:5-9a

Ps. 116:1-9

James 2:14-18

Mark 8:27-35

## Integral Ecological Sign of the Cross

We begin our celebration of the 3rd Sunday of the Season of Creation...

In the name of our Creator God Who, from the death of stars, births new stars and planets and spreads the seeds of life through the Universe,

And of the Word of God spoken into a hostile world, accepting suffering to give hope to all Creation,

And of the Wisdom of God, at work among us calling forth the New Creation. **Amen.**

May the grace and peace of our loving Creator God be with you!

## Introductory Comments

Last Sunday, we heard the encouragement of Isaiah to "Be strong and fear not," relying on God's faithful presence. We were invited to recognize God in the opening of eyes and ears to the crises Earth is suffering. We were encouraged to discern and accept God's invitation to share in the work of saving Earth and all the communities whose home it is.

Today again we hear the call to listen to God's Word coming in the Cry of the Earth and the Cry of the Poor. We are urged to put our faith into action and to expect resistance and suffering, our share in the cross of Christ.

## Penitential Rite Suggestion.

As we begin today, let's enter into the quiet of our spirits, ... conscious of Earth, our home and the home of every other living and inanimate creature we know ... just a dot in the vast expanse of the Milky Way ... the Milky Way itself but a small dot in the vast expanse of the Universe... conscious of the destruction and suffering on Earth from overconsumption, exploitation, poverty, and warming temperatures ... yet home to millions of people rising up to restore, heal, and save our Common Home....

Creator God, we often lose hope in the face of widespread destruction from fires, floods, droughts, violent storms, and other devastation from our changing climate, from the urgency of the needs, and the slowness of our response.

**Creator Spirit of God, have mercy.**

Christ Jesus, You call forth compassion and insist that we must be ready to suffer and sacrifice, taking up our crosses in Your spirit of love and healing forgiveness.

**Word of God, have mercy.**

Holy Spirit of God, You call us to action, to be the voice of the voiceless suffering among us on Earth, our Common Home.

**Wisdom of God, have mercy.**

May God, the Creator of all time and space, Who through the death of a star brought forth the vast Web of Life in which we live, 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 the stars and planets, all the inanimate and living inhabitants of our galaxy and of all Creation, to praise and glorify God.

### Opening Prayer

Loving Creator God, You have been faithful through billions of years, patiently preparing Earth to be the nurturing home for all that dwell on it and in it. As we come to recognize the urgent threats to its well-being from some of the values and actions of our human community, we ask You to deepen our trust in Your faithful love, Your power to save us, and Your work in us, among us, and through us. Send the healing power of Christ. Give us strength of faith and courage to speak Your prophetic Word of truth and transformation, ready to face resistance,

rejection, and suffering with love, creativity, and perseverance.

We make our prayer in the name of Christ Jesus, Your Word, and in the power of the Holy Spirit, the Wisdom at work renewing all things in Creation, now and forever. **Amen.**

### Points for Reflection on the Scriptures

The human community around the world has been growing in recent decades in its consciousness of the increasingly destructive threats from Earth's changing climate. The inadequacy of national responses and commitments, however, is now widely recognized. More dramatic and far-reaching commitments to transformative change are urgent if we hope to avoid catastrophic environmental tipping points in as little as five years or so into the future.

The issues have been highly politicized in nations around the planet and populations are deeply divided. Disinformation and denial

are rampant, especially in wealthy nations, to protect individual and group interests and to resist the global transformations essential to the survival and common good of the planet and all creatures who make their home on it and in it.

**The first reading from Isaiah** today picks up one of the key themes from last week: God's presence and work among us are recognized in the opening of eyes and ears, the loosening of tongues to proclaim God's prophetic Word.

Today's reading is taken from the **3rd Servant Song**. In the verse just before today's passage begins, the Servant of God declares, "God has given me a well-trained tongue, that I might know how to speak to the weary a word that will rouse them." And she/he continues, "Morning after morning God opens my ear that I may hear...."

**In the second reading**, James insists that faith that is not put into action is worthless. Faith without works is dead.



***"Will we adopt, as an international community, the necessary measures to stop the devastation of the environment or will we continue denying the evidence?"*** Pope Francis

In other words, in the context of our current planetary crises, we whose ears have been opened to God's Word in the Cry of the Poor and the Cry of Earth must use our "well-trained tongues" to speak out the prophetic Word we have received. How might we take up the opportunities God provides us each to forward the healing and saving of Earth and all its communities?

Do I, do we as communities have a sense of the prophetic Word given to us? How could I/we put that prophetic Word into action in our world today?

In the **Laudato Si Action Platform**, Catholic communities and people of good will around the world have identified seven practical goals and have begun to articulate actions and transformations that the prophetic Cry of the Poor and the Cry of Earth are calling forth from us, actions for healing our relationships with God, the human family, the community of Creation, and Earth itself.

**From Faith into Action.** These goals offer guidance for discerning our effective faith response. Three of the goals were raised for reflection and commitment to action in last Sunday's points on the scriptures: **Ecological Spirituality, Adoption of Sustainable Lifestyles, and Response to the Cry of the Poor.**

Would it be valuable to revisit one or more of those goals, exploring further commitments to action and implementation?

A fourth of the seven goals follows naturally and can help individuals and communities discover important insights and lines of action that can increase the quality and wisdom of their spiritualities, lifestyles, and action responses to those in poverty: **Ecological Education.**

**Ecological Education.** This goal seeks curricular and institutional reform to foster ecological awareness and transformative action. Actions could include ensuring access to education for all, promoting human rights, fostering *Laudato Si* themes, and encouraging ecological leadership and restoration activities.

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?

How might I/we further educate ourselves on the issues and dimensions of the crises we face? What areas or issues stir our curiosity and invite deeper understanding, wiser action?

How might I/we learn about and explore the possibilities for more sustainable lifestyles and alternate approaches to development than the dominant one?

Where can we find education for ourselves and our communities to deepen and expand an ecological spirituality? Who are the best teachers? How can I/we begin?

### **Take up your cross and follow me.**

The second major theme running through today's readings is equally challenging and more disturbing. Those who are chosen to proclaim God's prophetic Word must expect rejection and suffering, perhaps even death.

**The passage from the 3rd Servant Song** in the first reading from Isaiah, immediately after describing God's action to open her/his ears to the prophetic message, goes on to describe the beatings, resistance, and abuse that the Servant endures.

**In the gospel,** Jesus begins teaching his disciples that he too must suffer, be rejected and killed. He rejects Peter's insistence that God would not let that happen to the Messiah. Jesus knew that he was preaching God's prophetic Truth to a divided and hostile social-religious context. His Word threatened the control and social status of those in positions of religious and political power. They would not be able to let him succeed in the Way or the Truth he was proclaiming or the Life of the Kin-dom that he was revealing and calling into being.

Like the Servant of God in Isaiah, Jesus affirms strong faith that God will be present with help and vindication. Jesus insists that he will rise again. The witness of his love and forgiveness

through excruciating suffering and a shameful death, and then of his rising to new, transformed Life would speak more powerfully of God's good news of loving forgiveness.

People around the planet who are raising their prophetic voices for Care of Earth and Care of the Poor in these times are enduring the resistance, persecution, suffering, and death we hear about here. They make up a community of the human martyrs of this age, joining the plants, animals and other species suffering extinction from the effects of humanly-generated climate change.

These human martyrs have numbered between 100 and 200 each year in the last two decades and represent all major areas of the planet. A few of their pictures appear in these pages as powerful witnesses calling us all to the seriousness of our mission and to courage and hope. More on each of them and links to

additional information can be found in the Appendix on eco-martyrs and extinct species at the end of this booklet.

**The Psalm** featured in today's liturgy offers the perfect prayerful expression of the faith of both the Servant and of Jesus. It expresses gratitude for God's mercy in saving the Servant in the past and reaffirms the belief that she/he will walk again with God in the land of the living.

What do these scriptures say to communities being urgently called to speak out and work to save Earth as a nurturing home for all its creatures in such a deeply divided and conflictive time in human history?

Are there responses that I/we fear, that make me/us hesitate or hold back from the urgent prophetic mission before us? What are they?

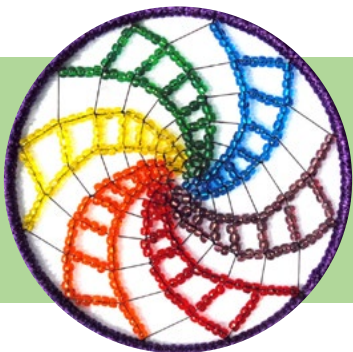
What groups in my/our context will resist the call to what Pope Francis describes as an

integral ecological conversion? What groups/individuals will reject and push back against actions I/we are feeling called to take as expressions of our faith?

Even when there is little chance of physical harm, do I/we fear the hardships that may be involved in speaking out publicly and embracing the transformations in my/our ways of living that an integral ecological conversion will call us to?

Does our faith in God's presence and faithful protection reflect the faith of the Servant in Isaiah and of Jesus? Can we pray in the spirit of the psalm in gratitude for God's mercy and faithful presence to us in our lives, drawing strength and trust from our experiences?

Am I/Are we ready to speak out and stand with vulnerable communities under attack for their work and witness for eco-justice? Indigenous communities? Communities of



***“Here I want to recognize, encourage and thank all those striving in countless ways to guarantee the protection of the home which we share.”***

*Pope Francis, Laudato Si', #13*

the poor and communities of color resisting environmental racism?

Am I/Are we conscious of those who have been killed or have suffered great violence for their work responding to the Cry of Earth and the Cry of the Poor? Who are these prophets in our region of the planet? How do their courage and witness affect me/us? How can it inspire and encourage us to express our faith in God's mission to us to heal Earth in urgent action?

Can we call upon their presence in the communion of saints to support and guide us?

### Faith Reflections

Are you among those who believe in God, Who births all created things, renews all things, and cherishes all things with love?

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

Are you among those who believe in God, Who opens the ears and frees the tongues of those called to be Servants of the New Creation among us in these times?

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, Who accepted rejection, suffering and death

on a cross, a faithful witness to God's call to loving care for all human beings and healing restoration 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, renewing all Creation, and filling the Universe?

Are you among those who believe in the Holy Spirit, Who renews life in Creation, groans in empathy with a suffering Creation, and waits, working with us, for the rebirth of Creation?

Are you among those who believe that with Christ and in the Holy Spirit we will rise to celebrate the New Creation?

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 the household of Creation. **Amen.**

### General Intercessions

For ever-deepening trust in the faithful presence and loving work of God in us, among us, and through us to respond effectively to the Cry of the Earth and the Cry of the Poor, we pray...

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

For the urgent, generous, and effective response of the global community in the ongoing United Nations conferences on biodiversity and climate change, 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...

### Prayer over the Gifts

Loving Creator God, from the explosive death of a star You planted the seeds of life on Earth. Through vast periods of time, You have prepared and given us these gifts of bread and wine and so much more to share. 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. Guide us in working for the restoration of our Common Home itself. Receive 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 heal our wounds, to open our eyes, our ears, and our hearts. Strengthen and protect us in the prophetic mission to heal and renew all of Earth's communities that You have entrusted to us. We make our prayer in the name of Jesus and in the power of Your Holy Spirit where we live and move and have our being, now and forever. **Amen.**

### Final Blessing

We are blessed with the great gift of Creation and with God's patience and forgiveness for our failures to care for it wisely and lovingly.

May our Creator God bless us all with deep, contemplative gratitude for the beauty and richness of Creation. **Amen.**

May Christ Jesus bless us with the courage to speak the prophetic Word entrusted to us. **Amen.**

May the Spirit of Wisdom bless us with patient understanding and forgiveness with each other. **Amen.**

May our Loving God bless us all, God who is our Creator, Jesus, our Brother, and the Holy Spirit in whom we live and move and have our being now and forever. **Amen.**

***"You have the bullet ...  
I have the word. The  
bullet dies when  
detonated, the word  
lives when spread."***

Berta Cáceres



#### ECO-MARTYR

**Berta Cáceres**  
(1971-2016) Honduras

#### EXTINCT SPECIES

**Golden Toad of Costa Rica**  
(declared extinct 2020) South America



# Third Sunday **MUSICAL SELECTIONS**

September 15, 2024 | 24th Sunday in Ordinary Time

## Hymns

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

- E For the Beauty of the Earth  
Folliet S. Pierpoint
- E Journey of Faith  
Delores Dufner, © 2012 Sisters of St. Benedict, pub. by WLP
- E,D God Who Stretched the Spangled Heavens  
Catherine Cameron, ©1967 Hope Publishing Co
- O,D Here I Am, Lord  
Daniel L. Schutte, ©1981 OCP
- O,D Take Up Your Cross  
Charles W. Everest
- O When We Are Living /Pues Si Vivimos  
Roberto Escamilla, ©1989 United Meth. Pub. House
- O,C Christ Has No Body Now But Yours  
Teresa of Ávila/Stephen C. Warner, ©2003 WLP
- C Gift of Finest Wheat  
Omer Westendorf ©1977 Archdiocese of Phila., Internat.  
Liturgy Pub.
- C One Bread, One Body  
© 1978 John B. Foley, SJ. Published by OCP.

- D O God, Our Help in Ages Past  
Isaac Watts
- D Stewards of Earth  
Omer Westendorf, ©1984 World Library Publications

## Psalm Settings

- Psalm 116: I Will Walk Before the Lord  
Owen Alstott, ©1977, 1990, OCP.
- Psalm 116: I Will Walk Before the Lord  
Kathleen Harmon, ©2013, 2014 by GIA Publications, Inc.
- Psalm 116: I Will Walk Before the Lord  
©2016 Casey McKinley, published by OCP
- Psalm 116: I Will Walk Before the Lord  
©2002 Randall DeBruyn, published by OCP.
- Psalm 116: I Will Walk Before the Lord in the Land of the Living  
Howard Hughes, ©1994 WLP