

*Service of Celebration and Thanksgiving in Southampton
for Creation Time and the Feast of St Francis 2016*

Opening Hymn: O Lord, my God, when I in awesome wonder
consider all the worlds Thy hands have made
I hear the stars, I hear the rolling thunder,
Thy power throughout the world displayed

Then sings my soul, my Saviour God to Thee
How great Thou art, how great Thou art
Then sings my soul, my Saviour God, to Thee
How great Thou art, how great Thou art.

Welcome and opening prayer: We gather at the conclusion of Creation Time in thanksgiving for the glorious gift of Creation, and to honour St Francis; and we ask, with Pope Francis, for the Lord's help to care for our world. We say together:

All: God of all creation,
Your spirit dances throughout the earth.
You give drink to the trees,
shade for the birds,
bread for the hungry.
You bring life and make all things holy.
Flood our hearts with your grace,
so we may sow seeds of love, justice and beauty,
and reflect your kingdom here on earth
We ask this through your Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen

Reader 1 God's Grandeur

The world is charged with the grandeur of God.
It will flame out, like shining from shook foil;
It gathers to a greatness, like the ooze of oil
Crushed. Why do men then now not reckon his rod?
Generations have trod, have trod, have trod;
And all is seared with trade; bleared, smeared with toil;
And wears man's smudge and shares man's smell: the soil
is bare now, nor can foot feel, being shod.

And for all this, nature is never spent;
There lives the dearest freshness deep down things
And though the last lights off the black west went
Oh, morning, at the brown brink eastward, springs -
Because the Holy Ghost over the bent
World broods with warm breast and with ah! Bright wings.

(Gerard Manley Hopkins)

Call of repentance Reader 2:

From the rising sun to the smallest of creatures, all of the earth is good. Yet we see how our fragile world is being robbed by the hand of greed. In many countries, water is no longer safe to drink. Forests are stripped bare. And parents fear for their children's future. Pope Francis reflects on the cry of the earth. "Each year sees the disappearance of thousands of plant and animal species which we will never know, which our children will never see, because they have been lost for ever. The great majority become extinct for reasons related to human activity. Because of us, thousands of species will no longer give glory to God by their very existence, nor convey their message to us. We have no such right." (L SI'33)

We say in turn:

Lord, how long will it take before we awaken to what we have done?

How many waters must we pollute?

How many forests must we despoil?

How much soil must we erode and poison?

How much of earth's atmosphere must we contaminate?

How many species must we abuse and extinguish?

How many people must we degrade and kill with toxic waste
before we learn to love and respect your Creation?

Reader 3

We recognise our part in harming the earth and our neighbours, and we ask for the Lord's forgiveness. In the silence of our hearts, Let us reflect on how to change our lives and care for God's gift of creation.

As a sign of commitment let us each light a candle, and think of one action we will do this week to make a step towards our vision of saving our planet.

Silent reflection

Reader 4

In LAUDATO SI' Pope Francis refers to his patron saint: St Francis, faithful to scripture, invites us to see nature as a magnificent book in which God speaks to us and grants us a glimpse of his infinite beauty and goodness. (L SI' 12)

St Augustine wrote that in their very existence all creatures give glory to God:

"Let your mind roam through the whole creation; everywhere the created world will cry out to you: "God made me"Go round the heavens again and back to the earth, leave out nothing: on all sides everything cries out to you of its Author: the very forms of created things are as it were the voices with which they praise their Creator."

For this reason, Francis asked that part of the friary garden be left untouched, so that wild flowers and herbs could grow there, and those who saw them could raise their minds to God, the Creator of such beauty. (*Thomas of Celano, first biographer of St Francis*)

Responsorial Psalm

Psalm 103

**R. Send forth your spirit, O Lord,
and renew the face of the earth**

Bless the Lord, my soul!
Lord God, how great you are,
clothed in majesty and glory,
wrapped in light as in a robe! **R.**

You founded the earth on its base,
to stand firm from age to age.
You wrapped it with the ocean like a cloak:
The waters stood higher than the mountains **R.**

You make springs gush forth from the valleys
they flow in between the hills.
On their banks dwell the birds of heaven;
from their branches they sing their song. **R.**

From your dwelling you water the hills;
earth drinks its fill of your gift.
You make the grass grow for the cattle
and the plants to serve people's needs. **R.**

How many are your works O Lord!
In wisdom you have made them all.
The earth is full of your riches.
Bless the Lord, my soul! **R.**

Reader 5

Pope Francis writes: A sense of deep communion with the rest of nature cannot be real if our hearts lack tenderness, compassion and concern for our fellow human beings. (LSI 91) The gravest effects of all attacks on the environment are suffered by the poorest. The depletion of fishing reserves especially hurts small fishing communities without the means to replace those resources; water pollution particularly affects the poor, who cannot buy bottled water. We must hear “*both the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor*” (LSI 48-9)

Reader 6

St Francis embraced the poor in his actions and his life-style. Born into wealth and privilege, after his conversion he gave his cloak to a beggar, and embraced the leper; he shed his fine clothes in exchange for the rough tunic of the poor. He gave up everything and begged in order to survive. Those who joined him, the brothers,

were happy to follow his rule of poverty. His former wealthy friends were replaced by the creatures whom he addressed during his hours of solitude and prayer. He learned that the universe as a whole shows forth the inexhaustible riches of God. Hence, writes Pope Francis, we need to grasp the variety of things in their multiple relationships....The sun and the moon, the cedar and the little flower, the eagle and the sparrow: the spectacle of their countless diversities and inequalities tells us that no creature is self-sufficient. When we see God reflected in all that exists, our hearts are moved to praise the Lord for all his creatures and to worship him in union with them. This sentiment finds magnificent expression in the hymn of St Francis.” (*L SI'* 87)

Hymn: All creatures of our God and King C H 4 verses 1, 3, 7.

Reader 7

Franciscan historians suggest that the saint wrote his magnificent canticle when he was in tremendous physical pain. His eyesight had deteriorated..yet he could revel in the wonder of creation. He felt in his soul the interconnection of human beings and the rest of creation. He expresses the essence of the Franciscan world view – that the Creator God is the Parent, both Mother and Father of all creatures, who are therefore brother and sister to one another. Because all of creation is part of this divine family, everything created...deserves brotherly and sisterly love and respect. Francis invites us to right relationship with the rest of creation, to repent of our sin of domination, and to participate actively in works of environmental healing.

Prayers of intercession We ask the Lord our God to open our eyes to the wonders of creation, and we offer our hearts in hope that all things may flourish.

We pray for the Church, that she may bring healing to the earth, and to people living in poverty. Sanctified by your love, may she guide us all on the path of wisdom.

Lord. In your mercy

We pray for world leaders, that your Spirit may move them to act with respect and urgency for the sake of the earth and the most vulnerable affected by the changing climate.

Lord, in your mercy

We pray for all indigenous communities losing their homes and traditions through destruction of the rain forests; and we pray for those courageous modern prophets who, like Sister Dorothy Stang and Chico Mendes, risk their lives protecting the Amazon rain forests and their inhabitants

Lord, in your mercy.....

We pray for our small team of dedicated gardeners, who enable us to enjoy the beauty of nature as we come to praise you.

Lord, in your mercy

We pray for our local community, that we may sow gestures of love and friendship for each other and the world around us, ever grateful for the gift you have entrusted to us.

Lord, in your mercy

All: Let ours be remembered as a time for the awakening of a new reverence for life, the firm resolve to achieve sustainability, the quickening of the struggle for justice and peace, and the joyful celebration of life.

We make these prayers through our Lord Jesus Christ, Redeemer of all Creation.
Amen

Closing Reading and Blessing

Reader 8

For you shall go out in joy, and be led back in peace;
The mountains and the hills before you shall burst into song,
And all the trees of the fields shall clap their hands.
Instead of the thorn shall come up the cypress;
Instead of the briar shall come the myrtle;
and it shall be to the Lord for a memorial,
for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off.

(ISAIAH 15)

We say together:

God of love, show us our place in this world
as channels of your love
for all the creatures of this earth,
for not one of them is forgotten in your sight.
Enlighten those who possess power and money
that they may avoid the sin of indifference,
that they may love the common good and advance the weak.
And care for this world in which we live.
Help us to protect all life,
to prepare for a better future
for the coming of your Kingdom
of justice, peace, love and beauty.
Praise be to you!
Amen

(Pope Francis LAUDATO SI')

Blessing of St Francis We say to each other:

*The Lord bless you and keep you,
May he show his face to you and have mercy;
may he turn his countenance to you and give you peace;
the Lord bless you.*

Closing Hymn Here I am, Lord CH 508 verses 1,2.

