

AN ECOLOGICAL WAY OF THE CROSS

Remembering the Passion of our Lord and the suffering of creation

OPENING PRAYER

L: Lord, Jesus Christ, You are the image of the invisible God, the first born of all creatures. You rose from the dead, saving us and enabling all things to be reconciled to God through you. Yet due to the sin of greed, we rob from the earth, resulting in environmental disaster.

All: Lord, when we try to follow your footsteps, give us the courage and strength to safeguard the integrity of creation.

I. JESUS IS CONDEMNED TO DEATH

(At every station)

L: We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.

All: Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

Pilate went back to the Praetorium and called Jesus to him. 'Are you the king of the Jews?' Jesus replied, 'Do you ask this of your own accord or have others said it to you about me?' Pilate answered, 'Am I a Jew? It is your own people and the chief priests who have handed you over to me; what have you done?' (John 18:33-35)

Pilate knew Jesus was innocent but he would not uphold justice and so he condemned him. The earth, the sky, the sea - all are innocent too. They have been polluted by our foolishness and selfishness, they too have been condemned. Our destruction of the environment is a sin against you, for we are condemning what you have created for us in love.

A: Lord, we confess our wrongdoing and we ask you to help us, to know, honour and love you through all your creation.

II. JESUS IS MADE TO BEAR THE CROSS

Pilate, anxious to placate the crowd, released Barabbas to them and, after having Jesus scourged, handed him over to be crucified. (Mark 15:15)

With this tree, Jesus revealed his overwhelming love for us. Through Jesus, the wood of the Cross in the fullness of creation has brought us salvation. But we are drowning in the tide of consumerism, buying that which is useless and rejecting that which is useful.

A: Lord, help us to understand that what we eat, what we drink, what we wear, and what we use are all from the sacrifice of the earth. Teach us to treasure them all.

III. JESUS FALLS FOR THE FIRST TIME

Remember, O Lord, how your servant is taunted; how I bear in my bosom the insults of the peoples, with which your enemies taunt, O Lord, with which they taunted the footsteps of your anointed. (Ps 89:50, 51)

God saw his creation and He said that it was good. But now, all this has been trampled and the ecological balance so upset that, with the ever-increasing amount of waste, the earth is facing a breakdown.

A: Lord, you have trusted us to be stewards of the earth. Grant us the courage to change so that our polluted hearts may be cleansed. Help us restore the original goodness of the beautiful world you have created.

IV. JESUS MEETS HIS AFFLICTED MOTHER

Simeon blessed them and said to Mary his mother, "Look, he is destined for the fall and the rise of many in Israel, destined to be the sign that is opposed – and a sword will pierce your soul too – so that the secret thoughts of many may be laid bare." (Luke 2:34-35)

Mary carried out God's command by sharing the passion of her own Son. Earth too is sharing the suffering which we have caused. How long will it take for us to respond to its cry? In pursuit of the convenience of a mere moment, we have become accustomed to a throw-away lifestyle.

A: Lord, grant us ears of understanding and hearts of charity that we may hear the lament of the earth, and be reconciled with creation.

V. JESUS IS HELPED TO CARRY HIS CROSS

On their way out, they came across a man from Cyrene called Simon, and enlisted him to carry his Cross. (Mt. 27:32)

The environment, as polluted as it is, cannot withstand further contamination. Can we be Simon for earth? Each little act of reducing waste, each little act of recycling, and each act of recovering the useful are all ways to lighten the cross carried by our earth. A heart of greed has bred a lifestyle of greed. A polluted heart has polluted the environment.

A: Lord, enlighten us to know that environmental protection is not the sole responsibility of governments but of us all. Help us rebuild our mindscapes by a change in how we live, so as to rebuild the damaged landscape.

VI. JESUS LETS VERONICA WIPE HIS FACE

All who see me mock me; they hurl insults, shaking their heads. (Ps 22:7)

For the love of Christ, Veronica bravely stood up amidst the crowd to wipe the blood stain on his face. Countless creatures today are struggling to survive, threatened with annihilation in the name of development and modernization. Who will stand up today for eco-justice?

A: Lord, give us the courage to challenge the constant thirst for more, to respect all creatures, doing our utmost to protect their right to survive.

VII. JESUS FALLS FOR THE SECOND TIME

Will no one hear my prayer; will not God himself grant my hope? May it please God to crush me, to give his hand free play and to do away with sin. This insight, at least, would give me comfort – a thrill of joy in unrelenting pain, that I never rebelled against the Holy One's decrees. (Job 6:8-10)

We repent the careless destruction of the earth and our failure to conserve its natural resources. Although we do not wish for polluted air or water, we lack the will power to solve environmental problems.

A: Lord, in the struggle to protect the environment, we pray that we may not be apathetic, nor merely paying lip service but strive instead to renew the earth.

VIII. JESUS SPEAKS TO THE WEEPING WOMEN

Large numbers of people followed him, and women too, who mourned and lamented for him. But Jesus turned to them and said, 'Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me; weep rather for yourselves and for your children.' (Luke, 23:27-28)

Reduction in biodiversity and the extinction of species are causes for our sorrow. The pain of the earth is our pain. The earth's resources are limited and economic development cannot be boundless.

A: Lord, may our industrial and economic development be sustainable for the environment, so that our earth has a chance to rest and be healed, so that we do not weep for future generations.

IX. JESUS FALLS FOR THE THIRD TIME

You have made my days a few handbreadths, and my lifetime is as nothing in your sight. Surely everyone stands as a mere breath. Surely everyone goes about like a shadow. Surely for nothing they are in turmoil; they heap up, and do not know who will gather. "And now, O Lord, what do I wait for? My hope is in you." (Ps 39:5-7)

Christ has fallen three times but what makes him rise again and again? It is love, His love for the Father and all humankind. Do we show our love for our Creator and Father taking care of His creation, the birds of heaven, the fish in the sea, the beasts in the wilderness and flowers in the meadows?

A: Lord, please transform our appreciation of the beauty of nature into a commitment to respect and protect her.

X. JESUS IS STRIPPED OF HIS GARMENTS

When they had finished crucifying him they shared out his clothing by casting lots. (Mt 25:35)

In his poverty, Jesus is the richest among all. In his poverty, Jesus can still be giving, forgiving and loving. In our pursuit of property, we become poor. Our creation of wealth strips the wealth of creation. The breakdown of humanity's relationship with God distorts all interpersonal relationships as well as humanity's relationship with nature. The root of the ecological crisis is that of humans trying to be masters over creation.

A: Lord, help us to be content to have nothing else but you. With you, we can re-form our relationships with fellow humans and with all creatures.

XI. JESUS IS NAILED TO THE CROSS

Yet ours were the sufferings he bore, ours the sorrows he carried, while we thought of him as someone punished and struck with affliction by God; whereas he was being wounded for our rebellions, crushed because of our guilt. (Isaiah 53:45)

The cruellest form of punishment has become the fulfillment of love and a realization of salvation. By the cross, we do not live in sin but live in God. In our ignorance we have neglected to take proper care of the wonderful world God has created. The crucifixion is the price paid by God's immeasurable love for us. If we are willing to repent, we too must pay a price.

A: Lord, you do not count any price to love us. In our desire to imitate you, we are willing to correct how we relate to creatures, to free them from corruption and to enjoy the fruits of salvation which you have gained for us through the cross.

XII. JESUS DIES ON THE CROSS

The soldiers came and broke the legs of the first man who had been crucified with him and then the other. When they came to Jesus, they saw he was already dead, and so instead of breaking his legs one of the soldiers pierced his side with a lance; and immediately there came out blood and water. (John 19:32-37)

The entire life of Jesus is a song of love between the Father and Him. When pain becomes ultimate, love reaches its highest point. The corruptible becomes incorruptible and a pure moment enters eternity. By the cross, the old creation has been buried and a new creation begins. We must make the order of a new creation a reality and become a new humanity.

A: Lord, we are ready to protect our environment with renewed hearts, so that the world may be a place of singing praises to you.

XIII. JESUS IS TAKEN DOWN FROM THE CROSS

The centurion, who was standing in front of him, had seen how he had died, and he said, 'In truth this man was the Son of God.' (Mark 15:39)

Jesus finishes his sacrifice of life in love. God who becomes human teaches what it means to be fully human. But humans who like to play God attempt to rule over nature and manipulate people in order to satisfy their own greed. If we are truly willing to follow Jesus, let our lives become a sacrifice of charity in loving all creatures, for God has loved us without any reservation. Lord, not only do You bring us salvation but You also invite us to co-operate with you in saving the world.

A: Mindful of our duty to care for the earth we promise to protect the splendor of all that you have created.

XIV. JESUS IS LAID IN THE TOMB

When it was evening, there came a rich man of Arimathea, called Joseph, who had himself become a disciple of Jesus. This man went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. Then Pilate ordered that it be handed over. (Mt 27:57-58)

The body of Jesus was locked inside a cave by a rock. But darkness can never overcome light and death can never win over life. Let us give ourselves to Jesus to continue His light and His life. We are sent to a suffering world to bring the Good News of light and life.

A: Lord, we repent and take responsibility for threatening the ecological balance and polluting the environment. We will choose a life style of greater simplicity, abandoning the pursuit of materialism and consumerism. We will co-operate with our brothers and sisters to rebuild the harmony between humanity and all creation.

CLOSING PRAYER

L : We worship You, Lord, we venerate Your Cross, we praise Your Resurrection.

A : Through the cross you bring joy to the world.

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