

1 And God Saw That it was Good

(The Goodness of Creation)

Check in

Leader explains that this is the first in a series of 12 sessions.

Context: *Deepening our mission as Christian believers and as CLC Ignatian members to respond to the call of the moment in the ecological frontier.*

These were composed by the CLC world office in Rome. There are three topics - Growing in communion with God's Creation, Deepening our mission as Christians and members of CLC, Urgent cries of the Earth and our response. Some of the sessions ask that we do some pre-reading or bring some materials to the following meeting. Today's session requires us to spend a few minutes sketching a place in nature that means a lot to us.

Grace: I ask God that I may experience a sense of wonder at creation.

Hymn: *Joyful Joyful We Adore Thee* (Youtube)

Explanation: Pope Francis has written:

There is an inherent goodness present in all of created reality, a goodness that is affirmed by the Creator himself (Gen 1: 4.10.12.18.21.25.31). The natural world has a value that is independent of its relationship or utility to human beings. The world is good not merely because it is useful to humans; the world is good because it IS. Every species and every creature has a right to existence, a right that is derived directly from its own divine origin. The earth is not merely the object of aesthetic and spiritual appreciation. The earth herself has a spiritual mode of being. (Laudato Si #)

Thomas Berry wrote about ecology and spirituality well before the recent Popes have.

"In our totality, we are born of the earth. Our spirituality itself is earth-derived. If there is no spirituality in the earth, then there is no spirituality in ourselves. Subjective communion with the earth, identification with the cosmic-earth-human process provides the context in which we now make our spiritual journey."

Scripture: Genesis 1, 9-25

Then God commanded, "Let the water below the sky come together in one place, so that the land will appear"—and it was done.¹⁰ He named the land "Earth," and the water which had come together he named "Sea." And God was pleased with what he saw.¹¹ Then he commanded, "Let the earth produce all kinds of plants, those that bear grain and those that bear fruit"—and it was done.¹² So the earth produced all kinds of plants, and God was pleased with what he saw.¹³ Evening passed and morning came—that was the third day.

¹⁴ Then God commanded, "Let lights appear in the sky to separate day from night and to show the time when days, years, and religious festivals begin; ¹⁵ they will shine in the sky to give light to the earth"—and it was done.¹⁶ So God made the two larger lights, the sun to rule over the day and the moon to rule over the night; he also made the stars.¹⁷ He placed the lights in the sky to shine on the earth, ¹⁸ to rule over the day and the night, and to separate light from darkness. And God was pleased with what he saw.¹⁹ Evening passed and morning came—that was the fourth day.

²⁰ Then God commanded, “Let the water be filled with many kinds of living beings, and let the air be filled with birds.” ²¹ So God created the great sea monsters, all kinds of creatures that live in the water, and all kinds of birds. And God was pleased with what he saw. ²² He blessed them all and told the creatures that live in the water to reproduce and to fill the sea, and he told the birds to increase in number.

²³ Evening passed and morning came—that was the fifth day.

²⁴ Then God commanded, “Let the earth produce all kinds of animal life: domestic and wild, large and small”—and it was done. ²⁵ So God made them all, and he was pleased with what he saw.

Silent prayer: Members take a few minutes (3-5) to reflect on these texts.

Exercise (with paper and pencils or coloured pens): All are invited to recall a place of natural beauty which has touched them deeply - a landscape, a garden, park, forest etc. They recall the goodness of creation experienced in that place. **Each one is invited to sketch out some features of that place** in silence. The emphasis is not on art or on accuracy. This sketch is only an aid to help me externalize what has touched me most deeply about this place. In turns, each one shares her/his sketch. The following questions could be used to guide the sharing

What are the features of this place?

How often have I visited it?

What are the feelings that it rouses in me?

When do I plan to visit this place again?

Sharing: members share briefly what touched them in this session.

Final prayer: A prayerful reading of the following poem

God’s Grandeur by Gerard Manley Hopkins

*The world is charged with the grandeur of God.
It will flame out, like shining from shook foil;
It gathers to a greatness, like the ooze of oil
Crushed. Why do men then now not reckon his rod?
Generations have trod, have trod, have trod;
And all is seared with trade; bleared, smeared with toil;
And wears man’s smudge and shares man’s smell: the soil
Is bare now, nor can foot feel, being shod.*

*And for all this, nature is never spent;
There lives the dearest freshness deep down things;
And though the last lights off the black West went
Oh, morning, at the brown brink eastward, springs —
Because the Holy Ghost over the bent
World broods with warm breast and with ah! bright wings.*

(Source: Poems and Prose of Gerard Manley Hopkins, Penguin Books, London, 1953)

Check out

Ongoing practice: I spend time contemplating some mystery of creation. I allow this mystery to fill me with a sense of awe and wonder. I enter into conversation with different aspects of nature - a tree, a river, the stars, the soil etc.