



Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns

2016

# Lenten *Reflection Guide*

*Forty days with Scripture and Laudato Si'*

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*Many things have to change course, but it is **we human beings** above all who **need to change**. We lack an awareness of our common origin, of our mutual belonging, and of a future to be shared with everyone. . . . A great cultural, spiritual and educational challenge stands before us, and it will demand that we set out on the **long path of renewal**.*

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Pope Francis, *Laudato Si'*

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# About this resource

In this Lenten Reflection Guide, we offer reflections, questions, prayers, and actions based on each week's Gospel reading and the teachings of Pope Francis in his encyclical, *Laudato Si'*. Use this guide individually or in small groups to reflect upon your life patterns, to pray more deeply, and renew your spirit to face the realities of our world.

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## About us

The Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns (MOGC) represents Maryknoll missionaries, who are Catholic men and women serving in impoverished communities around the world. The MOGC provides analysis and advocacy on issues of justice, peace and the integrity of creation that affect the countries and communities where Maryknoll missionaries serve.

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## Ash Wednesday Matthew 6:1-6, 16-18

*“When you pray, go to your inner room, close the door, and pray to your Father in secret. And your Father who sees what is done in secret will repay you.”*

### Preparing for the journey on the long path of renewal

**L**ent is an invitation to a journey of naming what is broken within us, turning away from it, and turning toward that which is truly good. The journey begins with acknowledging our failings, limitations, and mortality – all of which takes courage.

Pope Francis makes a courageous assessment of our planet when he says “The Earth, our home, is beginning to look more and more like an immense pile of filth.”

All of creation, including humanity shares a common home. But studies indicate that “most global warming in recent decades is due to the great concentration of greenhouse gases . . . released mainly as a result of human activity,” Pope Francis says. Five times he names a “throwaway culture” as a root cause of the ecological crisis. We are suffering from pollution and waste, scarcity of water, loss of biodiversity, decline in the quality of life and breakdown of society, extreme consumerism and global inequality.

An “ecological debt” exists, particularly between the global north and south, due to the disproportionate use of God’s gifts of water, minerals, and trees. Francis repeats Saint John Paul II’s call to a “global ecological conversion” to care for the needs of the vulnerable, which includes Earth.

In the readings for today, Paul writes to the Corinthians that “godly grief produces a repentance that leads to salvation and brings no regret, but worldly grief produces death.” “How profound this seems, as we face

this time of repentance and are reminded so forcefully that we are dust and unto dust we shall return,” says Father John Sivalon, a Maryknoll missionary who lived and worked in Tanzania. “Matthew emphasizes that with fasting, prayer and almsgiving, it is essential how we do these things: with authenticity and no calculation of how we might profit from them. Building on these insights, what Paul is emphasizing by the term “godly grief” is that the way we face and wrestle with grief, is what determines if it will lead to a true transformation of ourselves and how we journey in this world.

“All of us are carrying grief from loss in a variety of ways: the loss of loved ones; the loss of jobs; failed relationships; failed aspirations for ourselves; and the systemic losses of political and economic dreams,” Father Sivalon says. “Part of life is loss which leads to grief. But grief, depending on how we carry it, can lead to bitterness and anger or to freedom, peace and a new sense of self. On this day of Ash Wednesday, we recognize loss as a necessary part of life and we affirm our deep commitment to carry it in a ‘godly’ way which brings transformation, peace and life.”

### Questions for Reflection

How do you participate in a “throwaway culture”?

What images come to mind when you imagine grieving over climate change and the destruction of the natural world?

## Prayer

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Your creative love, O God, brought forth our world,  
Once a garden where humans  
Could taste and see the goodness of the earth.

But our eyes have been blinded  
to the beauty of Creation,  
to the knowledge that it is Gift,  
one given so that all humans may live and flourish.

Our indifference changes the world;  
Even mighty glaciers weep now.  
Our disregard for our sisters and brothers  
Threatens the very skies above us.  
Our passivity begins to choke us, and  
The excess of our lifestyles blot out the sun.

Call us to renewal, to stewardship;  
Call us to solidarity to the earth and all its creatures.  
Give us new vision to see the fragile beauty that remains  
to us;  
Give us new spiritual energy to become active  
In loving the world through our daily life;  
Give us new voices to speak out for environmental  
solidarity.

Bless us again with the gift  
Of being a joyful community;  
Bless us with a love of your Creation  
And we will glimpse your Eden once again.

– Jane Deren, 2009  
(c) [www.educationforjustice.org](http://www.educationforjustice.org)



“Rains are unpredictable now, making farming a risky venture. Farmers are unable to get their usual harvest, and food prices are rising. People who had two meals a day eat only once a day. This is especially tragic for those living with HIV/AIDS and who are taking anti-retroviral treatment. Regular meals are an important part of their treatment.”

– Joanne Miya, Tanzania  
Maryknoll Lay Missioners

## Fast

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Consider ways to phase out fossil fuels from your life. Natural gas, oil, and coal are fossil fuels used daily to provide energy. They are non-renewable energy sources and produce greenhouse gas emissions. Consider cleaner forms of transportation: Walk, ride your bike, use public transportation.

## Action

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In 2015 the Global Catholic Climate Movement collected over 900,000 petition signatures (delivered personally to the French president and the UN Climate chief at the Paris Climate Summit). In 2016, we will continue to collect signatures to deliver to all national governments. Sign the petition to world leaders to commit to ambitious climate action and to solve this urgent crisis.

<https://catholicclimatemovement.global/petition/>



## First Sunday in Lent

**Luke 4:1-13**

*"It is written, One does not live by bread alone."*

### **We are linked by unseen bonds that provide all we need for the journey**

**“E**verything 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,” Pope Francis says in *Laudato Si’*.

The word “creation” has a broader meaning than “nature,” Francis says. It is God’s loving plan in which “every creature has its own value and significance,” and humans are “linked by unseen bonds and together form a kind of universal family.” We need to join our concern for the environment with a “sincere love for our fellow human beings and an unwavering commitment to resolving the problems of society.”

We break the commandment “Thou shall not kill” when “twenty percent of the world’s population consumes resources at a rate that robs the poor nations and future generations of what they need to survive.”

In today’s Gospel, Jesus resists the devil’s offers of materialism and power, saying that he will serve and worship only God. “Do we model Jesus’ action by the traditional practice of giving up something for the 40 days of Lent?” asks Debbie Northern, a Maryknoll Lay Missioner who lived and worked in Tanzania and El Salvador. “Perhaps what is really needed is to take a deeper look at our lifestyles and habits. What are our temptations? Do we confidently turn them aside to rely on God alone? In today’s globalized world, one’s choices have a greater impact than ever before. When I was a child, ‘What does that have to do with the price of tea in China?’ was used whenever someone was speaking of a topic that seemed not to concern the

listener. Now, what decisions are made locally can affect the price of tea in China or the price of corn in El Salvador.

“In Deuteronomy, the Israelites arrive in the Promised Land and give thanks to God for the covenant between the people and God,” Debbie says. “At the same time the Israelites are aware that their part of the covenant is to obey the commandments and to serve God. They, too, faced temptations of false gods and as a community often had to ask for God’s forgiveness and grace. This is what Lent is about, realizing our failure to serve God – by the ways we are complicit in supporting unjust relationships, by the ways our trade laws are written to favor U.S. industrial farms, and by the ways immigrants seeking a better life are treated. These 40 days of Lent are about making changes to recognize God in the face of others and to truly show thankfulness to God for all we have received.”

In his annual Lenten message, Pope Francis says, “Indifference to our neighbor and to God also represents a real temptation for us Christians. Each year during Lent we need to hear once more the voice of the prophets who cry out and trouble our conscience.”

### **Questions for Reflection**

In what ways is your conscience troubled over the climate crisis?

What choices do you make daily that have an impact on the Earth? On poor communities?

## Prayer

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Guide our nets, O great river spirit,  
So our boat may abound with your bounty.  
Draw fish closer and let not our work be in vain.  
In gratitude we draw life from your murky depths  
That we and our families might live,  
Humbly knowing our turn will one day come  
To offer ourselves as food for other living things.

Bless us, O Mother Earth, as we kneel on and before  
you.  
You, from whom all life springs and to whom all life  
returns,  
Bless us, and others through us, especially our children,  
With health, prosperity and happiness.  
Let us be ever mindful of your tender care  
And never draw a breath without offering thanks  
For your generous gifts this day.

Sun, seed, and soil combine to yield a rich harvest  
Thanks, too, to rains both plentiful and soft.  
And thank you, O God of Creation,  
For drawing us together on this journey  
So we need no longer walk this way alone.  
We travel down paths both familiar and unknown  
Yet side-by-side our adventure now unfolds.

Teach us, then, O Lord of Everything,  
To seek your will, to celebrate your truth,  
To savor your Word, to wonder at your great mercy,  
To stand in awe of your goodness,  
To share your gifts and to enjoy your beauty  
Reflected no less in blossoming faces  
Than in outbursts of random roses.

–Father Joseph Veneroso, MM, *Honoring the Void:  
Meditations on the Meaning of Life from Maryknoll  
Magazine*



“The accustomed times for planting and cultivating the land have varied greatly. Planting later, awaiting the rains, means a shorter growing season and a diminished harvest. The wells are running dry and it is difficult to find water for the cattle. So many are discouraged by the climate and soil conditions that the youth are migrating to the cities, looking for jobs.”

– Father Edmund Cookson, *Peru  
Maryknoll Fathers and Brothers*

## Fast

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Consider eating less meat and fewer dairy products. Meat and dairy products are a major driver of climate change due to carbon and methane emissions through their production and distribution chains, according to data from United Nations agencies.

## Action

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Poorer countries have contributed least to climate change, yet are most impacted by it. Wealthier countries must finance low-emission and climate resilient development in poorer countries. The United Nations created a mechanism for this called the Green Climate Fund. So far, 37 countries have pledged a total of \$10 billion; of that, President Obama has committed \$3 billion over five years. The U.S. contribution is about the price of two B-60 bombers. Ask Congress to support the U.S. contribution to the Green Climate Fund:

<http://bit.ly/Act4GreenClimateFund>



## ***Second Sunday in Lent*** ***Luke 9:28b–36***

*“Jesus took Peter, John, and James and went up the mountain to pray. While he was praying his face changed in appearance and his clothing became dazzling white.”*

### **Jesus’ journey to Jerusalem inspires our transformation**

**O**n the second Sunday of Lent, we hear the story of Jesus’ Transfiguration. Jesus undergoes a dramatic change in appearance to help his disciples understand who he is and see his glory. The disciples who witness it can’t understand it until they witness Jesus’ Passion and death.

But we know the whole story and we can’t help but anticipate Jesus’ Resurrection even as we prepare to remember Jesus’ Passion and death. Knowing who Jesus is – “This is my chosen Son; listen to him.”– we don’t doubt that he can withstand the growing rift between him and the Jewish leaders that is described in later chapters. We know that the world will reject him and he will suffer, but God does not break promises and never abandons us.

“As the Gospel of Luke unfolds, however, James and John awaken to the fact that to really live the life of Jesus in our culture and world will surely bring suffering – as it did for Jesus,” said Sister Mary Grenough, a Maryknoll missionary in Myanmar. “If we try to live as Jesus did we (and others) discover God’s Spirit in our everyday lives in so many ways.

“Sometimes we have transfiguration experiences and don’t recognize them,” Sister Grenough said. “Last year we helped to start a small support program in a parish for people living with HIV and AIDS in Myanmar. Ten people came by special invitation and were very wary when they met each other. Some had known each other in their parish, but didn’t know they were HIV positive. The group struggled to accept each other and themselves, and they learned to be more open with each other. This past Christmas this group (who named

themselves ‘Guiding Star’) came to our house to sing Christmas carols for us. They are now about 30 people, young and old, men and women; they openly display their red AIDS ribbons and have become strong in their resolve to educate others and to support one another. They were so alive – with obvious new life. Yes, each of them have suffered and will continue to suffer. But now they have discovered a meaning for their lives and are learning to help each other.”

Many things have to change, Pope Francis says in *Laudato Si’*, but it is “we human beings above all who need to change.” We need to remember “our common origin,” “our mutual belonging,” and “a future to be shared with everyone.”

The Transfiguration shows us there is hope! Like Saint Francis of Assisi, our encounter with Jesus Christ becomes evident in our relationship with the world. “Our vocation to be protectors of God’s handiwork is essential to a life of virtue,” Pope Francis says. Love, “overflowing with small gestures of mutual care,” sets before us the ideal of “a civilization of love.” “We need one another,” and “we have a shared responsibility for others and for the world.”

### **Questions for Reflection**

Have you and a stranger ever exhibited “small gestures of mutual care” for each other?

Who is your neighbor in a globalized society?

## Prayer

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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.  
Praise be to you!

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.  
Praise be to you!

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.  
Praise be to you!

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.

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.  
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.  
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  
of justice, peace, love and beauty.  
Praise be to you!

Amen. – A Christian prayer in union with creation, *Laudato Si'*

[www.maryknollogc.org](http://www.maryknollogc.org)



“The Turkana tribe in northern Kenya herds goats, cows and camels because the climate doesn't support farming. During times of drought, the livestock starve and many people migrate south to the town of Kitale. They live in squalid slum camps on the edge of town and their children go to the streets. I am the project manager for the St. John Bosco Rehabilitation Centre where we rescue these children from the streets, place them in schools, and reintegrate them with their families.

– Russ Brine, Kenya  
Maryknoll Lay Missioner

## Fast

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Buy local, in-season produce. Locally produced food grown during natural seasons is fresher and requires less energy to produce and transport.

## Action

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Buy coffee beans from a partner in the Catholic Relief Services Fair Trade Network. Partners uphold the standards of fair trade with farmers and workers. Any time you make a purchase from one of these partners, they make a donation back to our Fair Trade Fund.

<http://www.crsfairtrade.org/coffee/>

*Lenten Reflection Guide – Second Sunday, February 21, 2016*



## Third Sunday in Lent Luke 13:1-9

*“I shall cultivate the ground around the fig tree and fertilize it; it may bear fruit in the future. If not, you can cut it down.”*

### Trust in God’s mercy and turn onto a path of renewal

On the third Sunday of Lent, we are assured of the continuing patience of God with those who have not yet repented their sins. In the Gospel of Luke, Jesus uses the parable of the fig tree to teach us about repentance, reform, and renewal. Just as the gardener cultivates the ground around the fig tree and fertilizes it, God cares for us in the hope that we repent our sins. It is important to prepare for the end of time, however, because the delay which God’s patience provides will not be permanent.

“Are we cultivating our personal and communal ‘ground,’ that is, our simple lifestyle, our good habits, our balanced attitudes, our reaching out to needy people?” asks Father Joe Healey, a Maryknoll missionary in Kenya. “Or do we tend to be judgmental, promote stereotypes and give labels to other people? Are we using the good fertilizer of prayer, fasting and almsgiving during this Lenten season to change and deepen our lives? Then we will bear the good fruits of community, equality, justice, listening, peace, serenity and silence in our personal and communal lives.”

When we learn of flooding along the great rivers in Bangladesh or devastation from typhoons in the Philippines, do we respond as if they are our neighbors? Pope Francis urges us to respond to the “cry of the earth [and] cry of the poor” to “protect our common home.”

Francis calls on the Church to educate parishioners on environmental degradation and to incorporate love of

creation into prayer and other sacred rituals. “The creation accounts in the book of Genesis contain, in their own symbolic and narrative language, profound teachings about human existence and its historical reality,” Francis says. “They suggest that human life is grounded in three fundamental and closely intertwined relationships: with God, with our neighbor and with the earth itself.”

Thirteen times in *Laudato Si’*, Francis names the need for a conversion. All people need an “ecological conversion” he says, “whereby the effects of their encounter with Jesus Christ become evident in their relationship with the world around them. Living our vocation to be protectors of God’s handiwork is essential to a life of virtue; it is not an optional or a secondary aspect of our Christian experience.”

Romans 12:2 says “Do not be conformed to the world where you live, but rather be transformed through the renewal of your mind. You must discern the will of God, what is good, what pleases, what is perfect.”

### Questions for Reflection

How can you cultivate your communal “ground” to foster a life of virtue?

In what ways can you help your parish incorporate love of creation in prayer and other rituals?

## Prayer

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All-powerful God, you are present in the whole universe and in the smallest of your creatures.  
You embrace with your tenderness all that exists.  
Pour out upon us the power of your love,  
that we may protect life and beauty.  
Fill us with peace, that we may live  
as brothers and sisters, harming no one.

O God of the poor,  
help us to rescue the abandoned and forgotten  
of this earth,  
so precious in your eyes.  
Bring healing to our lives,  
that we may protect the world and not prey on it,  
that we may sow beauty, not pollution and destruction.

Touch the hearts  
of those who look only for gain  
at the expense of the poor and the earth.  
Teach us to discover the worth of each thing,  
to be filled with awe and contemplation,  
to recognize that we are profoundly united  
with every creature  
as we journey towards your infinite light.

We thank you for being with us each day.  
Encourage us, we pray, in our struggle  
for justice, love and peace.

– A prayer for our earth, *Laudato Si'*



“Each year, the flooding seems to get worse in Cambodia. This is an effect of climate change, but also of the government's policy of economic land concessions where precious timber is cut and the land then shifts, and erodes. I am working with the faculty at the Royal University of Phnom Penh to establish a renewable energy laboratory.”

– *Sister Luise Ahrens, Cambodia*  
*Maryknoll Sisters*

## Fast

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Reduce energy consumption in your home. Avoid leaving appliances on stand-by, install energy-saving bulbs, choose appliances with the highest energy efficiency rating, and insulate your home and windows. Investigate ways to make your home more energy efficient: Schedule a home energy audit.  
<http://bit.ly/USHomeEnergyAudit>

## Action

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U.S. demand for food-based biofuels will account for almost half of global demand by 2025, under targets agreed by Congress in the Renewable Fuels Standard. This threatens the food and land rights of some of the world's poorest people. Ask Gina McCarthy, administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency, to move the U.S. away from food-based biofuels in the yearly Renewable Volume Obligations. Fuel consumption in the U.S. must not increase hunger around the world. <http://www.reformtherfs.us/>



## *Fourth Sunday in Lent* *Luke 15:1-3, 11-32*

*“But now we must celebrate and rejoice, because your brother was dead and has come to life again; he was lost and has been found.”*

### **God’s yearning love for those who are lost on the journey**

The Gospel reading for this Sunday includes the parable of the prodigal son. It re-affirms for us that God’s love and compassion knows no bounds. Sister Teresa Dagdag, a Maryknoll Sister on mission in Rome, suggests that we imagine the characters in the parable representing actors in today’s world:

“The Father represents God, a parent who is compassionate toward his two sons. With generosity, the parent decides to give in to the younger son’s demand for an early inheritance even though he foresees the high risk. In today’s world, we have a 4.6 billion-year-old Earth that provides for our needs and offers us renewable resources to use, re-use, and save. Comparably, God has risked dividing the world’s resources and trusts that we will use them responsibly.

“The prodigal son represents today’s global citizens who find opportunities to use Earth’s resources but squander them. We use air, water, minerals mined from underground, soil that nurtures food, and forests that give oxygen as though these were limitless. Like the prodigal son, our consumption patterns have placed a heavy toll on our limited inheritance.

“Just as the elder son in the story accuses his brother of squandering property . . . abusive agricultural practices rob the soil of its organic capacity to produce safe food; farmers aim for higher yields with dependence on chemical fertilizer; and corporations lure farmers to produce more with commercially sold seeds. But the

irony is that there are now a billion people going to bed hungry in the world, unable to feed themselves, unable to earn enough to buy food. The wasteful children of the Earth wake up to the shock of breathing polluted air and drinking unsafe water.

“We are among those who need to change our wasteful habits and to reverse the destructive processes to save our Earth community. We have been wasteful, not prudent, failing to save for the future to sustain life on Earth. Aren’t we also ‘prodigal’?”

In the end of the parable, there is joy, because the son seeks reconciliation and is brought back to the fullness of life. Throughout the world, people are mobilizing to restore the Earth that has been ravaged by mining and industrial agriculture. “Let us sing as we go,” Pope Francis says in *Laudato Si’*. “May our struggles and our concern for this planet never take away the joy of our hope. God, who calls us to generous commitment and to give him our all, offers us the light and the strength needed to continue on our way.”

### **Questions for Reflection**

In what ways are your habits wasteful and in need of reform?

In what ways do you “sing as you go” and express joy in God’s creation?

## Prayer

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Oh, Great Spirit,  
whose voice I hear in the winds  
and whose breath gives life to all the world, hear me.  
I am small and weak.  
I need your strength and wisdom.

Let me walk in beauty and make my eyes  
ever behold the red and purple sunset.  
Make my hands respect the things you have made  
and my ears sharp to hear your voice.  
Make me wise so that I may understand  
the things you have taught my people.  
Let me learn the lessons you have hidden  
in every leaf and rock.

I seek strength, not to be superior to my brother,  
but to fight my greatest enemy - myself.  
Make me always ready to come to you  
with clean hands and straight eyes,  
so when life fades, as the fading sunset,  
my spirit will come to you  
without shame.

—Chief Yellow Lark, Lakota, 1887



“Some days, the air pollution is so bad that you cannot see the buildings right next door. Most people wear masks on these days. All of us try to stay indoors as much as possible and I find it especially harder to breathe since my heart is weak.”

— *Father Thomas Egan, China  
Maryknoll Fathers and Brothers*

## Fast

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Fast from overconsumption. Refrain from shopping one day a week. Use the money and time saved to pray, read, pursue a hobby, build relationships, or support your community.

## Action

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Air pollution in the U.S. still remains a public health issue. Many protective standards are outdated or are years overdue. The EPA needs to update clean air protections to cut dangerous carbon pollution from power plants, reduce toxic emissions, and provide cleaner gasoline. Write President Obama:

<http://bit.ly/CleanAir2016>



## *Fifth Sunday in Lent*

*John 8:1-11*

*“Let the one among you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her.”*

### **Moving beyond present limits onto a new path for all of creation**

**T**oday’s Gospel is about the new creation that God is bringing about. In *Befriending the Earth*, Thomas Berry writes, “The human community and the natural world will go into the future as a single sacred community or we will both perish in the desert.”

“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,” Pope Francis says in *Laudato Si’*. . . . “Our insistence that each human being is an image of God should not make us overlook the fact that each creature has its own purpose. None is superfluous. The entire material universe speaks of God’s love, his boundless affection for us. Soil, water, mountains: everything is, as it were, a caress of God.”

“When I hear the Gospel account of the woman caught in adultery, I am always impressed at the serenity and forgiveness that exudes from Jesus,” said Father Ray Finch, a Maryknoll missionary who lived and worked in Bolivia. “Jesus is being attacked by the Pharisees and scribes; they are attempting to hold Jesus in a past that excludes possibilities of forgiveness and change, a past that clearly defines the fate of the sinner, in this case the woman caught in adultery. Jesus refuses to be defined by the past and opens up new worlds, new paths for all, for the sinner as well as for the Pharisees, for the scribes and for each one of us.

“The message of today’s Gospel is clearly about forgiveness,” Father Finch said. “But even more so it is

about turning the world upside down, about the new creation where we all have the possibility of being freed from our past, from our errors, from our chains, from the reality that we have lived for so long, from being caught in adultery, whatever that might be for each one of us.

“The Season of Lent enables us to perceive the new creation that God is bringing about in each of us and in our world. It helps open our eyes and hearts to the Spirit turning the world upside down. In the Gospel Jesus sees a person, a woman, trapped in her past. He sees beyond the sin, beyond the rules of society to a new, different person and future. The scribes and Pharisees see only what has been and the rules that “must” be fulfilled. They cannot see beyond what is, to what might be, to the new creation.

“Do we see beyond the past and present deformities, to what could be or are we stuck in what was and what is? Do we perceive the new that God is creating in each one of us and in our societies or can we only perceive the pain and the restrictions that hold us in the past?”

### **Questions for Reflection**

What aspects of God’s bountiful creation have you overlooked in the past?

In what ways can you “see beyond” your current limitations or rules of society, to bring forth a new way of being?

## Prayer

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Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love;

According to your abundant mercy blot out my transgressions.

Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin.

For I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me.

Against you, you alone, have I sinned, and done what is evil in your sight,

So that you are justified in your sentence and blameless when you pass judgement.

Indeed, I was born guilty, a sinner when my mother conceived me.

You desire truth in the inward being; therefore teach me wisdom in my secret heart.

Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me and I shall be whiter than snow.

Let me hear joy and gladness; let the bones you have crushed rejoice.

Hide your face from my sins, and blot out all my iniquities.

Create in me a clean heart, O God, and put a new and right spirit within me.

Do not cast me away from your presence, and do not take your holy spirit from me.

Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and sustain in me a willing heart.

Amen

– *Psalm 51:1-12*



“Each year exhibits increased dry conditions, changes in the rainy season pattern with not enough rain, or rains at the wrong time in the growing season cycle. There is an overall shifting of seasons.”

– *Sister Frances Kobets, Zimbabwe  
Maryknoll Sisters*

## Fast

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Consider making a fast from plastic. Plastics are made from fossil fuels – four percent of the world's annual petroleum production is converted directly into making plastics, and another four percent gets burned to fuel the process. Only approximately seven percent of plastics are recycled. Many municipalities in the United States have stopped recycling plastic bags because they are difficult to process and have little to no resale value. Plastic disposable bags clog our shorelines and suffocate birds and marine life.

## Action

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Lend your voice for environmental justice by asking Congress to support the Clean Power Plan. This is one part of a larger plan that the Obama administration submitted to the Paris Climate Summit. It establishes the first-ever national carbon standards and limits on carbon pollution from power plants, the largest source of carbon pollution in the U.S. Write your member of Congress: <http://catholicclimatecovenant.org/act/advocate>



## ***Palm Sunday***

***Luke 22:14 – 23:56***

*Some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to him, “Teacher, rebuke your disciples.” He said in reply, “I tell you, if they keep silent, the stones will cry out!”*

### **Journeying in union with all of creation**

**I**n this week’s Gospel, Jesus’ journey finally reaches its destination – Jerusalem. The crowds traveling with Jesus wave palm branches and shout praises as he triumphantly processes into Jerusalem. The Pharisees tell Jesus to rebuke his disciples for the celebration and to silence the people. He says in reply, “I tell you, if they keep silent, the stones will cry out!”

Not only do the people recognize him for who he is – savior and worthy to be praised – but all of creation is conscious of it.

At the beginning of *Laudato Si’*, Pope Francis says 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.” Francis describes how our complacency in the suffering of sister earth has brought us to this crisis.

“This sister 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.’”

We imagine her groans today in the forests becoming deserts in El Salvador, coastlines fading away in East Timor, and species disappearing around the world. We

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cannot ignore the death of nature for we are interconnected. “We have forgotten that we ourselves are dust of the earth; our very bodies are made up of her elements, we breathe her air and we receive life and refreshment from her waters,” Francis says.

We must not be afraid to speak up for the rights of nature, for if not us, then the earth itself will eventually cry out. If we continue to ignore climate change it may be too late to prevent the loss of creation and loss of life, especially in small island states.

Just as we speak up for changes in our personal lives, we need to speak up against the sins of corporations and complacency of governments that exploit or abuse the land for fossil fuels or unsustainable industrial farming. By being a witness to the death of nature, we can testify and experience the ecological conversion to which Pope Francis calls us.

### **Questions for Reflection**

During this season of Lent, what have you learned about your relationship with God, with the Earth, and with others?

How will you continue your ecological conversion throughout the year?

## Prayer

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Most High, all-powerful, good Lord,  
Yours are the praises, the glory, and the honor, and all  
blessing,

To You alone, Most High, do they belong,  
and no human is worthy to mention Your name.

**Praised be You**, my Lord, with all Your creatures,  
especially Sir Brother Sun,

Who is the day and through whom You give us light.  
And he is beautiful and radiant with great splendor;  
and bears a likeness of You, Most High One.

**Praised be You**, my Lord, through Sister Moon and the  
stars,  
in heaven You formed them clear and precious and  
beautiful.

**Praised be You**, my Lord, through Brother Wind,  
and through the air, cloudy and serene, and every kind of  
weather,

through whom You give sustenance to Your creatures.

**Praised be You**, my Lord, through Sister Water,  
who is very useful and humble and precious and chaste.

**Praised be You**, my Lord, through Brother Fire,  
through whom You light the night,  
and he is beautiful and playful and robust and strong.

**Praised be You**, my Lord, through our Sister Mother  
Earth,

who sustains and governs us,  
and who produces various fruit with colored flowers and  
herbs.

**Praised be You**, my Lord, through those who give  
pardon for Your love,  
and bear infirmity and tribulation.

Blessed are those who endure in peace  
for by You, Most High, shall they be crowned.

**Praised be You**, my Lord, through our Sister Bodily  
Death,

from whom no one living can escape.

Woe to those who die in mortal sin.

Blessed are those whom death will find in Your most  
holy will,

for the second death shall do them no harm.

**Praise and bless my Lord** and give Him thanks  
and serve Him with great humility.

– Saint. Francis of Assisi, *The Canticle of the Creatures*

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“[People have told me that] the traditional season for planting corn, which for centuries has begun on the first Sunday of May, has become unpredictable due to varying arrival of the rainy season. A short rainy season dry spell of two weeks – “la canícula” – has become a damaging drought for the past three years, lengthening to three weeks or a month, damaging crops and livestock.”

– Joe Hastings, *El Salvador*  
Maryknoll Lay Missioners

## Fast

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Fast from technology. Turn off your cell phone, computer, television. Use that time to care for your relationship with God, the earth, yourself, and others. Go for a walk, explore nature, seek out conversation with neighbors, especially those who are lonely.

## Action

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Methane is a lesser known greenhouse gas that is emitted in large quantities from oil and gas infrastructure on public lands. According to the Environmental Protection Agency, “Pound for pound, the comparative impact of methane on climate change is more than 25 times greater than carbon dioxide over a 100-year period.” The EPA has proposed methane rules to address harmful leaks from fossil fuel exploitation and production on public lands. Send a letter to President Obama to urge him to support stronger methane rules.

<http://bit.ly/MethaneRulesNow>

*Lenten Reflection Guide – Palm Sunday, March 20, 2016*