

2022

Ecological Conversion:

An encounter with Jesus
through our relationship
with the world around us.

LENT

prayer • fasting • almsgiving

The overarching theme for this Lenten practice is Ecological Conversion. *Laudato Si'* encourages us to encounter Jesus and the world around us by a conversion of heart. Through the three pillars of Lent — prayer, fasting, and almsgiving — we prepare our hearts for Easter. This Lent with the pandemic, climate change, flooding, fires and drought overwhelming us and Earth, we are invited to practice care for our common home through this act of conversion. Through reflection on *Laudato Si'*, the encyclical by Pope Francis on Care for our Common Home, we encourage positive action rather than 'giving up' as we enter into this time of Lent. *"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

PRAYER: · CONTEMPLATION · SILENCE · SCRIPTURE · LISTENING · PONDERING

"The universe unfolds in God, who fills it completely. Hence, there is a mystical meaning to be found in a leaf, in a mountain trail, in a dewdrop, in a poor person's face... Contemplation of creation allows us to discover in each thing a teaching which God wishes to hand on to us, since for the believer, to contemplate creation is to hear a message, to listen to a paradoxical and silent voice."(#233)

PRACTICES

Each day spend 10-15 minutes in prayer

- Give thanks to God for creation and being wonderfully made (Ps 139)
- Ask to see creation as God does in all its splendor and suffering
- Ask for the grace to see how my life choices impact creation, the poor and vulnerable
- Ask for the grace of conversion toward ecological justice and reconciliation
- Ask for the grace to reconcile my relationship with God, creation and humanity
- Offer a closing prayer of gratitude for some special awareness through prayer today

FASTING:

"Fasting makes sense if it really chips away at our security and as a consequence, benefits someone else, if it helps us cultivate the style of the Good Samaritan, who bent down to his brother in need and took care of him." **Pope Francis**

FACTS: *"whenever food is thrown out it is as if it were stolen from the table of the poor".* (#50)

- **Food waste** is one of world's worst contributors to greenhouse gases, which in turn adds to our global climate crisis. The UN estimates that 1/3 of global food produced is wasted.
- UN Sustainable Development Goal 12 (*Responsible Consumption and Production*) calls us to produce and consume our food in sustainable ways in order to alleviate hunger, poverty, food insecurity, and to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.
- When we waste food, we waste all the water, soil, and energy it takes to grow, transport and distribute our food. When food waste ends up in our landfills and decays, it creates methane gas, which is 25 times more powerful a pollutant than carbon dioxide.
- Note that the carbon footprint of food waste exceeds that of the entire airline industry; food waste also creates a greenhouse gas footprint bigger than all countries, except China and the U.S.A. (Source: <https://www.greenbiz.com/article/carbon-footprint-food-waste-bigger-most-countries>)

ACTION:

- Avoid food waste by shopping wisely and forgoing processed foods
- Give up eating meat, milk, eggs as a family 1-2 times weekly
- Consider a plant-based diet during Lent
- Donate savings to local food shelves
- Share a neighborhood potluck meal
- Save water while washing dishes, brushing teeth, showering
- Drink water rather than sodas

ALMSGIVING: Breaking Free from Plastics

Saint Francis is the example par excellence of care for the vulnerable and of an integral ecology lived out joyfully and authentically. He was particularly concerned for God's creation and for the poor and outcast. He loved, and was deeply loved for his joy, his generous self-giving, his openheartedness. He was a mystic and a pilgrim who lived in simplicity and in wonderful harmony with God, with others, with nature and with himself. He shows us just how inseparable the bond is between concern for nature, justice for the poor, commitment to society, and interior peace. (#10)

"A community can break out of the indifference induced by consumerism. These actions cultivate a shared identity, with a story which can be remembered and handed on. In this way, the world, and the quality of life of the poorest, are cared for, with a sense of solidarity which is at the same time aware that we live in a common home which God has entrusted to us. These community actions, when they express self-giving love, can also become intense spiritual experiences." (#232)

- *Merriam Webster Dictionary defines almsgiving as "giving something (such as money or food) freely to relieve the poor."* Let's stretch that definition a bit to include any action which will better the life of the poor. YouTube is filled with stories about the blight of plastics in the oceans, in fish and in our food. Almsgiving this Lent could be action as a community to eliminate plastics. This action would relieve the lives of the poor.
- "Although plastic is a versatile material with many uses, it is also concerning because it presents health risks, contributes to litter and pollution, and is challenging to dispose of. Some of the most common and problematic plastic items we deal with every day come in the form of packaging and single-use plastics. Since these items are used for a short period of time and then discarded, they contribute significantly to the increasing amount of plastic waste." (<https://hennepinplasticfree.ecochallenge.org/>)

ACTIONS

- Avoid using disposable decorations, such as balloons and plastic table coverings for special occasions.
- Get rid of disposable dishes and serving ware at home, church and work. If a dishwasher is available, use reusables rather than disposables.
- Bring reusable bags to the grocery store, recycle plastic bags, bottles and food containers.
- Participate in clean-up days in your neighborhood, park, church and school as a family .
- Skip the use of dryer sheets and disposable wipes
- Give the gift of experiences rather than stuff
- Work toward legislation to eliminate plastic shopping bags.

A PRAYER FOR OUR 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. Amen (Laudato Si' #246)



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