

# Fourth Sunday OF THE SEASON OF CREATION

September 22, 2024 | 25th Sunday in Ordinary Time

## SCRIPTURES

Wis. 2:12, 17-20

Ps. 54:3-8

James 3:16-4:3

Mark 9:30-37

## Integral Ecological Sign of the Cross

We begin our celebration of the 4th Sunday of the Season of Creation...

In the name of our Creator God Who gave birth to all Earth's living things, providing them a home in Earth's nurturing, supportive lands and seas,

And of the Word of God speaking into the world visions of true human greatness in service,

And of the Wisdom of God guiding every creature in keeping Earth alive and whole. **Amen**

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

## Introductory Comments

In today's readings, we are given a sense of the destructive power of passions, divisions, jealousies, greed, and competition, both for people and, in this Season of Creation, for Earth itself and all Earth inhabitants. This destructive dynamic contrasts sharply with what the Letter of James calls "the Wisdom from above," a wisdom that embraces the importance of turning our competitive energies to true service of the least among us and the Creation of which we are a part.

## Penitential Rite Suggestion

So, as we begin, let's enter into the quiet of our spirits ... conscious of God's gift of Earth, the nurturing home of such rich diversity of life, ... conscious of its destruction and suffering from overconsumption, exploitation, and warming

temperatures ... yet home to millions of people rising up to restore, heal, and save our common home....

Creator God, we have become alienated from each other and from Earth and viewed this planet as disposable, a source of endless resources.

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

Christ Jesus, the human family has polluted Earth's air, land, and waters, made countless species extinct, turned our greed into global warming, devalued human life, and loved what was called "progress" more than the planet and each other.

**Word of God, have mercy.**

Holy Spirit of God, You are at work in us and among us now in these times, teaching us of Your presence in Earth, calling us to take part in Your New Creation.

**Wisdom of God, have mercy.**

May God, the Creator - Who birthed life from the seas and drew it forth to increase and evolve and fill Earth, its sacred home, -- have mercy on us, free us from our sins, and guide us into the fullness of divine Life. **Amen.**

**Gloria:** The Word of God that flared forth nearly 14 billion years ago, unfolding into the vast beauty and expanse that we know as the created Universe today, reveals to us a God of unimaginable Beauty, Creativity, and Vibrancy of Life and Love. Take a moment to contemplate our reality and ask for conscious awe. ... And then let's join our voices with all Creation to sing our praise to 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 Earth's well-being from the values and actions of our human community, deepen our longing for the true wisdom "full of mercy and good fruits" that will bring the change and healing that Earth and we so urgently need.

Protect us from all who would resist our efforts to care for Earth. Stir in us Christ's passion for the greatness of service, service of all people, of all creatures, and of our Common Home. And give us strength of faith and courage to speak Your prophetic Word of Truth and service, 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

**In the reading from the Book of Wisdom,** the wicked are preparing to torture and kill the just one whom they experience as a living condemnation of their ways. They tell themselves, "If the just one be the son of God, God will defend him." This is the assumption that Peter made in last Sunday's gospel, the assumption which Jesus rejected, telling Peter

that he was thinking not as God does but as humans do. [Mark 8:27-35]

Hearing this in the Season of Creation raises a disturbing question. If God does not intervene to save God's beloved sons or daughters from suffering and death, could it true that God will not protect Earth either, no matter how precious it is, from the destructive effects of humanity's actions? God is certainly not protecting people from martyrdom who are working to defend Earth. The eco-martyrs highlighted throughout this resource show that. But what of Earth herself?

The warnings of scientists about the devastation that would come from the dangerous tipping points in the near future because of climate change press that question upon us. From what we are already seeing in more devastating storms, heat waves, droughts, fires, floods, the looming threat of dramatic sea level rise, the increasing frequency of extinctions of species globally, and the continuing rise of average annual global temperature, there is no denying that the risks and threats are real. And it is hard to imagine the extent of their widespread destructive power.

Could Earth be facing what Jesus was trying to teach his apostles in today's gospel: "I will be handed over to people who will kill me..."? From the evidence of the five great extinctions etched in our planetary history and the mysterious remnants of vast lost civilizations of the past, Earth has and could again endure vast and terrible death.

That history also bears witness that Earth could rise again, but that "resurrection" would, without doubt, as it has in past recoveries from major extinctions, take thousands and tens of thousands if not millions of years.

**The reading from the Letter of James** in today's liturgy warns of the destructiveness of selfish competitive patterns of action. Those are the behaviors that Pope Francis identified in *Laudato Si'* as driving the destructive dynamics now threatening the life of the planet, including the human community. The global economy is structured on competition that drives consumption and requires constant economic growth on a planet with limited resources. Recall that less than two months ago on August 1st Earth Overshoot Day was commemorated, highlighting the fact that the human community had consumed in just 7 months the renewable resources that it will take the planet a full year to replenish. And Earth Overshoot Day is coming earlier every year.

Those economic systems, structures and patterns of living are also the drivers of growing inequality around the planet that promises increasing social crises and conflict. When the average worker for a major corporation in a wealthy nation makes about \$28,000 a year while its CEO makes \$28,000 every nine seconds, social crisis seems inevitable. While that may be an extreme example, the competitive structures of the global economy are aggravating what Pope Francis has described as one complex and interrelated global crisis.

**Finally, in the gospel,** Jesus catches the Twelve arguing among themselves, competing to be recognized as the greatest in the group. Most all of us have to acknowledge a competitive streak in ourselves. It may show itself in different situations and ways. Some people's competitive juices flow when the issue is recognition. Some instinctively compete for power and control. The economy is driven when people compete for wealth. Others compete to be most helpful....

What is worth noting in this gospel passage is that Jesus does not tell the Twelve to stop competing. The drive to compete can provide powerful energy to drive action. Jesus tells them that his disciples need to channel their competitive energies into service, service of the least.

**"Faith without works is dead."**

The spiritual work coming out of this Sunday's reflection certainly should include continuing and deepening attention to the Laudato Si' Action Platform's goal of **Ecological Spirituality** that we looked at the 1st Sunday.

What competitive challenges do we find ourselves rising to most naturally and spontaneously? Through study and prayerful reflection, how can we best direct our competitive energies, both individually and as communities, to serve Creation and the human community in this time of growing crisis and need?

Will our plans and efforts deepen our personal and community ecological spirituality? Can they help to free us from the competitive dynamics driving climate change and social conflict? How can we nurture growth in mutual service, simplicity of life, and the true wisdom "full of mercy and good fruits" that will bring the change and healing that Earth and we so urgently need?

This reflection also highlights the importance of two other **Platform** goals.

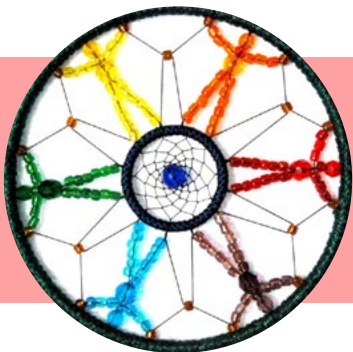
**Response to the Cry of the Earth.**

The severity of the various dimensions and impacts of the changing climate express Earth's great cry for help. This goal invites

action to protect Earth for the wellbeing of all who make it home. Actions toward this goal could include adopting renewable energies, working for carbon neutrality, protecting biodiversity, sustainability, and more - all the ways human creativity can identify or create to address the warming of the planet and the resultant climate change.

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 we move into further action toward this goal now?

**Ecological Economics.** This goal sees the economy as being in service of the whole human community which in turn needs to be in service of the biosphere. Actions could include sustainable production and consumption, ethical investments and divestment from fossil fuels, and prioritizing the care economy and the dignity of workers.



***"Could it be true that God will not protect Earth from the destructive effects of humanity's actions?"***

It promotes transition to economic systems which respect Earth's limits and are not based on competitive consumption, greed and the assumption of unlimited growth.

Does this type of action speak to my/our lives at this time? Does it counter the destructive human passions driving climate change that the Apostle James and Pope Francis warn against? Do actions like these resonate with my/our sense of calling at this time? What are we being called to?

How can we identify and grow in understanding more sustainable economic systems? What are some of their fundamental values and principles? More and more local communities are choosing these systems to transform the ways they are living. What changes would they require of us/our communities in how we live and what we aspire to? Where can we find individuals, communities and networks living them now in practical ways? Are there ways that I /we can join

in this type of action? How might we move into further action toward this goal now?

### Faith Reflections

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

Are you among those who believe in God, Who nearly 4.5 billion years ago began to form Earth, Who patiently evolved Earth as a nurturing home for all creatures, 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 protect and care for Earth as 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 inviting us to the greatness of service, evolving the New Creation?

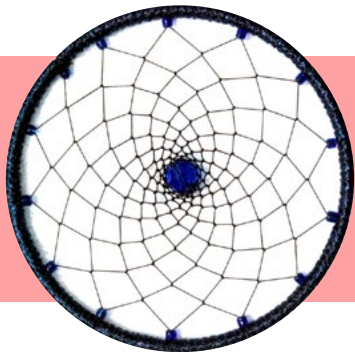
Are you among those who believe in the Holy Spirit, offering the peaceable, gentle Wisdom of God among us?

Are you among those who believe in the Holy Spirit, Who is working now among us to deepen in all peoples a spirit of solidarity dedicated to service for the renewal of Earth as a nurturing home for all?

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, for ever-greater attentiveness to the Wisdom from above guiding us to respond effectively to the Cry of the Earth and the Cry of the Poor, we pray...



***“Ecological Economics promotes transition to economic systems which respect Earth's limits and are not based on competitive consumption, greed, and the assumption of unlimited growth.”***

For the creativity, global solidarity, and courage to address the warming of the planet and the resulting, destructive climate change effectively, we pray...

For those who are today suffering most from the effects of the changing climate and for generous response to their needs from the rest of the human community, 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 inhabitants, 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 with courage, calling 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 billions of years, You have prepared and given us a rich diversity of Earth's gifts to share. From among them all and representing them all, we offer this bread and wine, grateful for Your faithful care for our needs.

Through them too we offer our lives, our talents, and our commitment to care for all in need on planet Earth and to work 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 our care. 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

May God bless us all with deep reverence and love for Creation in all its beauty, intricacy, and lavish goodness and guide us in caring for it wisely and well...

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



#### ECO-MARTYR

**Dorothy Stang, SNDdeN**  
(1931-2005) United States

#### EXTINCT SPECIES

**Po'ouli**  
(declared extinct 2019) Hawaii, USA



# Fourth Sunday **MUSICAL SELECTIONS**

September 22, 2024 | 25th Sunday in Ordinary Time

## Hymns

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

- E, D God, Who Stretched the Spangled Heavens  
Catherine Cameron, ©1967 Hope Pub. Co.
- E,D Touch the Earth Lightly  
Shirley Erena Murray, ©1992 Hope Publishing Company.
- E,O,D For the Healing of the Nations  
Fred Kaan, ©1968 Hope Publishing Co
- O For the Fruits of This (All) Creation  
Fred Pratt Green, ©1970 Hope Publishing Co
- O Everything That Has Voice  
Shirley Erena Murray, ©2003 Hope Publishing Co.
- O The Thirsty Cry for Water, Lord  
Herman Stuempfle, ©1997 GIA Publications, Inc.
- C Pan de Vida  
Bob Hurd and Pia Moriarty ©1988 by Bob Hurd, pub. by OCP
- C Be Not Afraid  
©1975, 1978 Robert J. Dufford, published by OCP
- D This Is My Song  
Lloyd Stone & Georgia Harkness, ©1964 Lorenz Publishing Co.
- D How Can I Keep From Singing  
Robert Lowry

## Psalm Settings

- Psalm 54: The Lord Upholds My Life  
Owen Alstott, ©1970, 1990, OCP
- Psalm 54: The Lord Upholds My Life  
J. Michael Joncas, ©1989, WLP
- Psalm 54: The Lord Upholds My Life  
Michel Guimont, ©1994, 1998, GIA Publications, Inc.
- Psalm 54: The Lord Upholds My Life  
Stephen Pishner, ©2013, 2014 GIA Publications, Inc.
- Psalm 54: You Alone Are My Help  
Collegetown Composers Group, ©2005 Liturgical Press