

# *Season of Caring for Creation*

*1 September – 4 October*

*Starts: September 1 – World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation*  
Pope Francis recently proclaimed it as a day of prayer for creation, as the Orthodox Church has done since 1989, to “draw from our rich spiritual heritage the reasons which feed our passion for the care of creation.”

*Ends: October 4 – Solemnity of Saint Francis of Assisi*

*As our Seraphic Founder, Saint Francis gives us a model to imitate, celebrate and reflect on as the Patron of Ecology and author of the Canticle of the Creatures.*



*Pope Francis uses the phrase ‘integral ecology’ and warns against a narrow scientific focus on the modern environmental crisis. It might best be seen as a type of package to guide our daily living. Focused first on Christian worship of the Creator of all, **Integral Ecology** has implications for choices in the human journey, our life style and values - to confront the impact of ‘dictatorial economics’ on the world’s poor and the earth itself. The Pope invites us to revisit the integral connection between Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation.*

## Week One: September 1 – 6



*Most High, all powerful, good Lord, Yours are the praises, the glory, the honor, and all blessing.*

*To You alone, Most High, do they belong, and no man is worthy to mention Your name.*

*Be praised, my Lord, through all your creatures, especially through my lord Brother Sun, who brings the day; and you give light through him.*

*And he is beautiful and radiant in all his splendor! Of you, Most High, he bears the likeness.*

**Call to Prayer:** 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. Encourage us in our struggle for justice, love and peace. We thank you for being with us each day. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

**Reading:** The human environment and the natural environment deteriorate together; we cannot adequately combat environmental degradation unless we attend to causes related to human and social degradation. In fact, the deterioration of the environment and of society affects the most vulnerable people on the planet: "Both everyday experience and scientific research show that the gravest effects of all attacks on the environment are suffered by the poorest". (Laudato Si #48)

**Moment of Contemplation...** (Take some time in silence...)

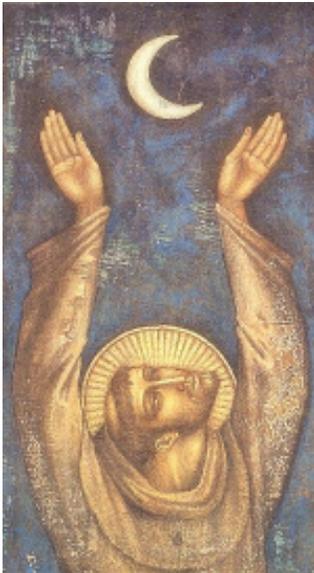
*"Our common home is like a sister with whom we share our life and a beautiful mother who opens her arms to embrace us."* (Pope Francis)

**Reflection Question:** What is the violence I do towards the environment – in what I do and in what I fail to do?

*"Cultivating and caring for creation means nurturing the world with responsibility and transforming it into a garden, a habitable place for everyone."* (Pope Francis, World Environmental Day Homily, 2013)

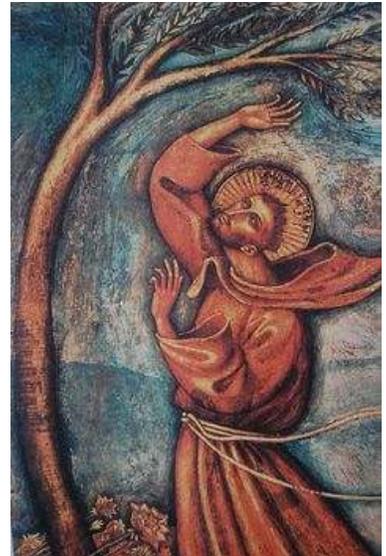
**Prayer for the Week:** All-powerful God, Fill us with peace, that we may live as brothers and sisters, harming no one. O God of the poor, help us to rescue the abandoned and forgotten of this earth, so precious in your eyes. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

## Week Two: September 7 – 13



*Praise 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.*



**Call to Prayer:** 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. Encourage us in our struggle for justice, love and peace. We thank you for being with us each day. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

**Reading:** My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord; my spirit rejoices in God my savior. For he has looked upon his handmaid's lowliness; behold, from now on will all ages call me blessed. The Mighty One has done great things for me, and holy is his name. His mercy is from age to age to those who fear him. He has shown might with his arm, dispersed the arrogant of mind and heart. He has thrown down the rulers from their thrones but lifted up the lowly. The hungry he has filled with good things; the rich he has sent away empty. He has helped Israel his servant, remembering his mercy, according to his promise to our fathers, to Abraham and to his descendants forever. (Luke 1: 46-55)

**Moment of Contemplation...** (Take some time in silence...)

*"The earth is the Lord's and all it holds, the world and those who dwell in it. For he founded it on the seas, established it over the rivers."* (Psalm 24:1-2)

**Reflection Question:** How can I show mercy to my brothers and sisters and all of creation?

**Action for the Week:** Consider Meatless Mondays – think about the benefits of abstaining another day from meat for yourself and for the environment.

**Prayer for the Week:** All-powerful God, 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. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

## Week Three: September 14 – 20



*Praised be You, my Lord, through Sister Water, which 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.*



**Call to Prayer:** 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. Encourage us in our struggle for justice, love and peace. We thank you for being with us each day. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

**Reading:** Prior to the cauterizing of the veins between Francis' eyes and ears, he spoke thus to the fire: 'My brother fire, that surpasses all other things in beauty, the Most High created you strong, beautiful, and useful. Be kind to me in this hour, be courteous. For I have loved you in the past in the Lord. I beseech the great Lord who made you that he temper your heat now so that I may bear it when you burn me gently.' When his prayer was ended, he made the sign of the cross over the fire and then remained fearless. (Adapted from Celano, Second Life of St. Francis)

**Moment of Contemplation...** (Take some time in silence...)

*"As the deer longs for streams of water, so my soul longs for you, O God." (Psalm 42:2)*

**Reflection Question:** What would I be willing to bless that I have previously feared or scorned?

*Think about the precious wonder of water – from your Baptism to the shower you took this morning. Thank God for this gift and ask the Holy Spirit to help you to be a good steward of the gifts that reveal God's love for us.*

**Prayer for the Week:** All-powerful God, Touch the hearts of those who look only for gain at the expense of the poor and the earth. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

## Week Four: September 21 – 27



*Praised be You, my Lord, through Sister Mother Earth, who sustains us and governs us and who produces varied fruits with colored flowers and herbs.*

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

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

**Call to Prayer:** 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. Encourage us in our struggle for justice, love and peace. We thank you for being with us each day. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

**Reading:** One day Francis was filled with joy because he was beginning to enjoy God in all creatures. He went through the streets singing and inviting everyone to sing along with him. Then he came upon an almond tree, and he said, 'Brother Almond, speak to me of God,' And the almond tree blossomed. (From a legend of St. Francis)

**Moment of Contemplation...** (Take some time in silence...)

*"Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth... Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God." (Matthew 5: 5, 9)*

**Reflection Question:** How can I demonstrate being meek towards God's created Earth?

**Action for the Week:** *Embrace the silence this week. Turn off everything unnecessary. Reflect on God's glory in Creation: The heavens are telling the glory of God; and the firmament proclaims his handiwork."*

**Prayer for the Week:** All-powerful God, 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. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

## Week Five: September 28 – October 4



*Praised be You, my Lord, through our Sister Bodily Death, from whom no living man can escape.*

*Woe to those who die in mortal sin. Blessed are those whom death will find in Your most holy will, for the second death shall do them no harm.*

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

**Call to Prayer:** 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. Encourage us in our struggle for justice, love and peace. We thank you for being with us each day. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

**Reading:** Mindful that they are bearers of peace which must be built up unceasingly, they should seek out ways of unity and fraternal harmony through dialogue, trusting in the presence of the divine seed in everyone and in the transforming power of love and pardon. Messengers of perfect joy in every circumstance, they should strive to bring joy and hope to others. Since they are immersed in the resurrection of Christ, which gives true meaning to Sister Death, let them serenely tend toward the ultimate encounter with the Father. (OFS Rule, Art. 19)

***Moment of Contemplation...*** (Take some time in silence...)

*"This is what I want from you: to do justice, to love compassionately, and to walk humbly with your God."* (Micah 6:8)

**Reflection Question:** How do I trust in the presence of the "divine seed" in all of God's creation?

**Action for the Week:** Participate in a Transitus Service. If you cannot get to one, then pray Evening Prayer I and/or the Office of Readings from the red Proper Offices of Franciscan Saints and Blessed in the Liturgy of the Hours.

**Prayer for the Week:** All-powerful, most holy, most high, supreme God: all good, supreme good, totally good, You Who alone are good, may we give You all praise, all glory, all thanks, all honor, all blessing, and all good. So be it! So be it! Amen.



## Honoring the Season of Creation: Political Actions On Behalf of our Common Home

During the liturgical Season of Creation, from September 1 to the Feast of St. Francis of Assisi on October 4<sup>th</sup>, Christians around the world will be celebrating the gift of creation with special services, reflections, and prayers. How very welcome it feels to have Creation at the center of our worship! But, today unfortunately, when our own government has unleashed a war against clean air, clean water, and protected public lands, thoughts and prayers are not enough. As Pope Francis himself reminds us in *Laudato Si*, to do our part in halting environmental degradation, we must also act –and we must learn that activism on earth’s behalf is an essential “part of our Christian spirituality” (p. 149).

What sort of action can we do in four weeks that will make a difference? Here are five possibilities:

1. Read, reread, study and take to heart Pope Francis’s analysis of our ecological situation in *Laudato Si*. If possible, study the encyclical with others from your church or community. The powerful insights in this text call us persuasively to conversion and to new ways of living in harmony with the earth and each other.
2. To learn about dynamic steps being taken by local communities across the nation to combat climate change, watch “Paris to Pittsburgh,” a 2018 documentary directed by National Geographic filmmaker, Sidney Beaumont. You can find it on You-Tube or the National Geographic site or at Amazon. Consider holding a group showing at your church or school.
3. Listen to our young people. They know that they will be the inheritors of whatever we do or fail to do to curb the climate crisis. They speak with passion and a wisdom beyond their years. You can begin by listening to Severn Suzuki, a 12 year-old girl from Canada who addressed the plenary session of the Rio summit in 1992. <https://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/severnsuzukiunearthsummit.htm> You can also read Greta Thunberg’s book, “No One is Too Small to Make a Difference.” Greta is the Swedish teenager who has come to the U.S. (by boat, in order to lessen the carbon footprint) to participate in the Climate Strike at the United Nations. Or you can follow –and even join—the Sunrise Movement, a group of young people whose commitment to solving the climate crisis has motivated thousands.
4. Join the Climate March which is taking place in all fifty states and in 150 countries on September 20<sup>th</sup>. This is an intergenerational, non-violent event; young people and adults are coming together to demand transformative action on behalf of the environment. You can find a march near you at: <https://peoplesclimate.org/> or <https://350.org/support-climate-strikes/>

5. Write to your congressman and your senators and let them know that you expect them to support legislation that supports clean air, clean water, forest preservation, and climate health. Tell them you oppose deregulation that permits methane to be emptied into the air. Tell them you want them to protect our national forests and parks. And given the administration's recent disastrous declarations, you can afford to be more specific. Tell your representatives that you do not want the Tongass, our nation's largest national forest, turned over to private mining companies. Remind them that public lands are the people's lands—or that, more precisely, the Lord's lands. Feel free to quote Psalm 24: "The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof; the world and they that dwell therein."

And finally, let us make clear to our political representatives that, in the spirit of St. Francis and the words of Pope Francis, we refuse "to turn reality into an object simply to be used and controlled," and we are coming together with other Christians to take charge of caring for "this home which has been entrusted to us" by our Creator. Could there be a better way to honor the Season of Creation?