



EARTHday

April 22, 2015

Celebrating Earth's Abundance

Know, O my child, that each thing in the universe is a vessel,
Full to the brim with wisdom and beauty.

Rumi

(Environment: In the center of the prayer space, place a basket or bowl containing edible symbols of Earth's abundance from your culture that will be shared during the prayer. Possibilities include bread, berries, grapes, orange segments, dates, nuts, etc. The environment also may include other appropriate symbols of abundance, depending on the hemisphere in which your community lives.)

Invitation to prayer

Leader:

May your summer, O Earth, and your rains,
your autumn, your dewy months, your winters, and your spring,
May these seasons, Earth, that make the year
and day and night
pour their abundance on us.

All:

May the God of the Earth give to us the milk of her blessing.
Bearers of your bounty, may our lives be lives of unceasing thanksgivings
for all the blessings of Earth.

*Atharva-Veda (12.1) Hymn to the Earth, a Hindu sacred text,
excerpted from Earth and All the Stars, 49 and 51*

Opening song: *Choose appropriate music, if desired.*

Reader 1:

We are surrounded by Earth's gifts, immersed in her abundance. Her fruits and vegetables feed us and her beauty arouses our spirit and our intellect, awakens our sense of wonder. This is our home.... Here is where we experience life, not an interpretation of life but life itself, the same energy force that brought the world into being. Here is where we experience the Divine.

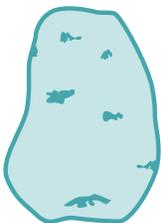
The human in the Universe, 55

Reader 2:

I, the fiery life of divine essence, am aflame beyond the beauty of the meadows, I gleam in the waters, and I burn in the sun, moon, and stars. With every breeze, as with invisible life that contains everything, I awaken everything to life.... I am the breeze that nurtures all things green. I encourage blossoms to flourish with ripening fruits. I am the rain coming from the dew that causes the grasses to laugh with the joy of life.

Hildegard of Bingen

Brief pause for reflection



Reader 1:

This home is inhabited by mountains, by seas, by lakes, by forests, by deserts, by bogs. It is so full of every sound and colour and texture that we can imagine. In fact, we cannot imagine beyond what Earth gives us to work with. It is her colour and sound that activates our own minds.

This home is laden with fruits and berries and vegetables, with plants and herbs and trees. They reproduce and reproduce and pleasure our food with their scent and colour and taste. All we know is around us, filling the skies and rivers.

The human in the Universe, 56

Reader 2:

Your gracious God is bringing you into a good land, a land with flowing streams gushing out into the valleys and hills. God is leading you to a land full of wheat and barley, of vine and fig trees and pomegranates, a land of olive trees and honey. It is a land where you will eat bread without scarcity, where you will lack nothing, a land whose stones are iron and from whose hills you may mine copper. You shall eat your fill and bless your God for the good land the Holy One has given you.

Deuteronomy 8:7–10

Brief pause for reflection

Reader 1:

The world is far, far greater than human need and desire, and abundance is the characteristic that begins to be revealed as we open ourselves to life and how it is lived beyond us.

The human in the Universe, 56

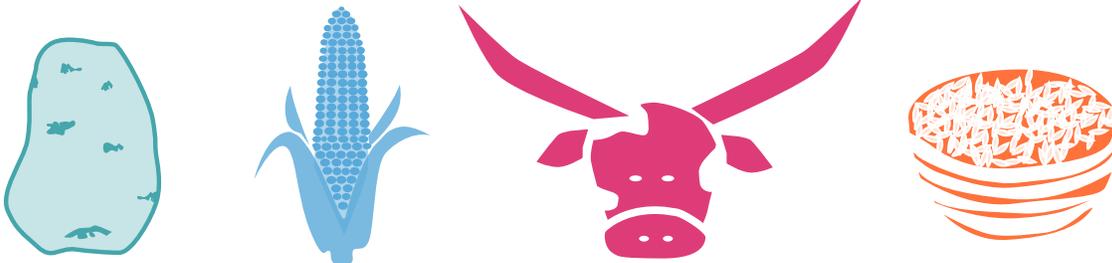
Reader 2:

And yet, we often take this abundance for granted — or worse, forget or deny it. Today, on Earth Day, let us renew our awareness of this planet's abundant gifts and the graciousness of their Giver.

Individual reflection: *Instrumental background music, if desired*

Suggestions:

- What feelings and responses does a sense of abundance elicit in you?
- How can we nurture a conscious awareness of the abundance that surrounds and sustains us? In ourselves? In others?
- How might living from a stance of abundance change our lives? Our societies?

Group sharing

Leader:

Abundance is the fruit of sharing and reciprocity throughout the Earth community. As a sign of our commitment to building a society where these are the norms, let us gratefully share Earth’s abundance with one another now and commit to somehow giving back to Earth today.

Reflectively pass and share the edible symbols of abundance.

Closing

Leader:

You brought us into this life as into an enchanted paradise. We have seen the sky, like a deep blue cup ringing with birds in the azure heights. We have listened to the soothing murmur of the forest and the sweet-sounding music of the waters. We have tasted fragrant fruit of fine flavor and sweet-scented honey. How pleasant is our stay with you on Earth: it is a joy to be your guest.

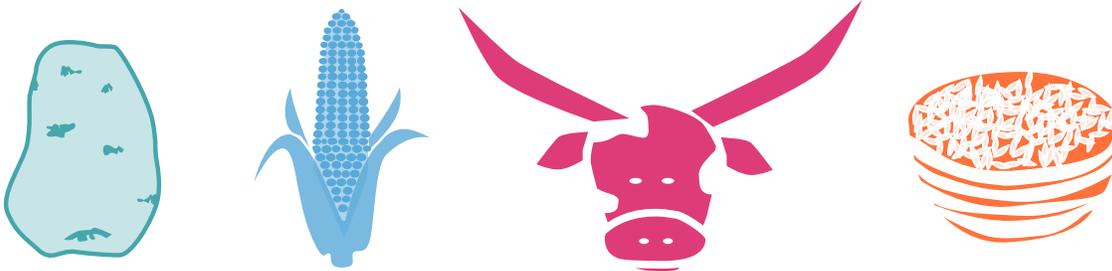
All:

Glory to you for the feast day of life,
Glory to you for the perfume of lilies and roses,
Glory to you for each different taste of berry and fruit,
Glory to you for the sparkling silver of early morning dew,
Glory to you, O Holy One, from age to age!

Amen.

*“Praise of God’s Creation in Chants and Echoes,” an Orthodox Creation Liturgy,
excerpted from Earth and All the Stars, 273*

Closing song: *Choose an appropriate song, if desired.*



References:

Brennan, Niamh. *The human in the Universe* (Lima, Ohio: Wyndham Hall Press, 2014).
“Praise of God’s Creation in Chants and Echoes.” *Earth and All the Stars: Reconnecting with Nature Through Stories, Poems, Hymns, and Prayers from the World’s Great Religions and Cultures*, edited by Anne Rowthorn (Novato, Calif.: New World Library, 2000).

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Symbols of Abundance

The visual elements of this prayer service represent symbols of abundance that are culturally significant in various parts of the world. Each one tells a story of God's gifts to Earth and her people.

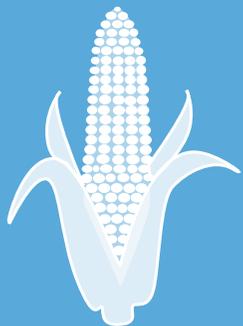


Africa (Uganda): Cow

The cow is culturally rooted in Uganda and many other African countries. One who has cows has wealth, abundance and a promising future. If one gives a cow it is a sign of respect, love, trust and belonging — emphasizing a strong relationship. Cows are given to young couples on their wedding day to wish them wealth and prosperity. In 2011, a gift of cows marked the reconciliation between Yoweri Museveni, president of Uganda, and Paul Kagame, president of Rwanda.

Asia (Bangladesh): Rice

There is a saying in Bangladesh: *Machhe bhate bangali*, which translates as, “Fish and rice make a Bengali.” Rice attends a Bengali from birth to after death. It is first fed to a 6-month-old in *Annaprashon*, the Rice Ceremony, and in the last rites “rice-ball offerings,” *Pindodaan*. Rice is an essential symbol of life and abundance.



North America (Mexico): Corn

For Mexicans, maize is not a crop but a deep cultural symbol intrinsic to daily life that dates back thousands of years. The image and shape of maize is a ubiquitous component of architecture and crafts. Spiritually, physically and economically, corn sustains indigenous peoples. (Adapted from “The People of the Corn,” www.culturalsurvival.org.)

South America (Peru): Potato

In Peru there are more than 3,800 potato varieties. The existence of these varieties can be attributed to the high value the Quechua people place on their cultural traditions and biological diversity. There are nearly as many uses for potatoes as there are varieties, from food preparation to the treatment of illness, and for use in various cultural practices. Ceremonies surrounding the planting and harvesting of potatoes are a traditional way of showing respect to Earth and to the crops that sustain these communities. (Adapted from “The Quechua: Guardians of the Potato,” www.culturalsurvival.org.)

