

Liturgical Materials for Honoring God in Creation

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Introduction

When we see the great abundance, diversity, and intricacy of God’s creatures, we are awestruck by life on our planet. We are amazed by the God who has created all that is, and who is the engineer or crafter of the cosmos, designing and assembling all the details. But we also know from science that the details of organisms change through time according to their situations – that is, they evolve through adaptation and natural selection.

Some people take this to mean that there is no role for God in the evolution of life on our planet, but they miss the point that it is through God’s love and humility that the processes of nature operate, bringing growth and adaptive change. God’s love grants creation the freedom to make and remake. Scripture is clear that divine mercy is over *all* God’s works. The material world is not something to be simply disregarded and destroyed as unimportant to God, whose love is unwavering.

Just as we do not read Scripture literally, so we must resist reading nature literally, but instead search for the big themes and the evolving stories, exploring a deeper and more sweeping narrative. It is in Jesus Christ that we see God’s humility most particularly and gain insight into what theologian John Haught has called the “extravagant generosity” of God. In the ancient hymn of Philippians 2 we gaze at Christ, who did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself to take the form of a servant, not simply on behalf of humankind, but on behalf of the whole cosmos which is redeemed in him.

Just as we are called to consider the lost and the least among our human brothers and sisters, so we may say that we are called to consider the dignity of all God’s creatures. Science currently is working on several fronts to discover more about kinship. There are both genetic/hereditary and ecological relationships among earth’s creatures. We share much of our DNA with plants and animals we do not usually consider as having much in common with us, and the air we breathe requires the healthy function of organisms far less complex than we are. For many people honoring the dignity of every creature involves thinking about threatened species of birds and mammals and large fish, environmentalism’s poster children, but for those who study life on earth, whether professional biologists or backyard naturalists, it means considering the insects and the plankton, the mushrooms and molds, the plants that bring us joy and the ones we call weeds, the algae and the bacteria. It means considering the dignity of even those species which bring humans disease, such as mosquitoes and viruses. It means pondering the relationships among creatures which are not always pretty: predation, parasitism, scavenging.

Each creature’s uniqueness is neither individual nor fixed. Living things develop their characteristics in their contexts in relationship to other creatures, other members of their population, and other species in their community. As the resources in their habitats change, and pressures from their fellow creatures shift, living things change. Death and even extinction of populations and species are a natural part of this process of change. But that reality does not mean that humans should accelerate extinction through our activities.

Our understanding of God as One, yet three persons, is a divine picture of diversity in community. Each person of the Trinity, Father, Son, and Spirit, gives to and receives from the others, in a community of exchange we call love. What is true of God may then be seen to be true of the community of life which God has loved into being and sustains through love. While each creature has its dignity, in life and in death, in struggle and in beauty, all creatures in their diversity, including human beings, are held in community with one another.

There is no doubt that human beings have changed the earth's cycles, surface, and creatures by our activities. We have managed and bred for our use and enjoyment some plants and animals, and destroyed the habitats of others. We have extracted minerals, fossil fuels, and soils; and have been careless with our use of extracted water. We have preserved some biomes for their scenic beauty, but ignored the ecological services provided by others. We have trawled the bottom of the seas and used them as a trash repository. A growing and increasingly urban population's hunger for food, clothing, shelter, and fuel is taking its toll, despite ongoing efforts to slow the loss of traditional rural wisdom about conservation and creation care. Human migration has fostered the spread of invasive species that displace native species, just as human migrants have often displaced indigenous peoples.

Scientists and activists may disagree about what is the greatest threat to human survival on the planet. Should the scarcity of water for drinking and sanitation be our biggest concern, or the challenge to feed a hungry world in an ecologically sustainable way? And which of our excesses put the whole planet in the greatest peril? Is it climate change or the loss of biodiversity that poses the greatest threat to the resilience of life on earth?

Ecologists understand that while entry points for concern and action vary, all these issues are interrelated. In agriculture, to take an example from our managed environment, resilience in the face of climate change will depend on better stewardship of water and increased preservation of the diversity of seed stock available for developing improved crops, while those engaged in agriculture continue to assess their contribution to greenhouse gases, polluted waste water, and soil erosion, and how all these negative impacts on the environment can be decreased.

There have been and will continue to be unintended consequences for our environment due to our choices and behaviors, but study and prayer can help us to become more conscious of the human impact on our planet. As we consider the risen and ascended Christ drawing all things to their perfection in himself, indeed drawing the cosmos into the heart of God in that process the Eastern Church calls "deification," we find reason for hope and an impetus for the renewing and reconciling of our relationships within the creation of which we are a part.

How to Use These Materials

The Propers for Honoring God in Creation may be used for a variety of liturgical occasions (for example, a Lenten weekday series of worship services to accompany environmental education classes). They are not intended to supplant the Sunday eucharistic lectionary.

The Prayers of the People Honoring God in Creation, Forms 1, 2, and 3, accord with the rubrics for the Prayers of the People (BCP, 359) and may be used for any celebration of the Eucharist or among the intercessions at the Daily Office.

A Confession of Sin against God's Creation and A Litany for the Planet are especially suitable for use in liturgies focused on creation or environmental concerns.

A Rogation Day Procession and Liturgy and Prayers for Rogation Day: A Rite for the Blessing of a Garden may be used on the traditional Rogation Days (Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday before Ascension Day) or at some other time suitable for the local context.

A Liturgy in Thanksgiving for Creation and in Honor of the Feast of St. Francis, with the Blessing of Animals, as well as Additional Readings and Resources for St. Francis Day, may be used for the commemoration of Francis of Assisi (October 4) or on some other occasion when God's people gather to pray for the earth and its creatures.

Propers for Honoring God in Creation

1. God, the source and destiny of the cosmos

Author of creation:

In wisdom you brought forth all that is,
to participate in your divine being,
and to change, adapt, and grow in freedom.
You make holy the matter and energy of the universe
that it may delight you and give you praise.
We thank you for gathering all creation into your heart
by the energy of your Spirit
and bringing it through death to resurrection glory;
through the One in whom all things have their being,
Jesus Christ, your Wisdom and your Word. Amen.

Isaiah 40:21–28a

Psalm 136:1–9, 25–26

Revelation 22:1–5

John 3:16–17

2. God of order and dynamic change

Mysterious God, whose imagination and desire embrace all:
We seek to discern you in the interplay of forces,
in the order and the chaos of the universe,
and in the complexities of every living system.
Give us grace to honor your goodness
in what we know and in what we do not know,
in the world's harmonies and turbulence,
and in its promise and change.
For you are in, through, and beyond all that is:
one God, made known to us in Jesus Christ,
through the Holy Spirit, our inspiration and guide. Amen.

Job 37:1–7

Psalm 102:25–28

Revelation 21:3–5a

Luke 13:6–9

3. The justice of God and the dignity of all creatures

Holy God, your mercy is over all your works,
and in the web of life each creature has its role and place.
We praise you for ocelot and owl, cactus and kelp, lichen and whale;
we honor you for whirlwind and lava, tide and topsoil, cliff and marsh.
Give us hearts and minds eager to care for your planet,
humility to recognize all creatures as your beloved ones,
justice to share the resources of the earth with all its inhabitants,
and love not limited by our ignorance.
This we pray in the name of Jesus,
who unifies what is far off and what is near,
and in whom, by grace and the working of your Holy Spirit,
all things hold together. *Amen.*

Jonah 3:4–10
Psalm 145:8–10, 16–18
Ephesians 1:8b–10
Luke 10:25–37

4. The kinship and unity of all creation in Christ

God, maker of marvels,
you weave the planet and all its creatures together in kinship;
your unifying love is revealed
in the interdependence of relationships
in the complex world that you have made.
Save us from the illusion that humankind is separate and alone,
and join us in communion with all inhabitants of the universe;
through Jesus Christ, our Redeemer,
who topples the dividing walls by the power of your Holy Spirit,
and who lives and reigns with you, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

Genesis 9:8–16
Psalm 36:5–10
Colossians 1:15–20
John 1:1–5

5. Reading God's goodness in the diversity of life

Gracious God, you reveal your goodness
in the beauty and diversity of creation;
in the circle dance of earth and air and water;
in a universe rich in processes
that support growth and coherence,
distinctiveness and community;
and above all in the gift of Jesus Christ,
who emptied himself to serve your world.
And so we offer thanks and praise to you,
one God in three persons:
the Author and Source of all,

Christ the Incarnate Word,
and the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever. *Amen.*

Genesis 1:11–12, 20–22

Psalm 104:25–32

Revelation 5:11–14

Matthew 13:31–32

6. Called to be God's partners in the care of the planet

Bountiful God, you call us to labor with you in tending the earth:
Where we lack love, open our hearts to the world;
where we waste, give us discipline to conserve;
where we neglect, awaken our minds and wills to insight and care.
May we with all your creatures honor and serve you in all things,
for you live and reign with Christ, Redeemer of all,
and with your Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. *Amen.*

Ezekiel 47:6–12

Psalm 33:3–9, 13–15

Romans 8:18–23

Mark 16:14–15

Prayers of the People

Honoring God in Creation

Form 1

Deacon or other Leader

Blessed God, whose love calls the whole creation into covenant with you, and who puts in our hands responsibility for the care of the earth and its creatures: we pray for all to whom you have given life and being, saying, “Merciful God, keep your planet and people in peace.”

For the well-being of the earth; for its resources of water, air, light, and soil, that they may be tended for the good of all creatures, we pray:

Merciful God, keep your planet and people in peace.

For the waters of the earth; for their careful use and conservation, that we may have the will and the ability to keep them clean and pure, we pray:

Merciful God, keep your planet and people in peace.

For the mineral and energy resources of the planet, that we may learn sustainable consumption and sound care of the environment from which they come, we pray:

Merciful God, keep your planet and people in peace.

For the animals of the earth, wild and domestic, large and very small, that they may know the harmony of relationship that sustains all life, we pray:

Merciful God, keep your planet and people in peace.

For the creatures of the earth who do us harm and those whose place in your creation we do not understand or welcome, that we may see them as beloved creatures of God, we pray:

Merciful God, keep your planet and people in peace.

For all who shape public policies affecting the planet and its creatures [especially _____ and our local leaders _____ and _____], that they may consider wisely the well-being of all who come after us, we pray:

Merciful God, keep your planet and people in peace.

For all those engaged in conservation, in agriculture and ranching, in aquaculture and fishing, in mining and industry, and in forestry and timber-harvesting, that the health, fruitfulness, and beauty of the natural world may be sustained alongside human activity, we pray:

Merciful God, keep your planet and people in peace.

For the creatures and the human beings of your world who are ill, or in danger, pain, or special need [especially _____], and for all who suffer from the unjust, violent, or wasteful use of the

earth's resources or their devastation by war, that all may one day live in communities of justice and peace, we pray:

Merciful God, keep your planet and people in peace.

For the gifts of science and technology and for those who practice these skills, that they may be wise, visionary, and compassionate in their work, we pray:

Merciful God, keep your planet and people in peace.

For the creatures and the people of the earth whose lives and deaths have contributed to the fruitful abundance of this planet [giving thanks especially for_____], we pray:

Merciful God, keep your planet and people in peace.

The Presider concludes the Prayers with this or another suitable collect.

Gracious God:

Grant that your people may have in them
the same mind that was in Christ Jesus,
and guide us into harmony of relationship
through loving-kindness and the wise use
of all that you have given;
for you are drawing all things into communion with you
and with each other by the power of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Prayers of the People

Honoring God in Creation

Form 2

During the silence after each bidding, the people offer their own prayers, either silently or aloud.

Intercessor

Let us pray for the revealing of the reign of God in the world, now and always.

Intercessor and People

In the beginning,
God was.

Here and now,
God is.

In the future,
God will be.

Intercessor

Creator of earth, sea, and sky, kindle the fire of your Spirit within us that we may be bold to heal and defend the earth, and pour your blessing upon all who work for the good of the planet.

Silence

God, Giver of life,
Hear our prayer.

Breath of life, receive our thanks for the beauty of our local habitat and all who dwell in it, and grant us the wisdom and will to conserve it.

Silence

God, Giver of life,
Hear our prayer.

Source of life, heal and redeem the wounds of your creation, and visit the places and people who suffer from our indifference, neglect, and greed.

Silence

God, Giver of life,
Hear our prayer.

Lover of all you have made, we thank you for the wondrous diversity of your creatures, and we pray for their well-being.

Silence

God, Giver of life,
Hear our prayer.

Author of the book of nature, receive our gratitude for places of restoration and healing, and continue to bless those places that feed our lives and spirits.

Silence

God, Giver of life,
Hear our prayer.

Wise Creator, whose works are full of mystery, give us wonder and appreciation for your creatures with whom we find ourselves in conflict.

Silence

God, Giver of life,
Hear our prayer.

Giver of all good gifts, awaken us daily to our dependence upon your bounty, and make us always thankful for the abundance of your blessings.

Silence

God, Giver of life,
Hear our prayer.

Divine Physician, heal our communities, especially those where neglect, greed, or violence inflict suffering upon people and other creatures.

Silence

God, Giver of life,
Hear our prayer.

Comforter of all the earth, sustain the people of this congregation who desire or need your presence and help [especially _____].

Silence

God, Giver of life,
Hear our prayer.

Rock and refuge of all your creatures, receive into everlasting mercy all those who have died [especially _____].

Silence

God, Giver of life,
Hear our prayer.

The Presider concludes the Prayers with one of the following collects.

Eternal God, the light of all who know you,
come and fill our hearts with your love.
Help us speak when many keep silent,
help us stand for what is right
when many sit in indifference.
Increase our faith and charity,

until your kingdom comes and heaven and earth
rejoice in everlasting glory;
through your Son, our Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

source: Anne Kelsey

or this

Holy God, you alone are unutterable,
from the time you created all things that can be spoken of.
You alone are unknowable,
from the time you created all things that can be known.
All things cry out about you:
those that speak, and those that cannot speak.
All things honor you:
those that think, and those that cannot think.
For there is one longing, one groaning,
which all things have for you.
All things that comprehend your plan
pray to you and offer you a silent hymn.
In you, the One, all things abide,
and all things endlessly run to you who are the end of all. Amen.

source: Gregory of Nazianzus

or this

[Gichi Manidoo,] Great Spirit God,
we give you thanks for another day on this earth.
We give you thanks for this day
to enjoy the compassionate goodness of you, our Creator.
We acknowledge with one mind
our respect and gratefulness to all the sacred cycle of life.
Bind us together in the circle of compassion
to embrace all living creatures and one another. Amen.

*source: Native American/Alaska Native and Native Hawaiian Liturgies,
prepared for the 76th General Convention of the Episcopal Church,
Anaheim, California, July 2009*

Prayers of the People

Honoring God in Creation

Form 3 (on the theme of water)

The silence after each bidding may be followed by an appropriate response, such as “Lord, in your mercy, / Hear our prayer.”

In the beginning, the Spirit of God hovered over the waters. The water that God called into being is at the heart of all that lives. Mindful of the many ways water affects our lives, let us pray for our waters and for the life of the world around us.

Silence

I ask your prayers for all people of faith, and for the transformations in their lives that are marked by the sacredness of water: at the Red Sea, in the Jordan River, in ritual baths, in the washing of feet, and in Holy Baptism.

Silence

I ask your prayers for the leaders of nations, corporations, and communities around the world, that they may exercise wise stewardship over the waters of their lands, so that all people may have clean water to drink and may live free from waterborne diseases.

Silence

I ask your prayers for the wisdom to shape creative solutions to conflicts over water in the dry places of our planet, and for justice and peace in desert lands.

Silence

I ask your prayers for all the waters of the earth: for oceans and seas, for rivers and streams, for lakes and ponds, for watersheds, marshes, and swamps, for the waters beneath the ground; and for all creatures that live in the waters of the earth.

Silence

I ask your prayers for all who travel or work at sea or on inland waterways.

Silence

I ask your prayers for all afflicted with too much water in flood or tsunami, storm or ice; and for those people and creatures who suffer as glaciers and ice floes melt and shrink.

Silence

I ask your prayers for all who have died and for all who mourn, that their tears of grief may be turned to wellsprings of joy.

Silence

The Presider concludes the Prayers with this or another suitable collect.

Blessed God, fountain of life:

Grant that we may see all water as holy,
and so protect and preserve the waters of the earth
and the life they sustain.

In the name of Christ, the living water, we pray. Amen.

A Confession of Sin against God's Creation

The Deacon or Presider may introduce the Confession with these words

Let us confess our sin against God and God's creation.

Silence may be kept

Minister and People

Holy and merciful God,
we confess that we have failed to honor you
by rightly claiming our kinship with all your creatures.
We have walked heavily on your earth,
overused and wasted its resources,
taken for granted its beauty and abundance,
and treated its inhabitants unjustly,
holding future generations hostage to our greed.
Have mercy on us and forgive us our sin.
Renew in us the resolve to keep and conserve your earth
as you desire and intend,
with grateful and compassionate hearts,
through your Son, our Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

or this

Merciful and sustaining God,
we have sinned against you.
We confess our lack of gratitude
for the beauty and bounty of your creation:
teach us to see that your earth sustains us and all that lives.
We confess that we have misused your earth:
grant us amendment of life.
We confess that we have been intemperate in our appetites:
strengthen us in self-control.
We confess that we have taken the abundance of your world for granted:
make us urgent now for its protection.
Forgive and renew us now through our Savior Jesus Christ,
by the power of the Holy Spirit,
with whom you live and reign, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

or this

God of compassion, have mercy upon us.
Heal our relationship with all creation.
Forgive us for our mistreatment and neglect
of the creatures who share the earth with us.
We are truly sorry and we humbly repent
for what we have done to harm them,
and for what we have not done to help them.
Fill us with your Spirit,
that we may care for one another and for all creatures,
according to your will and in the fullness of your love;
through Jesus Christ our Redeemer. Amen.

The Priest alone says

Almighty God have mercy on you,
forgive you all your sins through the grace of Jesus Christ,
strengthen you in all goodness,
and by the power of the Holy Spirit keep you in eternal life. Amen.

If no Priest is present, the Presider says the following

Almighty God have mercy on us,
forgive us all our sins through the grace of Jesus Christ,
strengthen us in all goodness,
and by the power of the Holy Spirit keep us in eternal life. Amen.

A Litany for the Planet

The Deacon or other Leader may select apt portions of this litany, and add local examples to any category, as well as special concerns and occasions for prayer where appropriate.

With all our heart and with all our mind, let us pray to the Creator, saying, “Creator, have mercy.”

On your earth, the garden of life,
Creator, have mercy.

On soil, that it may be fruitful in all seasons,
Creator, have mercy.

On rocks and minerals that form the foundations for life,
Creator, have mercy.

On volcanoes and lava flows that reveal the power of earth’s core,
Creator, have mercy.

On hills and great mountains; on cliffs, caves, and valleys,
Creator, have mercy.

On deserts and their hardy creatures,
Creator, have mercy.

* * *

On your waters, which sustain a diverse community of life,
Creator, have mercy.

On coral reefs, and on the animals, plants, and fish that inhabit them,
Creator, have mercy.

On ocean deeps, teeming with life; on the open seas and all that travel upon them,
Creator, have mercy.

On rivers, bringing water to thirsty places,
Creator, have mercy.

On lakes and streams, home to a diversity of life,
Creator, have mercy.

On ponds and marshes, cradles of life,
Creator, have mercy.

On wetlands and estuaries; on rocky coasts and beaches,
Creator, have mercy.

On islands and atolls, oases and all harsh outposts of life,
Creator, have mercy.

On glaciers and ice fields, holding the delicate balance of waters,
Creator, have mercy.

On storms, floods, and tempests, and all fearsome forces of weather,
Creator, have mercy.

On rains that water the earth, causing plants to sprout and grow,
Creator, have mercy.

On snow and hail, sleet and winter cold, and on the dormant things that wait for spring,
Creator, have mercy.

On mists and fog silently watering the ground,
Creator, have mercy.

* * *

On the atmosphere of your planet earth, that it may sustain all that breathes,
Creator, have mercy.

On winds that carry seeds and spores; on breezes that warm and cool the earth,
Creator, have mercy.

On lightnings and fires that cleanse and destroy, and on all that lies in their path,
Creator, have mercy.

* * *

On all the ecosystems of your earth and their intricate communities,
Creator, have mercy.

On forests of many kinds; on trees and shrubs and vines,
Creator, have mercy.

On grasslands, tundras, and plains, and on their varied plants,
Creator, have mercy.

On ferns and fungi; on spore-bearing and seed-bearing plants,
Creator, have mercy.

On micro-organisms of endless variety, the complex and the simple,
Creator, have mercy.

On reptiles and amphibians; on _____ and _____ [local examples],
Creator, have mercy.

On four-legged creatures; on _____ and _____ [local examples],
Creator, have mercy.

On two-legged and winged creatures; on _____ and _____ [local examples],
Creator, have mercy.

On many-legged creatures and insects; on _____ and _____ [local examples],
Creator, have mercy.

On mysterious creatures and places unknown to humankind,
Creator, have mercy.

On the human family across the globe, of many colors and communities, in kinship with all creation,
Creator, have mercy.

* * *

For a city, town, or village

On all who live and work and play in this city and this neighborhood,
Creator, have mercy.

On those who work around us, whose labor builds up our community and our world;
on _____ and _____ [local work examples],
Creator, have mercy.

On the businesses and industries of this city, that they may profit the whole community;
on _____ and _____ [local examples],
Creator, have mercy.

On the parks and green spaces of this city; on those who maintain them and those who enjoy them,
Creator, have mercy.

On the plants and animals of our ecosystem; on _____ and _____ [local examples],
Creator, have mercy.

On those who produce food and energy for this city's people and pets,
Creator, have mercy.

On schools and all places of learning; on all who care for and teach children and adults,
Creator, have mercy.

On the poor and homeless residents of this city, that there may be shelter and sustenance for them,
Creator, have mercy.

On visitors and immigrants; on all who offer welcome and shelter here,
Creator, have mercy.

On all places of reverence and prayer; on all who honor you and on those who do not yet know you,
Creator, have mercy.

On our ancestors, and on those who will come after us,
Creator, have mercy.

* * *

In time of widespread disease

On those stricken with _____, and those who suffer from any disease,
Creator, have mercy.

On those who care for loved ones who are ill,
Creator, have mercy.

On doctors and nurses, and all who render help and healing skill,
Creator, have mercy.

On scientists and researchers, and all who search for treatments and cures,
Creator, have mercy.

On all who work for public health, safety, and well-being,
Creator, have mercy.

On all who are fearful for their health and life, and on those who are alone and in great need,
Creator, have mercy.

On those who are dying and those who have died, and on all who mourn,
Creator, have mercy.

A Rogation Day Procession and Liturgy

The Rogation Days are traditionally observed on the Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday before Ascension Day. They may, however, be observed on other days, depending on local conditions and the convenience of the congregation. In ancient times, the observance consisted of an outdoor procession that culminated in a special celebration of the Eucharist. Prayers might be offered for the city and the neighborhood, for all who labor, for the fruitfulness of the land and waters; and for deliverance in time of war, disaster, or epidemic disease. The term from which this observance is drawn is the Latin rogare, meaning “to ask.”

Stations suitable for the procession may be selected, adapted, and ordered according to local circumstances.

The Rogation Procession

The congregation gathers at a convenient place and may sing a hymn. During the movement from place to place, to preserve the solemnity of the procession, it is desirable for the people to refrain from conversation and to join in hymns, litanies said or sung, or silence, or for bells or instrumental music to be played. At the stations the Presider may cense or sprinkle the place.

Suitable psalms and canticles include Psalm 103 with the refrain “Bless the Lord, O my soul”; Psalm 104 with the refrain “Hallelujah!”; the Venite (Psalm 95:1–7); Cantic D, A Song of the Wilderness (Isaiah 35:1–7, 10); and Cantic O, A Song of the Heavenly City (Revelation 21:22–26, 22:1–4). The Great Litany or A Litany for the Planet might be used. Several of these may be found in contemporary language in Enriching Our Worship 1.

The Presider may assign lay people to read the prayers.

Presider Blessed be the one, holy, and living God.

People Glory to God for ever and ever.

Presider Bountiful God of heaven and earth: By your gracious providence give and preserve the harvests of the land and sea for the good of all creatures, that those who receive good things from your hand may always give you thanks and praise; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Deacon Let us go forth in peace.

People In the name of Christ. Amen.

A hymn, psalm, canticle, or silence for the procession follows.

Station: At a place of work

Reading Ecclesiasticus 38:27–32a

Presider Let us pray.

Almighty God, whose Son Jesus Christ in his earthly life shared our toil and hallowed our labor: Be present with your people where they work. Make those who carry on the industries and commerce of this land responsive to your will, and bring all workers satisfaction in what they do and a just return for their labor; through Jesus Christ our Redeemer. Amen.

A hymn, psalm, canticle, or silence for the procession follows.

Station: At a garden or park

Reading Genesis 1:11–12

Presider Let us pray.

Gracious God, we give you thanks for the fruitfulness of the earth that nourishes our life and the life of all creatures. Bless those who work in fields and gardens. Send them seasonable and temperate weather, and grant that the fruits of the earth may be shared justly with all having need of them; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

A hymn, psalm, canticle, or silence for the procession follows.

Station: At agricultural land or a farmer’s market

Reading Genesis 8:21b–9:1 or Leviticus 19:9–10

Presider Let us pray.

Holy God, we thank you for the land and its soil, and all those who bring forth food and necessities of life from it. Send an abundant harvest to the farmers and ranchers of the world, and make all your people just, loving, and generous in their life together and mindful of the needs of all who are poor, after the example of Jesus Christ. Amen.

A hymn, psalm, canticle, or silence for the procession follows.

Station: For scientists and explorers

Reading Genesis 1:1–5 or Ecclesiasticus 17:1–11

Presider Let us pray.

God of Mystery, you made the universe with its marvelous order and chaos, its atoms, worlds, and galaxies, and the infinite complexity of living creatures. We give you thanks for all who study the mysteries of creation and ask that their work may increase our curiosity, wonder, and joy, that we may come to know you more truly and serve you more humbly; in the name of Jesus Christ, your Wisdom and your Word. Amen.

A hymn, psalm, canticle, or silence for the procession follows.

Station: At a place where food is served

Reading Mark 6:35–44

Presider Let us pray.

Generous God, your hand is open wide to satisfy the needs of every creature: We give you thanks for all who prepare and serve the food we eat. Bless them in their labor and bless all who benefit from their service; through Jesus Christ, the Bread of Life. Amen.

A hymn, psalm, canticle, or silence for the procession follows.

Station: For the gift and care of water

Reading Isaiah 41:17–20

Presider Let us pray.

God, whose Spirit moved over the deep: We thank you for the gift of water — the waters on the earth, and under the earth, the water above us, and within us. Make us mindful of the care of all the planet’s water, that it may richly sustain life for us and for those who come after us; through Jesus Christ, source of living water. Amen.

A hymn, psalm, canticle, or silence for the procession follows.

Station: At a memorial garden or cemetery

Reading Matthew 27:57–61

Presider Let us pray.

God of the living and of the dead, renew the face of the ground by your life-giving Spirit, and grant that all who rest here may be renewed in the joy of your eternal presence; through Jesus Christ, who is resurrection and life. Amen.

A hymn, psalm, canticle, or silence for the procession follows.

Station: For the air and all who work to keep it clean

Reading Ezekiel 37:9–10

Presider Let us pray.

Holy Spirit, breath of life: We give you thanks for the air and for all who work to keep it clean. Teach us to cherish the air we breathe; in your power we pray. Amen.

A hymn, psalm, canticle, or silence for the procession follows.

Station: At a place of government

Reading 1 Timothy 2:1–4

Presider Let us pray.

Almighty God, we pray for all who serve and govern the people of this and every land. Send upon them the spirit of wisdom, charity, and justice, that they may foster the well-being of all creation; for the sake of Jesus Christ, the way, the truth, and the life. Amen.

A hymn, psalm, canticle, or silence for the procession follows.

Station: For a place of healing

Reading Matthew 8:14–16

Presider Let us pray.

Merciful God, whose Son Jesus healed many who were sick: We commend to your care all who suffer, and those who care for them. By your grace lend compassion and skill to health and veterinary workers here and everywhere, and bring healing and comfort to those in need; that all may know your power and goodness and rise up to serve you, in the strength of your Holy Spirit. Amen.

A hymn, psalm, canticle, or silence for the procession follows.

Station: For military workers

Reading Isaiah 2:2–4

Presider Let us pray.

God our strength and shield: Protect and defend all who offer their lives in military service for the sake of others. Beat our swords into plowshares and our spears into pruning hooks, that all may dwell in harmony with one another and with all creation; through Jesus Christ our Redeemer. Amen.

A hymn, psalm, canticle, or silence for the procession follows.

Station: For public-safety workers

Reading Isaiah 21:6–8

Presider Let us pray.

God our rock and our refuge: Guard and bless all who work for the well-being and safety of our community. Grant courage, vigilance, and skill to those who rise up by night or by day at our urgent call, that they may always find your arm mighty to save; through Jesus Christ, who died that all may live. Amen.

A hymn, psalm, canticle, or silence for the procession follows.

Station: At a place where trash, compost, or recycling is handled

Reading Luke 13:6–9

Presider Let us pray.

Renewing God: Bless all whose labor here supports the well-being of our community. Strengthen and encourage them in their service, and make us mindful of their contribution to the stewardship of the earth, that all may be ministers of your new creation; in the name of Jesus our Redeemer. Amen.

A hymn, psalm, canticle, or silence for the procession follows.

Station: At the door of the church building

Reading Acts 2:41–47 or Isaiah 56:6b–7

Presider Let us pray.

Holy God, you give your people a desire to know and to worship you: Bless all who gather here in your name, that they may find a welcome and lift their hearts and voices in praise of you, who makes us a new creation in Jesus Christ, through whom we pray. Amen.

A hymn, psalm, canticle, or silence for the procession follows.

The procession enters the church, where a celebration of the Holy Eucharist may follow.

If the Eucharist is not to follow, the service may end with one of the following collects, a passing of the Peace, and a blessing and dismissal.

If a celebration of the Eucharist is to follow on a day other than Sunday, one of these collects may be used as a Collect of the Day, or as a Collect at the Prayers.

Collect of the Day

O God, from whom all good proceeds:
You established your covenant with all creation.
Guide us and all your people,
that we may walk upon the earth in righteousness and peace,
and honor you in our kinship with all your creatures;
through our Risen Lord, Jesus Christ,
who with you and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns,
one God, to the ages of ages. Amen.

or this

O heavenly Father, you have filled the world with beauty:
Open our eyes to recognize your gracious hand in all your works,
that, rejoicing in your whole creation,
we may learn to serve you with gladness;
for the sake of the One through whom all things were made,
Jesus Christ our Redeemer. Amen.

or this

Creator, we give you thanks for all you are
and all you bring to us for our visit within your creation.
In Jesus, you place the gospel in the center of this Sacred Circle
through which all of creation is related.
You show us the way to live a generous and compassionate life.
Give us your strength to live together with respect and commitment
as we grow in your Spirit, for you are God, now and for ever. Amen.

source: *A Gathering Prayer adapted from
Native American/Alaska Native and Native Hawaiian Liturgies, prepared for the
76th General Convention of the Episcopal Church, Anaheim, California, July 2009*

or this

Collect 19: For Rogation Days, I, II, or III

The Book of Common Prayer, pages 258–259, 207–208

At the Eucharist

*The Readings for the Eucharist may be those of the day if on a Sunday, or a selection from the Propers for Rogation Days in
The Book of Common Prayer, page 930.*

A Proper Preface for Rogation Days

Because in the mystery of Christ's incarnation you have gathered into one things earthly and
heavenly, calling your people to be ministers of reconciliation and to proclaim the Good
News to all creation.

The following postcommunion prayer may be used.

Faithful God
in the wonder of your wisdom and love
you fed your people in the wilderness with the bread of angels,
and you sent Jesus to be the bread of life.
We thank you for feeding us with this bread.
May it strengthen us
that by the power of the Holy Spirit
we may embody your desire
and be renewed for your service
through Jesus Christ our Savior. Amen.

source: *Enriching Our Worship 2, page 41*

Prayers for Rogation Days: A Rite for the Blessing of a Garden

Presider Blessed be the God of all creation:
People For in your goodness you make all things new.

Presider God be with you. or The Lord be with you.
People And also with you.

Presider Let us pray.
Gracious God, you open wide your hand and give of your goodness to all things living: Renew the face of the earth and increase the sustainable harvests of the world, that the land may bring forth enough for all, and your people may share justly and give honor to you; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

The Presider or other appointed leaders from the congregation may then lead the People in prayer, using one or more of the following collects, as appropriate.

Lover of all you have made: Protect and sustain the creatures of our local habitat. Increase their well-being, watch over them with love, and give us wisdom to honor our kinship with them; through Jesus Christ, the first-born of all creation. Amen.

God, whose Spirit moved over the deep: We thank you for the gift of water. Bless the waters on the ground and under the ground, and the waters that fall from the sky, that this garden may flourish and bear good fruit; through Jesus Christ our Savior. Amen.

God, who alone provides seed for the sower and bread for the eater, you have taught us to ask of you our daily bread: Bless the sowing of the seed this year, grant fertility to the soil, and strengthen the hands of the gardeners who till it, that through their labor your people may be nourished; through Jesus Christ, the bread of life. Amen.

Holy God, you have blessed our plowing and preparing of the ground: Protect what we plant and bring it to maturity, that we and others may enjoy a fruitful harvest; through Jesus Christ our Sustainer. Amen.

The Presider and People then say together

Holy One:
Bless and protect this garden and all who keep it.
Strengthen and uphold them in their labor,
that these plants may bear good fruit
and our care for the earth may witness to your love and justice;
in the name of the Creator, Word, and Spirit. Amen.

The Deacon or Presider may dismiss the People with these words

Deacon Let us bless the Lord.
People Thanks be to God.

A Liturgy in Thanksgiving for Creation and in Honor of the Feast of St. Francis, with the Blessing of Animals

An entrance hymn may be sung.

Presider Blessed be the God of all creation.
People And blessed be God's holy Name for ever and ever.

or this

Presider Blessed be God: Creator, Word, and Spirit,
People Who brings all things into being and calls them good.

Presider Bless your Creator, all animals of the land.
People Let us praise and exalt our Creator together.

Presider Bless your Creator, all birds of the air.
People Let us praise and exalt our Creator together.

Presider Bless your Creator, all creatures of the sea.
People Let us praise and exalt our Creator together.

Presider Bless your Creator, all children of God.
People Let us praise and exalt our Creator together.

Presider God be with you. *or* The Lord be with you.
People And also with you.

Presider Let us pray.
Most high, omnipotent, good Lord: Grant your people grace to renounce gladly the vanities of this world that, following the way of blessed Francis, we may for love of you delight in your whole creation with perfect joy; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

The Readings

First Reading Psalm 104:10–25

You, LORD God, send the springs into the valleys; *
they flow between the mountains.
All the beasts of the field drink their fill from them, *
and the wild asses quench their thirst.

Beside them the birds of the air make their nests *
 and sing among the branches.
 You water the mountains from your dwelling on high; *
 the earth is fully satisfied by the fruit of your works.
 You make grass grow for flocks and herds *
 and plants to serve humankind;
 That they may bring forth food from the earth, *
 and wine to gladden our hearts,
 Oil to make a cheerful countenance, *
 and bread to strengthen the heart.
 The trees of the LORD are full of sap, *
 the cedars of Lebanon which God planted,
 In which the birds build their nests, *
 and in whose tops the stork makes a dwelling.
 The high hills are a refuge for the mountain goats, *
 and the stony cliffs for the rock badgers.
 You appointed the moon to mark the seasons, *
 and the sun knows the time of its setting.
 You make darkness that it may be night, *
 in which all the beasts of the forest prowl.
 The lions roar after their prey *
 and seek their food from God.
 The sun rises, and they slip away *
 and lay themselves down in their dens.
 People go forth to their work *
 and to their labor until the evening.
 O LORD, how manifold are your works! *
 in wisdom you have made them all;
 the earth is full of your creatures.

A second Reading may be added here.

Litany for Creation and All Creatures

Presider Let us name with thanksgiving those animals for whom we care: _____.
 Let us name with thanksgiving those animals who have been our companions over the years
 and are no longer with us: _____.
 And let us remember the unnamed, unknown animals whose lives have benefited our own.

Silence

The Prayers may be led by a Deacon or other Leader.

Deacon Holy God, Creator of heaven and earth,
People Have mercy on us.

Deacon Holy and Mighty, Redeemer of the world,
People Have mercy on us.

Deacon Holy Immortal One, Sanctifier of the faithful,
People Have mercy on us.

Deacon Holy, blessed and glorious Trinity, One God,
People Have mercy on us.

- Deacon* Grant that all your creatures may thank and serve you;
People Shower your blessing on earth, O God.
or We beseech you to hear us, good Lord.
- Deacon* Grant favorable weather, temperate rain, and fruitful seasons, providing food and drink for all your creatures;
People Shower your blessing on earth, O God.
or We beseech you to hear us, good Lord.
- Deacon* Open our eyes to the joy and beauty of creation, that we may see your presence in all your works;
People Shower your blessing on earth, O God.
or We beseech you to hear us, good Lord.
- Deacon* Look with favor upon all who care for the earth, the water, and the air, that the riches of creation may abound for all your creatures;
People Shower your blessing on earth, O God.
or We beseech you to hear us, good Lord.
- Deacon* Make us faithful stewards of creation, wisely caring for the earth, the air, the seas, and all the life they bear;
People Shower your blessing on earth, O God.
or We beseech you to hear us, good Lord.
- Deacon* Awaken us to our responsibility for the care of creation;
People Shower your blessing on earth, O God.
or We beseech you to hear us, good Lord.
- Deacon* Forgive us our waste and pollution of creation and strengthen us to heal wounds we have inflicted;
People Shower your blessing on earth, O God.
or We beseech you to hear us, good Lord.
- Deacon* Remember all in captivity and those who are hunted, trapped, deserted, or abused, that they may find safety in homes of loving care;
People Shower your blessing on earth, O God.
or We beseech you to hear us, good Lord.
- Deacon* Do not forget those animals who have died yet remain dear to us, that they may rejoice in your new creation;
People Shower your blessing on earth, O God.
or We beseech you to hear us, good Lord.
- Presider* Holy God: No sparrow falls without your attention; nothing dies that is lost to you; nothing comes into being without your love. Give us just and compassionate hearts, that we may serve the earth and all its creatures, holding fast to the vision of your peaceable reign in which all will live with you eternally; through the Risen One, Christ our Savior. *Amen.*

Confession of Sin

The Confession may be omitted on occasion.

The Deacon or Presider says

Let us confess to God our sins against our fellow creatures.

Silence may be kept.

Minister and People

God of compassion, have mercy upon us.
Heal our relationship with all creation.
Forgive us for our mistreatment and neglect
of the creatures who share the earth with us.
We are truly sorry and we humbly repent
for what we have done to harm them,
and for what we have not done to help them.
Fill us with your Spirit,
that we may care for one another and for all your creatures,
according to your will and in the fullness of your love;
through Jesus Christ our Redeemer. Amen.

The Priest alone says

Almighty God have mercy on you,
forgive you all your sins through the grace of Jesus Christ,
strengthen you in all goodness,
and by the power of the Holy Spirit keep you in eternal life. Amen.

If no Priest is present, the Presider says the following

Almighty God have mercy on us,
forgive us all our sins through the grace of Jesus Christ,
strengthen us in all goodness,
and by the power of the Holy Spirit keep us in eternal life. Amen.

The Blessing of the Animals

Presider It is the priestly work of all God's people to give thanks for God's blessings, to ask for and lend assistance to all in need, and to stretch our hands to heal and cherish the creatures of God; this is our work of blessing. Recognizing God's love for these creatures, I invite you to bring forward the animals entrusted to your care, one by one, and to join me in the laying on of hands in prayer.

The animals are blessed individually by name by the Presider, using these or other words

Presider Fellow creature, friend and companion:
May God your creator and preserver
bless, defend, heal, and keep you,
this day and always. Amen.

The Presider then invites the People to name aloud their animals at home and to pray together, using these words

All Fellow creatures, friends and companions:
May God your creator and preserver
bless, defend, heal, and keep you,
this day and always. Amen.

Presider Let us pray.
 God of manifold blessings, source of all that is good and true and holy: Raise us up to see the world through your eyes, so that with the eyes of our hearts enlightened, we may treasure each creature touched by your creative hand. May your bountiful blessing be upon us all, Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier, now and for ever. Amen.

Or the animals may be blessed collectively, using this prayer

Presider Almighty and everlasting God, Creator of all things and Giver of all life: Let your blessing be upon these and all animals. May our relationships with them mirror your love, and may our care for them follow the example of your bountiful mercy. Grant these animals health and peace. Strengthen us to love and care for them as we strive, like Francis of Assisi, to imitate the love of Jesus Christ. Amen.

The Lord's Prayer

Presider God be with you. or The Lord be with you.
People And also with you.
Presider Let us pray.

Presider and People

Our Father, who art in heaven,
 hallowed be thy Name,
 thy kingdom come,
 thy will be done,
 on earth as it is in heaven.
 Give us this day our daily bread.
 And forgive us our trespasses,
 as we forgive those
 who trespass against us.
 And lead us not into temptation,
 but deliver us from evil.
 For thine is the kingdom,
 and the power, and the glory,
 for ever and ever. Amen.

Our Father in heaven,
 hallowed be your Name,
 your kingdom come,
 your will be done,
 on earth as in heaven.
 Give us today our daily bread.
 Forgive us our sins
 as we forgive those
 who sin against us.
 Save us from the time of trial,
 and deliver us from evil.
 For the kingdom, the power,
 and the glory are yours,
 now and for ever. Amen.

Or this

Holy One, our only Home,
 hallowed be your name.
 May your day dawn,
 your will be done,
 here as in heaven.
 Feed us today,
 and forgive us as we forgive each other.
 Do not forsake us at the test,
 but deliver us from evil.
 For the glory, the power,
 and the mercy are yours,
 now and for ever. Amen.

source: Martha Blacklock, Mother Thunder Mission

The Presider and People may say together this Prayer attributed to St. Francis

Lord, make us instruments of your peace.
Where there is hatred, let us sow love;
where there is injury, pardon;
where there is discord, union;
where there is doubt, faith;
where there is despair, hope;
where there is darkness, light;
where there is sadness, joy.
Grant that we may not so much seek
to be consoled as to console;
to be understood as to understand;
to be loved as to love.
For it is in giving that we receive;
it is in pardoning that we are pardoned;
and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life. Amen.

Hymn 593, "Lord, Make Us Servants of Your Peace," or another suitable hymn may be sung.

The Deacon, or the Presider, dismisses the People with these words

<i>Deacon</i>	Go in peace to love and serve God's creation.
<i>People</i>	Thanks be to God.

Additional Readings and Resources for St. Francis Day

Additional Readings

Genesis 1:20–22a, 24–26a, 28, 31a

And God said, “Let the waters bring forth swarms of living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the dome of the sky.” So God created the great sea monsters and every living creature that moves, of every kind, with which the waters swarm, and every winged bird of every kind. And God saw that it was good. God blessed them ...

And God said, “Let the earth bring forth living creatures of every kind: cattle and creeping things and wild animals of the earth of every kind.” And it was so. God made the wild animals of the earth of every kind, and the cattle of every kind, and everything that creeps upon the ground of every kind. And God saw that it was good. Then God said, “Let us make humankind.” ... God blessed them ...

God saw everything that God had made, and indeed, it was very good.

Wisdom 11:24–12:1

For you love all things that exist,
and detest none of the things that you have made,
for you would not have made anything if you had hated it.
How would anything have endured if you had not willed it?
Or how would anything not called forth by you have been preserved?
You spare all things, for they are yours, O Lord,
you who love the living.
For your immortal spirit is in all things.

Job 12:7–10a

But ask the animals, and they will teach you;
the birds of the air, and they will tell you;
ask the plants of the earth, and they will teach you;
and the fish of the sea will declare to you.
Who among all these does not know
that the hand of the LORD has done this?
In his hand is the life of every living thing.

Matthew 6:25–26

Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the air; they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them.

Matthew 11:25–30

At that time Jesus said, “I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and the intelligent and have revealed them to infants; yes, Father, for such was your gracious will. All things have been handed over to me by my Father; and no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him. Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”

Psalms 104:24–25, 27–28, 30–31

O LORD, how manifold are your works!
 In wisdom you have made them all;
 the earth is full of your creatures.
 Yonder is the sea, great and wide,
 creeping things innumerable are there,
 living things both small and great ...
 These all look to you
 to give them their food in due season;
 when you give to them, they gather it up;
 when you open your hand, they are filled with good things ...
 When you send forth your spirit, they are created;
 and you renew the face of the ground.
 May the glory of the LORD endure forever.

Canticle 12 A Song of Creation Benedicite, omnia opera Domini

source: *Enriching Our Worship 1, page 26*

Invocation

Glorify the Lord, all you works of the Lord, *
 sing praise and give honor for ever.
 In the high vault of heaven, glorify the Lord, *
 sing praise and give honor for ever.

II. The Earth and Its Creatures

Let the earth glorify the Lord, *
 sing praise and give honor for ever.
 Glorify the Lord, O mountains
 and hills, and all that grows upon the earth,*
 sing praise and give honor for ever.
 Glorify the Lord, O springs of water, seas, and streams, *
 O whales and all that move in the waters.
 All birds of the air, glorify the Lord, *
 sing praise and give honor for ever.
 Glorify the Lord, O beasts of the wild, *
 and all you flocks and herds.
 O men and women everywhere, glorify the Lord, *
 sing praise and give honor for ever.

Doxology

Let us glorify the Lord: Father, Son and Holy Spirit; *
sing praise and give honor for ever.
In the high vault of heaven, glorify the Lord, *
sing praise and give honor for ever.

Additional Materials

A Prayer by Walter Rauschenbusch

Enlarge within us the sense of fellowship
with all living things,
our brothers and sisters the animals to whom you gave this earth
as their home in common with us.

We remember with shame that in the past
we have exercised the high dominion of humans
with ruthless cruelty,
so that the voice of the Earth,
which should have gone up to you in song,
has been a groan of travail.

May we realize that they live, not for us alone,
but for themselves and for you,
and that they love the sweetness of life even as we,
and serve you in their place better than we in ours.
We pray through our Savior Jesus Christ,
who lifts up and redeems us all. Amen.

source: "For This World" in
Prayers of the Social Awakening (1910), adapted

A Reading attributed to Meister Eckhart

Apprehend God in all things,
for God is in all things.
Every single creature is full of God,
and is a book about God.
Every creature is a word of God.
If I spent enough time with the tiniest creature —
even a caterpillar —
I would never have to prepare a sermon,
so full of God
is every creature.

A Reading adapted from St. Isaac the Syrian

This is a charitable heart: It is a heart burning with love for the whole creation, for humans, for the birds, for the beasts, for the demons — for all creatures. One who has such a heart cannot see or call to mind a creature without having eyes being filled with tears by reason of the immense compassion which seizes the heart; a heart which is softened and can no longer

bear to see or learn from others of any suffering, even the smallest pain, being inflicted on a creature. That is why such a person never ceases to pray also for the animals, that they may be preserved and purified. This person will even pray for the reptiles, moved by the infinite pity which reigns in the hearts of those who are becoming united with God.

A Reading from The Brothers Karamazov by Fyodor Dostoevsky

Love all God's creation, the whole and every grain of sand in it. Love every leaf, every ray of God's light. Love the animals, love the plants, love everything. If you love everything, you will perceive the divine mystery in things. Once you perceive it, you will begin to comprehend it better every day. And you will come at last to love the whole world with an all-embracing love. Love the animals: God has given them the rudiments of thought and joy untroubled. Do not trouble it, don't harass them, don't deprive them of their happiness, don't work against God's intent.