

Laudato Si' Week 2020

A Novena of Creation



Together We Can Create A New Earth

Carmelite NGO

DAY ONE: THE CREATION STORY

Word of God: Gen 1:11-12; 26-27

"11 And God said, "Let the earth sprout vegetation, plants yielding seed, and fruit trees bearing fruit in which is their seed, each according to its kind, on the earth." And it was so. 12 The earth brought forth vegetation, plants yielding seed according to their own kinds, and trees bearing fruit in which is their seed, each according to its kind. And God saw that it was good."

"26 Then God said, "Let us make human being in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." 27 So God created human being in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them."

Laudato Si', 1

"Praise be to you, my Lord". In the words of this beautiful canticle, Saint 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".



Meditation

A vision of the world as something originated by a holy, faithful and loving God, and as something destined to an alliance that is the salvation of everything created.

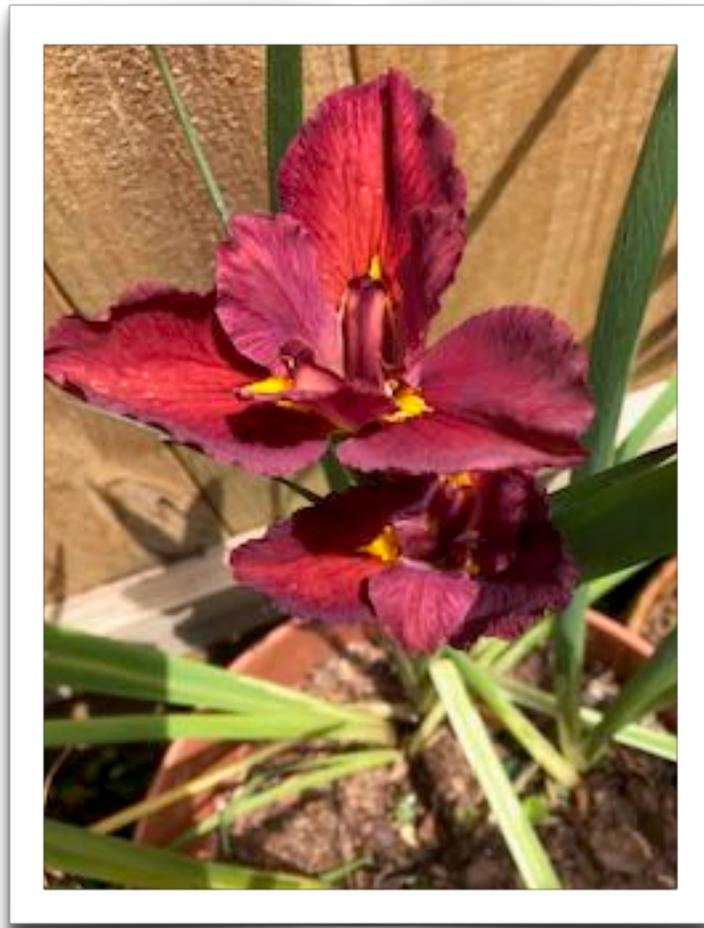
An understanding that the powerful Word of God the Creator has realized the work of creation. By His Word, everything has been created out of nothing. Everything created is good in the eyes of God.

Being the work of God is the reason why creation is sacred.

Human beings are the image and likeness of God; therefore, they share a common dignity and become pro-creators, that is, responsible for the preservation of God's work in time. Dominion not dominance means that we have authority and responsibility over the welfare and well being of God's creation.

Silence prayer.

Action: *Look around and identify 5 things that you have dominion over that can bring about a new creation.*



DAY TWO: THE RUPTURE

The Word of God. Gen 2: 8-9; 15-17

“8 And the Lord God made a garden in the east, in Eden; and there he put the human being whom he had made. 9 And out of the earth the Lord made every tree to come, delighting the eye and good for food; and in the middle of the garden, the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil... 15 And the Lord God took the human being and put it/him in the garden of Eden to do work in it and take care of it. 16 And the Lord God gave the human being orders, saying, You may freely take of the fruit of every tree of the garden: 17 But of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you may not take; for on the day when you take of it, death will certainly come to you.”

Laudato Si', 2

“This sister (earth) now 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, wounded by sin, 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."

Meditation

In Genesis, the environment of the earth is presented with the metaphor of "the garden," in which "God places the human being" to "cultivate it and care for it." Therefore, human relations with nature, with the environment of earth, must be such that the work is done as the administrator who is entrusted with something. The administration implies the conscious and responsible management of something that is entrusted to our care. We receive instructions to "care for and cultivate" God's creation. It is an ecological instruction.

Human beings suffered sin as broken bonds on three levels. A level related to God whereby humans avoid God's presence, either by forgetting his commandments, or by ignoring or forgetting the presence of God.

A second level is found among humans. Adam said of Eve, "this is, at last, bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh." However, after sin, Adam complains about his partner for the sin committed by saying: "The women you gave me to be with me. This is the scene of the first guilt against our neighbor, the partner, for our inability to recognize our own guilt.

A third level of the broken bond is with nature, highlighted by the curse on the snake, childbirth with pain, the bread gained with effort and hard work, etc.,



thus evidencing the hostility between the human flowering and the power of nature.

Underlying the texts of Genesis is the interpretation of the faith that humans have introduced disturbances within the natural world. The distancing of the human being from the will of God has a cosmic impact that alters the order of creation.

What we can see is a certain deep relationship between humans and the rest of the natural world, a relationship that includes an extension of the mystery of evil nature, and that originates in the human heart and that impacts the balance and harmony of nature.

Silence prayer.

Action: *Our role as administrators implies the conscious and responsible management of things entrusted to our care. Identify three ways we can exercise our role as good administrators of the environment.*

DAY THREE: CALL TO CONVERSION

The Word of God. Gen 3:8-10

“8 And there came to them the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the evening wind: and the man and his wife went to a secret place among the trees of the garden, away from the eyes of the Lord God. 9 And the voice of the Lord God came to the man, saying, **Where are you?** 10 And he said, Hearing your voice in the garden I was full of fear, because I was without clothing: and I kept myself from your eyes.”

Laudato Si', 5

“Saint John Paul II became increasingly concerned about this issue. In his first Encyclical he warned that human beings frequently seem “to see no other meaning in their natural environment than what serves for immediate use and consumption”. Subsequently, he would call for a global ecological conversion. At the same time, he noted that little effort had been made to “safeguard the moral conditions for an authentic human ecology”.

The destruction of the human environment is extremely serious, not only because God has entrusted the world to us men and women, but because human life is itself a gift which must be defended from various forms of debasement. Every effort to protect and improve our world entails profound changes in “lifestyles, models of production and consumption, and the established structures of power which today govern societies”.



Authentic human development has a moral character. It presumes full respect for the human person, but it must also be concerned for the world around us and “take into account the nature of each being and of its mutual connection in an ordered system”. Accordingly, our human ability to transform reality must proceed in line with God’s original gift of all that is.”

Meditation

From the beginning, humans have doubted the goodness of God’s work and his love; flee from his presence instead of looking for it.

To give direction in the right direction to humans, God makes them realize that they are no longer in their place, directing them with this call: *Where are you?* This call is implicitly an invitation to return, an invitation to change their interior attitude, and invitation to conversion.

The conversion of human beings is essentially a restoration of the relationships between humans; with others, with oneself, with the environment, and with God.

Pope Paul VI declared that the dizzying industrial civilization endangers the balance of the earth, causing an irreversible deterioration that leads to a possible ecological catastrophe and the annihilation of life on earth, since “everything is bound together” in this common home.

For Pope Paul VI the interconnection is an instance that demands a greater ethical response, a human moral progress that accounts for the consequences of its actions on the ecological interweaving.



As a Church we have to “better underline the urgency and the need for a radical change in the behavior of humanity, if we want to ensure its survival,” that is, if we want to take care of the common home, the garden.

In the last decade there has been an ecological rebirth within the Church.

Ecological conversion means a change in our lifestyles, as well as in our patterns of production and consumption and in the established power structure since humans seem unable to perceive “other meanings of their natural environment, but only those that serve for the purpose of immediate use and consumption.

Ecological conversion requires a human ecology that “takes into account the nature of each being and their mutual connection in an orderly system” that sustains it.

Silence prayer.

Action: *Can you identify the moment you recognized the call to conversion in your life? If so, what did you do about it?*

DAY FOUR: PARADIGM SHIFT

Word of God: Joel 1: 10-12

“10 The fields are destroyed, the ground mourns, because the grain is destroyed, the wine dries up, the oil languishes. 11 Be ashamed, O tillers of the soil; wail, O vinedressers, for the wheat and the barley, because the harvest of the field has perished. 12 The vine dries up; the fig tree languishes. Pomegranate, palm, and apple, all the trees of the field are dried up, and gladness dries up from the children of man.”

Micah 6:8

“8 You mortals, the LORD has told you what is good. This is what the LORD requires from you: to do what is right, to love mercy, and to live humbly with your God.”

Laudato Si', 10.

“Saint Francis of Assisi 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.”



Meditation

“The duties we have with the environment are related to those we have for the person considered in himself and in his relationship with others,” because “the way humanity treats the environment influences the way it treats itself, and vice versa.”

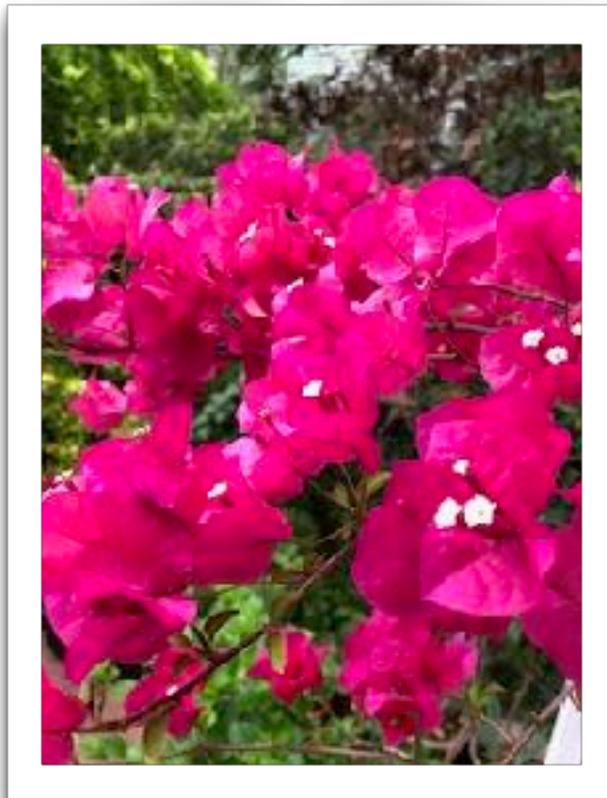
It can be said that ecological conversion begins with “an effective shift in mentality that can lead to the adoption of new life-styles in which the quest for truth, beauty, goodness and communion with others for the sake of common growth are the factors that determine consumer choices, savings and investments.”

An economy that has assumed the cultural eclipse of God, with the consequent loss of the “centrality of the human person,” and the principle of gratuitousness and the logic of the gift, values inherent to the creation by God, which make human beings brothers and sisters among themselves by sharing the common home, this inherited land.

The economy requires a change of logic to function correctly, assuming a people-centered ethics.

Silent prayer.

Action: *In 1986 the U.S. Catholic Bishops stated, “the economy exists for people, not people for the economy.” Name an element in the present structure of the economic system that must change for the economy to become more people centered.*



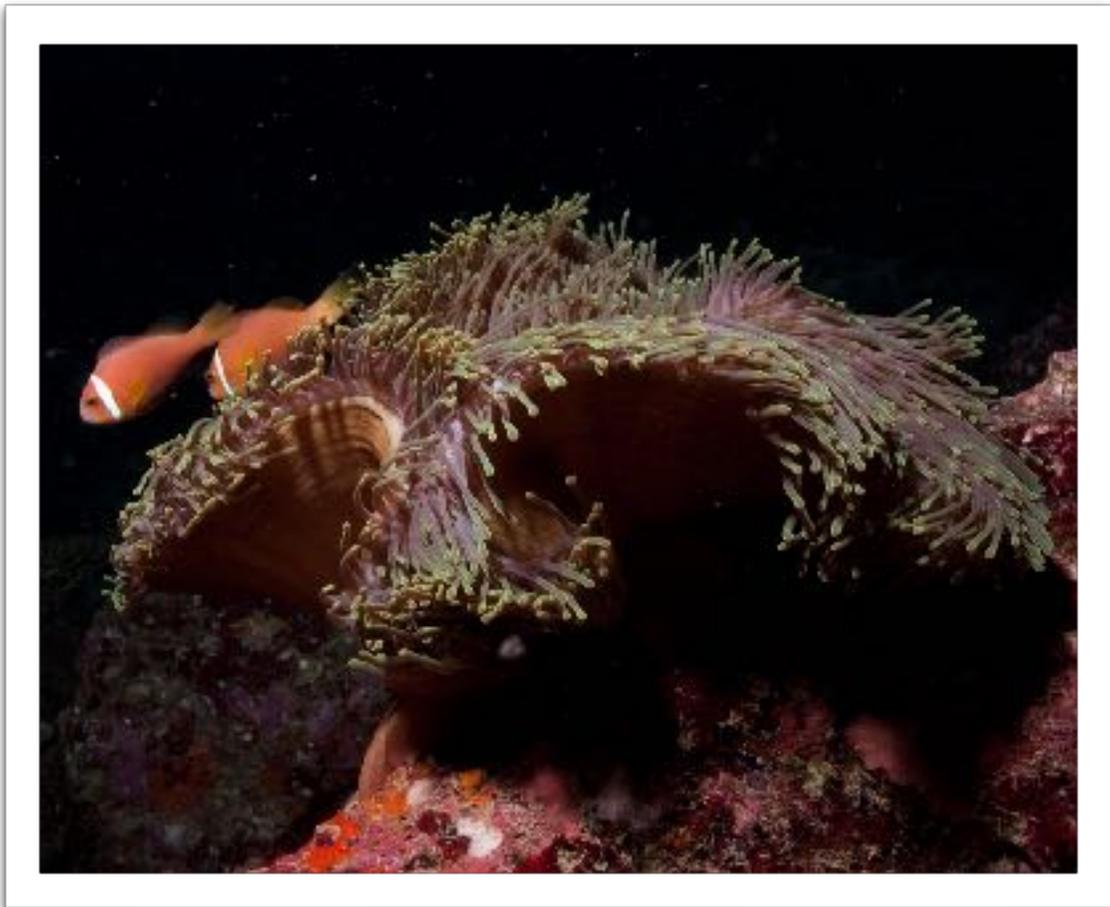
DAY FIVE: SEEING WITH THE HEART

The Word of God: 1 Kings 19:9-14

“9 There he came to a cave and lodged in it. And behold, the word of the LORD came to him, and he said to him, **"What are you doing here, Elijah?"** 10 He said, **"I have been very jealous for the LORD, the God of hosts.** For the people of Israel have forsaken your covenant, thrown down your altars, and killed your prophets with the sword, and I, even I only, am left, and they seek my life, to take it away." 11 And he said, "Go out and stand on the mount before the LORD." And behold, the LORD passed by, and a great and strong wind tore the mountains and broke in pieces the rocks before the LORD, **but the LORD was not in the wind.** And after the wind an earthquake, but **the LORD was not in the earthquake.** 12 And after the earthquake a fire, but **the LORD was not in the fire.** And **after the fire the sound of a low whisper.** 13 And when Elijah heard it, he wrapped his face in his cloak and went out and stood at the entrance of the cave. And behold, there came a voice to him and said, **"What are you doing here, Elijah?"**”

Laudato Si', 216

“The rich heritage of Christian spirituality, the fruit of twenty centuries of personal and communal experience, has a precious contribution to make to the renewal of humanity. Here, I would like to offer Christians a few suggestions for an ecological spirituality grounded in the convictions of our faith, since the



teachings of the Gospel have direct consequences for our way of thinking, feeling and living.

More than in ideas or concepts as such, I am interested in how such a spirituality can motivate us to a more passionate concern for the protection of our world.

A commitment this lofty cannot be sustained by doctrine alone, without a spirituality capable of inspiring us, without an "interior impulse which encourages, motivates, nourishes and gives meaning to our individual and communal activity".

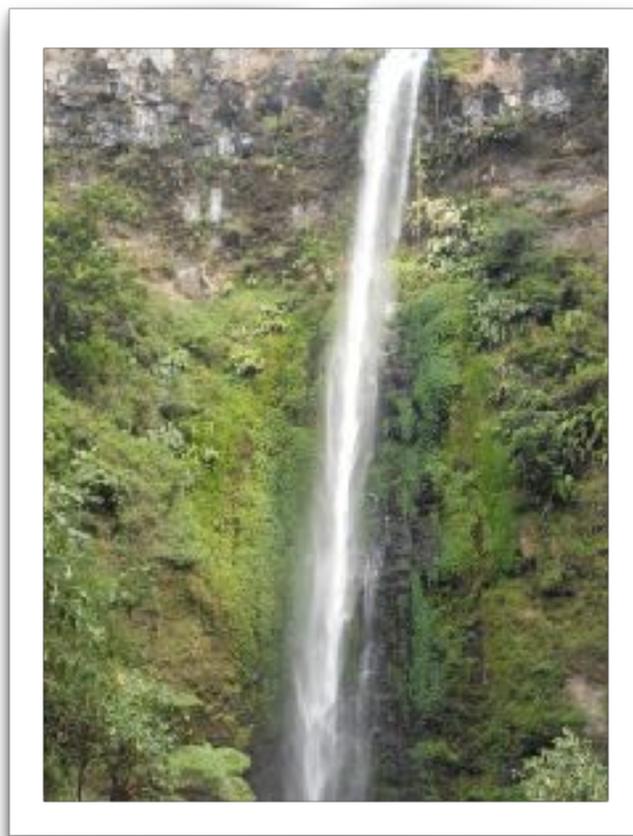
Admittedly, Christians have not always appropriated and developed the spiritual treasures bestowed by God upon the Church, where the life of the spirit is not dissociated from the body or from nature or from worldly realities, but lived in and with them, in communion with all that surrounds us."

Meditation

Conversion is about a change, "desire to change," that impels us to become aware of the real state of things and how is our relationship with creation, so "we must examine our lives and acknowledge the ways in which we have harmed God's creation through our actions and/or our failure to act."

We need to experience a conversion or change of heart. Because what does not touch the fiber of our heart does not generate real changes in behavior.

Ecological spirituality is that way of living according to the values and beliefs that govern the fundamental choices and decisions of life. It is a new experience that forms a lifestyle alternative to the dominant culture, of pure consumption and discarding.



Such spirituality can only be sustained by the essential values that faith offers; such as, the principle of gratuitousness and the logic of the gift, which expresses human fraternity and is an essential condition for opening ourselves to universal fraternity with all creation.

Silent Prayer.

Action: *What in my faith touches the fiber of my heart so that I can experience universal fraternity with all of creation?*

DAY SIX: OUR GREAT MOTIVATIONS OF FAITH

The Word of God: Matthew 6:19-21

"19 "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, 20 but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. 21 **For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.**"

Laudato Si', 222

"Christian spirituality proposes an alternative understanding of the quality of life, and encourages a prophetic and contemplative lifestyle, one capable of deep enjoyment free of the obsession with consumption. We need to take up an ancient



lesson, found in different religious traditions and also in the Bible. It is the conviction that "less is more".

A constant flood of new consumer goods can baffle the heart and prevent us from cherishing each thing and each moment. To be serenely present to each

reality, however small it may be, opens us to much greater horizons of understanding and personal fulfilment. Christian spirituality proposes a growth marked by moderation and the capacity to be happy with little.

It is a return to that simplicity which allows us to stop and appreciate the small things, to be grateful for the opportunities which life affords us, to be spiritually detached from what we possess, and not to succumb to sadness for what we lack. This implies avoiding the dynamic of dominion and the mere accumulation of pleasures."

Meditation

The central message is the possibility of achieving a personal experience of love for God, that is realized through each creature and the poor.

The essential motivation for the care of nature and the care of living beings is nothing other than love.

Love makes possible "an alternative understanding of the quality of life," for which "less is more."

The force of love can be a source of joy and celebration because we are able to discover the gratuitousness that precedes, sustains, feeds and return (our feet) to the ground.

Conversion, above all, means a change in mentality, a change in the logic of thinking, given that "we need to realize that certain mindsets really do influence our behavior."

We must question our underlying "logic" that prevent us from taking the ecological issues seriously.

We need to sow a spirituality of connection with everything created. The life of the spirit is not dissociated from the body or from nature or from worldly realities, but lived in and with them in communion with all that surrounds us.

Ecological conversion involves a change in our ways of celebrating and praying.

Ecological conversion is a call to all to cooperative participation, creating networks, to educate new habits and virtues that help us to get out of the simplistic thinking; "every problem has a technical solution."

Ecological conversion is based on the experience of an ecological spirituality whose central axis is integral ecology as a paradigm of social and environmental justice.

Silent Prayer.

Action: *What mindsets do I have that affect my ability to pursue ecological conversion?*



DAY SEVEN: SPIRITUALITY OF CONNECTEDNESS

The Word of God: Rom 8:18-23

“18 For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us. **19 For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God.** 20 For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, **in hope 21 that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God.** 22 For we know that **the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now.** 23 And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies.”

Laudato Si', 70.83

“These ancient stories, full of symbolism, bear witness to **a conviction which we today share, that everything is interconnected, and that genuine care for our own lives and our relationships with nature is inseparable from fraternity, justice and faithfulness to others.**”



“The ultimate destiny of the universe is in the fullness of God, which has already been attained by the risen Christ, the measure of the maturity of all things. Here we can add yet another argument for rejecting every tyrannical and irresponsible domination of human beings over other creatures. **The ultimate purpose of other creatures is not to be found in us.** Rather, all creatures are moving forward with us and through us towards a common point of arrival, which is God, in that transcendent fullness where the risen Christ embraces and illumines all things. **Human beings, endowed with intelligence and love, and drawn by the fullness of Christ, are called to lead all creatures back to their Creator.**”

Meditation

Jesus insists that evil comes from within human being, not from things. The gospel of John begins by indicating that, in the being of Jesus Christ, the mystery of God is introduced into the history, not only of humanity, but of all creation. God is inserted into the created cosmos, suffering its same fate. This introduction of God in his work not only reaffirms the positive value that God gives to creation, but also it includes his commitment to its destiny.

The effects of the resurrection of Christ determine a renewed configuration of the cosmos and of the human being. The whole of what is created now experiences that newness of being, although awaiting its final deployment with the “new heaven and earth.” From faith, the new creation does not consist in a mere restoration of the ecological balance. This new cosmic reconfiguration is extended in history through the Holy Spirit.

The new creation takes place in a tension between the definitive that is coming (the new man who is born) and the past that is being left behind (the old man who dies). In this process all creation participates yearningly. In some way, this present time Christian life in today is from faith, the time of transformation by the conversion to new realities by humanity and the entire cosmos. In that time, we can see the ecological awakening (and all ecological activity that accompanies it) as a way of expressing concretely our faith entrusted to the Resurrection.

Silent Prayer.

Action: *How do we allow the Holy Spirit participate in our lives?*



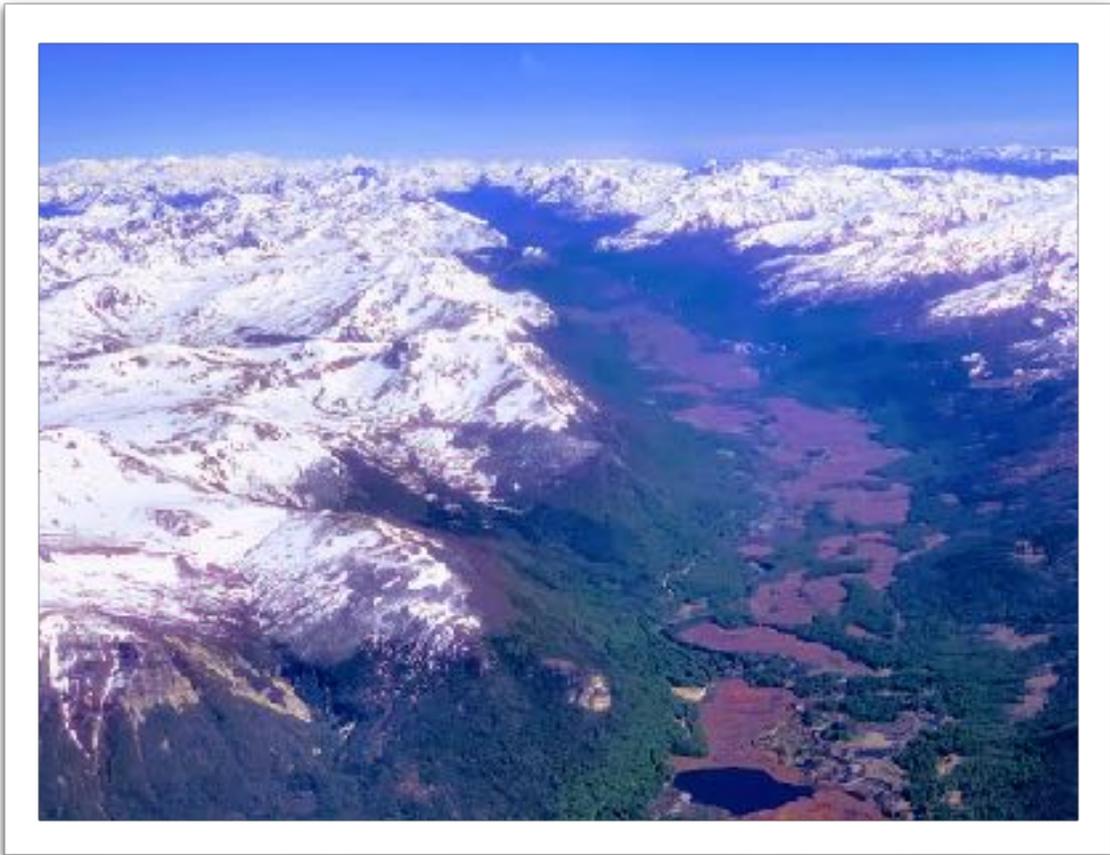
DAY EIGHT: SPIRITUALITY OF CONNECTEDNESS – CONTINUED

The Word of God: Matthew 25:34-40

“34 Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. 35 For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, 36 I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me.' 37 Then the righteous will answer him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? 38 And when did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you? 39 And when did we see you sick or in prison and visit you?' 40 And the King will answer them, 'Truly, I say to you, **as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.**'”

Laudato Si', 92

“Moreover, when our hearts are authentically open to universal communion, this sense of fraternity excludes nothing and no one. It follows that our indifference or cruelty towards fellow creatures of this world sooner or later affects the treatment we mete out to other human beings. We have only one heart, and the same wretchedness which leads us to mistreat an animal will not be long in showing itself in our relationships with other people.



Every act of cruelty towards any creature is “contrary to human dignity”. We can hardly consider ourselves to be fully loving if we disregard any aspect of reality: “Peace, justice and the preservation of creation are three absolutely interconnected themes, which cannot be separated and treated individually without once again falling into reductionism”.

Everything is related, and we human beings are united as brothers and sisters on a wonderful pilgrimage, woven together by the love God has for each of his creatures and which also unites us in fond affection with brother sun, sister moon, brother river and mother earth”.

Meditation

The concept of **integral ecology** would seem to connect two planes, one physical and the other spiritual. On the physical plane it means that the ecological integrity in a particular geography and social justice in that environment are two faces of the same coin. They are united because human beings and nature are part of interdependent and nourishing systems of life.

On the spiritual plane, **integral ecology connects the exercise of care for the natural world with the exercise of justice towards the poorest and most disadvantaged people of the earth**, who represent God’s option of preference in revealed history, those with whom he identified.

What ecological conversion is meant for indicates that my faith and my future (eschatological) hope of (wait for) “new heaven and new earth” may be seen as the same as the present moment in terms of the Gospel: “As often as you did this to my little ones you did it to me,” including creatures.

Ecological conversion is crucial for the present generation. Among the principal challenges before us, “climate change,” with grave implications: environmental, social, economic, political and for the distribution of goods.

“We must be ever more acutely aware of the importance of accelerating and adapting our actions in responding adequately to both the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor.”

Silent Prayer.

Action: *How do we hear the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor? How do we perceive the connection between both physical and spiritual planes of ecology spirituality?*



DAY NINE: HOLY SPIRIT IS THE ENERGY FORCE THAT MOVES, GUIDES AND SUSTAINS US

The Word of God: Gal 5:22-23

“22 By contrast, the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against such things.”

Rev 21:1 “1 Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more.”

Laudato Si', 160

“What kind of world do we want to leave to those who come after us, to children who are now growing up? This question not only concerns the environment in isolation; the issue cannot be approached piecemeal. When we ask ourselves what kind of world we want to leave behind, we think in the first place of its general direction, its meaning and its values.



Unless we struggle with these deeper issues, I do not believe that our concern for ecology will produce significant results. But if these issues are courageously faced, we are led inexorably to ask other pointed questions: What is the purpose of our life in this world? Why are we here? What is the goal of our work and all our efforts? What need does the earth have of us? It is no longer enough, then, simply to state that we should be concerned for future generations.

We need to see that what is at stake is our own dignity. Leaving an inhabitable planet to future generations is, first and foremost, up to us. The issue is one which dramatically affects us, for it has to do with the ultimate meaning of our earthly sojourn."

Meditation

The Spirit of God renews the face of the earth in and through us. The Psalmist says: "You send forth your Spirit, everything is recreated, and you renew the face of the earth." The book of Acts of the Apostles finds a significant correspondence in this psalm, which is a great praise to God Creator. The Holy Spirit that Christ has sent from the Father, and the Creator Spirit who has given life to each thing are one and the same.

Our faith in creation tells us that the "garden" in which we live has been entrusted to us to cultivate and guard it with respect.

The action of the Spirit is and has always been to be our guide to the full truth, so that we can bear fruit and thus renew the earth. We are invited to experience the spirituality of ecology in which the gifts of the Spirit are of inestimable help.

The gifts of the Holy Spirit are:

Piety – that enables us to experience reverence before the God of life, the Creator, whose love is in every creature.

Fear of the Lord – as a subjective experience of wonder, awe, before the beauty, the goodness and the truth that is discovered before our eyes.

Wisdom – that reveals ever deeper meanings to us about life.

Understanding – that opens our eyes to see that everything is interconnected in this world that surrounds us and of which we are part of, of its wave.

Knowledge – that allows us to discover that the universe reflects in itself and through us the image of the Creator.

Counsel – that allows us to practice justice with mercy and humility

Fortitude – that instills in us the courage, the strength, to act; many times with sacrifice.

Silent Prayer.

Action: What role do the gifts of the Holy Spirit play in our faith and decisions?



Further reading.

[Laudato Si'](#)

[Ecological Conversion](#)



The Carmelite NGO

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