

SEASON OF CREATION

1 SEPTEMBER – 4 OCTOBER 2023



A Mighty River
Amos 5: 24

**Let Justice
and Peace Flow**
Season of Creation 2023

Parish

PRAYER SERVICE



A PROGRAM OF  Caritas AUSTRALIA



Season of Creation Parish Prayer Service

PREPARATION

We invite you to use this resource to celebrate the Season of Creation (1st Sept to 4th Oct) with your parishioners. This Prayer Service may be freely adapted for your setting.

Prepare a prayer space by creating a river scene installation. Alternatively, if your school is located near a river or creek, consider holding your prayer service on the banks. Take inspiration from Amos 5:24: 'Let justice roll on like a river, righteousness like a never-failing stream.'

Before the service, find out all you can about a local river or creek. Where does it start and stop? Which creatures live in and around it? What kinds of plants grow in and around it? What does it mean for the local people, including First Nations Peoples?

To make your river scene installation, consider combining a large bowl of water, stones (arranged to suggest a riverbed), leaves or native river plants (purchased from a local nursery rather than collected directly from the riverbank). You could also include river words from the local First Nations language.

*Then, print copies of the key quotes from Pope Francis's encyclical *Laudato Si'* (see following pages). Ideally, print the quotes onto heavy paper or card and cut them into individual cards before adding them to the river scene installation. If the congregation is small, print enough copies for each person. For larger congregations, invite the leader or a representative from each parish small group to be its representative. During the Act of Commitment, invite them to come to the installation and select one card each to take home or back to their group, where it can continue to be a focus of future contemplation and discussion.*

*If your prayer service is taking place indoors and you have access to a projector and screen, you may wish to use the **Season of Creation Prayer Service presentation** (zipped with this file) and have it ready to project slides onto the screen as the Prayers of the Faithful are being read.*

LAUDATO SI' QUOTES



Humanity still has the ability to work together in building our common home.

Pope Francis, *Laudato Si'* n13



The urgent challenge to protect our common home includes a concern to bring the whole human family together to seek a sustainable and integral development, for we know that things can change.

Pope Francis, *Laudato Si'* n13



LAUDATO SI' QUOTES



We have to realize that a true ecological approach *always* becomes a social approach; it must integrate questions of justice in debates on the environment, so as to hear *both the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor*.

Pope Francis, *Laudato Si'* n49



The effects of the present imbalance can only be reduced by our decisive action, here and now.

Pope Francis, *Laudato Si'* n161



LAUDATO SI' QUOTES



“To sense each creature singing the hymn of its existence is to live joyfully in God’s love and hope.”

Pope Francis, *Laudato Si'* n85



Intergenerational solidarity is not optional, but rather a basic question of justice, since the world we have received also belongs to those who will follow us.

Pope Francis, *Laudato Si'* n159



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Opening Song

Suggestions: "Come to the Water" (Matt Maher, *Overflow*), "Morning Song" (Ruth Duck), "Let Everything That Has Breath" (Matt Redman, *Intimacy*), "All Creatures of Our God and King" (St Francis of Assisi/William H. Draper), "For the Beauty of the Earth" (Folliott Sandford Pierpoint), "Praise God From Whom All Blessings Flow" (Thomas Ken), "Abundant Life" (Ruth Duck & Marty Haugen), "Morning Has Broken" (Eleanor Farjeon, *As One Voice Vol. 1*).

Acknowledgement of Country

Reader: As we gather together on the lands of the [*insert name of Australian First Nations Peoples here*], we acknowledge the traditional owners and pay respect to Elders past and present. We thank them for their care of the land, sky and waters, and all living things that thrive on and within them.

Opening Prayer

Leader: We begin in the name of the +Father, and of the +Son, and of the +Holy Spirit. Amen

Creator God,

You made us and all creation to share your life: all the birds and bugs of the air, the animals of the land, the creatures of the rivers and seas; all the trees and flowers and plants; and all the people everywhere. Open our minds to your way of life and teach us how to live together with hearts full of love and justice.

We ask this in your name,

Amen.

Call of Repentance

Reader: From deep waters and first light to living creatures of every kind: the Earth is good! Yet, we see how our planet is not being taken care of. In many places, water is no longer safe to drink, forests are being cut down and there is not enough food to eat.

Shaniella's story tells of how a lack of water for drinking and washing can even keep people (especially women and girls) from gaining education and work.

Shaniella grew up in a village in the Solomon Islands with her father, mother and three brothers. She went to a local school until Year 11 but was unable to complete her final year. Shaniella knew that without the right job skills, she would find it hard to earn a living.

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Reader: In 2020, Shaniella decided to move away from home to study at a rural training centre. She is interested in learning how to work in hospitality and tourism. Shaniella also started learning how to grow food, cook and sew.

Not long after Shaniella started, the school was hit by a landslide, flooding and a cyclone, all in quick succession. It was a scary and uncertain time and the events caused huge disruption and challenge to the community. Not only was the school's water system destroyed but its buildings and food garden were also damaged.

Caritas helped the school install eight water tanks. This meant students and the local community had access to clean drinking water and toilets again. Caritas also provided planting materials to restore the vegetable garden. Two hundred chickens were provided along with training on how to look after them. Caritas also ran some Disaster Risk Reduction workshops to help Shaniella and her community reduce risks and prepare for future emergencies.

Now that there's enough food to eat and water for drinking and washing, Shaniella can complete her job skills training. Life is full of hope for Shaniella, for her school community and for all future generations.

With our support, Caritas Australia is working with partners all over the world to address water shortages, including in places like the Solomon Islands that are being closely impacted by climate change.

Leader: In Pope Francis's message for the *World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation*, he describes the rhythms and cycles of creation as a heartbeat. We can hear the 'heartbeat of the Earth' when we slow down and pay attention. Pope Francis explains, 'Just as the hearts of babies beat in harmony with those of their mothers, so in order to grow as people, we need to harmonize our own rhythms of life with those of creation, which gives us life.'¹

But we know that we have not always listened to 'those heartbeats: our own and those of our mothers and grandmothers, the heartbeat of creation and the heartbeat of God.' And this has played a part in harming the Earth and our neighbours.

So, as we think about some of the ways we haven't listened to or cared for others, including the planet, we ask for God's forgiveness.

Silent Reflection

*Quiet, reflective music plays. Suggestions: "Prayer of St Francis" (Sarah McLachlan, *Rarities, B-Sides and Other Stuff, Volume 2*), "Spirit, Open My Heart" (Ruth Duck).*

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Gospel Reading: John 4:6b–14 *NRSVCE*

Leader: A reading from the holy Gospel according to John:

Jesus, tired out by his journey, was sitting by the well. It was about noon. A Samaritan woman came to draw water, and Jesus said to her, 'Give me a drink'. (His disciples had gone to the city to buy food.)

The Samaritan woman said to him, 'How is it that you, a Jew, ask a drink of me, a woman of Samaria?' (Jews do not share things in common with Samaritans.)

Jesus answered her, 'If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that is saying to you, "Give me a drink", you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water.'

The woman said to him, 'Sir, you have no bucket, and the well is deep. Where do you get that living water? Are you greater than our ancestor Jacob, who gave us the well, and with his sons and his flocks drank from it?'

Jesus said to her, 'Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, but those who drink of the water that I will give them will never be thirsty.'

The Gospel of the Lord.

All: Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

Reflection

Leader: Today, as we mark the Season of Creation, we gather by a river to pray. Rivers are special places. They are places full of movement; places where different plants and creatures and people meet; places where, all year or at just the right time of year, water flows and lifeforms flourish!

You might recall that Jesus was baptised in a river. In fact, Jesus spent a lot of time near water. He met his fisherman friends beside a lake. He calmed a storm on the sea. He cooked breakfast for his friends on the beach. He even walked on water!

Today's Gospel story tells us how Jesus was tired and resting beside a deep well. While he was there, a woman came to collect water and he asked her for a drink. As they talked, Jesus described God's life and love as 'living water', saying that those who drink of it 'will never be thirsty.'

When he said this, he meant that the God who made the life-giving waters in the beginning *still* offers us the life of love and justice we and all creation need to thrive.

So, today and any time you come to a river, notice its rhythm, its 'heartbeat'. As you watch its flow, remember the living water Jesus talked about. And let yourself be moved to action, sharing God's life of love and justice with all the people, plants and creatures you meet.

*Quiet, reflective music plays. Suggestions: "Laudate Omnes Gentes" (Taize), "Prayer of St Francis" (Sarah McLachlan, *Rarities, B-Sides and Other Stuff, Volume 2*), "Spirit, Open My Heart" (Ruth Duck).*

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Prayers of the Faithful

*(If using the **Season of Creation Prayer Service presentation**, project it onto the screen and navigate through the slides as the Prayers of the Faithful are being read.)*

Reader: God of Living Water, lead us into your life of love and justice for all. Lord, hear us.

All: Lord, hear our prayer.

Reader: Help us listen to the cry of the earth. Show us how we are one part of your big, beautiful creation. Inspire us to act with care for the environment around us. Lord, hear us.

All: Lord, hear our prayer.

Reader: Help us listen to the cry of the poor. Show us how our choices affect others, including Shaniella and her community. Inspire us to act with compassion so that everyone can thrive. Lord, hear us.

All: Lord, hear our prayer.

Reader: Help businesses everywhere to be sustainable, ethical and fair in all aspects of their work. Show us how we can encourage them to do that. Inspire us to make the world better for all. Lord, hear us.

All: Lord, hear our prayer.

Reader: Help us not waste the Earth's precious resources. Show us how to take greater care of the things we have access to. Inspire us to live simply. Lord, hear us.

All: Lord, hear our prayer.

Reader: Help us learn how best to care for creation and for our brothers and sisters around the world. Show us new ways and remind us of ancient ways of better tending to the Earth and each other. Inspire us with creativity and courage. Lord, hear us.

All: Lord, hear our prayer.

Reader: Help us remember to live in wonder and awe of creation. Show us how to love the Earth and each other as you do. Inspire us to practice gratitude every day. Lord, hear us.

All: Lord, hear our prayer.

Reader: Help us work together to make the world a healthy and fair place for all. Show us and our community how we can act for justice at local, regional, national and international levels. Inspire us to be brave and generous. Lord, hear us.

All: Lord, hear our prayer.

Reader: We pray, God of Living Water, lead us into your life of love and justice for all.

All: Amen.

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Act of Commitment

Leader: Today, as we meet by the river to pray, we remember Jesus's 'living water': God's life of love and justice for all. We tune in to hear 'the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor'.² We continue to think about all those in our world who are facing the effects of climate change and lack of safe water.

(Invite congregation members or parish group leaders or representatives to come to the installation and select one card each to take home or back to their group, where it can continue to be a focus of future contemplation and discussion.)

Today, as we meet by the river to pray, let us take Pope Francis's words of *Laudato Si'* to heart, committing ourselves to care for our common home, so that we and all of creation can experience its life and goodness.

Final Prayer and Blessing

Leader:

God who made the world and saw that it was good,
God who speaks in flows of living water,
God who breathes life and love into us all—
May that God meet you by the river,
settle you to hear creation's heartbeat,
move you to care for the Earth
and give you all the compassion and courage
you need to act for justice.

All: Amen.

Leader: With the blessing of the +Father, the +Son and the +Holy Spirit, let us go from here to joyfully care for creation.

All: Amen.

Closing Song

Suggestions: "Prayers of the People" (Ruth Duck), "Let Everything That Has Breath" (Matt Redman, *Intimacy*), "All Creatures of Our God and King" (St Francis of Assisi/William H. Draper), "Praise God From Whom All Blessings Flow" (Thomas Ken), "Healing River of the Spirit" (Ruth Duck).

Notes

¹ *Message of His Holiness Pope Francis for the World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation, 1st September 2023.*

² Pope Francis, *Laudato Si'* n49.