



SHOW MERCY TO OUR COMMON HOME

EARTH DAY 2017

In our current global reality, violence is endemic, permeating not only our human relationships, but also our relationships with Earth. Such violence is legitimated and supported by many of our dominant cultural, social and economic beliefs, attitudes and practices that are frequently unconscious or unexamined. In this prayer, we invite you to reflect on these dynamics which undergird the violence being done to our planet, and to embrace a nonviolent, merciful response to Earth and other beings with whom we share our common home.

Opening song (*Choose appropriate music, if desired.*)

Quotations from Pope Francis

Reader: [Our Sister Earth] now cries out to us because of the harm we have inflicted on her by our irresponsible use and abuse of the goods with which God has endowed her. We have come to see ourselves as her lords and masters, entitled to plunder her at will. The violence present in our hearts ... is also reflected in the symptoms of sickness evident in the soil, in the water, in the air and in all forms of life. This is why the earth herself, burdened and laid waste, is among the most abandoned and maltreated of our poor; she “groans in travail.”¹

— *Laudato Si'*, 2

Reader: [A] sober look at our world shows that the degree of human intervention, often in the service of business interests and consumerism, is actually making our earth less rich and beautiful, ever more limited and grey, even as technological advances and consumer goods continue to abound limitlessly. We seem to think that we can substitute an irreplaceable and irretrievable beauty with something which we have created ourselves.

— *Laudato Si'*, 34

Reader: As individuals, we have grown comfortable with certain lifestyles shaped by a distorted culture of prosperity and a “disordered desire to consume more than what is really necessary,”² and we are participants in a system that “has imposed the mentality of profit at any price, with no concern for social exclusion or the destruction of nature.”³ Let us repent of the harm we are doing to our common home.

— *Show Mercy to our Common Home*
Message for World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation, 2016

Personal reflection

- *Where, in your own cultural context, do you perceive beliefs, attitudes and practices that legitimate or support violence to Earth and the Earth community?*
- *In what ways is violence done to Earth violence done to ourselves?*

A Litany of Sorrow

Leader: We have forgotten who we are,
We have alienated ourselves from the unfolding of the cosmos,
We have lost awareness of our common origin, our mutual belonging and a future to be shared,
We have estranged ourselves from our common home.

Response: We have forgotten who we are.

Leader: We have sought only our own security,
We have exploited simply for our own ends,
We have distorted our knowledge,
We have abused our power, doing violence to earth.

Response: We have forgotten who we are.

Leader: Now the land is barren,
And the waters are poisoned,
And the air is polluted.

Response: We have forgotten who we are.

Leader: Now the forests are dying,
And the creatures are disappearing,
And humans are despairing.

Response: We have forgotten who we are.

Leader: We pray for the gift of true repentance,
We pray for mercy and forgiveness,
We pray for strength to change.

Response: May we learn to show mercy to our common home.

— Adapted from “A Litany of Sorrow,” *Interfaith Declarations and Worship Observance, The North American Conference on Religion and Ecology*, Earth Day, 1990

Quotations from Pope Francis

Reader: Many things have to change course, but it is we human beings above all who need to change... . An awareness of the gravity of today’s cultural and ecological crisis must be translated into new habits.

— *Laudato Si'*, 202, 209

Reader: The first step which involves “gratitude and gratuitousness, a recognition that the world is God’s loving gift... . It also entails a loving awareness that we are not disconnected from the rest of creatures, but joined in a splendid universal communion.”⁴... This in turn must translate into concrete ways of thinking and acting that are more respectful of creation.

In the same way, the resolve to live differently should affect our various contributions to shaping the culture and society in which we live... . Economics and politics, society and culture cannot be dominated by thinking only of the short-term and immediate financial or electoral gains. Instead, they urgently need to be redirected to the common good, which includes sustainability and care for creation.

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Reader: The Christian life involves the practice of the traditional seven corporal and seven spiritual works of mercy... . [L]et me propose a complement to the two traditional sets of seven: may the works of mercy also include *care for our common home*.

As a spiritual work of mercy, care for our common home calls for a “grateful contemplation of God’s world”⁵ which “allows us to discover in each thing a teaching which God wishes to hand on to us.”⁶ As a corporal work of mercy, care for our common home requires “simple daily gestures which break with the logic of violence, exploitation and selfishness” and “makes itself felt in every action that seeks to build a better world.”⁷

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Personal reflection

- *In what ways might we unconsciously engage in or support violence to Earth through our daily choices?*
- *To what simple daily gestures that break the logic of violence, exploitation and selfishness will you commit?*

Shared reflection *(if desired)*

Response

Leader: In his first Easter message, Pope Francis proclaimed, “Peace to this our Earth!”
Let us join in that blessing.

Peace to Our Earth

Group 1 Peace to this earth,
This gift of creation,
Which we celebrate
With joy and with reverence.

Group 2 May we take time to see
The radiance of creation,
This gift of light and liquid
And green growth.

Group 1 Peace to this earth;
May we practice nonviolence
Toward our lakes, rivers and seas.
May we renew the living waters
Teeming with life, small and large.
May clean waters quench our deep thirst.

Group 2 Peace to this earth;
May we practice nonviolence
Toward the land, the very ground of life;
May we restore the soil
So its richness can give us and all creatures plentiful food.
May we all be nourished by the fruits of the earth.

Group 1 Peace to this earth;
May we practice nonviolence
Toward air, sky, clouds.
May we respect these gifts
So we can breathe freely in gentle rain.
May the natural world be a safe home for all.

Group 2 Peace to this earth,
Peace to creation,
Which we celebrate
With joy and reverence,
Knowing we hold a fragile world
In our hands.

— Adapted from “Peace to Our Earth” by Jane Deren
Education for Justice website

Closing prayer *(together)*

“O God of the poor,
help us to rescue the abandoned
and forgotten of this earth,
who are so precious in your eyes...

God of love, show us our place in this world
as channels of your love
for all the creatures of this earth,”⁸

God of mercy, may we receive your forgiveness
and convey your mercy throughout our common home.
Praise be to you!
Amen.

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Endnotes

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| 1 | <i>Romans</i> 8:22. | 4 | Pope Francis, <i>Laudato Si'</i> , 220. |
| 2 | Pope Francis, <i>Laudato Si'</i> , 123. | 5 | Pope Francis, <i>Laudato Si'</i> , 214. |
| 3 | Pope Francis, “Address to the Second World Meeting of Popular Movements,” Santa Cruz de la Sierra, Bolivia, 9 July 2015. | 6 | Pope Francis, <i>Laudato Si'</i> , 85. |
| | | 7 | Pope Francis, <i>Laudato Si'</i> , 230-31. |
| | | 8 | Pope Francis, <i>Laudato Si'</i> , 246. |

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