

150 Years of Grace: A Reflection on Creation and Care

July Day of Recollection

"Laudato si', mi Signore..." Praise be to You, my Lord.

For 150 years, our community has stood as a small but steady light-praying, teaching, tending, healing, and witnessing to the quiet, persistent love of God. As we mark this anniversary, we pause to remember that our story is woven into a much larger one: the story of creation itself, the first gift God ever placed in human hands. Creation is not a backdrop to our lives. It is the first Scripture - the original revelation of God's tenderness, order, beauty, and desire for communion. Every sunrise, every birdcall, every season turning is a reminder that God is still speaking, still sustaining, still inviting us into relationship.

Pope Francis: The Poet of Creation

Pope Francis calls us to see creation not as a resource to be used, but as a brother and sister to be loved. He speaks with the heart of a poet and the urgency of a shepherd. He **reminds us that the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor are one cry - a single wound** in the Body of Christ.

Francis invites us to slow down, to notice, to bless, to protect. He urges us to rediscover **wonder-the spiritual posture that opens the heart to gratitude and responsibility. His teaching is not political; it is profoundly sacramental. Creation is holy ground, and we are** its caretakers.

Consider several concrete ways you have taken seriously the role of 'caretaker'?

Pope Leo XIV: The Theologian of Human Dignity

Pope Leo XIV, the successor to Francis and beloved by him, spoke with clarity and courage **about the dignity of every person. He insisted that no one is expendable, no one is invisible,** no one is beyond the concern of the Church. His voice rose in defense of workers, families, the poor, and the vulnerable.

Though he did not write directly about ecology, his teaching forms the foundation of all Catholic social thought: human dignity is non-negotiable. When people are exploited, creation suffers. When creation is exploited, people suffer. Leo reminds us that justice and mercy are not optional virtues - they are the shape of the Gospel.

A Shared Vision: One Earth, One Human Family

Together, Francis and Leo offer us a single, unified call: Honor creation. Protect the **vulnerable. Live simply. Love generously. Seek justice. Walk humbly with God.**

Their voices echo through our own 150-year story. Our Sisters lived with this teaching long before it had names - in classrooms, hospitals, parishes, retreat houses, and quiet corners of prayer. We have cared for the earth by caring for people and cared for by people in a common honoring of the earth.

Meditation for Our Community

As we look back with gratitude and forward with hope during this month marking the anniversary of the approval of our constitution on July 16, 1898. From the Directives in our Constitution on Poverty, we read:

“Personally, and as a local community, we evaluate our practice of poverty in the light of the Gospel, attempting to reflect a Franciscan standard of living in our food, clothing, housing, and mode of transportation.”

We ask: How is my lifestyle a practice of poverty in the light of the Gospel as a Franciscan standard in my food, clothing, housing and transportation?

What is God inviting us to notice? What is God asking us to release? What is God calling us to protect? Where is God asking us to begin again?

We remember that creation is not a problem to be solved but a mystery to be received. We remember that our vocation is not efficiency but fidelity. We remember that small acts of care a garden tended, a light turned off, a prayer whispered for the suffering- ripple outward in ways we may never see.

A Prayer for Our 150th Year

God of all creation, You who breathed life into the world and called it good, Open our eyes to the beauty that surrounds us. Open our hearts to the suffering of the earth and the poor. Open our hands to the work of healing and renewal.

Make us instruments of your peace. Make us guardians of your creation. Make us a community of tenderness, courage, and hope.

Bless our past with gratitude, our present with faith, and our future with trust in Your unfailing love.

"Laudato si' , mi Signore... " Praise be to You, my Lord

After reflecting on these readings and your knowledge of *Laudato Si'*, Care for our Common Home, each person is invited (as one is able) to “take in” God’s natural creation for an outdoor walk. Let yourself be drawn by some natural beauty, the wind, a flower, a squirrel, etc. **Gaze** upon it with all your senses of sight, sound, smell, etc., **consider** its *haecceitas*, as our Franciscan tradition refers to its very being created uniquely by our Creator, and then take a long, loving **contemplative** pause to enjoy this gift.

When your group gathers to share the insights of the reading, share your outdoor experience. Then conclude with this prayer, individually reading a line and then pausing.

The “A Prayer for Our Earth” by Pope Francis is a short but powerful prayer that concludes his 2015 encyclical *Laudato Si'*. It calls for reverence for creation, justice for the poor, and a commitment to protect life and beauty on Earth.

- All-powerful God, you are present in the whole universe and in the smallest of your creatures. You embrace with your tenderness all that exists.
- Pour out upon us the power of your love, that we may protect life and beauty.
- Fill us with peace, that we may live as brothers and sisters, harming no one.
- O God of the poor, help us to rescue the abandoned and forgotten of this earth, so precious in your eyes.
- Bring healing to our lives, that we may protect the world and not prey on it, that we may sow beauty, not pollution and destruction.
- Touch the hearts of those who look only for gain at the expense of the poor and the earth.
- Teach us to discover the worth of each thing, to be filled with awe and contemplation, to recognize that we are profoundly united with every creature as we journey towards your infinite light.
- We thank you for being with us each day. Encourage us, we pray, in our struggle for justice, love and peace.

(Acclaim together): We give thanks and praise and proclaim: AMEN.