



GREAT ENDEAVORS MINED & SHARED

from an International Adult Faith Formation Best Practices Study

68 - August 2016

A Best Practice: Celebrating Creationtide (Part I)

For quite some time, our church – Catholic Social Teaching, concerned women and men, popes and bishops have called us to a renewed understanding of and action for the care of the earth.

Saint John Paul II reminded us that all of Creation reflects the love of the Creator and should be treasured. Pope Benedict XVI brought urgency to the question of how our Catholic principles should shape our climate future.

Respect for creation is of immense consequence...
Man's inhumanity to man has given rise to numerous threats to peace and to authentic and integral human development – wars, international and regional conflicts, acts of terrorism, and violations of human rights.

Yet no less troubling are the threats arising from the neglect – if downright misuse – of the earth and the natural goods that God has given us.

For this reason, it is imperative that mankind renew and strengthen that covenant between human beings and the environment, which should mirror the creative love of God, from whom we come and toward whom we are journeying.

- Pope Benedict XVI; *Message for the World Day of Peace, January 1, 2010*

Pope Francis Addresses Care for Creation

This call has now been intensified. *Laudato Si'*, subtitled *On Care For Our Common Home*, published on June 18, 2015, is the second encyclical published by Pope Francis and the first encyclical which he personally wrote. (The first encyclical Pope Francis published in 2013, *Lumen Fidei*, was largely the work of Pope Francis' predecessor, Emeritus Pope Benedict XVI.)

In the months following the publication of *Laudato Si'*, some media comments around the world, criticized the pope for “not sticking to religion” in his teaching, but Pope Francis is actually following the example set by his predecessors. Most of the popes in the modern era, starting with Pope Leo XIII and his encyclical, *Rerum Novarum*, issued on May 15, 1891, have called for global social reform. *Laudato Si'* is, however, the first encyclical that a pope, relying primarily on scientific data, has called for radical changes in human behavior and government policies around the world - behavior and policies that have resulted in irresponsible development, environmental degradation and global warming.

Laudato Si' is also unique in another way. In the modern era most papal encyclicals have been addressed either to the hierarchy of the Catholic Church and/or to all the Catholic faithful, stressing the role of the pope as the primary teacher in the Catholic Church. This encyclical has no addressee, but in the introductory comments Pope Francis states that he wishes “to address every person living on this planet . . . I would like to enter into dialogue with all people about our common home.” (#3) Pope Francis has positioned *Laudato Si'* as not only a teaching document for Catholics, but as a plea to the entire world to take action while we still can.



(Links to the encyclical as well as some commentary are at the end of this newsletter.)

Learning from Our Sisters and Brothers

Over the last 25+ years, the Orthodox churches and many Protestant and Anglican churches have developed a specific liturgical response to the dangers facing our planet by including *Care for Creation* as an integral component of their public prayer life. This response is generally called Creationtide - the topic of our next two newsletters.

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Creationtide: A Definition and Description

Creationtide is a season of the liturgical year during which the church remembers in a special way God's work of creation and the obligation of all humanity to respect and care for all of God's creation.

- Creationtide portrays the wholeness of God's presence in all of Creation. It is not primarily focused on human beings.
- Creationtide puts the historical phase of the Christ-event in context. We often focus on the Jesus story: his birth, ministry, death, and resurrection.
- At times, we ignore Creation. The story about the historical Jesus, crucial as it is, can get disconnected from the epic grandeur of God's cosmic management of Creation from its beginning to the consummation of all things.

Several different names for this liturgical season are in general use by different denominations and church groups, including:

- Creationtide
- Creation Time
- A Time for Creation
- Season of Creation

"Creationtide" includes all the liturgical practices that aim to provide a framework for practicing Christian life that is concerned with Care for Creation.

Creationtide: A Brief History

In 1989, Demetrios I, the then Ecumenical Patriarch of Orthodox Christians, suggested that September 1st, the first day of the Orthodox Church's year, should be observed as a day "of protection of the natural environment." Under the leadership of Demetrios' successor, Bartholomew I, this has been a continuing and an even more important fixture in Orthodox practice. Today Bartholomew is often referred to as the "Green Patriarch." He has also discussed and collaborated with Pope Francis on the world's serious threats to the environment.

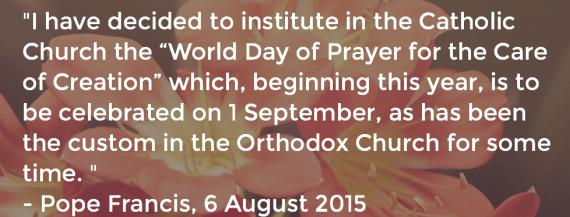
Ten years following the Orthodox adoption of the September 1st celebration, the European Christian Environmental Network (ECEN)

widened this proposal, urging churches to adopt a Creationtide season that would run from September 1st to the feast of St. Francis on October 4th. This was endorsed by the 3rd European Ecumenical Assembly. The Assembly recommended that this month "be dedicated to prayer for the protection of Creation and the promotion of sustainable lifestyles that reverse our contribution to climate change." This month-long Creationtide was also embraced by the World Council of Churches.

In the United States, beginning in 2008, the Revised Common Lectionary used by many Protestant and Anglican churches also provided the option of using alternate Creationtide readings to replace the standard pericopes for the Sundays in the month of September.

While the Catholic Church has not adopted the liturgical season of Creationtide, in 2015 Pope Francis joined Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew in proclaiming September 1st as the World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation.

On September 1, 2015, Pope Francis led a special Liturgy of the Word in St. Peter's Basilica marking the Catholic Church's first Day of Prayer for Creation.



"I have decided to institute in the Catholic Church the "World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation" which, beginning this year, is to be celebrated on 1 September, as has been the custom in the Orthodox Church for some time."
- Pope Francis, 6 August 2015

Why Celebrate Creationtide?

"God is Love" (1 John 4:8) and Creationtide are ways of understanding how God loves the whole Creation. Creationtide is all about celebrating God's limitless love for everything that God has created and our obligation, as daughters and sons of God, to respect and protect all of creation. With Creationtide, the church (the people of God) recognizes that God's love is so great that it takes the whole of Creation to receive it and that it is this holy love that brings all Creation into existence, sustains it, guides it, and brings it into fulfillment.

How is Creationtide celebrated?

The focal point for celebrating Creationtide is the Sunday Worship Service that includes the celebration of both Word and Sacrament. The Scripture selections proclaimed at these services, drawn from both the Old and New Testaments, may be chosen for their specific relevance to various aspects of

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Creation. The sermon or homily is particularly important as it draws the connection between the Word proclaimed and the care or action required by each of us.

Of the Eucharistic Prayers and Prefaces found in the present edition of the Roman Missal, Eucharistic Prayer IV used with Preface V of the Sundays in Ordinary Time are often used. References to current thinking and suggestions for Eucharistic Prayers are also included at the end of this newsletter.

An authentic parish celebration of Creationtide, of course, goes beyond Sunday Worship. Activities, teaching opportunities, etc. can be used throughout September to both clarify and reinforce the message that we must love and care for all creation - - just as God loves and cares for all creation:

- Fun activities for children can be used to share with our youngest Christians about their obligations to care for Creation.
- Educational activities for teens and adults provide comprehensive scientific background on the pressing issues that face our planet.
- Work projects are a positive way of reaching the broader community.
- Simple activities such as distributing information on recycling or putting-up posters on conservation can be effective.
- The links in the following sections provide numerous examples for both liturgical practices and additional activities to celebrate Creation.

Anglican and Protestant Churches in the U.K.

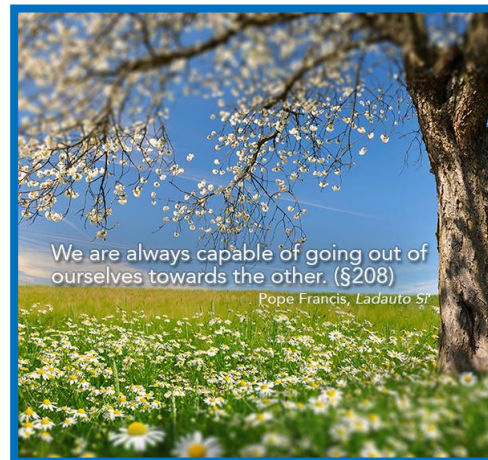
Churches Together in Britain and Ireland (CTBI) is an ecumenical organization formed on September 1, 1990 as the successor to the British Council of Churches. The members include most of the major Anglican and Protestant churches in England, Northern Ireland, Scotland, Wales and the Republic of Ireland. CTBI has compiled a program of resources to encourage and assist churches to observe Creationtide. These include suggestions on a variety of ways in which churches, groups and individuals can choose to focus on a specific creation theme each year. They generally follow the themes suggested each year by the World Council of Churches. Each church

community within the CTBI is free to choose and modify the programs as they see fit.

In Scotland, a cooperative group of churches has formed the Eco-Congregation Scotland that uses the CTBI materials as a starting point for developing a variety of materials for both liturgical prayer and for action. Their materials are freely available on line at:

<http://www.ecocongregationscotland.org/materials/creation-time/>

The Scripture citations used often follow the standard Revised Common Lectionary readings for the assigned Sundays, with additional suggestions on how to emphasize the chosen Creation theme.



Protestant and Anglican Churches in the United States

Most of the church communities in the United States that celebrate Creationtide follow a pattern that mirrors the standard three-year lectionary approach, with specific lectionary citations for each of the four Sundays of September in each of the three cycles (A, B, C). The Creation series for each year has a general theme and each Sunday focuses on a specific area of creation.

The “Season of Creation” program that can be found at the “Let All Creation Praise” website (<http://www.letallcreationpraise.org/>) has the following structure:

Year A – Spirit Series

Week One: Forest Sunday

Week Two: Land Sunday

Week Three: Wilderness Sunday

Week Four: River Sunday

Year B – Word Series

Week One: Planet Earth Sunday

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Week Two: Humanity Sunday
Week Three: Sky Sunday
Week Four: Mountain Sunday

Year C – Wisdom Series

Week One: Ocean Sunday
Week Two: Animal Sunday
Week Three: Storm Sunday
Week Four: Universe Sunday

More information, including the specific Scripture citations recommended, can be accessed at: <http://www.letallcreationpraise.org/season-of-creation>.

An Australian Catholic Approach

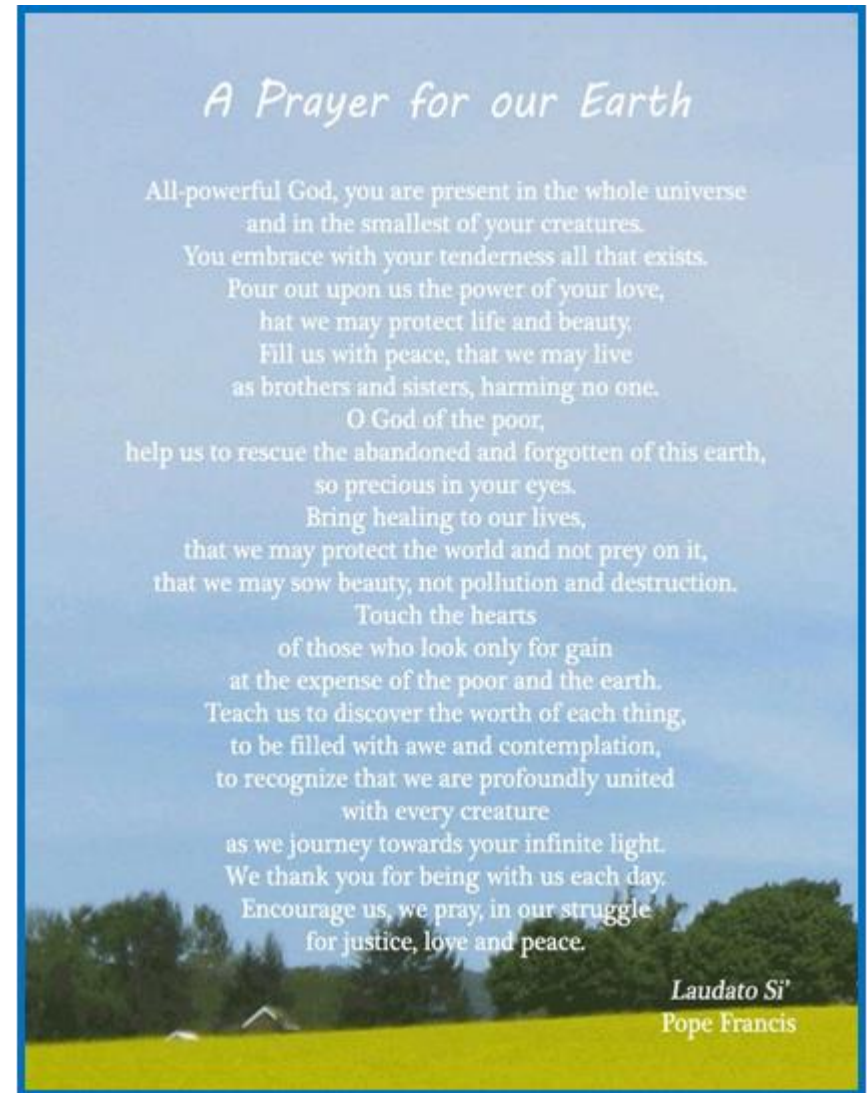
The Columban Missionaries in Australia have produced a plan for celebrating Creationtide on the September Sundays in Ordinary Time, retaining the regular Catholic Lectionary pericopes for each Sunday, but picking a specific form of creation (e.g. trees, rivers, etc.) for each Sunday. This approach combines elements from the U.K. and United States Protestant approaches and it could be adopted by Catholic parishes in the United States, since there is no change to the prescribed lectionary choices. The resources from the Columban Missionaries can be found at: <http://www.columban.org.au/resources/a-catholic-season-of-creation-sundays-of-september>

Does Our Response to Environmental Issues Require Both Prayer and Action?

The short answer, of course, is yes! There is a Latin maxim, generally attributed to St. Prosper of Aquitaine (c. 390-455) that addresses the centrality of worship in the life, identity and mission of the Catholic Church: *Lex Orandi, Lex Credendi, Lex Vivendi*. The phrase in Latin literally means the law of prayer (the way we worship) is the law of belief (what we believe) which leads to the law of living (the way we act). Simply stated: how we worship reflects what we believe and determines how we will live.

We began with a brief introduction to *Laudato Si'*. Pope Francis ended this encyclical with Chapter Six, entitled Ecological Education and Spirituality. In this last chapter Pope Francis addresses the need for not only all Christians, but for all God's children to pray to our Creator.

Pope Francis ends with two prayers - prayers in which we acknowledge God's love for us as we marvel at all the wonders of creation and also acknowledge that we continue to need God's help to carry out our responsibility for maintaining Creation (#246).



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The websites mentioned above and the additional ones listed below can help to start the formulation of a specific plan for our parishes. Next month's **GEMS** will discuss in detail how one unique parish in the United States has been celebrating Creationtide for the past four years.

More Information and Further Study

Laudato Si':

- Available in several print editions sold at Amazon.com and other online websites and available to read for free on line at: http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si.html
- Thomas Reese's (NCR) Readers Guide: <http://ncronline.org/blogs/faith-and-justice/readers-guide-laudato-si>

Eucharistic Prayers for Creationtide:

- "Liturgical Considerations of the Myth of Eden" by Gail Ramshaw (Worship, January 2015, Vol. 89 No. 1)
- "Ecological Euchology" by Robert J. Daly, S.J. (Worship, March 2015, Vol. 89 No. 2)
- *New Eucharistic Prayers* edited by Frank C. Senn (Paulist Press, 1987)
- *The Eucharistic Prayers of the Roman Rite* by Enrico Mazza (Pueblo Publishing, 1986)

Ecumenical On-Line Resources for Creationtide and Prayers for Creation:

- Prayers to Care for Creation – USCCB: <http://www.usccb.org/prayer-and-worship/prayers-and-devotions/prayers/prayers-to-care-for-creation.cfm>
- The Episcopal Ecological Network: <http://eenonline.org/>
- Christian Ecology Link (U.K.): <http://www.christian-ecology.org.uk/creationtime.htm>
- European Christian Environmental Network (ECEN) – Time for God's Creation - Published by the Conference of European Churches (CEC): http://www.ceceurope.org/fileadmin/filer/cec/CEC_Documents/Prayer_Worship_and_Spirituality/CreationtimeE.pdf

Books of Interest:

- *Water from an Ancient Well* by Kenneth McIntosh. Anamchara Books (2011)
- *Christ in Evolution* by Ilia Delio, OSF. Orbis Books (2008)
- *Care for Creation* by Ilia Delio, OSF et al. St. Anthony Messenger Press (2008)
- *Making All Things New* by Ilia Delio, OSF. Orbis Books (2015)
- *Listening to the Heartbeat of God* by J. Phillip Newell. Paulist Press (1997)
- *Earth, Wind and Fire* edited by Carol Dempsey, OP et al. The Liturgical Press (2004)
- *All Creation is Groaning* edited by Carol Dempsey, OP et al. The Liturgical Press (1999)
- *The Dream of the Earth* by Thomas Berry, CP et al. Sierra Club Books (1988)
- *The Universe Story* by Thomas Berry, CP. Harper San Francisco (1992)
- *The Great Work: Our Way Into the Future* by Thomas Berry, CP. Random House/Bell Tower (1999)
- *Evening Thoughts: Reflecting on Earth as Sacred Community* by Thomas Berry, CP. Sierra Club/University of California Press (2006)

Some GEMS Questions

- What do you still need to read to deepen your understanding of our call to care for creation?
- What, in this issue, resonated most with you?
- Pope Francis has designated September 1st as "World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation." How might you celebrate that in your parish/diocese?
- While keeping the integrity of liturgy, how might we include care for creation within our worship
 - What might the General Intercessions look like?
 - What hymns might be sung?

Some GEMS Suggestions

- If there are screens in your church building, consider showing short videos on creation/our care of creation as people gather. Check:
 - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QPzS_B8BTqI
 - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pOFYJv_HzwwEven if you don't use these, take a moment to view them yourself. You won't be disappointed!
- Begin planning now for Earth Day 2017 in your parish.
 - <http://bustedhalo.com/ministry-resources/virtual-earth-day-retreat>
 - <http://www.earthday.org/earth-day/>
- Take part in Earth Hour 2017: <https://www.earthhour.org/>
- Devote a small – but consistent – section in your Sunday bulletin (and on your website) to “care for our common home.” Include quotes, facts and statistics, concrete and practical things to do.



Adding New Luster to an Old Gem

Issues #3 through #9, #15 through #18, #46 through #48 and #56 through #58 explored the reality of hospitality within our parishes and (arch)dioceses.

We might find additional help here - [Church Announcements: 7 Do's and Dont's](#) that illustrates that a well-crafted and clearly stated announcement invites people into the work of God; while a poorly-crafted announcement can be confusing or off-putting (<http://www.buildfaith.org/2015/10/16/church-announcements-7-dos-and-donts/>).

[Seven Church Signs That Give a Positive Impression](#) is a reminder that everything matters. Thom Rainer, the author, comments, “Many churches have positive signs posted around the church facilities. Unless you are a curmudgeon, these signs would give you a favorable impression of the

church.” Read through the comments, too, for they give more suggestions and some interesting perspectives.



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Past issues of **GEMS** are archived at www.janetschaeffler.com

Additional ideas for Adult Faith Formation Planning and Best Practices can be found at:

- *The Seasons of Adult Faith Formation*
http://www.lifelongfaith.com/store/p25/The_Seasons_of_Adult_Faith_Formation.html
- *The Seasons of Adult Faith Formation website*
<http://www.lifelongfaith.com/2015-adult-faith-formation-symposium.html>