



**5 June 2016**  
**World Environment Day**

**A Day of Prayer and Reflection**

Sponsored by  
**The Carmelite NGO**  
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## Introduction

As this prayer was being prepared, the May 16, 2016 edition of *The Sydney Morning Herald*, carried an article by Environment Editor, Peter Hannam, that highlights this critical moment in our environmental history. “A significant marker of rising global greenhouse gas emissions has been passed, with a key monitoring site on Tasmania’s north-west tip recording atmospheric carbon-dioxide exceeding 400 parts per million for the first time...the unfortunate milestone was reached on Tuesday May 10. Citing Paul Krummel, who heads the CSIRO (Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation, Australian Government), Hannam reports that while this event is mostly symbolic, the 400 ppm reading “highlights the problem of rising emissions, which are increasing more rapidly than they used to be.” To read the entire article, google “Confirmed: Southern hemisphere CO2 level rises above symbolic 400 ppm milestone.” This “marker” in our global environmental history underscores Pope Francis’s “urgent appeal” to the global community in his encyclical, *Laudato Si: On Care For Our Common Home*, an appeal which invites us to acknowledge the “immensity and urgency of the challenge we face:”

*More than fifty years ago, with the world teetering on the brink of nuclear crisis, Pope St. John XXIII wrote an Encyclical which not only rejected war but offered a proposal for peace. He addressed his message Pacem in Terris to the entire “Catholic world” and indeed “to all men and women of good will.” Now, faced as we are with global environmental deterioration, I wish to address every person living on this planet...In this Encyclical, I would like to enter into dialogue with all people about our common home. (LS, 3)*

*I urgently appeal, then, 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...As the bishops of Southern Africa have stated: “Everyone’s talents and involvement are needed to redress the damage caused by human abuse of God’s creation.” All of us can cooperate as instruments of God for the care of creation, each according to his or her own culture, experience, involvements and talents. (Laudato Si, 14)*

It is in response to that urgent appeal that we enter into reflection, dialogue and prayer on World Environment Day.

## Caring for God's Sacred Creation

*(Chimes or a rain stick can be used to begin these quiet moments)*

Take a few moments before beginning this prayer to sit quietly, attentive to the air that flows in, around, and through you, to the ground on which your feet rest, to the song of birds, to the sunlight or rainfall, to the rippling of a river or the roar of the sea, to the hum of life beneath all of your thoughts...

**Opening Song: Sacred Creation** by Rufino Zaragoza \*

**Refrain:** *Sacred the land, sacred the water, sacred the sky, holy and true.  
Sacred all life, sacred each other; all reflect God who is good.*

All praise be yours through Brother Sun, bearing a likeness of  
you Most High One.  
Sister Moon and Stars who are precious, ride your glorious sky.

Brother Wind and Air that pervades, vary their moods to sustain  
all you've made.  
Sister Water, useful and pure, lowly, freely sharing her life.

Through Brother Fire you brighten the night, strong and robust  
yet playful and bright.  
Sister Earth, our mother who nurtures, feeding, yielding flower  
and herb.

(\* "Sacred Creation" by Rufino Zaragoza, OFM may be found on  
YouTube with verses in English, Vietnamese and Spanish, [https://  
youtube.com](https://youtube.com))

### Opening Prayer

**Leader:** *In the words of this beautiful canticle, St Francis of Assisi reminds us that our common home is like a sister with whom we share our life and a beautiful mother who opens her arms to embrace us. 'Praise be to you, my Lord, through our Sister, Mother Earth, who sustains and governs us, and who produces various fruit with colored flowers and herbs.'*

*- Laudato Si: On the Care of Our Common Home, 1, Pope Francis*

**Reader 1: From the Book of Proverbs:**

Thus says the wisdom of God:  
From of old I was poured forth,  
at the first, before the earth.  
When there were no depths  
I was brought forth,  
When there were no fountains  
or springs of water;  
before the mountains were settled  
into place,  
before the hills,  
I was brought forth:  
while as yet the earth and fields  
were not made,  
nor the first clods of the world.  
“When God established  
The heavens I was there,  
when God marked out the vault  
over the face of the deep;  
when God made firm the skies above,  
when God fixed fast  
the foundations of the earth;  
when God set for the sea its limit,  
so that the waters should not  
transgress God’s command;  
then was I beside God  
God’s artisan,  
God’s delight day by day,  
playing before God all the while,  
playing on the surface of the earth;  
and I found delight in the human race.”

*(Proverbs 8:22-31)*

*(Pause for silent prayer)*

**Leader:** *Sacred all life, sacred each other; all reflect God who is good.*

**All:** Lord Jesus,  
as you made your way throughout the land,  
you often stopped to contemplate the beauty sown by your Father.  
In constant touch with nature,  
you lent it an attention full of fondness and wonder;  
you lived in harmony with creation and  
invited us to see within it the divine message.

May we direct our gaze to the end of time  
when you will deliver all things to the Father,  
so that “God may be everything to everyone.” (1 Cor 15:28)

Praise to you, O Risen One,  
you who mysteriously hold all creatures of this world to yourself  
directing them toward your fullness through which  
the very flowers of the field and the birds of the air  
are imbued with your radiant presence.

*(adapted from Laudato Si, 97-100)*

## **Reader 2**

Following a period of irrational confidence in progress and human abilities, some sectors of society are now adopting a more critical approach. We see increasing sensitivity to the environment and the need to protect nature, along with a growing concern, both genuine and distressing, for what is happening to our planet...

*(Laudato Si, 9)*

## **Reader 3**

The climate is a common good, belonging to all and meant for all...A very solid scientific consensus indicates that we are presently witnessing a disturbing warming of the climatic system. In recent decades this warming has been accompanied by a constant rise in the sea level and, it would appear, by an increase of extreme weather events, even if a scientifically determinable cause cannot be assigned to each particular phenomenon. Humanity is called to recognize the need for changes of lifestyle, production and consumption, in order to combat this warming or at least the human causes which produce or aggravate it.

*(Ladato Si, 23-26)*

*(Pause for silent reflection)*

**Leader:** To commit a crime against the natural world is a sin against ourselves and a sin against God.

*- Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew*

**All:** Merciful God, grant us the wisdom and courage to replace  
consumption with sacrifice,  
greed with generosity,  
wastefulness with a spirit of sharing.  
May we learn to accept the world as a sacrament of communion.

May we truly believe that the divine and the human meet  
in the slightest detail in the seamless garment of God's creation,  
in the last speck of dust of our planet.

*(adapted from Laudato Si, 9)*

#### **Reader 4**

Fresh drinking water is an issue of primary importance, since it is indispensable for human life and for supporting terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems. Sources of fresh water are necessary for healthcare, agriculture and industry...

One particularly serious problem is the quality of water available to the poor. Every day, unsafe water results in many deaths and the spread of water-related diseases, including those caused by microorganisms and chemical substances. Dysentery and cholera, linked to inadequate hygiene and water supplies, are a significant cause of suffering and of infant mortality. Underground water sources in many places are threatened by pollution ... Detergents and chemical products, commonly used in many places of the world, continue to pour into our rivers, lakes and seas.

*(Pause for silent reflection)*

**Leader:** Sacred the land, sacred the water, holy and true...  
All reflect God who is good.

**All:** Creator God, our sister, Mother Earth, now cries out  
because of the harm we have inflicted on her.  
Burdened and laid waste, among the most abandoned  
and maltreated of our poor; she groans in travail.  
We have forgotten that we ourselves are dust of the earth;  
our very bodies are made up of her elements.  
Forgive our disregard, our destructiveness, our greed.  
Recreate in us your Spirit, O God.  
As we breathe Earth's air and receive life  
and refreshment from her waters,  
may we be strengthened to care more faithfully  
for our common home.

*(adapted from Laudato Si, 2)*

#### **Reader 5**

The earth's resources are also being plundered because of short-sighted approaches to the economy, commerce and production. The loss of forests and woodlands entails the loss of species which may constitute extremely important resources in the future, not only for food but also for curing disease and other uses.

It is not enough, however, to think of different species merely as potential “resources” to be exploited, while overlooking the fact they have value in themselves. Each year sees the disappearance of thousands of plant and animal species which we will never know, which our children will never see, because they have been lost forever. Because of us, thousand of species will no longer give glory to God by their very existence, nor convey their message to us. We have no such right.

*(Brief Pause)*

**Leader:** If you chance to come upon a bird’s nest, in any tree or on the ground, with young ones or eggs and the mother sitting upon the young or upon the eggs, you shall not take the mother with the young.”

*(Dt 22:4,6)*

**All:** Creator God, our sister, Mother Earth, now cries out because of the harm we have inflicted on her. Burdened and laid waste, among the most abandoned and maltreated of our poor; she groans in travail. We have forgotten that we ourselves are dust of the earth; our very bodies are made up of her elements. Forgive our disregard, our destructiveness, our greed. Recreate in us your Spirit, O God. As we breathe Earth’s air and receive life and refreshment from her waters, may we be strengthened to care more faithfully for our common home.

*(adapted from Laudato Si, 2)*

## **Reader 6**

At the end, we will find ourselves face to face with the infinite beauty of God (*cf. 1 Cor 13:12*), and be able to read with admiration and happiness the mystery of the universe, which with us will share in unending plenitude...

In the meantime, we come together to take charge of this home which has been entrusted to us, knowing that all the good which exists here will be taken up into the heavenly feast. In union with all creatures, we journey through this land seeking God...Let us sing as we go. May our struggles and our concern for this planet never take away the joy of our hope.

**Closing Song:** *Sacred Creation* (see beginning)

**Leader:** Let us go in peace to care for our common home.

## WAYS WE CAN CARE FOR OUR COMMON HOME

from Pope Francis  
(see *Landato Si*, 212)

There is a nobility in the duty to care for creation through little daily actions, and it is wonderful how education can bring about real changes in lifestyle. Education in environmental responsibility can encourage ways of acting which directly and significantly affect the world around us, such as,

- ✓ Avoiding the use of plastic and paper,
- ✓ Reducing water consumption,
- ✓ Cooking only what can reasonably be consumed,
- ✓ Buying food products locally grown and harvested,
- ✓ Showing care for other living beings,
- ✓ Using public transportation or car-pooling,
- ✓ Planting trees,
- ✓ Turning off unnecessary lights.



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## The Carmelite NGO

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The **Carmelite NGO**, a non-governmental organization in Special Consultative Status with the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) of the United Nations, a member of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), affiliated to the Department of Public Information (DPI) of the United Nations, and a member of the the Catholic Covenant on Climate Change is comprised of the men and women from around the world who are members of the Carmelite Order or its affiliated Congregations, Institutes and ministries within the Catholic Church.

**For more information about us and our work,  
visit our website: [carmelitengo.org](http://carmelitengo.org)**