News
EarthBeat



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PAUSE

READ

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,

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.

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.

— "Canticle of the Sun" by St. Francis

*Soil, water, mountains: everything is, as it were, a caress of God**.** The history of our friendship with God is always linked to* particular places which take on an intensely personal meaning*; we all remember places, and revisiting those memories does us much good. Anyone who has grown up in the hills or used to sit by the spring to drink, or played outdoors in the neighbourhood square;* going back to these places is a chance to

recover something of their true selves.

— Laudato Si', 84

REFLECT

Today we end the Season of Creation in the same way we began it, by considering the "particular places" that have helped us fall in love with creation. As we celebrate St. Francis Day, the "Canticle of the Sun" invites us to slow down and notice our collective home with eyes of wonder and awe.

Throughout this series, my co-author, Michael, and I have shared stories of gratitude and grief about our "happy places" — the places where we experience most intimately the caress of God. Guest authors have also shared personal stories about threats to their own particular places and how they are working to protect and honor the elements of earth, water, air and fire where they live, so that abundant life can continue to flourish.

As we end a month of reflection on the *oikos* of God, we are reminded that all of creation — including plant and animal life — has a right to the continued existence of their homes and special places. We are being called to take action to lovingly protect them. Moving forward, we must discern the choices we can make to help keep these places life-giving.

At the same time, we know that the hard facts about climate change can feel overwhelming, and our hope is that these reflections on the elements have inspired you to reconnect at a heart-level with the *oikos* of God wherever you are, even in the midst of everyday life.

Jesus is an inspirational example of living a life centered in one's place. He did most of his ministry in nature and was radically present wherever his feet were planted. He was born in a manger, walked along seashores, climbed mountains, journeyed through the desert and had deep spiritual conversations along roads and walking into cities.

Even in his final hours, Jesus chose to go to a garden to pray. As we go forth from this season, what lessons does his life have for us about caring for our common home and the bountiful creation in it?

This unprecedented moment demands that we keep our hearts open and attuned to the "cry of the earth and the cry of the poor," because decisions made today will have direct consequences for the future of all creation.

We must unite to make tangible systemic changes to how we live on this planet, especially in countries like the United States. The task is so large that at times it can feel easy to lose hope or become paralyzed because any particular action we take will not be enough to fix the entire system.

Paradoxically, in the midst of this global storm that threatens to overwhelm us, we are being invited to root ourselves in our particular places and in the daily spiritual practices of gratitude, childlike wonder and heart-centered connection that provide ongoing conversion.

While collective action for systemic change is necessary, we must find gentle, personal ways to sustain our inner fires in order to build the just, loving and healthy world that God desires.

To close the series, I'd like to share one last story from EarthBeat editor Barbara Fraser that is a practice that might help carry us forward on this journey.

As we spoke about gratitude for particular places, Barbara told me about a time she went to reconciliation and received a delightfully unorthodox suggestion from her priest.

"My pastor at the time did not use the term 'penance,'" she said. "Instead he called it an 'act of satisfaction.' It was early spring in Appalachia, and the act of satisfaction he gave me was: 'Go for a walk in the woods and remember that all of this was made for you.' That was more than 35 years ago, and I still remember it."

While we know that all of creation has inherent dignity and value, it is also true that God created the world for *you*, in particular, to delight in. Take a moment to breathe deeply, pause and ponder that.

Seriously — take a moment now. This is a big deal! *All this was made for you*. How might this perspective break open your heart and permeate your relationship with the places where you are?

Keep noticing. Keep breathing. Keep taking personal and structural action. Keep participating in the radical act of delighting in creation as we continue working

together to protect and cherish the holy ground on which we live and the particular places that we love.

- How does the phrase "all of this was made for you" make you feel? Does it affect your understanding or relationship with the rest of creation?
- What ideas, stories or practices mentioned this month would you like to remember?
- How can you help to ensure your "happy place" remains life-giving?

ACT

Today begins the 40 day journey of prayer and discernment in preparation for the launch of the Laudato Si Action Platform.

Consider choosing a daily ecospirituality practice for the next 40 days. Find some ideas below, or choose a different practice that sustains your sense of awe and love for creation:

- Visit your "happy place" weekly or daily, if possible.
- Commit to learning one answer daily to this 40 question bioregional quiz.
- Take an awe-walk daily and delight in creation.
- Listen to your breath as a prayer practice to connect with all of creation.
- Pick up litter every time you see it. Pray for everyone who touched it or was impacted by its life cycle from extraction of the materials from which it is made to the person who dropped it.
- Say a short prayer of gratitude every time you encounter water or notice wind.
- Engage in spiritual conversation around creation with loved ones or colleagues. Example: Ask people about their first memory in nature, their favorite tree or pet, or where their "happy place" is physically located.
- Practice an "act of satisfaction" each week.

- Pray daily for the world leaders who will meet in October for the U.N. Conference on Biodiversity (COP15) and in November for the U.N. Climate Conference (COP26).
- Commit to creativity and play: walk outside in the rain, create nature sketches or art, write songs or use any other talents you have to honor your “happy place."

At Home in Creation

pause | read | reflect | act

You can sign up here to receive these reflections every Monday, Wednesday and Friday throughout the Season of Creation, Sept. 1-Oct. 4.

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