



Catholic Climate Covenant™
Care for Creation. Care for the Poor.

Finding God in the Wilderness

A Prayer Service Series for the Season of Creation

Why celebrate the Season of Creation with an “ecological conversion?”

During the Season of Creation (September 1st—October 4th), Christians across the earth come together to pray and care for creation. Today, indifference and spiritual apathy towards God’s gift of creation and the people impacted by its exploitation have led to what Pope Francis calls “an ecological crisis.” (LS 217) For Catholics, this crisis is “a summons to a profound interior conversion.” To end the evil of environmental destruction, we must start by examining our own broken relationships with God, with one another and with creation and choosing to open our hearts to an ecological conversion.

Finding God in the Wilderness

Finding God in the Wilderness is an invitation to ecological conversion inspired by St. John the Baptist, who ventured into the wilderness to know God more fully. He returned from the wilderness ignited with love for the Creator and a fervent desire to prepare the way for the Messiah. We invite you, like John the Baptist, to embark on a spiritual journey into the wilderness to encounter God in a new way, and to come forth ready to help inspire a similar conversion in others.

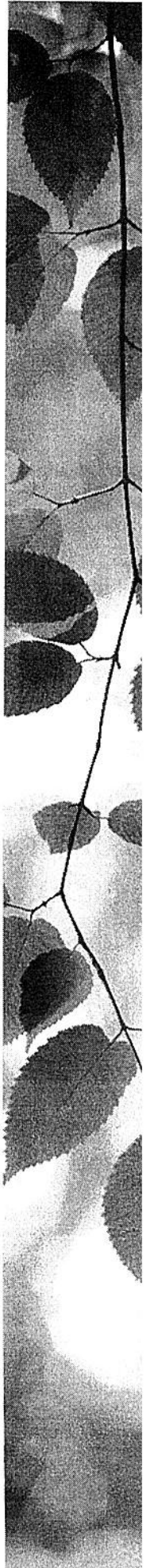
What is this prayer service series?

Finding God in the Wilderness is a four-part series designed to be prayed each Sunday after Mass during the Season of Creation. Each service lasts about 10-15 minutes and incorporates a reflection on the Mass readings for each week, viewed through the lens of creation care. The series culminates in Catholic Climate Covenant’s Feast of St. Francis program.

The structure of this prayer service series is based loosely on St. Ignatius of Loyola’s Spiritual Exercises. Like the Spiritual Exercises, the four weeks of this prayer service series follow a progression of four different themes meant to encourage spiritual conversion. Each service also follows the structure of the Daily Examen, a method within the Spiritual Exercises of reflecting on the day’s events and noticing God at work within them. Finally, *Finding God in the Wilderness* follows the Ignatian tradition by being contemplative in nature and focusing on knowing God through one’s emotions.

How can I pray it?

- 1. Gather a prayer group**
Finding God in the Wilderness can be prayed alone, but is best prayed in a small group of 3-10 people.
- 2. Find a quiet, peaceful place**
An outdoor space is best, but you can also pray in the pews after Mass, or in a parish hall or other gathering place.
- 3. Let the Holy Spirit speak through your emotions**
As you follow the Prayer Service Series Guide, pay attention to what you feel as you reflect on past events; and to what God may be trying to say to you.
- 4. Continue your prayer through action**
Each prayer service in the series ends with a suggestion of a concrete action of creation care. Commit to a small action each week as a way of continuing this prayer throughout the Season of Creation.





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Sunday, September 10, 2017

Week Two: Following Christ As His Disciples

Thanksgiving

Leader: Dear friends, we gather today to give thanks for God's abundant good gifts of creation; for clean water and air, for food and shelter, and all animals and plants. We give thanks for the wisdom imparted during the Mass, and for the joy of loving all we encounter. We pray that as Christ's disciples, our hearts and minds may be radically transformed, so that we learn to heal the earth with gentleness and love.

Illumination

Leader: As we reflect on the readings from today's Mass, we seek to understand them through the lens of God's creation. We call upon the Holy Spirit to fill our hearts and help us to hear God's voice in these words.

A moment of silent reflection before Examination.

Examination

Reader 1:

"Whatever other commandment there may be, are summed up in this saying, namely, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' Love does no evil to the neighbor; hence, love is the fulfillment of the law."

Leader: Christ's greatest commandment was to love our neighbor and to do no evil to our neighbor. Yet, a constant question is "Who is our neighbor?" Should we extend our love to all creation? Can we strive to do no evil to creation? If so, loving all of God's creation is the complete fulfillment of the law.

Reader 2:

"God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation."

Leader: What incredible words! God unites with creation through Christ, and we, as Christ's disciples are gifted with the joyful task of spreading the good news of reconciliation, love, and peace, to all creation. We are entrusted to bring together – to make peace with – all of creation.

Climate change is a potent indicator of the mistreatment, exploitation, and oppression of creation. It is a manifestation of our failure to love and tend the garden of creation. As disciples of Christ, we cannot sit idly by as the impacts of climate change ravage our most vulnerable brothers and sisters and all life on earth. We are entrusted to take action and bring "reconciliation" to humanity and to our common home.

Gratitude/Contrition

Leader: As we look back on this past week, we allow the Holy Spirit to guide us through our memories and emotions. We remember the moments when we glimpsed God's beauty and power in creation. We give thanks for the times when we were able to serve God by caring for creation, and we offer our sincere contrition for the times when we failed to do so.

Leader asks questions one by one and invites participants to share their responses. If praying alone, participant may reflect on each question silently.

- Where was I most aware of God's beauty in creation last week?
- How did I make a conscious effort to care for God's creation last week?
- What challenges or joys do I experience as I recall my care for creation?
- How can I repair breaks in my relationship with creation?

Adapted from the Ecological Examen by Joseph Carver, SJ

Hope

Leader: In *Laudato Si*, Pope Francis reminds us: "All it takes is one good person to restore hope!" (LS 71) How will you be that one good person this week?

If in a group, participants are invited to share their responses aloud. Suggestions: I will heal the earth with gentleness and love by eating less meat. Even one day of meatless meals will make a difference in our carbon footprint.

Leader: We close with a prayer of hope:

Reader 3:

Closing prayer: (This Pledge of Commitment may be read in unison or in alternation)

Pledge of Commitment *To Protect and Heal God's Creation*

We have come to renew our covenant with God and with one another in Christ Jesus, our Lord.

We have come to help protect God's creation.

We have come as followers of Jesus to commit ourselves anew to one another and to heal injustice and poverty.

We have come to stand together against all threats to life.

We have come to discover some new beauty every day in God's creation: the sunrise and sunset, birds, flowers and trees, rainbows in the sky, the stars, the many forms of life in the forest.

We will remember always that God speaks to us through the beauty of creation, and we will

try our best to answer God's call to reverence for all creation.

Prayer adapted from Prayers to Care for Creation, by the USCCB

