

Season of Creation 2023



A Mighty River ~ Amos 5: 24

Let Justice and Peace Flow

Resources for Sunday Masses

Produced by Laudato Si' Animators
and Eco Groups - Scotland

Please feel free to adapt for your own use.

Introduction

For the Season of Creation 2023 we have focussed on offering a Penitential Rite and Prayers of the Faithful for each Sunday based on the *Message of Pope Francis for the World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation*.

Information on this year's Theme and Logo is taken from the Season of Creation website and there are additional resources available there. [Season of Creation Resources 2023](#)

There are many ways you can highlight the Season of Creation in your liturgy - children and/or adults could dress in nature costumes; this year's symbol of a Mighty River could be displayed in some creative way; you could display this year's logo in a prominent place in the church - [link to download logo](#).

You could also consider activities - planting a tree, reducing your carbon footprint - individually and communally; joint project with local school - many of our primaries are Laudato Si' Schools; become an [Eco Congregation](#) - this was a recommendation of the Bishops' Conference of Scotland in their Pastoral Letter Pentecost 2021.

Eco Congregation Scotland has excellent [resources for the Season of Creation](#) and it is an ideal time to have an Ecumenical Service.

Watch / Screen 'The Letter'



Click the image to view the trailer.

The Letter tells the story of a journey to Rome of frontline leaders to discuss the encyclical letter Laudato Si' with Pope Francis. The exclusive dialogue with the Pope, included in the film, offers a revealing insight into the personal history of Pope Francis and stories never seen since he became the Bishop of Rome.

The film can be viewed at home on [YouTube](#) but it is also a great opportunity in the Season of Creation to do a parish screening followed by a discussion on how to respond. It has also been screened with other faith traditions and the sharing afterwards has been very powerful.

If you are interested in finding out about the various options and the practicalities please go to [The Letter](#).



Promoting Integral Human Development in the light of the Gospel

The Season of Creation is also a good time to consider using this resource from SCIAF. It is designed to be used within parishes to encourage group participation and further an understanding of Integral Human Development (IHD).

Over two workshops, parishioners will discuss, watch videos and pray together, learning more about IHD and how it works in practice for SCIAF.

You can get more information at [SCIAF](#)

This year's theme: Let Justice and Peace Flow

Join the river of justice and peace

The prophet Amos cries out “But let justice roll on like a river, righteousness like a never-failing stream!” (Amos 5: 24) and so we are called to join the river of justice and peace, to take up climate and ecological justice, and to speak out with and for communities most impacted by climate injustice and the loss of biodiversity.

Our prayers, sermons and liturgies must call for justice not only for humans but for all creation. Justice, allied with peace, calls us to repent of our ecological sins and to change our attitudes and actions. Righteousness demands that we live in peace, not conflict with our human neighbours, and building right relationships with all of creation. ‘Peace’ (shalom) involves not only the absence of conflict but positive, live-giving relationships with God, ourselves, our human neighbours, and all creation.

Those Indigenous communities that recognise the sacredness of natural elements and so live as an embodiment of an interconnected way of life, expressing a partnership between people and the life of the Earth, have much to teach the rest of the world.

We are invited to join the river of justice and peace on behalf of all Creation and to converge our individual identities, of name, family or faith community, in this greater movement for justice, just like tributaries come together to form a mighty river. As the people of God, we must work together on behalf of all Creation, as part of that mighty river of peace and justice.

This year's symbol: A Mighty River

The river of life brings hope instead of despair

The prophet Isaiah proclaims “Listen carefully, I am about to do a new thing, now it will spring forth; will you not be aware of it? I will even put a road in the wilderness, rivers in the desert.” (Isaiah 43: 19)

Biodiversity is being lost at a rate not seen since the last mass extinction. The hope of keeping average temperature increases to 1.5 degrees Celsius is fading. The world humans have known, enjoyed and celebrated is changing rapidly beyond repair. The futures of young people are threatened by the cascading impacts of the loss of biodiversity and a changing climate. Industrialisation, colonisation and the extraction and consumption of resources have created great wealth, unequally distributed. Powerful

Global North nations have grown wealthy at the expense of Global South nations and Indigenous and subsistence communities.

Today's climate and ecological emergency hurts the most vulnerable, many living in the least wealthy nations, who have contributed the fewest emissions. Indigenous peoples make up five percent of the world's population and protect nearly 80 percent of the world's remaining biodiversity.

We are presently more aware than ever of the link between fossil fuels, and violence and war. We can, however, dream and work for a world where each country produces the energy they need from God-given gifts of the sun and wind, rather than going to war for fossil fuels.

The urgency grows and we must make visible peace with Earth and on Earth, at the same time that justice calls us to repentance and a change of attitude and actions. As we join the river of justice and peace with others then hope is created instead of despair. Streams can rise in the desert. An economy of peace can be built instead of an economy based on conflict.

A mighty torrent can move mountains

Our individual actions during the Season of Creation are important. Celebrating creation, taking part in clean-ups, planting trees, and reducing our carbon footprint are some of the immediate actions we can take.

We must also recognise that as we need a mighty movement of justice, individual actions are no longer enough. Justice also includes paying historic debts. At a global level, nations with power and wealth have a duty to deal justly and honestly with communities that suffer most from the climate and ecological crises. They have not dealt righteously with their less wealthy neighbours in global forums. They have not fulfilled their promises of financing the losses and damages that vulnerable communities are suffering from, or funding necessary biodiversity initiatives in less wealthy nations, nor have they made the necessary sacrifices to stay below 1.5 degrees Celsius global warming.

Nevertheless, Global South nations, working together for more than 30 years, managed to win a victory at COP27 in making wealthier nations realise their moral duty to provide financing for loss and damage.

The recent decisions at COP15 to preserve biodiversity are also hopeful and require similar perseverance. The new UN Treaty on Oceans marks a historic moment for protecting marine biodiversity in international waters, adding to the hope of more

persistent global responses to the climate crisis. These victories have been achieved by those with less power working together. Together we can be a mighty river of justice and peace, that brings new life to earth and future generations, a river that can move the mountains of injustice.

How the river of justice and peace inspires our advocacy actions

Those living in the Global North must ask their elected representatives to fulfil their promises. These promises include funds promised at global meetings for the most vulnerable communities affected by climate change and for the preservation of remaining biodiversity.

Other actions in recognition of our interconnectedness and interdependence with all of Creation include learning about and signing the Universal Declaration of the Rights of Rivers, part of a movement to recognise the inherent rights of Mother Earth. As an ecumenical family, we can engage in these actions and contribute to ensure that the web of life is preserved and cared for.

This is why practical advocacy and sustainable actions are more fully described in the Celebration Guide and the Season of Creation website. At the same time that we trust in God's work, we recognise that we can also participate in God's will for justice and peace. This Season of Creation, may we journey together in communion as the people of God to let justice and peace flow!

Message of Pope Francis for the World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation 2023 ¹

Dear brothers and sisters!

“Let Justice and Peace Flow” is the theme of this year’s ecumenical Season of Creation, inspired by the words of the prophet Amos: “Let justice flow on like a river, righteousness like a never-failing stream” (5:24).

The evocative image used by Amos speaks to us of what God desires. God wants justice to reign; it is as essential to our life as God’s children made in his likeness as water is essential for our physical survival. This justice must flow forth wherever it is needed, neither remaining hidden deep beneath the ground nor vanishing like water that evaporates before it can bring sustenance. God wants everyone to strive to be just in every situation, to live according to his laws and thus to enable life to flourish. When we “seek first the kingdom of God” (Mt 6:33), maintaining a right relationship with God, humanity and nature, then justice and peace can flow like a never-failing stream of pure water, nourishing humanity and all creatures.

On a beautiful summer day [in July 2022, during my pilgrimage to Canada](#), I reflected on this on the shores of Lac Ste. Anne in Alberta. That lake has been a place of pilgrimage for many generations of indigenous people. Surrounded by the beating of drums, I thought: “How many hearts have come here with anxious longing, weighed down by life’s burdens, and found by these waters consolation and strength to carry on! Here, immersed in creation, we can also sense another beating: the maternal heartbeat of the earth. Just as the hearts of babies in the womb beat in harmony with those of their mothers, so in order to grow as people, we need to harmonise our own rhythms of life with those of creation, which gives us life”. ²

During this Season of Creation, let us dwell on those heartbeats: our own and those of our mothers and grandmothers, the heartbeat of creation and the heartbeat of God. Today they do not beat in harmony; they are not harmonised in justice and peace. Too many of our brothers and sisters are prevented from drinking from that mighty river. Let us heed our call to stand with the victims of environmental and climate injustice, and to put an end to the senseless war against creation.

¹ <https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/messages/pont-messages/2023/documents/20230513-messaggio-giornata-curacreato.html>

² [Homily at Lac Ste. Anne](#), Canada, 26 July 2022.

The effects of this war can be seen in the many rivers that are drying up. Benedict XVI once observed that: “the external deserts in the world are growing, because the internal deserts have become so vast”.³ Consumerist greed, fuelled by selfish hearts, is disrupting the planet’s water cycle. The unrestrained burning of fossil fuels and the destruction of forests are pushing temperatures higher and leading to massive droughts. Alarming water shortages increasingly affect both small rural communities and large metropolises. Moreover, predatory industries are depleting and polluting our freshwater sources through extreme practices such as fracking for oil and gas extraction, unchecked mega-mining projects, and intensive animal farming. “Sister Water”, in the words of Saint Francis of Assisi, is pillaged and turned into “a commodity subject to the laws of the market” ([Laudato Si’, 30](#)).

The United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change has stated that acting now with greater urgency means that we will not miss our chance to create a more sustainable and just world. We can and we must prevent the worst from happening. “Truly, much can be done” (ibid., 180), provided we come together like so many streams, brooks and rivulets, merging finally in a mighty river to irrigate the life of our marvellous planet and our human family for generations to come. So let us join hands and take bold steps to “Let Justice and Peace Flow” throughout our world.

How can we contribute to the mighty river of justice and peace in this Season of Creation? What can we, particularly as Christian communities, do to heal our common home so that it can once again teem with life? We must do this by resolving to transform our hearts, our lifestyles, and the public policies ruling our societies.

First, let us join the mighty river by transforming our hearts. This is essential for any other transformation to occur; it is that “ecological conversion” which Saint John Paul II encouraged us to embrace: the renewal of our relationship with creation so that we no longer see it as an object to be exploited but cherish it instead as a sacred gift from our Creator. Furthermore, we should realise that an integral approach to respect for the environment involves four relationships: with God, with our brothers and sisters of today and tomorrow, with all of nature, and with ourselves.

As to the first of these relationships, Pope Benedict XVI spoke of the urgent need to recognise that creation and redemption are inseparably linked: “The Redeemer is the Creator and if we do not proclaim God in his full grandeur – as Creator and as Redeemer

³ [Homily for the Solemn Inauguration of the Petrine Ministry](#), 24 April 2005.

– we also diminish the value of the redemption”.⁴ Creation refers both to God’s mysterious, magnificent act of creating this majestic, beautiful planet and universe out of nothing and to the continuing result of that act, which we experience as an inexhaustible gift. During the liturgy and personal prayer in “the great cathedral of creation”,⁵ let us recall the great Artist who creates such beauty, and reflect on the mystery of that loving decision to create the cosmos.

Second, let us add to the flow of this mighty river by transforming our lifestyles. Starting from grateful wonder at the Creator and his creation, let us repent of our “ecological sins”, as my brother, Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, has urged. These sins harm the world of nature and our fellow men and women. With the help of God’s grace, let us adopt lifestyles marked by less waste and unnecessary consumption, especially where the processes of production are toxic and unsustainable. Let us be as mindful as we can about our habits and economic decisions so that all can thrive – our fellow men and women wherever they may be, and future generations as well. Let us cooperate in God’s ongoing creation through positive choices: using resources with moderation and a joyful sobriety, disposing and recycling waste, and making greater use of available products and services that are environmentally and socially responsible.

Lastly, for the mighty river to continue flowing, we must transform the public policies that govern our societies and shape the lives of young people today and tomorrow. Economic policies that promote scandalous wealth for a privileged few and degrading conditions for many others, spell the end of peace and justice. It is clear that the richer nations have contracted an “ecological debt” that must be paid (cf. [Laudato Si’, 51](#)).⁶ The world leaders who will gather for the COP28 summit in Dubai from 30 November to 12 December next must listen to science and institute a rapid and equitable transition to end the era of fossil fuel. According to the commitments undertaken in the Paris Agreement to restrain global warming, it is absurd to permit the continued exploration and expansion of fossil fuel infrastructures. Let us raise our voices to halt this injustice towards the poor and towards our children, who will bear the worst effects of climate

⁴ [Conversation at the Cathedral of Bressanone](#), 6 August 2008.

⁵ [Message for the World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation](#), 21 July 2022.

⁶ “A true ‘ecological debt’ exists, particularly between the global north and south, connected to commercial imbalances with effects on the environment, and the disproportionate use of natural resources by certain countries over long periods of time” ([Laudato Si’, 51](#)).

change. I appeal to all people of good will to act in conformity with these perspectives on society and nature.

Another parallel perspective has to do with the Catholic Church's commitment to synodality. This year, the closing of the Season of Creation on 4 October, the feast of Saint Francis of Assisi, will coincide with the opening of the Synod on Synodality. Like rivers in nature, fed by myriad tiny brooks and larger streams and rivulets, the synodal process that began in October 2021 invites all those who take part on a personal or community level, to coalesce in a majestic river of reflection and renewal. The entire People of God is being invited to an immersive journey of synodal dialogue and conversion.

So too, like a river basin with its many tiny and larger tributaries, the Church is a communion of countless local Churches, religious communities and associations that draw from the same shared waters. Each source adds its unique and irreplaceable contribution, until all flow together into the vast ocean of God's loving mercy. In the same way that a river is a source of life for its surroundings, our synodal Church must be a source of life for our common home and all its inhabitants. In the same way that a river gives life to all kinds of animal and plant life, a synodal Church must give life by sowing justice and peace in every place it reaches.

In Canada, in July 2022, I spoke of the Sea of Galilee where Jesus brought healing and consolation to many people and proclaimed "a revolution of love". Lac Ste. Anne, I learned, is also a place of healing, consolation and love, a place that "reminds us that fraternity is genuine if it unites those who are far apart, [and] that the message of unity that heaven sends down to earth does not fear differences, but invites us to fellowship, a communion of differences, in order to start afresh together, because we are all pilgrims on a journey".⁷

In this Season of Creation, as followers of Christ on our shared synodal journey, let us live, work and pray that our common home will teem with life once again. May the Holy Spirit once more hover over the waters and guide our efforts to "renew the face of the earth" (cf. Ps 104:30).

Rome, Saint John Lateran, 13 May 2023

⁷ [Homily at Lac Ste. Anne](#), Canada, 26 July 2022.

Penitential Rite

C: As we begin the Season of Creation let us acknowledge where we have been guilty, individually and communally, of failing to commit ourselves fully to embracing the way of Jesus.

A way that was rooted in ‘a right relationship with God, humanity and nature’.

Creator God,

out of whose power and love the whole universe came into being,

we humbly confess that we have not loved

and cared for our Common Home as you entrusted us to do

and not created a fair and just world for all who inhabit it.

C: Lord Jesus,

driven by a need to for material wealth

we have divided our world into rich and poor nations,

in which the rich over consume whilst the poor lack the basic necessities of life.

Lord, have mercy.

All: Lord, have mercy.

C: Christ Jesus,

within our rich countries we have also divided our societies into rich and poor,

and abandoned many to the margins of society

to live in poverty and hopelessness.

Christ, have mercy.

All: Christ, have mercy.

C: Lord Jesus,

we have ruthlessly exploited the great gift of your creation

destroying ecosystems and the extinction of many of your wonderful creatures

and our actions have now led us to the brink of a climate catastrophe.

Lord, have mercy.

All: Lord, have mercy.

Prayer of the Faithful

R: For the Church:

may we always prioritise, in all we say and do, our commitment to Justice and Peace.

‘Let us heed our call to stand with the victims of environmental and climate injustice, and to put an end to the senseless war against creation.’

(pause a few seconds for silent prayer)

Lord, hear us.

R: For a renewed spirituality amongst the followers of Jesus:

may we respond positively to the need to understand and practice an ‘ecological spirituality’;

a spirituality based on the ‘loving awareness that we are not disconnected from the rest of creatures, but joined in a splendid universal communion’.

(pause a few seconds for silent prayer)

Lord, hear us.

R: For a transformation of our hearts:

may the Spirit will lead us to a true ‘ecological conversion’

to a renewal of our relationship with creation so that we no longer see it as an object to be exploited but cherish it instead as a sacred gift from our Creator.

(pause a few seconds for silent prayer)

Lord, hear us.

R: For a radical change of our public policies:

may we move from ‘economic policies that promote scandalous wealth for a privileged few and degrading conditions for many others’

to economic policies that are fair and just for all.

(pause a few seconds for silent prayer)

Lord, hear us.

Sunday 10th September

Twenty - Third Sunday of the Year

Season of Creation II

We have sinned against Mother Earth and all who inhabit it.

Penitential Rite

C: Creator God, you created the earth as a common home for the benefit of all who inhabit it but we have sinned against Mother Earth and all who inhabit it.

C: Lord Jesus,
for our failure to 'harmonise our own rhythms of life with those of creation,
which gives us life'.
Lord, have mercy.

All: Lord, have mercy.

C: Christ Jesus,
for lifestyles that are 'marked by waste and unnecessary consumption'
where 'the processes of production are toxic and unsustainable'.
Christ, have mercy.

All: Christ, have mercy.

C: Lord Jesus,
for our failure to truly appreciate the interconnectedness of all life on Mother
Earth.
Lord, have mercy.

All: Lord, have mercy.

Prayer of the Faithful

- R:** For the Church:
may we truly affirm in what we say and do
'our vocation to be protectors of God's handiwork'.
(pause a few seconds for silent prayer)
Lord, hear us.
- R:** For all followers of Jesus:
may we be open to the promptings of the Spirit in discerning those actions that
are consistent with God's vision for our Common Home and embrace and
support them;
and equally denounce all actions that are inconsistent with God's vision.
(pause a few seconds for silent prayer)
Lord, hear us.
- R:** For those in positions of power:
may we reject policies and practices rooted in 'consumerist greed, fuelled by
selfish hearts' and stop 'the unrestrained burning of fossil fuels',
'fracking for oil and gas extraction, unchecked mega-mining projects,
and intensive animal farming'.
(pause a few seconds for silent prayer)
Lord, hear us.
- R:** For all who have suffered for defending the earth and the poor:
we pray for all women and men, of all faiths and none,
who have been persecuted, and often killed,
for standing up to those who have sought to destroy their land and their culture.
(pause a few seconds for silent prayer).
Lord, hear us.

Sunday 17th September

Twenty - Fourth Sunday of the Year

Season of Creation III

Forgiveness requires Truth and Justice

Penitential Rite

C: Creator God,
you have called us to be a synodal Church that gives life by ‘sowing justice and peace in every place it reaches’.

C: Lord Jesus,
for our failure, individually and communally,
to prioritise justice and peace.
Lord, have mercy.

All: Lord, have mercy.

C: Christ Jesus,
for our failure to listen to those who have warned us of the catastrophic consequences of our failure to live in harmony with creation and all who inhabit Mother Earth.
Christ, have mercy.

All: Christ, have mercy.

C: Lord Jesus,
for our failure to establish a just way to pay our ‘ecological debt’ to those who have contributed least but are suffering the most due to climate change.
Lord, have mercy;

All: Lord, have mercy.

Prayer of the Faithful

- R:** For the Church:
may we always recognise that forgiveness and reconciliation
are rooted in truth and justice.
(pause a few seconds for silent prayer)
Lord, hear us.
- R:** For the gift of authentic listening:
we pray that the Spirit may help us discern the true reality of climate change
and the steps we are called to urgently take in the hope of creating a more just
and sustainable world.
(pause a few seconds for silent prayer)
Lord, hear us.
- R:** For those peoples who experiencing climate devastation:
we pray that our hearts may be open to those whose communities and countries
are being devastated by climate change’,
let us commit ourselves to seeking climate justice for all our sisters and brothers.
(pause a few seconds for silent prayer)
Lord, hear us.
- R:** For our children and young people, and future generations:
we pray that we may have the courage to take the necessary action
individually, as a community and as a nation
‘to prevent, or at least limit, the collapse of our planet’s ecosystems’.
We pray for those young people throughout the world are who are raising their
voice and taking action for Mother Earth.
May we act in solidarity with them.
(pause a few seconds for silent prayer)
Lord, hear us.

Sunday 24th September

Twenty - Fifth Sunday of the Year

Creation is for the Common Good

Season of Creation IV

Penitential Rite

C: Creator God,
we have failed to truly understand that whilst humanity was created in the image and likeness of God 'justifies absolute domination over other creatures'.
We are called to live in harmony with Mother Earth and all who inhabit it and care and cherish it for future generations.

C: Lord Jesus,
for our failure to recognise that Mother Earth
was created as a common home for the benefit of all who inhabit it
and that we in the rich countries have exploited it to satisfy our 'consumerist excesses'.
Lord, have mercy.

All: Lord, have mercy.

C: Christ Jesus,
for failing to listen to the prophets of all faith traditions and none
who have invited us to reject the dynamic of domination over creation
and instead embrace living in harmony with it.
Christ, have mercy.

All: Christ, have mercy.

C: Lord Jesus,
you shared with us the importance of the dignity of work,
the need for all to be treated equally
and that work should be for the sake of the common good
and not for the profit of the few.
Lord, have mercy.

All: Lord, have mercy.

Prayer of the Faithful

- R:** For the Church:
may we may firmly proclaim that Mother Earth is a gift for the Common Good
and that humanity should cease to rape and plunder Mother Earth
to satisfy its consumerist excesses.
(pause a few seconds for silent prayer).
Lord, hear us.
- R:** For an openness to new ways:
may we be open to being led by the Spirit to fully embrace the vision of Jesus
and become a new people for a new world.
(pause a few seconds for silent prayer).
Lord, hear us.
- R:** For all in positions of power:
may they commit to building a just and fair society
based on workers being treated fairly and justly
and all work being for the common good.
(pause a few seconds for silent prayer).
Lord, hear us.
- R:** For a commitment to the children of today and of the future:
may we strive not only to avert climate catastrophe
but to develop new economic models that are based on equality and justice for
everyone in our Common Home.
(pause a few seconds for silent prayer).
Lord, hear us.

Sunday 1st October

Twenty Sixth Sunday of the Year

Ushering in the Reign of God

Season of Creation V

Penitential Rite

C: Creator God,
your Son Jesus ‘summoned us to a new relationship with you,
and that entailed a different relationship with others and with creation’.
But due to our actions Mother Earth ‘weeps and implores us to put an end to our
abuses and to her destruction’.

C: Lord Jesus,
for failing to ‘repent and modify our lifestyles and destructive systems’.
Lord, have mercy.

All: **Lord, have mercy.**

C: Christ Jesus,
for failing to be truly converted to ushering in the Reign of God
and instead worshipping false gods.
Christ, have mercy.

All: **Christ, have mercy.**

C: Lord Jesus,
for failing to demand our politicians act now with greater urgency
such that we will not miss our last chance to avoid total climate catastrophe.
Lord, have mercy.

All: **Lord, have mercy.**

Prayer of the Faithful

R: For the Church:

may we may always remain true to our mission of ushering in the Reign of God,
in our words and above all in our action,
such that Justice and Peace might Flow like a mighty river.
(pause a few seconds for silent prayer).
Lord, hear us.

R: For all followers of Jesus:

may we be a people of discernment
reading the signs of the times and responding with action
rooted in the promptings of the Spirit.
(pause a few seconds for silent prayer).
Lord, hear us.

R: For a Synodal Church:

may we fully engage in the building of a synodal Church
that ‘gives life by sowing justice and peace in every place it reaches’.
(pause a few seconds for silent prayer).
Lord, hear us.

R: For the COP 28 summit:

may the world leaders who gather in Dubai this November
heed the appeal of Pope Francis and ‘listen to science
and institute a rapid and equitable transition to end the era of fossil fuel’.
And let us respond to his plea to
‘raise our voices to halt this injustice towards the poor and towards our children,
who will bear the worst effects of climate change.’
(pause a few seconds for silent prayer).
Lord, hear us.