

Earth Day



Prayer Journal



**SISTERS OF ST. JOSEPH
OF CARONDELET**



Sisters of Saint Joseph
U.S. FEDERATION



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Section 1: Religious/ Spiritual Conversion

Surrender is at the heart of religious conversion. Regardless of one's religious alliances, conversion begins with moving beyond one's self to the recognition of the transcendent, and then to falling in love with this transcendent reality. A movement beyond self-absorption and self-centeredness accompanies the delight and reverie in creation. Ecological consciousness impels individuals and collectives of persons to radical attitudinal and behavioral conversion.

Engaging with Nature: a meditation practice

Engaging with Nature has three parts. You might not be able to get to all three parts every time but as this becomes a more comfortable practice you will find that you can move to stage 3 in almost any setting. The three stages are:

1. Engaging through physical relaxation
2. Noticing your environment through your five senses
3. Embracing the nature that surrounds you and joining in harmony with all



Engaging through physical relaxation:

Find a spot outside to which you can frequently return for 5 minutes to 30 minutes during these days leading up to Earth Day. Begin this time by relaxing, breathing deeply, and tuning into both the physical and emotional feelings in your body.

Noticing your environment through your five senses:

Once you feel that relaxation, switch your focus from the internal and use your five senses to focus on the external world.

- **Touch**- feel your connection with the earth and all that is touching your body. This may include the warmth of the sun or a breeze.
- **Hearing**- Sit quietly and listen deeply to all the sounds that you perceive.
- **Sight**- open your eyes if they were closed and view the world around you- allow your vision to focus on those things you are drawn to and to drift to see all that surrounds you
- **Smell**- what do you notice in the air
- **Taste**- sometimes you can even taste chemicals in the air or a natural freshness

This is a time for tuning in to the environment around you. If you find yourself tuning out of the here and now, gently bring yourself back to exploring the experience of your senses.



Embracing the nature that surrounds you and joining in harmony with all:

The third part often occurs after you have become very comfortable with relaxing and noticing. You feel yourself shift from being an observer and experience yourself as an active part of your environment. Your connection becomes intimate and your consciousness expands as your sensory and perceptual capabilities allow you to move into a new awareness of oneness.

TOUCH



Find a comfortable seated position.

Take this time to bring awareness to your breath.

As you breathe in deeply, notice how it feels as the air passes through, bringing energy and sustenance.

Take turns bringing your attention to each of the parts of your body, and imagine as you inhale your breath bringing life to each part.

As you exhale slowly, notice how it feels for the breath to leave. Notice if you feel tension, stress, and with every inhale deepen your relaxation into every part of your being.

Enter into total presence, and notice how the terrain feels against you. Imagine yourself rooting down into the earth, expanding and deepening further into the soil with every exhale.

Feel what this groundedness is to you. Perhaps you feel the wind rustling against you, the sharpness of cold or thickness of heat, how it moves over you.

Rest in this space awhile, and in the comfort of knowing that you are of this earth as is the soil, the elements, the wind.

HEARING

Take this moment to inhale and exhale deeply for a while, as you begin to allow for stillness to take place within your mind and body. Resting within your landscape of inner quiet, notice what lives and sounds fill the space around you.

Can you hear any creatures? Imagine what they are experiencing in this moment.

Can you hear the wind, and how it moves through this space?

What other life forms can you hear?

In this space where all things live and breathe, feel how your breath connects you to all things. Offer it up in gratitude and praise for this world where all things, in stillness and in movement, are sustained by the breath.



SIGHT



Find a comfortable position outside, and if you are able, close your eyes for a moment.

Allow yourself to adjust to the darkness that is housed within you.

How does it feel to exist in the vast universe that is you? What images, feelings, or thoughts arise? Acknowledge their form, appreciate what they intend to bring to you, and allow them to fade back into the darkness.

When you are ready, slowly open your eyes. Notice what you feel when the light re-enters your being. As you come back into the outer world, imagine that you are seeing the trees, plants, animals, and everything that makes up the world around you for the first time. Appreciate their colors, the shape of their beings, the fluidity of movement and stillness surrounding you.

Give thanks for the gift of sight, and the unique and spectacular way your vision connects you with the world within you and around you.

SMELL

Take a deep breath, and hold it for a moment before you exhale.

As the air around you enters your being, be mindful of the different scents that fill you. Can you name them? How do you respond to them? What feelings, thoughts, or memories do these scents evoke in you?

Your sense of smell is the most primal of our senses. Scents travel a direct path to the emotional and memory centers of the brain. Scents often connect with emotions and memories in very vivid ways, both pleasant and unpleasant.

Notice the ways in which your mind and body work together or distinctly to experience these smells.

Relax into the sensations these scents stir into awakening as they waft over you and make space for understanding what they communicate.



TASTE

Bring an edible outside with you for your practice.

As you take each bite, cultivate an awareness of the life and journey of this food, and gratitude for the life it brings to you.

Imagine who grew it, and how it grew.

Imagine how it eventually got from the field into your hand. Why did you reach for this particular food? How do you respond to it?



As you take in this food, be aware of the wisdom it brings to feed and nourish you. Know that **“all the food of this world is divine love made edible.”** (Anthony Bloom “Beginning to Pray”)

In holding space for this, give thanks for this food, the life, and the love that it feeds you.

Section 2:

Moral Conversion

Moral conversion encompasses changes in the very criteria, choices and values that govern one's decisions and actions. Ecological consciousness carries with it the burden of being aware of unintended consequences.

We know that the environmental crisis besetting Earth has its roots in human decisions and actions.

What do you do once you know?

Excerpts from Laudato Si: On Care for Our Common Home

Chapter 6 Ecological Education and Spirituality

202. Many things have to change course, but it is we human beings above all who need to change. We lack an awareness of our common origin, of our mutual belonging, and of a future to be shared with everyone. This basic awareness would enable the development of new convictions, attitudes and forms of life. A great cultural, spiritual and educational challenge stands before us, and it will demand that we set out on the long path of renewal.



I. TOWARDS A NEW LIFESTYLE



203. Since the market tends to promote extreme consumerism in an effort to sell its products, people can easily get caught up in a whirlwind of needless buying and spending.

205. Yet all is not lost. Human beings, while capable of the worst, are also capable of rising above themselves, choosing again what is good, and making a new start, despite their mental and social conditioning. We are able to take an honest look at ourselves, to acknowledge our deep dissatisfaction, and to embark on new paths to authentic freedom.

206. A change in lifestyle could bring healthy pressure to bear on those who wield political, economic and social power. This is what consumer movements accomplish by boycotting certain products. They prove successful in changing the way businesses operate, forcing them to consider their environmental footprint and their patterns of production. When social pressure affects their earnings, businesses clearly have to find ways to produce differently. This shows us the great need for a sense of social responsibility on the part of consumers. “Purchasing is always a moral – and not simply economic – act”.[146] Today, in a word, “the issue of environmental degradation challenges us to examine our lifestyle”.[147]

As you pray with these excerpts from *Laudato Si*, please choose one concrete change that you can make and share it with us.

Consume in an Eco-Friendly Way

Buy Local/Eat Local

There are many reasons to eat or buy local. Why should your household?

Watch a video in which Michael Pollen explains how eating local affects the planet in under 2 minutes.



Another way to see how what you eat affects the environment is to use this handy calculator from Oxford and the BBC to see what resources are used to produce the food you eat.



Check out our
Eco-Friendly and
Fair Trade Catalog



Eco-Friendly or Fair Trade

Another option for consuming thoughtfully is to buy eco-friendly and fair trade products.

Eco-friendly means that they are produced in a way that is not harmful to the environment.

Fair trade certification ensures fair prices are paid to producers in developing countries. This started with coffee and has expanded into a multitude of products.



Food Waste

Ever wonder what happens to all the food that you throw away or that restaurants throw away?

Learn about it watching Waste - The Environmental Cost of Food Waste and Food Waste is the World's Dumbest Problem.

What can you do that costs you no money?

Reduce food waste:

- Take note of what you have before you shop
- Plan meals around what you already have
- Reuse vegetable scraps: veggie stock, compost, clever recipes
- Eat lower on the food chain
- Make an effort to eat leftovers
- Eat locally and in-season as much as possible

Transportation:

- If you live in a city and are able, bike and walk more
- Carpool with friends and neighbors
- Consider fewer international vacations, travel domestically

Household:

- Wash clothes in cold water
- Hang dry clothing instead of using washing machine
- Be conscious of turning lights on and off
- Don't use lights in your home for as long as you can through the day; use natural light
- Take shorter showers
- Develop water-saving dish-washing practices
- If it's yellow, let it mellow... if it's brown, flush it down
- Use dishcloths and cloth napkins rather than paper towels and napkins
- Swap chemical-laden cleaning products with a simple 1:1 vinegar/water mixture (use baking soda for scrubbing needs)
- Unplug unused devices, chargers, appliances, etc.
- Collect rainwater for gardening



What can you do that costs you no money?

Avoiding plastic:

- Resist unnecessary freebies, including plastic utensils from restaurants
- Bring reusable containers to restaurants for take-out, coffee, etc.
- Bring your own reusable bags everywhere!
- Produce has traveled for hundreds and sometimes thousands of miles before it reaches your nearest market. It does not need to be placed into plastic produce bags to “protect” from germs in your cart. If you prefer to keep them in bags while shopping, bring your own cloth ones.

Extra:

- Before buying anything new, check first with your neighborhood swap, Facebook Marketplace, craigslist, local thrift stores
- Be aware of greenwashing! Products often take advantage of terms like “natural” or green packaging to convince users of its supposed sustainability, but in truth they are less concerned about environmental-friendliness than they are with driving consumerism. Double-check any claims that a product makes, and use your best judgment to determine whether this is a product that will **ACTUALLY** support a more sustainable lifestyle.



Reflection Questions

If you tried a new eco-friendly or fair trade product,

- What did this product promise to bring into (or take away from) your life?
- Has this product followed through with its claim?
- Has it noticeably enhanced your ability to be more sustainable? If so, in what ways? If not, how or why?
- Do you see yourself continuing to use it?
- If you knew what you know now, would you still have purchased this product?



After learning and thinking about your consumer habits, how can you introduce eco-friendly habits into your life?

What adjustments can you make to what you are already doing to make a habit more eco-friendly?

Section 3:

Intellectual Conversion

Intellectual conversion involves radical clarification of one's cosmology. Distorted perceptions of reality, objectivity and human knowledge are overcome allowing that which is authentic to remain and flourish.

Teilhard de Chardin imagined Earth surrounded by a noosphere woven together from threads of elevated human consciousness. The Australian theologian Denis Edwards, develops Teilhard's thinking in a direction which give non-human species and elements of creation an active role in the weaving of the noosphere (Edwards 2006). By honoring each species and specimen with its appropriate inherent dignity and intrinsic value Edwards extends the entire living biosphere toward the noosphere.



Take a hummingbird, for example; a hummingbird can be nothing other than a hummingbird. It is an authentic being. In being pure hummingbird, its worldview is that of a hummingbird. He or she contributes to the life of Earth out of the fullness of its capacities. Its consciousness is that of a hummingbird. By being an authentic hummingbird, the bird, in common with every species and individual specimen, can be said to commune with the divine. These tiny birds, like ourselves, are active participants in the evolution of the noosphere.



Human beings are anthropocenes (Morton 2018), and we humans, are unable to break out of being anthropocentric- it is what we are. Our worldview and consciousness are those of a Homo sapiens. Our relationship with the divine is as a Homo sapiens.

Reflection questions:

- What do you know about yourself, your relationship with the planet, and your consciousness as a human being?
- How do you commune with the divine?

Section 4:

Psychic Conversion

Psychic conversion refers to the reorientation of the person through human self-transcendence. Psychic conversion leads to a heightening of one's values and sensitivities such as elevated experiences of beauty, goodness, love and truth, often called grace moments.

Praying by Mary Oliver

It doesn't have to be
the blue iris, it could be
weeds in a vacant lot, or a few
small stones; just
pay attention, then patch
a few words together and don't try
to make them elaborate, this isn't
a contest but the doorway
into thanks, and a silence in which
another voice may speak.



Reflection Questions:

- What helps you to create a silent and still space for yourself?
- Once you have settled into it, what voice(s) arise from this stillness?
- What do you feel being spoken to you?

O God, enlarge within us the sense of
fellowship with all living things,
our brothers the animals to whom thou
gavest the earth as their home in
common with us.

We remember with shame that in the past
we have exercised the high dominion
of man with ruthless cruelty
so that the voice of the earth,
which should have gone up to thee
in song, has been a groan of travail.
May we realize that they live not for
us alone but for themselves and for
thee, and that they love
the sweetness of live.

—St. Basil the Great

Please take a
moment to take
the Earth Day
Prayer Journal
Survey

