



ST COLUMBANS MISSION SOCIETY
Online Resource

A Catholic Season of Creation Sundays of September 2014

This resource explores the existing Catholic Lectionary to help us remember God's seamless gift of Life in all Creation – people within the natural world. It grows out of an Adelaide based ecumenical work led by Scripture scholar Dr Norman Habel.

Called 'A Catholic Season of Creation' it has four leaflets for the four Sundays of September. It explores the Sunday Lectionary and the gifts of forests, land, wilderness and water to help us hear the voice of earth as a voice of God.

Our Sunday worship is a great place to start if we want to grow a better recognition of the natural world in God's plan of salvation in Jesus Christ. Linking the insights of ecology with Scripture deepens our appreciation of the way God acts in our lives.

The resource will be sent electronically to Catholic parishes and other communities to use as an A3 bulletin cover. Parts of the resource can be used according to local needs.

The doctrine of Creation has almost disappeared from theology ... a new understanding of the inseparability of Creation and Redemption are of supreme importance.
Pope Benedict XVI, Bresanone 06.08.2008

The Resource is free and online. However, a donation to the work of the Columban JPIC Office would be appreciated.

There are other weak and defenceless beings who are frequently at the mercy of economic interests.... creation as a whole.
Pope Francis Joy of the Gospel #215



A Catholic Season of Creation – Sundays of September

23rd Sunday of Ordinary Time - September 7th 2014

NO. 1

Forest Sunday

The virtuous flourish like palm trees, they grow tall like cedars of Lebanon

Ps 92:12

We believe in God, Creator of Heaven and Earth

Season of Creation

Rev Dr Norman Habel inspired an ecumenical group in Adelaide to initiate the Earth Bible Project and develop a Season of Creation for worship. It runs during the month of September leading up to celebration of the Feast of St Francis of Assisi October 4. Each of the four Sundays focuses on a particular gift. <http://seasonofcreation.com>

1. Forest
2. Land
3. Wilderness
4. Water

The group married Scripture with scientific insights about the natural world to rediscover the hidden voice of the Earth in the Bible. They developed a three year cycle of Scriptural Readings as a Creation Season Lectionary to help communal prayer. Catholic liturgists have yet to do this.

This resource explores the existing Catholic Lectionary to help us remember the seamless gift of God-given Life in all Creation – people within the natural world. We confess our arrogant abuses and make the search for God present. There needs to be an ecological conversion.

The Columban Centre for Peace Ecology and Justice previously created the 'Stations of the Forest' and 'Grace of Earth' linking Catholic faith and ecology.

Hymns

In 2004 Norman Habel published Songs to celebrate with Creation. www.willowconnection.com.au He has put ecologically aware words to familiar hymns and challenges us to try our creative hand.

- Be still and know that I am God
- Cedars of Lebanon
- Oh Jesus crucified On the Cross

Dismissal

Remembering that God has drawn us into diverse cycles of life, and having celebrated with thanks that we are part of the earth community, let us go forth to find God given life in all creation, in the forests, striving to care and speak for them as brother and sister.

Lectionary and Worship Phrases (Ezekiel; Ps 94; Romans; Matthew)

Appointed you as sentry
Warn them in my name
Listen to his voice
Harden not your hearts
Kneel before the God who made us
They tried me even though they saw my work
Love your neighbour as yourself

The Good News of reconciliation he has entrusted to us
Go and have it out with him
The evidence of two or three witnesses
Like the deer that longs for running streams
Your word and your sacrament give us food and life
Where two or three meet in my name, I shall be there.



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Be praised, my Lord, through Brothers
Wind and Air, and clouds and storms,
and
all the weather, through which
you give your creatures sustenance.

St Francis of Assisi

Greeting

Today the Readings invite us to celebrate the Grace of being drawn into the circle of God given Life. We remember that the natural world begins that cycle. We are gifted to be members of the earth community and today let us give thanks particularly for trees, our brothers and sisters in creation, giving the oxygen we breathe. They provide wood for our houses and are home for wildlife. But let us also remember the times we have misused the forests in their diversity, a sign of how we have wronged other people in the cycle of life, and ask forgiveness.

Prayers of the Faithful

- That we will care for the diversity of forests as habitat for a diversity of plants and animals.
- That we will work to stop international debt forcing countries into unsustainable development and their citizens becoming environmental refugees.
- That we will not take the gift of clean air and clean water for granted but work to help the forests perform their natural services of cleansing.

Connecting Justice, Peace and Care for Earth (JPIC)

Jesus taught freedom from oppression and to love the search for the presence of God's reign in our lives and the universe. Since Pope Leo XIII's 1891 letter on the Condition of Workers, church teaching has faced many social issues so that individual compassion flows through to both growing just structures and dismantling the structure of sin. Treating the earth with respect is within this continuum. (*Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church* 2004).

The connection between actions on social justice, growing peace and care for earth means that we cannot properly work for one without caring for all three. Read more on www.columban.org.au Countries often decimate local forest to pay debt. www.jubileeaustralia.org Cutting old growth forests in Australia threatens species biodiversity.

ABC Clips: *A Tree Falls* 8/06/2014 www.abc.net.au

Breath is not only the life that fills the body ... [it is] breath of the universe, a cosmic force ... it symbolises the Holy Spirit who fills all things with love, giving wisdom and joy.

Fr William Johnston

[Humanity] has the right to a safe and healthy environment
Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church #468

Whatever is fragile, like the environment, is defenceless before the interests of a deified market.

Pope Francis,
Joy of the Gospel #56

Lectionary's Hidden Voices

The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy mandated that the treasures of the Bible are to be opened up more lavishly (#51). In 1969 a new order of Readings (Lectionary) was published with a three year cycle of Sunday Readings.

Scripture scholars from around the world aimed to retrieve the hidden voice of the Earth in the Bible. www.flinders.edu.au

The voice of earth, like that of women, has often been ignored and even suppressed. The *Magnificat* is not proclaimed on a Sunday (Luke 1:46 – 56).

Church Teachings

Catholic Earthcare Australia was set up by the Catholic Bishops in 2003. It has initiated many projects – eg. the *Garden Planet*; A Climate Change Conference; Regional Bishops statements; energy efficiency. www.catholicearthcare.org.au



It built on the history of the Bishops' official Social Justice and Charitable agencies www.socialjustice.catholic.org.au/ www.caritas.org.au/ Environmental teaching is often applied through the on-the-ground work of Religious Orders. www.rahamim.org www.edmundrice.org www.earthsong.org International aspects have been promoted by missionary groups www.columban.org.au www.catholicmission.org.au

Ecological Insight

The diversity of Australian forests prompts us to pray. www.columban.org.au Silviculture is the art and science of meeting the diverse needs and values of forest owners and society on a sustainable basis. www.forestry.org.au Sustainability includes issues of clearing rates, forest fragmentation of old growth, biodiversity, habitat for wildlife and regeneration. www.jpe.oxfordjournals.org

[Humanity] has the right to a safe and healthy environment.

Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church #468

Liturgy and natural symbols

The Introduction to the Missal is a rich source of theology. The entire celebration is planned in such a way that it leads to a conscious, active, and full participation of the faithful both in body and in mind, a participation burning with faith, hope, and charity #18. We use material things in our prayer actions to convey sacred mysteries - signs and symbols. The holy oils of anointing; the basic elements of bread and wine bringing spiritual nourishment: these are all gifts of the earth and work of human hands.

What can I do?

Get involved. Join a local group:
Bushcare, community garden,
school greening project.
Pray the Stations of the Forest

A Catholic Season of Creation – Sundays of September

24th Sunday of Ordinary Time - September 14th 2014

NO. 2

Land

I am the Lord who brought you out of Ur of the Chaldeans, to give you this land.

Gen 15:7

Through your closeness to the land you touched the sacredness of human relationship with God

St John Paul II,
Alice Springs 1986

Greeting

Today, the Readings invite us to celebrate the gift of God's forgiveness for when we have pushed the land itself beyond its limits. A sign of God forgiving is the land itself when we have pushed it beyond its limits. Fertile and living soils are a gift to be cherished. As members of the earth community, we ask God to teach us respect for God's design for the land. As we remember the ways we have wronged God's land, we also ask forgiveness for the ways we have wronged those around us.

Prayers of the Faithful

- That we are cautious with biotechnologies to neither pervert nature's evolutionary path nor harm the welfare of farmers and consumers.
- That we support research into alternative ways of sustaining rural communities, creating jobs for young people rather than driving them to suicide.
- That we will commit our nation to lower fossil-fuel use and grow alternative energy sources that sustain this and future generations.

Lectionary and Worship Phrases (Ecclesiasticus; Ps 102; Rm; Mt)

Creator and guide,
Creator of all
Offered his life in the service of all
When you pray your sins will be forgiven
Never forget all God's blessings
As the heavens are high above earth so is his love
The life and death of each of us has its influence on others
Love one another as I have loved you
How often must I forgive my brother if he wrongs me?
I cancelled all that debt of yours when you appealed to me
May the worship of each one here bring salvation to all
May the Spirit guide and direct you in your way.



Creation is not a property, which we can rule over at will; or, even less, is the property of only a few: ... we care for it and we use it for the benefit of all, always with great respect and gratitude.

Pope Francis Audience 21.05.14

Hymns

Songs of Creation has put ecologically aware words to familiar hymns and challenges us to try.

www.willowconnection.com.au

- Fertile land
- Flowers in the desert
- Now thank we all our God

Dismissal

Remembering that God is the creator who actively guides our journey, and having celebrated with thanks that God has given us the power to forgive, let us go forth on our mission to be signs of forgiveness to all people by the way we strive to care for the land which is humanity's common home.

Season of Creation

This Sunday focuses on Land. <http://seasonofcreation.com/> Aboriginal stories speak about our intimate relationship to land: that we belong to country and everything upon it is kin.

The bureau of meteorology recognises the wisdom of the Aboriginal people preserved in their stories that go back to the ice age. www.bom.gov.au

The collective wisdom of nature religions challenges us to go deeper into the mystery of Christ as our fulfilment. That we are part of earth is a revolutionary challenge to people imbued with a modern mind-set.

Connecting Justice, Peace and Care for Earth (JPIC)

Columban JPIC believes that there is an intimate connection between the action of social justice, growing peace and care for earth. We cannot properly work for one without caring for all three.

www.columban.org.au

Even business now uses a triple bottom line to recognise ecological impacts. But this advance is under threat through possible clauses in the Trans Pacific Partnership (TPP) trade negotiations.

www.aftinet.org.au The environmental impact of coal mines and drilling for coal seam gas (CSG) are rightly contested.

ABC clips: Fracking inquiry 28/03/14 www.abc.net.au

Be praised, my Lord, through our
sister Mother Earth,
who feeds us and rules us,
and produces various fruits with
coloured flowers and herbs.

St Francis of Assisi.

The Eucharist is celebrated in order
to offer on the altar of the whole
Earth, the world's weak and suffering
(in the beautiful words of Teilhard de
Chardin).

St John Paul II 1995, Gift and Mystery,
quoted on On Holy Ground p13

Lectionary's Hidden Voices

The revision of the lectionary was mandated by Vatican II. In 1969, a new three year cycle of Sunday Readings was promulgated replacing a one year cycle.

Prophecy is a major part of the Scripture showing the consequences of human action. The voice of Earth as Prophet can be heard in the increasing frequency of severe weather or extinction of species as oceans warm, consequences of our actions. We must not suppress this gift of God the way the Lectionary overlooks the voice of women.

There is no Sunday Reading about Deborah. (Jud 5:1-31) Verses 15-19 about Huldah the prophet are omitted from the Lectionary passage. (2 Kings 22:8-13; 23:1-3)

When the soul
lies down
in that grass
the world is too
full to talk about.

— Rumi



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Church Teachings

Education offices in most states have produced a local edition of *On Holy Ground* www.catholicearthcare.org.au It is of value to all Catholics.

First published by Catholic Earthcare Australia its method is deceptively simple – a vision, the supporting context of Catholic tradition, implementing and sustaining the vision.

Some diocesan offices have set up dedicated eco-centres such as Townsville which 'promotes education for the environment'. www.gumburu.tsv.catholic.edu.au

Ecological Insight

Every few years the government publishes *State of the Environment Australia*. It collates scientific reports for all states to better clarify trends affecting the entire nation. It was last published in 2011.

It begins by saying that Australians cannot afford to see themselves as separate from the environment. It points to areas of progress but warns that changing climate and ocean conditions will require quick and major national responses. Coastal areas will require coordinated management. www.environment.gov.au

What can I do?

Some parishes have formed an environmental group. A group might begin by discussing a local problem or sharing personal environmental concerns, then use the See-Judge-Act method to organise ideas and concerted action.

A Catholic Season of Creation – Sundays in September

25th Sunday of Ordinary Time – September 21st 2014

NO. 3

Wilderness

I will plant trees in the barren desert

Isaiah 41:19

My mother's land can be dry and harsh. Yet every cluster of rocks, is sacred – every feature.

Maisie Cavanagh
(used with permission)

Hymns

Songs of Creation puts ecologically aware words to familiar hymns and challenges us to try.

www.willowconnection.com.au

- Song of the Wild
- Be still and feel the Presence
- For this Great Sunburnt Land

Dismissal

Remembering that God's law of love guides us on our journey and having celebrated God-given power to be generous, let us go forth on our mission to appreciate the land where we live. May we be living signs of giving rather than grasping, sharing the earth with other people and the wildlife which St Francis called our brothers and sisters.

Greeting

Today the Readings invite us to celebrate the grace of being led by God's law of love. God's thoughts are often not ours. Jesus tells the story of the generous landowner who gives equally to all his workers. The land itself, wild parts and settled areas, is an ever present sign of God's generosity. We ask forgiveness for the times we have taken the gift of country for granted and the gift of the people surrounding us.

Prayers of the Faithful

- That we will seek out the spiritual depths of the natural world and be grateful to the scientists who help reveal it to us.
- That we will act to conserve the diversity of species in our country by protecting the diverse habitats that nurture them.
- That we will support government expenditure on ecological research to preserve the gift of wilderness for this and future generations.

Lectionary and Worship Phrases (Is, Ps 144, Phil, Mt)

Guide us as you guide creation according to your law of love
All humanity is in need of your law

My thoughts are not your thoughts, my ways not your ways

The Lord is near to all who call
How good is the Lord, compassionate to all creatures
The kingdom of God is like a landowner
Why be envious because I am generous?
May these gifts become for us the Eucharist of Jesus Christ

May we put into action the saving mystery we celebrate.



According to St Thomas Aquinas and St Bonaventure, the diversity of species represents the wonder and beauty of God that transcends any one creature.

'The Gift of Water' 2004, quoted on
On Holy Ground p12

Season of Creation

The Season of Creation runs during the Sundays of September. Scripture scholars drew on social justice principles. <http://seasonofcreation.com>

Much injustice in western cultures sprang from dualistic philosophy - reason/feeling; civilised/primitive; sacred/profane. Six Eco-justice Principles were created (Readings from the Perspective of Earth ed. NC Habel 2000, *Pilgrim Press*) - a summary:

1. Intrinsic worth – the earth and all its parts has value, not a place of 'exile'.
2. Interconnectedness – a community of mutually dependent life, not merely for our 'use and benefit'.
3. Voice – earth can raise its voice in celebration and against injustice, not a 'passive object'.
4. Purpose – a dynamic cosmic design with all parts contributing to a goal, not aimless.
5. Mutual Custodianship – responsible custodians function as partners to sustain a balanced diversity, not 'rulers'.
6. Resistance – earth actively resists abuse, not a passive 'helpless victim'.

Connecting Justice, Peace and Care for Earth (JPIC)

Columban JPIC believes that there is an intimate connection between the action of social justice, growing peace and care for earth. We cannot properly work for one without caring for all three of Connections. www.columban.org.au

Long term harm can be done through bio-technology. www.madge.org.au Planned conservation benefits Aboriginal peoples, rural communities, tourism and food for the spirit.

ABC clips: *The Wild West* 25 May 2014; *Battle for Pagoda Country* 2 May 2014 www.abc.net.au

Francis of Assisi - For me, he is the man of poverty, the man of peace, the man who loves and protects creation; these days we do not have a very good relationship with creation, do we?

Pope Francis Audience with Media 16.03.13

There are other weak and defenceless beings who are frequently at the mercy of economic interests or indiscriminate exploitation. I am speaking of creation as a whole. We human beings are not only the beneficiaries but also the stewards of other creatures.

Pope Francis, Joy of the Gospel #215

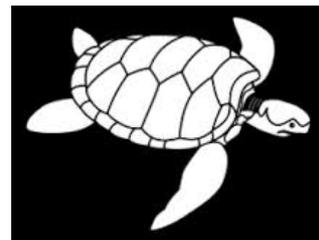
Lectionary's Hidden Voices

Saying *Mother Earth* is a common way of speaking for indigenous peoples. The metaphor captures the reality that the earth embraces and nurtures us, is resilient and persists in caring for us. We must not forget the stories of nurturing and courageous women in the Scriptures.

The midwives Shiphrah and Puah defied the pharaoh's law (Ex 1:8-22). Esther bravely pleaded to save her people from annihilation. (Esther 4:16) Judith was another heroine. (Judith 8:2- 8) These passages are not in the Sunday Lectionary. In a parallel way, we often fall short in recognising Mother Earth.

Church Teaching

In 1971 Pope Paul VI was first to publish on environmental issues (*Eighty Years*). St Pope John Paul II developed Catholic Teaching when he gathered religious leaders to Assisi in 1986. Care for earth was a call common to all humanity and religions. Pope John Paul's II 1990 New Year Message outlined the main issues and he chose St Francis as the Patron Saint of the Environment. He and following Popes have detailed the Catholic call to *ecological conversion* and to fulfil an ecological vocation. Pope Benedict XVI called for 'a new understanding of the inseparability of Creation and Redemption'. (20.08.08)



Jesus was led by the spirit into the desert. Mt 4:1

The vocation of being a "protector", however, is not just something involving us Christians alone; it also has a prior dimension which is simply human.

Pope Francis Homily 19.03.13

Ecological Insight

Wilderness means living plants and animals evolving within their particular geological area. Within its dynamic structure, wilderness carries the cumulative wisdom of millions of years. It is good for the human spirit and the wellbeing of future generations. www.wilderness.org.au www.australianwildlife.org

What can I do?

Strive to bring Earthcare into your Sunday Liturgy. The US Catholic Bishops Climate Covenant publishes a newsletter and worship resources. www.catholicclimatecovenant.org



A Catholic Season of Creation – Sundays of September

26th Sunday of Ordinary Time – September 28th 2014

NO. 4 Rivers

The angel showed me the river of life rising from the throne of God.

Revelation 22:2

Earth is our common home.

Pope Benedict XVI Peace Day Message 2008

Greeting

Today the Readings invite us to celebrate the grace of being filled with the life of God's kingdom. Jesus emptied himself of divinity. We are to empty ourselves of sin so that the integrity of God flows into our world like a river. Losing our integrity makes us like parched deserts. We are sorry for the times we have diminished water as a sign of God's Reign and ask forgiveness for the loss of integrity in our daily living.

Prayers of the Faithful

- That we have wisdom in our efforts to use the Murray Darling, the Great Artesian Basin and all rivers with ecological respect and human equity.
- That we will curb our water-waste and extraction industries will take care not to pollute our rivers and aquifers.
- That Australia will be generous in helping all nations provide clean water for their peoples at reasonable prices.

Hymns

Songs to Celebrate with Creation.

www.willowconnection.com.au James McAuley composed hymns about the Australian land and animals.

- By the Rivers of Babylon
- Song of Waters
- Mother Earth, Our Mother Birthing

Dismissal

We have celebrated with joy that the Reign of God flows like a river of blessing through our lives and our land. Emptied of self-importance and filled with the integrity God gives, let us go forth on our mission to find and proclaim the kingdom wherever we find it knowing that, like water, it is abundant if we look.

Lectionary and Worship Phrases (Ez, Ps 24, Phil, Mt)

Join in the joys of your kingdom
 The beauty of your power
 Upright person renounces integrity to commit sin ... dies
 Renounces sin to become law-abiding ... live
 teach me your paths
 Do not remember the sins of my youth
 Be united in your convictions and united in your love
 Nobody thinks of his own interests first
 Your minds must be the same as Jesus Christ
 His state was divine but he did not cling to his equality with God
 My sheep listen to my voice
 Prostitutes will make their way into the kingdom of God before you
 Accept our offering and make it a source of blessing
 Christ gave up his life for us.



'inter-generational justice' and 'inter-generational solidarity,'
Pope Benedict XVI Caritas in Veritate #51
Peace Message 2010 #8

Season of Creation

The Season of Creation runs during the Sundays of September. Combining the insights of ecology and scriptural scholarship reveals deeper meanings in the Lord's Prayer. (Mt 6:9-13) <http://seasonofcreation.com> Vicky Balabanski says that the Our Father is a window into Christian aspirations as well as a focus for worship. *Readings from the Perspective of Earth* p151f, ed. N C Habel 2000.

The Lord's Prayer was written within an ancient three tiered cosmos. Astromony now shows that the image of a split between heaven and earth is false. God is present and active on earth establishing the Reign of God.

Petitions in the Lord's Prayer are about bread, debt and our being put on trial. Earth is our focus if we believe all people and species need food; our overuse of earth resources put us into a debt which must be paid; un-serviceable loans and over-development test nature's life support systems and put us on trial.

Connecting Justice, Peace and Care for Earth (JPIC)

Columban JPIC believes that there is an intimate connection between the action of social justice, growing peace and care for earth. We cannot properly work for one without caring for all three. Its magazine takes the name *Connections*. www.columban.org.au

Injustice towards the life giving cycle of water on earth takes many forms. Overseas there are Australian companies competing in Chile and elsewhere to control rights over water. In Australia we often mismanage water resources, be it the Murray Darling Basin or the Great Artesian Basin. The impact of mining and the chemicals used in coal seam drilling often pollute rivers or aquifers essential for agriculture.

ABC clips: *The River Lovers* 21/02/14 *Hidden Resource* 3/11/13 www.abc.net.au

Global climate change has already impacted ... of immediate concern are environmental refugees coming from our Pacific neighbours.

Bishop's Committee JDEP 2005
On Holy Ground p15

The Christ we encounter in the Eucharist is the risen one in whom in whom all things were created and are reconciled.

Fr Denis Edwards 2005, quoted on
On Holy Ground p13

Lectionary's Hidden Voices

Earth serves humanity as a teacher and leader. Natural systems of atmospheric winds and ocean currents, changing seasons and slowly evolving genetics are the context for human life. Earth teaches us to plan within its limits, showing what does and does not work.

The Lectionary often leaves out the teaching and leadership role of women. In the continuous reading from Romans, Phoebe as deaconess is omitted. During the Easter Sundays the sending of Mary Magdalene as a messenger to the disciples is left out. (John 20:17) These omissions alert us to look for the teaching role of the earth in God's plans.

Church Teaching and Belief

Worldwide conferences of Catholic Bishops have taught on the connection between faith and environmental issues. The US bishops have set up an office to address climate change. www.catholicclimatecovenant.org

The Federation of Latin American and Caribbean Bishops Conferences have spoken on how genetically modified cropping has caused poverty and damaged health. www.worldmission.ph Religious and Mission groups explore international social and environmental justice. www.columbans.co.uk



We are losing the attitude of wonder, contemplation, listening to creation. The implications of living in a horizontal manner [are that] we have moved away from God, we no longer read His signs.

Pope Francis 5.06.13 World Environment Day

Ecological Insight

The CSIRO has been an iconic research unit for nearly a century. Its science shows that rivers and coastal systems are under pressure from their misuse and climate fluctuations; groundwater dependent ecosystems are at risk. At stake are deteriorating water quality, modified natural habitats, disrupted food webs, and reduced ecosystem services.

The CSIRO's Catchment Biogeochemistry and Aquatic Ecology Research Program collects the scientific knowledge to form management strategies to protect and improve Australia's aquatic systems. Research focuses on how the basic life forms of ecosystems interact in rivers, floodplains, wetlands, water storages and estuaries. www.csiro.au

What can I do?

- Contact your local water management authorities to find out what they do.
- Contact Caritas about overseas water aid projects.
- Find out about Pacific islands losing their fresh water lagoons.