

A Prayer Service for Earth Day

Leader: Come, let us praise God for the gift of Creation.

All: Creator God, we praise you for the grandeur of the universe.
 We praise you for the gift of this Earth.
 We praise you for the land, and we praise you for the seas.
 We praise you for the great miracle of teeming life on our prolific planet.
 We praise you for the cycle of growth and for the beauty of bursting blooms in the Spring time.
 We praise you green growth of summer and for the holy harvest in the Fall.
 We praise you for the infinity of different creatures on the land and in the sea, each unique in its own way, each fitting into the complex ecosystems you have gifted us with, each dependent on each other and the whole.
 We praise you, our Creator. Grace us with a sense of our responsibilities to preserve and protect your precious gift, This Garden, this Earth.
 We praise you, Creator God, and we offer you our hearts and hands for the preservation of your Creation.



Reflections:

Because the earth was entrusted to human stewardship, the natural world is not just a resource to be exploited but also a reality to be respected and revered as a gift and trust from God. It is the task of human beings to care for, preserve and cultivate the treasures of Creation. . . The natural resources of Creation need to be protected against the harmful policies of some industrialized nations and increasingly powerful transnational corporations which can lead to deforestation, despoliation of the land, pollution of rivers by mining, over-fishing of profitable species, or fouling the fishing-grounds with industrial and nuclear waste. We must respond to the concerns of scientists about the warming of the global commons; the world's countries must work together, taking the necessary and responsible steps to curb this trend, for the good of all peoples and of Creation itself.

-Pope John Paul II, November 22, 2001

The brutal consumption of creation begins where God is not, where matter is henceforth only material for us, where we ourselves are the ultimate demand, where the whole is merely our property and we consume it for ourselves alone ... I think, therefore, that true and effective initiatives to prevent the waste and destruction of creation can be implemented and developed, understood and lived, only where creation is considered as beginning with God.

-Pope Benedict XVI, August 2008

At its core, global climate change is not about economic theory or political platforms, nor about partisan advantage or interest group pressures. It is about the future of God's creation and the one human family. It is about protecting both "the human environment" and the natural environment. It is about our human stewardship of God's creation and our responsibility to those who come after us. With these reflections, we seek to offer a word of caution and a plea for genuine dialogue as the United States and other nations face decisions about how best to respond to the challenges of global climate change. . . All nations share the responsibility to address the problem of global climate change. But historically the industrial economies have been responsible for the highest emissions of greenhouse gases that scientists suggest are causing the warming trend. Also, significant wealth, technological sophistication, and entrepreneurial creativity give these nations a greater capacity to find useful responses to this problem. Energy resource adjustments must be made both in the policies of richer countries and in the development paths of poorer ones.

-U.S.C.C.B, June, 2001



Litany for a Changing World

Reader One: The Earth's climate is changing and around the world we see the signs of the times.
The seas are in peril and the land is subjected to abuse.

Response: God, give us the grace to help heal this world and to reverse the effects of climate change.

(Repeat Response after each reader.)

Reader Two: Everywhere on Earth, ice is changing. New studies show that the soot from stoves in developing countries is second only to CO₂ in the damage it causes, particularly in the Arctic and Himalayas. Most central and eastern Himalayan glaciers could virtually disappear by 2035.

Reader Three: Arctic sea ice is not only thinning but also decreasing in area. NASA images from 2009 show that the ice is disproportionately thin, making it more vulnerable to melting. Arctic sea ice coverage has declined by 40% in just the last five years.

Reader Four: Spring ice breakup in the Northern Hemisphere now occurs 9 days earlier than it did in the last century, and autumn freeze-up 10 days later, causing the thawing of permanent frost in places such as Alaska.

Reader Five: From the Arctic to Peru, from Switzerland to the equatorial glaciers of Irian Jaya in Indonesia, massive ice fields, huge glaciers, and sea ice are disappearing, effecting animals and humans.

Reader Six: In the Antarctica, the sea ice has shrunk by a fifth, making it more difficult for penguins and birds of the region to survive. In Canada, the winter ice melts 2-3 weeks earlier than usual, and polar bears are having difficulty finding enough food.

Reader Seven: In the Great Barrier Reef in Australia, as in many other reefs, the warmer ocean water is destroying coral and other organisms. In the Virgin Islands in the Caribbean, the sea turtles are being effected by the warmer weather and their birth patterns are changing.

Reader Eight: Climate change contributes not only to rising temperatures, but also raises the risk of wildfires. In the next 40 years, major changes in wildfire patterns may increase the risks in the Western U.S., Scandinavia, Northern Russia, and the Tibetan plateau.

Reader Nine: In poor countries in Africa, such as Kenya and Tanzania, warmer weather has increased mosquitoes which carry malaria. African nations say that they will need \$267 billion per year to fight and adapt to the effects of climate change. People in these nations live in vulnerable areas where they have few if any resources to cope with the effects on their own.

Closing Prayer: The seas are weeping and the land is in grief. But we are called to be signs of hope in this world, to be co-creators with God of a global community where the earth is respected and cherished. We ask our Creator to give us the grace of discernment and to guide us as we become active members of the human family, working with our sisters and brothers to change the destructive trends that are causing global warming. We have been given a great gift, the richness of Creation, and as we celebrate the earth on this day, we pledge to protect this gift of God. Hear us Creator, and be with us every day as we seek to restore and preserve your Creation. Amen.

Factual data from National Geographic web site articles, www.nationalgeographic.com

