

EARTH DAY PRAYER 2016

LEADER

The concept of Earth Day was established in 1969 at a UNESCO conference in San Francisco. Its aim is to inspire awareness of and appreciation for Earth's environment. Worldwide observance is celebrated each year on April 22.

These three candles represent the history of our relationship to Earth-- past, present & future. (A candle will be lit before each reading.) As we begin our prayer for this Earth Day let us take a few moments of silence to call to mind how we, both individually and as a community, have demonstrated our concern for Earth's welfare.

PAST

The first candle stands for the 14 billion years that scientists believe it has taken our planet to evolve to its present state. About 5000 BC a new species began to influence the evolutionary process. Changes in the relationship between Earth and humanity were minimal at first, but gradually became more significant. The industrial revolution, 1760-1840, was the first wave of major changes that affected the relationship between human beings and our planet. These changes were significant and far reaching. Although they contributed much to improving quality of life, they had a negative effect on Earth by the squandering of resources, the loss of species and habitats, and consolidation of wealth in the hands of a few.

PRESENT

We are living in the second major wave of changes, the technological revolution, represented by the second candle. The inventions and research of this period have resulted in rapid and dramatic changes to Earth in a very short period of time. Science and society have not been able to keep up with the changes some of which appear to be heading in the wrong direction.

FUTURE

The third candle stands for the future which we cannot imagine. With the scientific advances made in the last few years, more dramatic changes lie ahead. Earth is at the tipping point between a glorious future and complete destruction. While physical science can predict some changes, nanotechnology will be the catalyst for improving present technologies and creating new ones.

We need to ask ourselves what we can do to assist in changing the direction of the future. It is our responsibility to care for Earth and all its creatures as our Creator intended.

SING:

Sing out Earth and Skies (vs. 1)

Come, O God of all the earth; Come to us O Righteous One;
Come and bring our love to birth; In the glory of your Son.

Refrain: Sing out, earth and skies! Sing of the God who loves you!
Raise your joyful cries! Dance to the life around you.

Reader 1: O God, you love our Earth; from sunrise to sunset you fill land and sea with riches; the hills rejoice at your touch; the valleys shout for joy, yes, they sing.

Reader 2: Open our eyes to your resplendent world that we may care for Earth as our companion in creation.

Reader 1: May the pure song of air, water and trees, broaden our minds, lift up our hearts, and guide us to you.

Reader 2: Our resplendent world in its form and functioning is what enables us to have such a splendid sense of God.

Reader 1: Thomas Berry, CP, reminds us that “any degradation of Earth in its primary functioning inevitably affects our sense of the divine, just as we lose our experience of the great birds in flight, our experience of the animal or vegetative world, our experience of the rivers and the sea, or our experience of atmospheric phenomena.”

Sing:

Sing out Earth and Skies (vs. 4)

Come, O Justice, Come, O Peace; Come and shape our hearts anew;
Come and make oppression cease; Bring us all to life in you.

Refrain: Sing out, earth and skies! Sing of the God who loves you!
Raise your joyful cries! Dance to the life around you.

READING: At Our Mercy by Elizabeth Johnson

The time is past when humans could ignore the impact of their behavior on the ecological systems that support life on Earth. In the context of Christian faith, ecological practices bespeak a profound turning to the God of life...In the midst of the ruination of the tree of life, faith in the living God can spur us to action that makes a difference. The story of the evolving world is not over. To a large extent, earth's future is now at the mercy of human decision and indecision. If ever there was a sign of the times to be interpreted theologically, this is it. Do we want to be converted from dominion over the earth toward care for it? The question is not just an ascetic or moral one. Rather, it is an urgent invitation to align our hearts with God's love so that all may have life. A flourishing humanity on a thriving planet in an evolving universe, all together filled with the glory of God--this is the vision that must guide us at this time of earth's distress, to practical effect. Ignoring the crisis keeps people of faith and their churches locked into irrelevance while a terrible drama of life and death is played out around them. But living the ecological vocation sets us off on a great adventure of mind and heart, expanding the reach of our love.

A CHRISTIAN PRAYER IN UNION WITH CREATION (from LAUDATO SI)

I Father, we praise you with all your creatures; They came forth from your all powerful hand; they are yours, filled with your presence and your tender love.

II Son of God, Jesus, through you all things were made. You were formed in the womb of Mary our Mother, you became part of this earth and you gazed upon this world with human eyes. Today you are alive in every creature in your risen glory.

I Holy Spirit, by your light you guide this world towards the Father's love and accompany creation as it groans in travail. You also dwell in our hearts and you inspire us to do what is good.

II Triune Lord, wondrous community of infinite love, teach us to contemplate you in the beauty of the universe, for all things speak of you. Awaken our praise and thankfulness for every being that you have made. Give us the grace to feel profoundly joined to everything that is.

I God of love, show us our place in this world as channels of your love for all the creatures of this earth, for not one of them is forgotten in your sight.

II Enlighten those who possess power and money that they may avoid the sin of indifference, that they may love the common good, advance the weak, and care for this world in which we live.

I The poor and the earth are crying out. O Lord, seize us with your power and light, help us to protect all life to prepare for a better future, for the coming of your kingdom. Amen

PAUSE for Reflection

Sing: Earthen Vessels

Refrain: We hold a treasure, not made of gold, in earthen vessels wealth untold;
One treasure only: the Lord, the Christ, in earthen vessels.

- 1) Light has shown in our darkness: God has shown in our heart with the light of the glory of Jesus, the Lord. **Refrain**
- 2) God has chosen the lowly who are small in this world; in this weakness is glory in Jesus, the Lord. **Refrain**

Leader: As we are called to see ourselves and each other as earthen vessels that hold God's presence and bring God's gifts to the world, so too, this very world and all that is above, around and within it are earthen vessels—just as easily shattered, just as much in need of our loving attentiveness and support. May our hands align with God's in caressing and shaping these vessels.

Response: Loving God, hear us

- 1) For trees, plants, crops and forests, Let us pray.
- 2) For water, oceans, rivers, streams and ponds, Let us pray.
- 3) For air, wind, climate and weather, Let us pray.
- 4) For sun, clean energy and prevention of global warming, Let us pray.
- 5) For animals, especially endangered species, Let us pray.
- 6) For all humankind, Let us pray.
- 7) For recycling and moderate personal consumption, Let us pray.
- 8) For proper use of chemicals and disposal of toxic wastes, Let us pray.
- 9) For Earth and unity, Let us pray.

Leader: Creator God, we thank you for all of creation. We pray that you guide us in your ways to protect, to serve, to hold precious this glorious Earth in all its abundance. Give us wisdom, that we may be faithful to your will. Give us restraint in our use of resources; that this Earth on which we live, this Earth that you made and sustain, will pass to our children, generation upon generation. Peace be to this community, Peace be to this land, Peace be to all people. Amen.

Sing: We hold a treasure, not made of gold, in earthen vessels, wealth untold; one treasure only: the Lord, the Christ, in earthen vessels.

Quotes for further reflection or as part of this prayer.:

- 1) The major problems in the world are the result of the difference between how nature works and the way people think. – Gregory Batson
- 2) To cherish what remains of the Earth and to foster its renewal is the only legitimate hope of survival. – Wendell Berry
- 3) The supreme reality of our time is in the vulnerability of our planet. – John F. Kennedy
- 4) Our role is no longer to merely ease sufferings, bind up wounds, and feed the hungry, but through every form of effort to raise the powers of love upward to the next stage of consciousness. – Teilhard de Chardin