



International Solidarity Reflection

Environment

Shalom

School Sisters of Notre Dame

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Introduction

In every season of the year, we can consciously experience what a gift creation is for us—with its growth, blossoming, maturing, or resting and, what is more, with its nourishment, health, and spiritual enrichment. God is the origin and source of all life—God’s love embraces all things.

Call to Prayer

Called to solidarity with all of creation, we pray for a right relationship with all created things and with our environment. We ask for strength and vigor so that creation will be restored to its integrity, to what God wants it to be. We ask for energy and patience so that we will persevere in our efforts.

Experience

First Contrast: Our food—how beautiful the growing of seeds, the ripening of fruits! Water—a symbol for life itself—safeguards our survival, gives pleasure to our senses with its clarity, is an image of God’s work. Can we put ourselves into the shoes of the people whose land is too dry for seeds to be planted and or to provide the basic needs of life? Global warming has led to desertification in many parts of the world such as China, Africa, Australia, and the United StatesDue to a lack of clean water, people are exposed to contagious diseases in countries where dirty ponds or poisoned rivers are the only available sources of water, or where water from the river that is needed for survival is diverted to industrial plants, or where people cannot afford to buy bottled drinking water.

Second Contrast: In many countries, people enjoy a lifestyle in which it is simply taken for granted that electrical power and gasoline will be available at any time. The production of atomic energy results in environmental changes that are initially invisible, but the effects of the resulting genetic changes are all the more lasting. At the same time, the search for sources of energy at home is often based on the desire for independence from oil-producing countries. In order to exploit gigantic oil fields, governments do not mind destroying biotopes or hunting grounds and fishing waters used by the people who live there.

Reflection

Reading 1: At the end of the fifth day, God, the creator of the world, said that creation was good. (*Genesis 1*)

Reflection: “I believe that our earth was created as a wonderful biotope for the unfolding of all life. We human beings are not called to dominate and exploit, but to live together as brothers and sisters and to foster all other life. I realize that I am a significant cell in the web of life and that, if life in our world is to be restored to health, I myself must recover first.” (*Bernd Winkelmann, Pastor in R., Reich Gottes – jetzt! (The reign of God—now!), Fenestra-Verlag, 2006*)

Reading 2: “God spoke to Noah and his sons, ‘I am now establishing my covenant with you and with your descendants to come, and with every living creature that was with you: birds, cattle and every wild animal with you; everything that came out of the ark, every living thing on earth. And I

shall maintain my covenant with you: that never again shall all living things be destroyed by the waters of a flood, nor shall there ever again be a flood to devastate the earth.” (Gen 9, 8 ff)

Reflection: The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* states that dominion over both living and nonliving things which was granted by our Creator is not absolute. It is limited by concern for the quality of life of one’s neighbor, now and for generations to come. “It requires a religious respect for the integrity of creation.” (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, No. 2415) (*From the Lenten Homily by the Bishop of Bamberg, 2009*)

Reading 3: “For creation was made subject to futility, not of its own accord but because of the one who subjected it, in hope that creation itself would be set free from slavery to corruption and share in the glorious freedom of the children of God. We know that all creation is groaning in labor pains even until now.” (*Romans 8, 19 ff*)

Reflection: “Indeed, questions of protection of the environment, of resources and of the climate, require all international leaders to act jointly and work in good faith, promoting solidarity with the weakest regions of the planet ... Likewise, international action to preserve the environment and to protect various forms of life on earth must rediscover the authentic image of creation. This never requires a choice to be made between science and ethics: rather it is a question of adopting a scientific method that is truly respectful of ethical imperatives.” *From the Address of Pope Benedict XVI to the General Assembly of the United Nations on April 4, 2008* <http://www.zenit.org/article-22334?l=english>

Action

This month, be especially attentive and sensitive to creation surrounding you and take an interest in it!

- Walk outdoors, observe nature—see with the heart that we live both from and with nature. Organize a walking group pilgrimage to particularly beautiful places in your area or to places that give cause for concern.
- If possible, consciously choose your food and see it as a gift to us from nature. Think about the ecological costs of your articles of daily use and, with the help of the website <http://www.myfootprint.org/en/>, “calculate” the ecological footprint of our lifestyle.
- Attentively read, listen to, and watch media reports on environmental topics of every kind from all parts of the world. Share your insights, not only with those closest to you but, if possible, through dialogue on these topics with others in kindergartens, schools, and adult education classes.

Prayer

Loving God, you are the mother and father of us all. We thank you for your creation and for creating us in your image and likeness. All people are spiritual beings of infinite worth. You have given equal rights to every human being.

We acknowledge that we have disfigured your creation and have failed to care for it. There is so much pain in the world because of selfishness and greed. We all share responsibility for the wrongs of the past. Therefore, we will work together for a better future and we will see our common humanity in all people.

Holy God, let us never forget that we ourselves need healing and that you walk with us on the path of salvation and life. With your strength, let us help create a world in which all people may live together as brothers and sisters. Amen. (*Adapted from the 2005 Ecumenical Prayer for Peace by Fr. Michael Lapsley, SSM, South Africa*)

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