

**SOME EXAMPLES OF RESOURCES USED FOR *CATHOLICS GOING GREEN*  
AND *CARING FOR CREATION PRAYER TRAIL***  
(to accompany **GEMS #51**)

***Catholics Going Green: Session 1***  
***Reflection on Water/Baptism***

For the earliest Christians water was a powerful symbol, full of the meaning of both life and death. For them water represented terror, destruction, death and burial. In the beginning, water represented chaos, until God separated it forming the sea and sky.

Yet water was equally a symbol of life. “Let the waters teem with an abundance of living creatures...” “A river rises in Eden to water the garden...”

Within water’s double meaning of death and life, what made the difference was the Spirit. “In the beginning, when God created the heavens and the earth, the earth was a formless wasteland, and darkness covered the abyss, while a mighty wind swept over the waters.” The mighty wind, the “ruah”, the breath of God, the Spirit, makes order out of the chaos of the waters. Thus water and the Spirit of God are linked from the very beginning of the earth.

The final stage of the Israelites’ journey out of slavery and oppression in Egypt and into a new land and new life was the crossing of the Jordan River.

The baptism John offered in the Jordan was a call to repentance and a conscious ushering in of the last times and the beginning of the Messiah’s reign. The Jews believed these days would begin with water. “I will sprinkle clean water upon you to cleanse you from all your impurities, and from all your idols I will cleanse you.”

By baptizing in the Jordan, John symbolized that those who came for baptism were leaving behind the land of slavery to sin and crossing over to a new Promised Land.

Jesus, himself, came to John in the waters of the Jordan to be baptized. Jesus was not baptized because he needed forgiveness of sin, but as a sign that he was the new age – the inaugurator of a new time; a time of salvation.

In the baptism of Jesus we see once again the dual symbolism of death and life in water. As Jesus is plunged into the water he is ritually going to his death. When he arose from the water “behold, the heavens were opened [for him], and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove [and] coming upon him.” From the chaos of death, the Spirit brings order and new life.

For us, to be baptized is to go into those waters which signify that we have died to sin and evil and to emerge from them cleansed by the spirit and rise with Christ.

Through the water of baptism, Christ’s spirit is poured forth. To be baptized is to open oneself to the spirit of Jesus. It is to have the Spirit make order out of the chaos of sin, through forgiveness.

It is to cross over to the Promised Land, to be sprinkled anew, cleansed of impurities to become fully alive

***Catholics Going Green: Session 6***  
***Reflection on Fire***

“When the time for Pentecost was fulfilled, they were all in one room together. And suddenly there came from the sky a noise like a strong driving wind, and it filled the entire house in which they were. Then there appeared to them tongues of fire, which parted and came to rest on each one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in different tongues, as the Spirit enabled them to speak.”

The apostles, truly “set on fire” by the Holy Spirit, left their place of hiding and boldly stepped forth into the light of day to proclaim the Good News of Jesus Christ. A major change occurred in the lives of each one of them that day. The fire of the Spirit transformed them from fearful people to fearless ones, ready to face ridicule, hardship, imprisonment and even death for the sake of the ultimate truth.

So, too, let us ask the Holy Spirit to set us on fire, to transform us, to give us the courage to make changes in our lives for the sake of our love for our Lord. Let us ask the Holy Spirit to inspire us to leave this place tonight filled with divine fire, ready to leave behind old, unsustainable ways and to embrace a change that will help us to grow in discipleship by living out Christ’s call to love God and neighbor. May the Holy Spirit give us a new vision of God’s creation as truly sacred and a deeper understanding of neighbor as every human being, most especially those in need, as well as all God’s creatures and all of creation.

As we go forth tonight, let us pray that we may water the seeds of new understanding so that as they grow, they may nurture new life within us and guide us to bring the oil of healing to that which is broken. As we continue on our journey of faith, may we walk in the light of God’s love and wisdom, free as the air, on our way to living as a true Eucharistic people. May the Holy Spirit descend upon us, igniting within us the fire that will give us courage to face opposition, to persevere because we know we are doing God’s work and spreading God’s love. Let us go forth, ready to change our lives, even if we only start with something as small a mustard seed, for we have faith that from such a tiny seed comes something so much greater.

**St. George Parish Caring for Creation Prayer Trail**  
**Text for Signs**

**Station 1 – Watersheds/Baptism**

Water in this quiet stream flowing gently by will gather distant raindrops on its journey to Indian Lake, on through the Blackstone River Watershed to Naragansett Bay and ultimately the ocean. The communities of this watershed and the people who live there are connected by the same life giving water which nourishes and cleanses our world just as all the baptized are connected by the waters of baptism that cleansed our souls. Caring for our stream and our watershed is a way of caring for our neighbors and answering our baptismal call.

*“Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit...” (Mark 28:19)*

**Station 2 – The Eucharist and Nature**

The Eucharist nourishes our body, mind, and spirit. God’s creation in nature also nourishes us and our well-being here on earth. Wheat and grapes, bread and wine, fruit of the earth and work of human hands, become the Body and Blood of our Lord, Jesus Christ in the Eucharist. We not only receive the Eucharist, but we also share the Eucharist. Through it we receive a call to conversion and an invitation to draw more deeply into communion with God and with all that God has created.

*“Jesus said to them, I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never hunger, and whoever believes in me will never thirst.” (John 6:35) or*

*“While the land has its Sabbath, all its produce will be food equally for you yourself and for your male and female slaves, for your hired help and the tenants who live with you, and likewise for your livestock and for the wild animals on your land.” (Lev. 25:6-7)*

**Station 3 – Diversity and Healing/Holy Oil**

Open your eyes and your heart to all the life forms around you. Recognize the mystery, strength, and healing quality of life and its diversity. It is from among the very elements of nature that we create the Holy Oil used in the Anointing of the Sick. Olives, balsam, myrrh, frankincense, and cloves mixed together create the oil that brings healing of the whole person, mind, body, and especially soul. Take time to observe and appreciate the many plants, animals and all of God’s creatures that live among us here in this forest. As you proceed along this trail, remember that healing is often and uphill climb.

*“So they went off and preached repentance. They drove out many demons, and they anointed with oil many who were sick and cured them.” (Mark 6:12)*

**Station 4 – Seed**

The stone wall here reminds us of a once agricultural landscape of pastures and farms which produced food, wool, and firewood sustaining the families that lived here. The large oak and hickory trees that we see today were once the tiny seeds of a new forest in those former pastures more than 100 years ago. As Jesus told us, “The Kingdom of Heaven is like a mustard seed that a

person took and sowed in a field. It is the smallest of all the seeds, yet when full-grown it is the largest of plants. It becomes a large bush and the birds of the sky come and dwell in its branches.” So much comes from the smallest of things.

*“But some seed fell on rich soil, and produced fruit, a hundred or sixty or thirtyfold.” (Matt. 13:8)*

### **Station 5 – Air and Light**

Look up through the opening in this forest to the sky and take a deep breath. Air is essential to life on earth. Yet, sometimes we take it for granted. God breathed the Spirit into all beings bringing them to life. All is sustained by the ruah, the breath of God. We must stand in solidarity as a global community for we all live and breathe the same air. Jesus, the Light of the World, asks us to be light for others.

*“When you send forth your breath, the are created, and you renew the face of the earth.” (Psalms 104:30)*

*“What came to be through him was life, and this life was the light of the human race; the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.” (John 1:3b-5)*

### **Station 6 – Fire (A Call to Conversion)**

God cares deeply for us and all of Creation, including the natural world. Let us ask the Holy Spirit who sent forth Divine Fire at Pentecost, to inspire us with a new vision of God’s creation as truly sacred and with a deeper understanding of neighbor as every human being, most especially those in need, as well as all God’s creatures and all of creation. We are called to care for creation in a spirit of stewardship. What will you do to answer that call?

*“Then there appeared to them tongues as of fire, which parted and came to rest on each one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in different tongues, as the Spirit enabled them to proclaim.” (Acts 2:3-4)*

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