



International Solidarity Reflection

School Sisters of Notre Dame

Shalom

Solidarity with all Creation

June 2018

Introduction

There are several important international events in June. *World Environment Day* is on June 5, with the theme: “They (the rainforests) were fine before us, now they need us,” inviting us to save the rainforests of the world by less consumerism and protecting “the lungs of our planet.”

World Oceans Day on June 8 celebrates the sacredness of the oceans, the source of life. It reminds me of the story of a humpback whale that was caught in lobster traps off the coast of San Francisco. A fisherman called for help and five divers in wet suits attempted to cut the ropes around the whale’s body. One diver remembers the eye of the whale, carefully watching as he cut the rope that was caught in the whale’s mouth. When the whale was freed, s/he began swimming out into the open sea. Suddenly it turned around and went to each diver, and used his flipper to give a little nudge of thanks, and then swam out to open water. The divers said their lives would never be the same after receiving this deep gratitude.

June 17 is the *UN World Day to Combat Desertification and Drought*. This day has been observed since 1994 to alert the world to the growing threat of desertification, especially in Africa.

Call to Prayer

“Oh feed me this day, Holy Spirit, with the fragrance of the fields and the freshness of the oceans which you have made, and help me to hear and to hold in all dearness those exacting and wonderful words of our Lord Jesus Christ saying: Follow me.” (*Mary Oliver, Devotions, 2017*)

Following Jesus who lived in community with the “lilies of the field and the birds of the air” calls us to know our bioregion and celebrate our place in it.

Experience

Choose to pray outside or near an open window, listening to birdsong, feeling the breezes, or watching trees... If praying with others, describe what makes this place a precious part of Earth for you; share some facet that makes it special to the larger context of community.

Example: I live in St. Louis, Missouri, USA on the banks of the Mississippi River, which is part of Earth’s fourth largest river-system, after the Amazon, the Nile, and the Yangtse. It is the major flyway for 325 species of birds, and their migrations teach me about changing seasons.

Sacred remains of Native Peoples (pre-Columbian) are honored here. They camped on these banks: I want to treasure their presence on this land which speaks to me of endurance, beauty, community. They weathered four seasons each year and used only what they needed. They lived in harmony with abundant wildlife, including white-tailed deer, skunks, raccoons, squirrels, groundhogs, foxes, and birds, which still grace this land.

Reflection

On Pentecost 2015, Pope Francis promulgated *Laudato Si'* which calls all to learn the language of Indigenous Peoples hearing the cries of Earth, living in harmony with other species.

Giving us a new moral compass, Pope Francis quotes Patriarch Bartholomew who invites us to acknowledge our sins again creation: “For human beings...to destroy the biological diversity of God’s creation; for human beings to degrade the integrity of the Earth by causing changes in its climate, by stripping the Earth of its natural forests or destroying its wetlands; for human beings to contaminate the Earth’s waters, its land, its air and its life – these are sins. For to commit a crime against the natural world is a sin against ourselves and a sin against God.” (*Laudato Si'*, 8)

Echoing this sentiment Pope Francis prays: “Show us our place in this world ...” (*Laudato Si'*, 246 final paragraph of the prayer)

Finding our place in this world has led me to look for positive examples of living in harmony with creation. One simple story focusing on Solidarity with Creation gives me hope: **Reading with Rover**. It is a program to teach children to read by having them read to a dog. Reading with Rover children have shown remarkable improvement as they read out loud to a therapy dog especially trained for this situation.

Action

- Can you name examples of living in harmony with creation in your area?
- Some of you may respond by limiting your use of paper and plastic, working for systemic change such as immigration reform, caring for plants, working in a garden, and spending time outside attentive to the beauty that surrounds you.

Closing Prayer

Let us thank God for the beauty of our Earth by sitting in silence together, hopefully outside. Let us listen to the symphony of the birds, receiving the healing grace of trees blowing in the breeze, and the wildlife teaching us how to live in harmony. (*Silence for 10 minutes together.*)

Suggested Hymn: “This is My Song.”