

PRAYER

'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.' (*Laudato Si'*, 217)

A Prayer for our Earth

All powerful God, you are present in the whole universe and in the smallest of your creatures.

Pour out upon us the power of your love, that we may protect life and beauty.

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.

Amen. (*Laudato Si'*, 246)

A Prayer Before Meals

Loving God, we ask you to bless this food which comes to us through the work of many people, from the sowing of seeds in the earth, to our table here today. Help us to always care for your beautiful creation. Amen.

As you splash water on your face three times, repeat this prayer: The palmful of the God of Life. The palmful of the Christ of Love. The palmful of the Spirit of Peace.

We are invited to listen to creation's call. What is God saying to us through the Book of Nature? Spend more time, with awareness, evoking the senses, contemplating God's love for us through creation. Can we allow nature to be a teacher, a friend, a channel of God's love?

The Next Steps at Home, in your Parish and Local Community

'It cannot be emphasised enough how everything is interconnected.' (*Laudato Si'*, 138)

- Reflect on your relationship with God's creation:
www.ecologicalexamen.org
- Look up the *Laudato Si'* Goals and see how your parish might achieve them:
www.laudatosiactionplatform.org
- Consider highlighting one of the following dates in your parish: Earth Hour, National Tree Week, Earth Day, Biodiversity Week
- Plant a native Irish tree or hedge.
See: www.easytreesie.com
- Organise a blessing of pets for the Feast of St Francis on 4 October
- Set up a 'Care for Creation' group in your parish. Read *Laudato Si'* together
- Consider becoming an eco-parish.
See: www.ecocongregationireland.com
- Work on joint actions and projects with other faith communities; schools, youth groups, community groups in your area
- Go wild! Embrace the wildflowers:
www.pollinators.ie/communities/faith-communities

'The biblical texts are to be read in their context, recognizing that they tell us to "till and keep" the garden of the world (Genesis 2:15). "Tilling" refers to cultivating, ploughing or working, while "keeping" means caring, protecting, overseeing and preserving. This implies a relationship of mutual responsibility between human beings and nature.' (*Laudato Si'*, 67)

'Remove the sandals from your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground.' (Exodus 3:5)



Listen to the Voice of Creation

'I have heard their cry ... I know their sufferings ... Come, now! I will send you ... I will be with you.'
(Exodus 3:1-12)

SEASON OF CREATION

1 September–4 October



Trócaire

SOIL

'God has joined us so closely to the world around us that we can feel the desertification of the soil almost as a physical ailment, and the extinction of a species as a painful disfigurement.'
(*Evangelii Gaudium*, 215)

Did you know? Healthy soil is a living ecosystem that sustains the health of animals as well as plants and humans. Soil can be thought of as the infrastructure that is needed to keep a host of bacteria, fungi, viruses and microscopic creatures living in balance.



Present situation:

- Every minute we lose the equivalent of thirty football pitches of fertile soil. When we don't look after it, soil can lose its ability to support plant growth, become contaminated or erode away
- 'A good soil is hard to come by and, once you have it, care must be taken to look after it, as compaction and digging can destroy a soil' (Diarmuid Gavin)
- Climate change, the spread of intensive agriculture, deforestation and industrial activity have accelerated the loss of soils in almost every country in the world. Many of the vital bacteria and fungi that are necessary for good soil are depleted, leaving it vulnerable to being washed away

Don't treat soil like dirt!

'The only thing that stands between us and extinction is six inches of soil and the fact that it rains' (Anna Krzywoszynska, University of Sheffield)



WATER

'Without the oceans our planet would be as inhospitable as Mars: no meadows, no insects, no forests, no flowers, no birds, no animals and no humans. Today the oceans are under enormous attack from many different sources.' (Archbishop Dermot Farrell)



Did you know?

97.5% of water on earth is salt water. 2.5% is fresh water. This 2.5% sustains life on earth. Of this 2.5% of fresh water, 70% is used in agriculture, 22% in industrial settings and only 8% for domestic settings. The demand for freshwater has increased dramatically.

Present situation:

- In 1980, 500 rivers in Ireland were in 'pristine' condition. Today this number has fallen to just 20
- Sea level rise in the coming years will erode the soft Irish coastline and result in increased inundation in our many coastal cities and towns
- In poorer countries, women and children are disproportionately impacted by poor access to clean water and it is women and girls who spend most of their days collecting water; this in turn directly impacts their education



SOIL: WHAT CAN WE DO?

- Grow soil-saving plants, deep rooted to help with water runoff
- Compost food waste and use it as mulch
- Eliminate the use of harmful pesticides and weedkillers
- Mark World Soil Day on 5 December to focus attention on the importance of healthy soil and to advocate for the sustainable management of soil resources (<https://www.un.org/en/observances/world-soil-day>)
- Check out what some Irish farmers are doing by visiting: <https://talamhbeo.ie/>
- Connect with a local group like GIY (Grow It Yourself), Tidy Towns or consider setting up one in your parish
- Use local seasonal flowers at church
- Start or help with a church garden, have a herb garden at church, even in a window box



WATER: WHAT CAN WE DO?

- Visit www.water.ie for water saving measures, such as fixing leaking taps. A dripping tap leaking ten drops of water each minute, adds up to 90 litres or more over a month
- Collect rainwater
- Use reusable bottles and avoid buying bottled water as much as possible
- Organise a beach clean or a riverbank clean with your parish
- Celebrate World Oceans Day in your parish on 8 June (<https://worldoceanday.org/>)

