

Summer Family Faith Suggestions to Celebrate Creation

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Psalm 24 proclaims, “the earth is the Lord’s and all that is in it.”

Not only has our annual observance of Earth Day reminded us of our responsibility to our planet home, but numerous statements by the Holy Father and the US bishops tell us that care for the earth is integral to who we are as responsible Christians.

The summer season is a unique time for families to explore the wonder and awe of creation and its Creator. Set aside time for these family faith ideas.

- **Backyard Biologists.** Look at all the marvels right under your nose. In your backyard mark off an area six feet square, preferably including a bush, tree or flowers along with grass or bare soil. You will need magnifying glasses, notebooks and pencils. The object is to record the wonder of nature in this small area you have chosen. Be as thorough as you can. What kinds of plant do you find? What kinds of animals? What evidence do you find of creatures that may have passed over this area? Find out as much as you can about the uniqueness of these animals and plants. You may want to return after a week or month to record any changes.
- **Prayer of Wonder.** Read aloud with your family the story of creation (Genesis 1:1-31; 21:1-3), or a psalm from Scripture that thanks God for the beauty of the earth (Psalms 8, 33, 98, 100, 104, 128, 148 or 150). With song, dance, poetry or some other form of art, compose a prayer that expresses your family’s thanks for the wonders of creation.
- **End of the Day.** Find out from the newspaper what time the sun sets this week. Catch the sun’s “closing act.” Talk about how the power of the sun reflects the greatness of God.
- **The Wonders of the Night.** Go on a stargazing trip with your family - it can be in your own backyard. Take blankets, binoculars, a flashlight and something to munch on and drink. To prepare for your evening, the *Star Gazer* site at www.jackstargazer.com, a companion to the PBS program of the same name, offers tips on what to look for at various times of the year. The magazine *Sky and Telescope* (www.skyandtelescope.com) has a useful site with a weekly listing of sky highlights and a sky chart that you can customize to your viewing location.
- **Making a Difference.** Talk as a family about ways you can work together for a cleaner, safer environment. Discuss possible changes in your family’s consumer habits: using biodegradable products, using paper bags instead of plastic, recycling paper, bottles and

cans, etc. Talk about ways to save energy. Decide what actions your family will take to beautify the earth.

- An Early Beginning. This might be the hardest suggestion here! It requires getting up before the sun. Find a place where you can see the sunrise clearly. Each time you see a new color in the sky, thank God for something beautiful. Continue with new and different ideas until the sun is shining brightly. Then head to breakfast with a smile of thanksgiving on your face. (Because looking directly at the sun can damage vision, be sure to look at the sky around the sun.)
- Porch Prayer. With your family, sit on the porch or in the backyard. Listen quietly for sounds and then pray short prayers related to the sounds that are heard, e.g. as you hear birds singing, thank God for music; if you hear a siren, pray for the safety of those waiting for help.

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