

WORLD ENVIRONMENT DAY JUNE 5, 2019
Prayer Service
by Sister Pat Ferrick and Kathleen Bonnette

Call to Prayer

The aim of World Environment Day is to raise awareness of the environment and specific environmental issues. One important environmental concern of our time is the effect of a continuous border wall on the animals and plants of the borderlands. On this issue, we can clearly see the wisdom of Pope Francis in *Laudato Si'*: "It is essential to seek comprehensive solutions which consider the interactions within natural systems themselves and with social systems. We are faced not with two separate crises, one environmental and the other social, but rather with one complex crisis which is both social and environmental. Strategies for a solution demand an integrated approach to combating poverty, restoring dignity to the excluded, and at the same time protecting nature" (139).

The US Mexican border extends from the Pacific Ocean to the Gulf of Mexico and crosses Texas, New Mexico, Arizona and California - a distance of 1954 miles. The terrain covered includes the Rio Grande River, vast stretches of desert and rugged hills, wildlife preserves, national parks and both public and private land. It is home to many different species of animals, birds and plants.



Scientists, conservationists and activists claim that extending the border wall "would cause incalculable damage to the integrity of wildlife populations on either side of the border." Citing adverse impacts to wildlife ranging from Sonoran pronghorn to Gould's turkey, the National Wildlife Federation passed a [resolution](#) in 2017 opposing "construction of a continuous wall along the U.S.-Mexico border." Calling the barrier "one of the biggest potential ecological disasters of our time." In her article, "[Six Ways the Border Wall Could Disrupt the Environment](#)", Laura Parker lists potential threats that the erection of the wall might have. As we reflect on these potential environmental impacts, let us hold in our hearts the vulnerable plants, animals, and people who are discounted in U.S. responses to immigration concerns.

Opening Song

[All Creatures of Our God and King](#)

Sheet music included at the end of this document.

Readings

Reader: A continuous border wall is a threat to the diverse border landscapes, putting at risk the natural habitats of many native animals and plants, including 62 that are listed as critically endangered.

All: God of Creation, you say that the flowers of the fields and the little sparrows are precious to you (Matthew 6). May we see the world through your eyes and act “so that our planet might be what you desired when you created it, and correspond with your plan for peace, beauty and fullness” (*Laudato Si'*, 53).

Reader: A wall would impede escape routes of both people and animals in case of wildfire, and would increase the possibility of flooding. Fencing already constructed acted as a dam at Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument in Arizona in 2008, causing accumulations of water between two to seven feet. This occurred after only a 90 minute summer thunderstorm. The water also swept into Nogales, Sonora, Mexico causing millions of dollars of property damage, and in 2014 both Nogales, Arizona and Nogales, Sonora were inundated because debris trapped in the wall impeded the natural flow of the water.

All: God of Justice, we know that you are present with those suffering from floods and fire (Isaiah 43). May we see the world through your eyes and act “so that our planet might be what you desired when you created it, and correspond with your plan for peace, beauty and fullness” (*Laudato Si'*, 53).



Flooding in August, 2018 in Nogales, Sonora

Reader: The wall would limit the ability of animals to roam for food, water and mates, and would trap them in the event of wildfires or floods. Stanford University biologists Paul Ehrlich and Rodolfo Dirzo warn that “some of these species face extinction within the US if their movements are cut off by the continuous border wall.” A paper which they authored calling on scientists around the world to express concern over the environmental crisis which the wall would create has been endorsed by more than 3000 scientists.

All: God of the Universe, our ability to understand the world is granted by your design. May we see the world through your eyes and act “so that our planet might be what you desired when you created it, and correspond with your plan for peace, beauty and fullness” (*Laudato Si'*, 53).



A family of javelinas encounters the wall



Endangered bighorn sheep



Endangered ocelots



Altamira Oriole

Reader: The wall would divide the Rio Grande River, which flows between the U.S. and Mexico. Its channels change course and the river floods in the spring. If the wall were built north of the river, some US citizens would wind up with their land on the Mexican side of the river.

All: God of Living Water, you promise that your peace will flow like rivers in the desert (Isaiah 43 and 66). May we see the world through your eyes and act “so that our planet might be what you desired when you created it, and correspond with your plan for peace, beauty and fullness” (*Laudato Si'*, 53).

Reader: Finally, the wall would create hazards for wildlife refuges and parks. Proposals that are being considered would have the wall going through and ceding to Mexico parts of various wildlife refuges and national parks and the National Butterfly Center in Texas. In the name of national security, construction of the border wall is exempt from more than 30 federal environmental protection laws. Jeff Corwin, a wildlife biologist, declared that the expansion of the border wall “will choke off life from both sides” [U.S. and Mexico].

All: God of the Vulnerable, we know you are present with “the least of these” (Matthew 25), and you walk with those who humbly seek justice and protection for the powerless. May we see the world through your eyes and act “so that our planet might be what you desired when you created it, and correspond with your plan for peace, beauty and fullness” (*Laudato Si'*, 53).

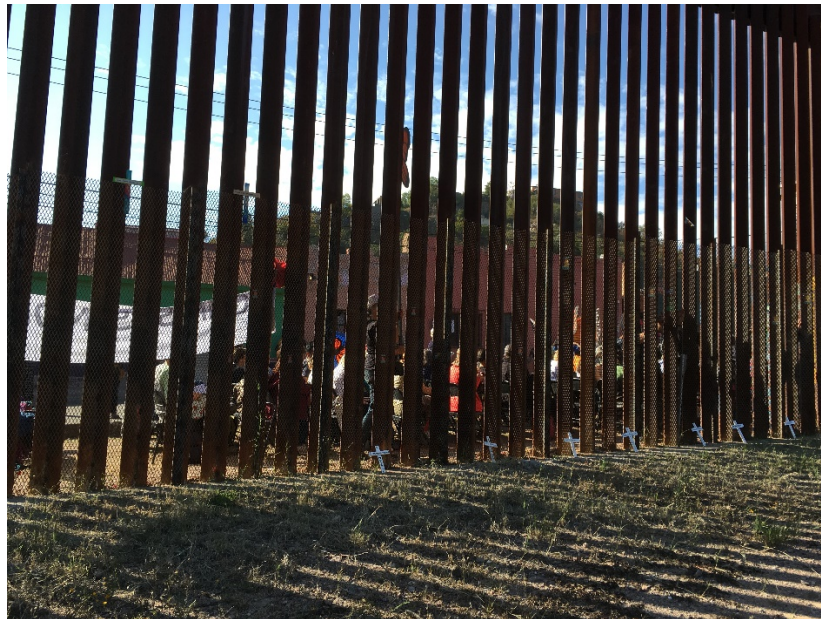
Reflection/Sharing

- As we pray in the words of Pope Francis – that we would act in ways that help our planet become what God desired it to be (*Laudato Si'*, 53) – what reflections do you have about the border wall?

Closing Prayer

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.

(Prayer for the Environment, *Laudato Si'*)



Border wall in Nogales, Arizona- before the five layers of concertina wire were added

(from the US side looking into Nogales, Sonora)

All Creatures of Our God and King

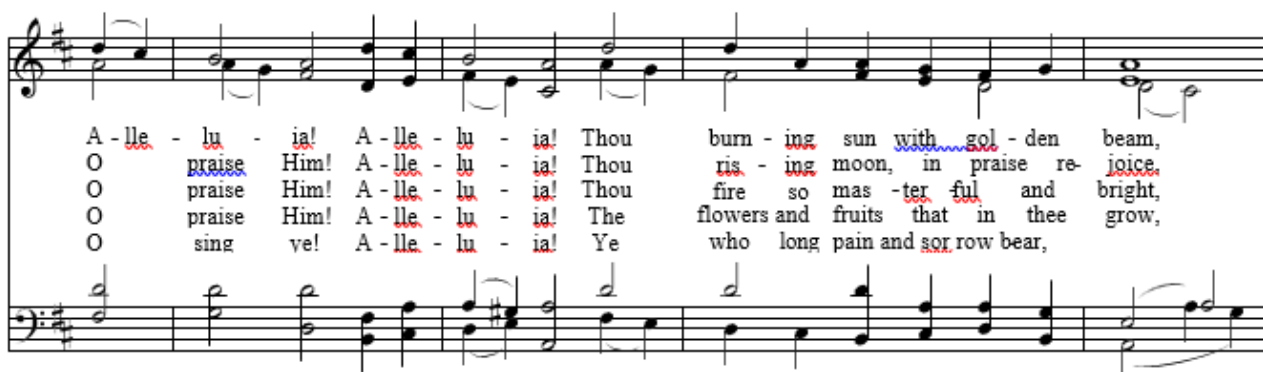
PRAISE

Words: Francis of Assisi circa 1225. Translated by William H. Draper, 1919.
Music: 'Lasst Uns Erfreuen' from Geistliche Kirchengesänge, Köln, 1623. Setting: Ralph Vaughan Williams, 1906.
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♩ = 160



1. All crea-tures of our God and King Lift up your voice and with us sing,
2. Thou rush-ing wind that art so strong Ye clouds that sail in Heaven a-long,
3. Thou flow-ing wa-ter pure and clear, Make mu-sic for thy Lord to hear,
4. Dear mo-ther earth, whoday by day Un-fold-est bless-ings on our way,
5. And all ye men of ten-der heart, For-giv-ing o-thers, take your part,



A-lle-lu-ia! A-lle-lu-ia! Thou burn-ing sun with gol-den beam,
O praise Him! A-lle-lu-ia! Thou ris-ing moon, in praise re-joice,
O praise Him! A-lle-lu-ia! Thou fire so mas-ter-ful and bright,
O praise Him! A-lle-lu-ia! The flowers and fruits that in thee grow,
O sing ye! A-lle-lu-ia! Ye who long pain and sor-row bear,



Thou sil-ver moon with soft-er gleam! O praise Him!
Ye lights of eve-ning, find a voice!
That giv-est man both warmth and light.
Let them His glo-ry al-so show.
Praise God and on Him cast your care!



O praise Him! A-lle-lu-ia! A-lle-lu-ia! A-lle-lu-ia!

6. And thou most kind and gentle Death,
Waiting to hush our latest breath,
O praise Him! Alleluia!
Thou leadest home the child of God,
And Christ our Lord the way hath trod.

7. Let all things their Creator bless,
And worship Him in humbleness,
O praise Him! Alleluia!
Praise, praise the Father, praise the Son,
And praise the Spirit, Three in One!