



Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet

Prayer Journal

2024

INTRODUCTION

We invite you to use this prayer journal to explore the spiritual call to ecological conversion. Inside, you will find prayers, a short communal prayer service, inspirational quotes, reflections and suggested questions for you to ponder. May this prayer journal help you go deeper, journey farther, and respond boldly and creatively to the call to care for creation.



Pray for the Congregations of St. Joseph Participation at the UN-INC

From April 21-30, Sisters Sue Wilson, Joan Atkinson, (both from the Canadian Federation) and Patty Johnson will be representing the global Congregations of Sisters of St. Joseph at the United Nations Intergovernmental Negotiation Committee (UN-INC) in Ottawa, Canada to negotiate a legally binding global instrument (treaty) to regulate plastic pollution. This is the fourth session of five to finalize the treaty. Our status as a non-governmental organization (NGO) at the United Nations authorizes us to submit documents and speak on the floor regarding these negotiations.

Let us hold these important negotiations in prayer during this Earth Month.



COMMUNAL PRAYER SERVICE FOR EARTH MONTH 2024

Opening Song

Choose a song relating to the beauty of creation.

Suggestion: “Creation Calls” by Brian Doerksen <https://youtu.be/xAtzO8B1UK8>

Prayer

Creation is calling us to attend to the urgent plastic problem. The air, water and soil are contaminated with micro plastics. We’re facing mountains of it, and it’s impacting those living in poverty the most. But Jesus said our faith can move mountains!

In this Easter Season, let us join in hope-filled prayer for the success of the first-ever global agreement on plastic waste. The Congregations of St. Joseph, represented by our NGO at the UN are working to tackle plastic pollution. As the global plastic treaty talks take place at conferences during 2024, let us pray for a binding agreement that sees the end of plastic pollution and the damage it’s causing to communities across the world:

- Creator God, give those who are negotiating the treaty wisdom and insight, ensure the agreement addresses the human impact of plastic pollution and brings about an end to open dumping and burning.
- Creator God, help the negotiators, especially those representing richer nations and fossil fuel corporations, pay attention to the damage being

done to the entire web of life by the proliferation of plastic.

- Creator God, may the waste pickers’ voices be represented and heard in the negotiations and that the treaty secures a fair future for those who collect and recycle plastic waste around the world.
- Creator God, help the NGO negotiators to have opportunities to influence the delegations to ensure those living in poverty are kept at the heart of the negotiations.

Sharing

A reading from *Laudate Deum* by Pope Francis

64. Jesus “was able to invite others to be attentive to the beauty that there is in the world because he himself was in constant touch with nature, lending it an attraction full of fondness and wonder. As he made his way throughout the land, he often stopped to contemplate the beauty sown by his Father and invited his disciples to perceive a divine message in things”. [38]

65. Hence, “the creatures of this world no longer appear to us under merely natural guise, because the risen One is mysteriously holding them to himself and directing them towards fullness as their end. The

very flowers of the field and the birds which his human eyes contemplated and admired are now imbued with his radiant presence”. [39] If “the universe unfolds in God, who fills it completely... there is a mystical meaning to be found in a leaf, in a mountain trail, in a dewdrop, in a poor person’s face”. [40] The world sings of an infinite Love: how can we fail to care for it? (*38, 39,40 are references to Laudato Si)

What beauty in Creation especially touches you? What practical ways can you work to protect the beauty of Earth from plastic pollution?

Prayer

Prayer Inspired by Pope Francis' *Laudate Deum (Praise God)* from USCCB

We praise you, O God, Creator of all things,
whose mystery unfolds in “a leaf, in a mountain trail, in a dewdrop, in a poor person’s face.”
Jesus, your Son, taught us to wonder as he made his way throughout the land, contemplating the beauty of creation.

We pray, O God, that you may stir in us
a reverent awareness of our invisible link with the entire created world.

We pray for humility—
to remember that we, too, are created and are not creation’s masters.

We pray for compassion—
for open eyes and hearts to welcome those forced to flee from their homes due to rising sea levels and drought.

We pray for repentance—
so that our thirst for power and domination may be transformed into service.

We pray for simplicity—
and the will to turn from our greed which impacts vulnerable people everywhere.

We pray for cultural conversion—
that we may simplify our lifestyles, reduce pollution and waste, and exercise prudence in our decision making.

We pray for policy changes—
that as a nation and world we may work together to reverse the course of climate change.

Our hearts ache as we ponder:
“The world sings of an infinite Love:
how can we fail to care for it?”

We praise you, O God,
confident that you work in our hearts and through our actions, so that we may better care for our common home.

Amen.

Closing Song

Choose a song that inspires unity.

Suggestion: “By Breath” by Sara Thomson
<https://youtu.be/5HgOJiJRKMM>



Quotes and topics for reflection

“The greatest threat to our planet is the belief that someone else will save it.”

Robert Swan, Polar Explorer

“The most effective solutions will not come from individual efforts alone, but above all from major political decisions on the national and international level.”

Pope Francis, Laudate Deum

“Despite current ads and slogans, the world doesn’t change one person at a time. It changes when networks of relationships form among people who share a common cause and vision of what’s possible. This is good news for those of us intent on creating a positive future. Rather than worry about critical mass, our work is to foster critical connections.”

Margaret Wheatley

“Hope is holding a creative tension between everything that is with everything that could and should be and each day taking some action to narrow the distance between the two.”

Parker Palmer



Reflection question

How do these quotes inspire you?



The Perils of Plastic Pollution on Human Health

By Mary Lou Dolan, CSJ; Nancy Marsh, CSJ and Patty Johnson, CSJ

The impact of plastic on human health is a multifaceted concern, stemming from its enduring presence and the many types of plastic. In fact, much of the estimated 8.3 billion metric tons of plastic that have been produced globally since the 1950s still exists in some form. Plastics are durable and resistant to degradation, contributing to their persistence in the environment. These hazards impact human health as we consume bits of plastics through our food, inhale them in the air and even absorb them through our skin.

The stability of different plastics varies; some persist longer, while others break down more readily. Many plastics contain additives for flexibility or color that can be toxic and leach into the environment. Additionally, scientists have recently discovered that some plastics break down into microplastic filaments. These microscopic versions of their original plastics, carrying both plastic frameworks and additives, can dissolve into air, water and soil.

Microplastics have been found globally—even dispersed by winds on Mt. Everest. They infiltrate bodies of water entering aquatic food chains. They contaminate landfills, releasing toxins into groundwater. Toxins from plastics and microplastics can enter our bodies through breathing, drinking, skin absorption, and consuming food contaminated by microplastics. Human tissues, including blood, excrement, biofluid, tissue samples and amniotic fluid, have been found to contain microplastics.

A 2023 *Environmental Health* article delineated potential health risks such as nerve damage, cellular harm and genetic changes affecting human reproduction. The Endocrine Society warns that plastics harbor numerous hazardous chemicals that leach into our bodies and the environment. These chemicals disrupt hormone systems, leading to conditions like cancer, diabetes, reproductive disorders, neurological impairments in fetuses and children, and even death.

Plastic pollution is omnipresent, affecting our ecosystems, with disproportionate impact on the often-marginalized communities of people residing near production, transportation and disposal sites. "Wastepickers," who sift through waste for recyclables, face particular risks.

Addressing this crisis requires collective action. Individuals can reduce the use of single-use plastics, support regulatory initiatives, cultivate environmental mindfulness and advocate for global efforts such as the UN Plastic Pollution Treaty. The Congregations of St Joseph UN-NGO has taken on the challenge of using our voice and status at the United Nations to impact the treaty negotiating sessions by attending the sessions, engaging the negotiators, and offering testimony. By cooperatively taking steps towards a plastic-free future, we can mitigate the pervasive threats posed by plastic pollution to human health and the environment.



Congregations of St. Joseph at the United Nations Statement

In support of the UN Global Plastic Pollution Treaty, the Congregations of St. Joseph, representing 10,000 Catholic sisters committed to creating bonds of unity in 46 countries, share our priorities and our commitment to engage in substantive discussion during negotiating sessions. Our concern for the care of Earth, our common home, impels us to address the devastating impacts of plastic pollution.

We support establishing an ambitious and effective international legally binding treaty that safeguards all beings and the environment from the harmful effects of plastic pollution, while ensuring a just transition for those whose jobs and businesses are affected. In support of a circular plastic economy, we advocate for systemic change at local, national and global levels at the same time we commit ourselves to personal efforts supporting these goals.

The Congregations of St. Joseph realize that commitment to an ethical framework for sustainable development is at the heart of plastic pollution issues. We have deep concerns for human and ecosystem rights as they relate to clean water, air and land. The plastic pollution crisis calls for a treaty with specific controls that can be easily amended as science and technology evolve. To prevent irreparable ecological damage, we believe the goal of ending plastic pollution by 2040 should be part of the treaty.

Our gravest concerns are plastic pollution's upstream and downstream effects on the health of humans, living beings and ecosystems. Therefore, we strongly urge that the treaty:

- Prioritize eliminating single-use plastics and the addition of harmful classes of chemicals and polymers to all plastics, allowing for a toxin-free plastics economy.
- Develop standards for the composition of plastics that allow for transparency in labeling so that producers and consumers can be aware of both composition and safe recycling or disposal methods.
- Apply the “precautionary principle” in those situations where there is the possibility of harm from certain plastic additives while conclusive evidence is not yet available. There is sufficient data to begin prioritizing transitions based on potential risk.
- Apply the UN principle, “polluter pays” so that the costs of all impacts on human health and the environment caused by the whole lifecycle of plastics are shared globally and not only within national boundaries. This should include a global Extended Producers’ Responsibility system that addresses current, future and legacy plastics production, especially plastics with toxic additives.
- Shift rapidly to a circular economy for plastics where the producers are responsible to ensure environmentally sound practices at each stage of production, usage and disposal, including recycling (not downcycling) so that plastics can be reused, and a decreased amount of virgin plastic is needed.
- Quickly transition nonessential uses of plastics to more environmentally friendly materials.
- Work toward fair wages for waste pickers, their protection from toxins and a “just transition” to new jobs as we move towards decreased plastic use and new modes of waste management.
- Implement a harmonized formula for monitoring and reporting at each stage of plastic’s lifecycle, with clear accountability to the UN.
- Given the global nature of this crisis, promote sharing of scientific information, technology and financial resources with developing nations.



PRAYER

The urgent challenge to protect our common home includes a concern to bring the whole human family together to seek a sustainable and integral development, for we know that things can change.

The Creator does not abandon us; never forsakes God's loving plan or repents of having created us.

Humanity still has the ability to work together in building our common home.

Diane Smith, CSJ
