



**Recommendations for Sunday Liturgies during
The Season of Creation 2021**

Theme: "RESTORING OUR COMMON HOME"



**These resources are provided by the Laudato Si' Working Group of the
Council for Catechetics.**



Note: The following suggestions for Sunday liturgies must ensure compliance with government COVID-19 guidelines

Some ideas for before your Season of Creation Liturgy

- Advise the congregation on the previous Sunday to bring something from nature and leave it at a table near the Altar when they enter the Church
- Invite volunteers, children or adults, to dress in nature costumes – bees, insects, fish, and to welcome the congregation before mass.
- Technology can enhance the celebration in terms of visual resources. A set of visual resources will be available before September on the Irish Bishops Conference website as well as on www.lovingisterearth.com, for use with PowerPoint, webcam, LCD, Live Streaming etc.

Suggestions for Music:

- St Francis' Canticle (could be used as Psalm)
- Look at the World (John Rutter) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kxr8QBPq1z0>
- Our God Reigns
- All Creatures Great and Small
- Ag Críost an Síol
- Psalm 38: All the Ends of the Earth
- For the Beauty of the Earth (John Rutter) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xlBkpAm3fhw>
- How Great is Our God (Chris Tomlin)
- Laudate Omnes Gentes (Taizé)
- How Great Thou Art
- Taizé Chants: e.g. Laudate Omnes Gentes
- Deirdre Ní Chinneide: Oscail Mo Chroi (meditative chant) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kW7niPuhxpY>
- God Has Given us the Earth (Grow in Love hymn) <https://vimeo.com/280567593>



Sacred Space & Entrance Procession suggestions:

- During opening hymn, children in nature costumes could wave colourful cloths and bring them to the Altar, with a globe, a rainbow (ancient symbol for God's providence).
- The theme of Restoring Our Common Home should be emphasised in the sacred space or a banner for the Season of Creation.
- Use Earth's elements: fire, water, earth, wind. Also include seeds, a plough, garden tools etc. Be creative.
- Statue of St. Francis (patron of ecology) or a picture of Irish saints such as St. Bridgit, Kevin etc.; Celtic Cross, making links with our Celtic Spirituality.
- Tree saplings for planting after the mass / pot plants. (see separate Tree Planting resource on www.catholicbishops.ie Season of Creation page).

MASS FOR THE SEASON OF CREATION 2021



Introduction (Priest, Leader of Care for Creation Group or Reader)

Welcome! I am happy to introduce the first Sunday of the Season of Creation.

The Season of Creation has a special significance for the Catholic Church, particularly since Pope Francis established September 1st as the annual World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation. It is a time marked throughout the Christian world from 1st September to 4th October (Feast of St. Francis of Assisi) and celebrates the joy of creation as well as encourages awareness-raising initiatives to protect the natural environment. The theme this year is **Restoring Our Common Home**. We celebrate in the awareness that we continue to deal with the COVID-19 crisis and that the environmental crisis and this health crisis are interconnected. Both are global emergencies that affect many people, both are experienced most deeply by the poor and vulnerable, and both expose the deep injustices in our societies. Both will be solved only through a united effort that calls on the best of the values we share to protect our common home.

Penitential Rite

O Gracious God, Creator Spirit, Source of life, you have given order, light and life to the world around us, and you have expressed delight in your creation. You commanded us to till and care for the garden of life. And yet, we have trampled on the beauty of your creation and neglected to keep your Word. As we begin Mass today, we seek God's mercy and forgiveness for the times that we have offended against the integrity of God's creation.

And so:

1. For the times we have allowed the mindless destruction of biodiversity to take place, Lord have mercy
2. For the times we have polluted the oceans, rivers and lakes by dumping plastic in them, Christ have mercy
3. For the times we have ignored the contamination of the atmosphere with carbon emissions, Lord have mercy

May Almighty God have mercy on us, forgive us our ecological sins, and inspire us to care for our common home, Amen.

Introduction to the Gloria

As we say/sing the Gloria, let us remind ourselves that we are praising and celebrating God as the author of our universe and of our salvation.

Homily Notes for each Sunday of the Season of Creation 2021
These are notes that can be adapted as appropriate for your setting

23rd Sunday in Ordinary Time Year B - Sunday 5th September 2021
(Season of Creation 1 – Jane Mellett)

In 2015 Pope Francis published his ground-breaking encyclical on the environment *Laudato Si' – On Care for Our Common Home*. In it he calls on all people of the world to enter into dialogue about what is happening to our planet, urging us to listen to both the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor. He invites us to “become painfully aware” of the extent of this crisis and engage in the eco-conversion that is needed to protect our common home. We are invited to join Christians around the world in celebrating this season in prayer, especially in our liturgies, in deep reflection, in living more sustainably and in raising our voices in the public sphere. We are invited to think more deeply about what is happening at present to the earth, the environmental destruction which now threatens our world and the call to ‘eco-conversion’. It is an opportunity for all of us to reflect on our place within the story creation and to accept our individual and collective responsibility to care for our common home. The Season of Creation offers all of us a unique opportunity to renew our vocation to become stewards of God’s creation. Our commitment to the care of our common home is not some kind of add-on to our faith or optional extra; instead as Pope Francis continually reminds us the care of God’s creation should be at the centre of our call as Christians.

“The ecological crisis is also a summons to profound interior conversion...whereby the effects of their encounter with Jesus Christ become evident in their relationship with the world around them. Living our vocation to be protectors of God’s handiwork is essential to a life of virtue; it is not an optional or a secondary aspect of our Christian experience.” (Laudato Si’ §217)

Throughout *Laudato Si'*, Pope Francis urges us to listen to the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor. The scientific community tell us that we are now living through the 6th mass extinction of life on our planet, with the catastrophic destruction of biodiversity due to human activity. We have plundered the earth. This Autumn, two vital UN conferences are due to take place, the UN Conference on Biodiversity (COP15 in China) and the UN conference on Climate Change (COP26 in Glasgow). As Catholics, we have been invited by the Vatican to sign a petition addressed to the Presidents of these conferences to raise our voices for God’s Creation, to urge world leaders to act. The petition is called the “Healthy Planet, Healthy People Petition” and can be found at www.thecatholicpetition.org An action we can all take this season is to sign this petition, in solidarity with the poor and with creation and encourage our friends and families to do the same. It is a very simple action which calls for the Restoration of Our Common Home, God’s creation.

“I wish to address every person living on this planet... I urgently appeal for a new dialogue about how we are shaping the future of our planet. We need a conversation which includes everyone, since the environmental challenge we are undergoing, and its human roots, concern and affect us all.” (Laudato Si’ §3, 14).

24th Sunday in Ordinary Time Year B – 12th September 2021

(Season of Creation 2 – Bishop Martin Hayes)

Laudato Si' (LS) on Care for our Common Home (Pope Francis, 24 May 2015) clearly outlines our interdependent relationship with each other and with all of creation as everything is closely interrelated (LS, par. 137). The purpose of the Season of Creation liturgy is to acknowledge God as creator, give thanks to God for the gift of creation that we have received, highlight that each creature reflects something of God, raise awareness of our responsibility to care for creation and ask God for help to fulfil our obligations in that regard. Also, as the custodians of creation we must acknowledge our failures to protect creation.

The one phrase from Laudato Si' which I have been alert to for some time is "*We are not God*" (LS, 67). Pope Francis is highlighting that our calling to stewardship of the Earth has been misinterpreted as a licence to exercise domination over all other life forms. He reminds us that our preoccupation with absolute ownership runs counter to God's gift of creation. He advocates a relationship whereby we take just enough to subsist and so provide for future generations (LS, 67). We are in a relationship of interdependency with all of life. It means that we cannot see plant and animal life as just mere resources (LS, 33) Once we come to an appreciation of different species, we must take practical steps to ensure their survival so that each creature can give glory to God.

In the Season of Creation, we want to celebrate, firstly, the beauty and diversity of all of creation which has been or is on display at this time of year and secondly, its fruitfulness as we move towards harvest time. The whole of creation is speaking to us of God, revealing God as do the scriptures in the Word of God. What is the Word of God of this Sunday saying that is relevant to the celebration of the Season of Creation? When we consider ourselves as part of the interrelationship of creation, we are challenged to move beyond notions of individual salvation alone. I am drawn to reflect upon the invitation of Jesus in our Gospel of this Sunday to '***renounce oneself and take up one's cross and follow Him***'. In the context of an interdependent relationship with all of creation we are called to renounce the tendency to be those independent individuals who in being self-centred give rise to a collective selfishness. (LS, 204)

The social teaching of the Church, forms the framework for Laudato Si' as illustrated by Pope Francis when he states, "*We have to realize that a true ecological approach always becomes a social approach; it must integrate questions of justice in debates on the environment, so as to hear both the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor.*" (LS, 49). In caring for our common home, we are addressing poverty caused by climate change. The implementation of the social teaching of Laudato Si' can be understood as putting '***faith into action***', the theme of our 2nd Reading from the Letter of St. James.

We are told by St. James that if good works do not go with faith, it is quite dead. The invitation to put our faith into practice is enlarged by *Laudato Si'* to include care of all of created life, hence, it is challenging. It requires an ecological spirituality, indeed an ecological conversion, first heralded by St John Paul II, and reiterated by Pope Francis when he states, *"the ecological crisis is also a summons to profound interior conversion ... Living our vocation to be protectors of God's handiwork is essential to a life of virtue; it is not an optional or a secondary aspect of our Christian experience"* (LS, 217).

Sunday 19th September 2021 – Twenty Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time
(Season of Creation 3 – Fr. Dermot Lane)

There are 2 significant themes in today's readings. Firstly, in James 3:16-4:3 we read, "For where there is envy and selfish ambition, there will be disorder and wickedness of every kind". Our world today has become **deeply disordered** through the exploitation of the resources of nature. Examples of that disorder are climate change, loss of biodiversity, pollution of marine life, and more recently the advent of the deadly coronavirus and its variants. As individuals and as a Christian community we are called to work together to mitigate this deep disorder through actions that will support the well-being of our common home.

Secondly, in the Gospel (Mk. 9:30-37) we read, "Whoever wants to be first must be last and **servant** of all", said Jesus to his disciples. The call to service is a prominent theme throughout the gospels (See Mk10: 42- 45; Mt. 18: 1- 4; Lk.22:27). This call to service reaches a high point in the washing of the feet of the disciples by Jesus after the Institution of the Eucharist. Every celebration of the Eucharist carries with it a call to service. Being a disciple of Jesus in the 21st century is about living a life of service, offered to our neighbour and to the groaning of creation which grows louder in the cry of the poor and the cry of the earth. (See *Laudato Si'* 49).

During the season of creation we are called in particular to be of service to our common home which at this time is in urgent need of repair. We could do this in any number of different ways: by planting a tree, rewilding our gardens, or cutting back on our carbon emissions.

Sunday 26th September 2021 – Twenty Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time
(Season of Creation 4 – Vivek da Silva)

In Laudato Si we read:

(The earth) 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” (Rom 8:22). We have forgotten that we ourselves are dust of the earth (cf. Gen 2:7); our very bodies are made up of her elements, we breathe her air and we receive life and refreshment from her waters.

Over the last year we have seen how the earth has been ravaged by unprecedented fires, floods and heat waves. The world has grappled with a virulent respiratory disease that brought the world to an enforced slow down. It offered people the opportunity, amidst great hardship and grief, to pause and reflect on their own lives and their relationship with all of creation.

Fr Sean McDonagh says that Laudato Si’ is an attempt to redefine the relationship between humans and the rest of creation, so that we can soon reach a point where the basic needs of all humans will be met in a way that does not endanger the rest of creation or irreversibly damage it.

Greta Thunberg, the young climate activist from Sweden, has energised many around the globe with her message to actively care for our common home. At the recent Austrian World Summit she implored leaders to stop pretending that they were caring for the future of life on the earth. She demanded that they reduce the gap between their word and action. The time for words is over. It is time to act, and to act in a radical way akin to the call of the Gospel today.

There are many prophets in our midst today who urge us to hear the cry of the poor and the cry of the earth. Pope Francis in his encyclical Laudato Si gives expression to this collective prophetic voice to ensure that every human being can live in dignity and peace, with his or her basic needs met while, at the same time, protecting planet Earth. If we were to heed this voice, the outcome, says Fr Sean McDonagh, will be a great victory for humans, for other creatures, and for the planet itself. “If, however, the invitation to be part of this new world fails and humans continue with the exploitative behaviour that they have shown in recent years, it will be tragic for humans, for other creatures, and for the planet. The stakes are very high. In fact, they could not be higher!”

“Would that all the people of the LORD were prophets! Would that the LORD might bestow his spirit on them all!” (Numbers 11:29)

27th Sunday in Ordinary Time Year B - 3rd October 2021
(Season of Creation 5 – Jane Mellett)

Today we mark the end of the Season of Creation, a time where we celebrate all that is part of our beautiful world, God's creation. It is a season where we pray with and for creation and remind ourselves that we are protectors of this earth, given responsibility to 'till' and to 'care', not to plunder and destroy. Yet we know that our world is suffering. In *Laudato Si*, Pope Francis' encyclical on Care for Our Common Home, we are asked to hear the cry of the earth, to awaken to what is happening to God's creation and to take the urgent action that is needed. *Laudato Si* describes the roots of the environmental crisis as a deeply **spiritual crisis** because we have forgotten who we are and where we come from. We are called to reconnect with God's creation and take example from St. Francis of Assisi, whose feast day we celebrate tomorrow. St. Francis is the patron saint of ecology and saw God in all of creation. He was a mystic and a pilgrim and had a deep relationship with nature. St Francis saw the deep interconnectedness of all things and experienced God's creation as family, '*Brother Sun, Sister Moon, Brother Wind, Sister Water*'. The COVID -19 crisis has reminded all of us of this deep interconnection; that we share one common humanity and live together on a common home. We are now urgently called to Restore Our Common Home.

As we bring this Season of Creation to a close, let it be a beginning, a **springboard** into contemplation and action where our relationship with God's creation is concerned. This is an urgent call. And one which faith communities have a responsibility to respond to. Pope Francis is leading the way and is inviting the church to join the *Laudato Si'* journey. Over the next seven years, parishes are invited to sign up to achieve seven *Laudato Si'* Goals and become a *Laudato Si'* Parish (www.laudatosiactionplatform.org). We would like to invite a small group to come together and explore this possibility. Much support is available from [Trócaire](#) and [Eco-Congregation Ireland](#) and it is an opportunity to be a witness to helping to address the environmental crises. This would be one clear way to play our part in Restoring Our Common Home as a parish community.

So, let us pray today that we might re-awaken within us a sense of awe and wonder and strive to restore our world. Let us Live *Laudato Si*. "Truly much can be done!" (LS, 180).

"Just as happens when we fall in love with someone, whenever St. Francis would gaze at the sun, the moon or the smallest of animals, he burst into song, drawing all other creatures into his praise." (LS, 11).

"For a long time, we carried on thinking we could be healthy in a world that was sick. But the crisis has brought home how important it is to work for a healthy world... "To come out of this crisis better we have to see clearly, choose well and act right. Let's talk about how, let us dare to dream." (Pope Francis, *Let us Dream*).

St. Francis of Assisi, pray for us.

Short silence after the homily

Introduction to the Creed

As we stand to recite the Creed, notice that we are speaking to God who is the 'Creator of heaven and earth'.

Options for Prayers of the Faithful

1. O Creator God, in this month of creation time, teach us to see your footprints in the beauty of creation. Inspire us to care for the earth, to respect the rights of all people, and all living species to share in your gifts today and to be always mindful of those who come after us. Lord hear us
2. God of all life, we give thanks for the gift of the earth, our common home. At this time, many people, the oceans, and the eco-systems of the earth are struggling to survive. Help us to change our ways and guide us to live a life which is not centred exclusively on ourselves but on the needs of others and the worship of you as our ultimate concern. Lord hear us
3. At this time in human history, we are mindful that the survival of our planet and the well-being of humanity is threatened. Let us pray that UN Agreements to reduce global warming and to care for the poor will be honoured by governments throughout the world. Give courage to world leaders as they meet in the coming months to make crucial decisions for our common home. Lord hear us.
4. Let us pray for each other at this time that we may live the vision and values of Pope Francis' encyclical *on care for our Common Home*. In particular we pray for greater attention to social justice, climate justice, and intergenerational justice. Lord hear us
5. Lord, we pray that we may gain a deeper appreciation of the beauty and diversity of all that you have created and of how we are interconnected with each other and with the natural world. Lord hear us
6. Lord, in the spirit of the call of your Son, Jesus, to follow Him by renouncing ourselves, may we resolve to curb all selfish individual actions that conflict with our interrelationship with each other and with the natural world. Lord hear us
7. Lord, on this Sunday – day of rest and recreation - we give thanks for the faith we celebrate in your Son, the Risen Jesus Christ, who has inspired us to gather in thanksgiving and praise.
8. Lord, may we have the courage to give expression to our faith with practical actions for the betterment of each other and of your creation to ensure the rejuvenation of our common home. Lord hear us

Offertory Procession

- A loaf of bread and bowl of grapes could be brought to the altar.
- Indicate that we have bread and wine to offer only because of the work of our endangered pollinators; bread and wine are gifts from the Earth, gifts from God.
- If symbols were not brought up at the beginning of the liturgy soil, seeds, plants or a tree for planting could also be offered.

Suggested Music: Ag Críost an Síol

Our Father

As we pray this prayer over the coming weeks, let us ask forgiveness for our sins against Creation and the poor. Let us be reminded of our deep interconnectedness with all that exists and that at the centre of the Lord's prayer we say: **thy will be done on earth** as it is in heaven.

Before Communion

The celebrant could read aloud the prayer usually said quietly by the priest: 'Lord Jesus Christ, may our receiving of you ... be for us protection in mind and body, and a healing remedy'.

Post-communion Reflection *Please see Appendix for further examples.*

The Canticle of Creatures (St. Francis)

Most High, all-powerful Lord,

Yours are the praises, the glory,

and the honour and all blessing.

Praised be you, my Lord, with all Your creatures,

especially Sir Brother Sun, who is the day,

and through whom You give us light.

And he is beautiful and radiant with great splendour;

and bears a likeness of You, Most High one.

Praised be You, my Lord, through Sister Moon and the stars,

in heaven You formed them, clear and precious and beautiful.

Praised be You, my Lord, through Brother Wind,

and through the air, cloudy and serene,

and every kind of weather through which you give sustenance to your creatures.

Praised be You, my Lord, through Sister water,
who is very useful and humble and precious and chaste.

Praised be You, my Lord, through Brother fire,
through whom You light the night, and he is beautiful and playful
and robust and strong.

Praised be You, my Lord, through our Sister Mother Earth,
who sustains and governs us, and who produces various fruit
with coloured flowers and herbs.

Praised be You, my Lord, through those who give pardon for Your love,
and bear infirmity and tribulation.

Blessed those who endure in peace,
for by You, Most High, shall they be crowned.

Praise and bless my Lord and give Him thanks
and serve Him with great humility.

Final Blessing

- Indicate theme of next Sunday's Mass
- We are encouraging parishes to plant a tree during the Season of Creation, invite people to join outside if possible. You can use our Tree Planting resource found on the www.catholicbishops.ie Season of Creation resource page.
- Please encourage your parish / parishioners to sign the "Healthy Planet Healthy People" petition: www.thecatholicpetition.org The Vatican Dicastery for Integral Human Development has requested that this be the key advocacy action for Catholics during this Season of Creation 2021.
- The Final Blessing to include all aspects of creation, including what is around the Altar and outside the Church.

Presider: The Mass is ended. Go in Peace to care for our common home and preserve the integrity of God's creation.

As Congregation Exits

- Small gift of seeds, bulbs, prayer card, booklet, photo, given out by children in costumes
- Planting of a native Irish Tree on church grounds to mark the Season of Creation 2021. Involve local groups and local media.

APPENDIX - POST COMMUNION REFLECTIONS

1. A Prayer for the Earth (from Laudato Si, 246)

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.

2. A Christian prayer in union with creation (from Laudato Si).

Father, we praise you with all your creatures.
They came forth from your all-powerful hand;
they are yours, filled with your presence and your tender love.
Praise be to you!
Son of God, Jesus,
through you all things were made.
You were formed in the womb of Mary our Mother,
you became part of this earth,
and you gazed upon this world with human eyes.
Today you are alive in every creature
in your risen glory.
Praise be to you!

Holy Spirit, by your light
you guide this world towards the Father's love
and accompany creation as it groans in travail.
You also dwell in our hearts
and you inspire us to do what is good.
Praise be to you!

Triune Lord, wondrous community of infinite love,
teach us to contemplate you
in the beauty of the universe,
for all things speak of you.
Awaken our praise and thankfulness
for every being that you have made.
Give us the grace to feel profoundly joined
to everything that is.
God of love, show us our place in this world
as channels of your love
for all the creatures of this earth,
for not one of them is forgotten in your sight.
Enlighten those who possess power and money
that they may avoid the sin of indifference,
that they may love the common good, advance the weak,
and care for this world in which we live.
The poor and the earth are crying out.
O Lord, seize us with your power and light,
help us to protect all life,
to prepare for a better future,
for the coming of your Kingdom
of justice, peace, love and beauty.
Praise be to you!
Amen.

3. St Patrick's Breastplate – extract sung, danced or read, followed by silent pause.

I arise today, through the strength of heaven,

The light of the sun, radiance of the moon, splendour of fire,

The speed of lightning, the swiftness of wind,

The depth of the sea, the stability of the earth, the firmness of rock.

I arise today, through God's strength to pilot me,

God's might to uphold me, God's wisdom to guide me,

God's eye to look before me, God's ear to hear me,

God's word to speak for me, God's hand to guard me,

God's shield to protect me, God's host to save me

From everyone who shall wish me ill, afar and near.

Against every cruel and merciless power, that may oppose my body and soul,

Christ with me, Christ before me,

Christ behind me, Christ in me,

Christ beneath me, Christ above me,

Christ on my right, Christ on my left,

Christ when I lie down, Christ when I sit down,

Christ when I arise, Christ in the heart of every man who thinks of me,

Christ in the mouth of everyone who speaks of me,

Christ in every eye that sees me, Christ in every ear that hears me.

I arise today

Through a mighty strength, the invocation of the Trinity,

Through belief in the Threeness, Through confession of the Oneness
of the Creator of creation.



4. The Hazel Nut by Julian of Norwich

'God showed me a little thing, the size of a hazel nut, lying in the palm of my hand. I looked upon it and wondered, "What might this be?" And I was answered, "It is all Creation."

I marvelled how it could last, for I thought it might suddenly fall to nothing, it was so small.

And I was answered, "It lasts and ever shall last, for God loves it.'

In this little hazel nut I saw three truths: the first is that God made it; the second is that God loves it; and the third is that God keeps it safe.'

5. The Eucharist and Creation – Pope Francis, *Laudato Si'* 236

'The Eucharist is an act of cosmic love: yes, cosmic! Because even when it is celebrated on the humble altar of a country church, the Eucharist is always in some way celebrated on the altar of the world. The Eucharist joins heaven and earth: it embraces and penetrates all creation. The world which came forth from God's hands returns to him in blessed and undivided adoration. In the bread of the Eucharist creation is projected towards divinisation, towards unification with the Creator himself.'

6. The Dance of Creation: Brian Grogan SJ, *Creation Walk* 90-91

We may imagine heaven, not as an endless choir practice on a wet Sunday afternoon, but as the unrestricted and all-inclusive joy of dancing in a transfigured universe. Even an initial awareness of the infinite imagination and power of God who plays in creation shows that ours is already a dancing universe.

We are part of the unfathomable weave of the universe, immersed in its deep mystery. Its dance has already begun: it has always been in process. Each of us has a role in it. Jesus and his Father are working (John 4:34) for the good of all creation and we can tune in to their signals and do likewise. Thomas Merton says that every moment and every event in every person's life plants seeds of spiritual vitality in their hearts. This is the divine at work on Earth: this is grace, and grace is everywhere. All is sacred, and so are we. We must not desecrate our Common Home. We belong to the great Creation Story, to a whole that is infinitely greater than ourselves. We are called even now to share with all of creation 'in the freedom of the children of God' (Romans 8:21). So, let's put on our dancing shoes and learn the steps of the cosmic dance!

7. A prayer for the Earth (Martyn Goss, Diocese of Exeter)

God our Creator, maker and shaper of all that is, seen and unseen;

You are present in the breath and depth of the whole of creation,

and in the processes that make life possible.

Yet, we are distracted by the gods of the marketplace.

Our lives have become fractured and fragmented.

In our brokenness we disturb

the Earth's capacity to hold us

Call us back from the brink.

Help us to choose love and not fear,

to change ourselves and not the planet,

to act justly for the sake of the vulnerable,

and to make a difference today for the life tomorrow.

We make this our prayer in your name, Father, Son and Holy Spirit,

Amen.



8. **A Poem for Papatūānuku – Mother Earth** (abridged version) by Jacinda Ardern, Prime Minister of New Zealand, after the lockdown announced in NZ, March 2020.

Rest now, Mother Earth
Breathe easy and settle
Right here where you are
We'll not move upon you
For awhile

We'll stop, we'll cease
We'll slow down and stay home
And draw each other close and be kind
Kinder than we've ever been.
I wish we could say we were doing it for you
as much as ourselves
But we're doing it anyway
It's right. It's time.
Time to think -- About others
To remove our shoes
Press hands to soil
Sift grains between fingers
Time to notice
To whom we belong

For now it's just you
And the wind
And the forests and the oceans and the sky full of rain
Embrace it, this sacrifice of solitude we have carved out for you
A small offering.
People always said it wasn't possible
To ground flights and stay home and stop our habits of consumption
But it was. It always was.
We were just afraid of how much it was going to hurt
– and it IS hurting and it will hurt and continue to hurt
But not as much as you have been hurt.

So be still now. Wrap your hills around our absence
Loosen the concrete belt cinched tight at your waist

Rest. Breathe.
Recover. Heal
– And we will do the same



9. Our Common Home seen from Space: Astronaut Russell Schweickart 1969

‘The astronaut looks back and sees the Earth not as something big but small. And now the contrast between Earth--that bright blue-and-white Christmas tree ornament--and that black sky, that infinite universe, really comes through. Earth becomes so small and so fragile, and such a precious little spot in the universe, and you realize that on that small spot, that little blue-and-white thing, is everything that means anything to you; all of history, music, poetry, art, games, war and death, birth and love, tears and joy, all of it is on that little spot out there that you can cover with your thumb.

‘You’re going 25,000 mph, ripping through a vacuum, and there's not a sound. There's a silence, the depth of which you've never experienced before, and you think about what you're experiencing and why. Have you been separated out by God to have some special experience that other people cannot have? No.

‘It's not for yourself. You have to bring it back, somehow--a rather special responsibility. It tells you something about your relationship with this life. When you come back, there's a difference—so precious-- in the relationship between you and that planet and all its forms of life, because you've had that kind of experience.’

