

A Franciscan Ecological Examination of Conscience

(from *Care for Creation* p. 99-101, by Illia Delio, Keith Warner, Pamela Wood)

Sunday: Is my whole life centered on God's overflowing love in my life, revealed through Jesus and through all of creation? Do I respond wholeheartedly to the call of this Spirit in my life?

Monday: Do I accept with a grateful heart the gifts of God's goodness and diversity in creation? Do I respond as Francis did, by building bonds of love, care, concern and companionship with all living beings? Do I value creation not as mine alone but first and foremost as God's home?

Tuesday: Am I willing to accept Francis' invitation to live as a "lesser brother or sister" within the kinship of creation? Do I pray for the forgiveness of sins between humans and the created world, and for the healing and reconciliation of our broken relationship with creation?

Wednesday: Am I caring toward my larger family of creation? Have I shown fidelity, humility, reverence and love to my Sister Mother Earth and all my brother and sister species? Have I used my God-given gifts to honor and protect the diverse, interdependent, fragile nature of all life and to preserve it for all future beings?

Thursday: Have I lived in a state of unrelatedness, over and against creation? Have I used my God-given gifts to honor and protect the diverse, interdependent, fragile nature of all life and to preserve it for all future beings?

Friday: Do I seek to eliminate from the world whatever keeps all creatures in their full development intended by their Creator: pollution, greed, overconsumption, loss of habitat, disease, war, extinction of species, oppressive laws and structures? Do I support organizations that work for ecological improvement on a systemic scale (not only for charismatic megafauna), restoration of habitat and preservation of open spaces?

Saturday: Have I committed myself to follow Francis' example of ecological conversion? Have I encouraged others to take care for creation seriously? Have I been judgmental or mean-spirited toward myself or others when we live imperfectly in our journey to heal our relationship with creation?

After reflecting on your question of the day, hold in your mind and heart the ways in which you have lived in disharmony with creation. Ask the earth and the Creator for forgiveness for your transgressions. Offer these mistakes up to God and ask for the strength and the wisdom to learn to live with integrity within the web of creation. Resolve to amend your life in the spirit of penance and love for our world. Name one action you intend to take today to work for care for creation.

Expressing Your Personal CANTICLE OF THE CREATURES in a Walk of Thanksgiving and Praise

Francis and God were mutual lovers. Bonaventure captures this spirit in his most powerful writings.¹ One of Francis' favorite sayings was, "Greatly to be loved is His (God's) love, who loved us so greatly." Francis' own response of love for all God's love is poured out in the Prayer of Abandonment at the end of the "Letter to a General Chapter," written at the end of Francis' life. The *Canticle of the Creatures* is a hymn of praise, thanks, glory, honor, and blessing for all of God's love-gifts, especially creation.²

During this walk, receive God's love-gifts in all of creation – gifts we often take for granted – in each or your five senses.

Begin the half-hour or hour as you would any time of prayer:

- 1) Consciously call to mind God's presence within you and all about you.
- 2) Breathe the fresh air in deeply. Reflect on how it constantly sustains your life -day and night – a reminder of the God who is present, loving you, holding you, and continually creating you.
- 3) Walk slowly apart from others, distractions, and pause to consciously experience the use of your

SIGHT

Use your vision to receive, enjoy, caress, revel in—color, shape, depth, texture, movement, etc., in all that is around you. Take some moments to reflect upon all that sight has contributed to the enrichment of your life experience: beauty, happiness, pleasure, reading, observing, etc. Try to realize how different your life would be if you were not able to see. Then, recognizing that all of creation and your sight are gifts from God, let some words and phrases or actions of praise flow from your heart.

SOUND

Stop and really listen even perhaps to the silence; notice the sounds-- high or low pitch, soft, loud, shrill, gentle-- in and all around you. Take some moments to reflect upon how your sense of hearing has contributed to the enrichment of your life experience. Try to realize how different your life would be if you were not able to hear.

Then, recognizing that all of creation and your gift of hearing are gifts from God, let some words and phrases, or actions of praise flow from your heart.

¹ See *LM 9, I, Francis of Assisi: Early Documents -- The Prophet*, pp. 605 ff or *Omnibus*, pp.698.

² See *Francis of Assisi: Early Documents -- The Saint*, pp.113-14 or *Omnibus*, pp.130.

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TOUCH

Consciously experience the feeling of the sun, air, or breeze on your skin, textures of clothing, grass, trees stones, flowers, etc., the awareness of the earth under your feet, the pull of gravity as you walk or jump. Consider the ways the sense of touch has enriched your life experience-- gardening, swimming, a massage, typing, playing a musical instrument, giving a greeting of peace. Imagine your life without the sense of touch. Express your words and phrases, your actions of loving praise!

TASTE

Consciously use your sense of taste to receive, enjoy, caress, revel in the bitter, sweet, sour, in all that is around you. Remember some particular tastes from the past, and all that you remember about them. Note the differences and sameness, etc. What would life be like, without the sense of taste? How would you feel impoverished? Express your feelings in loving words of praise, in phrases and actions of gratitude for this wonderful sense of taste.

SMELL

Consciously smell the various scents about you-- grass fresh-mowed, hand lotion, soap, flowers, perspiration. . . Remember the smells of the past that recall certain images of your grandmother's kitchen or linen closet, lilies of the valley and lilacs that remind you of May crowning, huge bouquets of peonies, mint crushed under your feet as you walked. . . Note differences, sameness. . . What would life be like if you did not have the sense of smell? Express your feelings in loving words of praise for the gift of smell, in phrases and actions of gratitude.

WRITE YOUR OWN CANTICLE

Use the space (left) to write your own canticle, flowing from your praise walk!

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