



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.

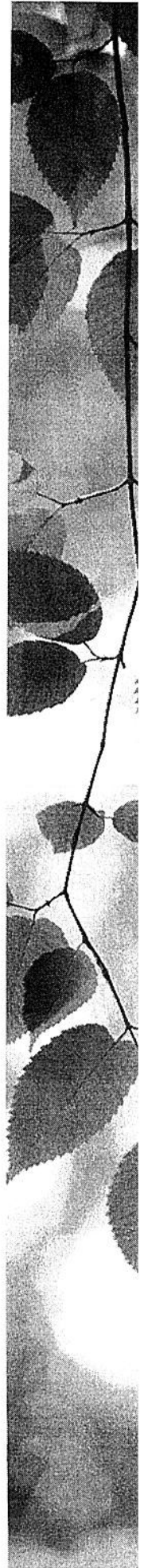
What is this prayer service series?

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 24, 2017

Week Four: Christ's Resurrection and Our Call to Serve

Thanksgiving

Leader: Let us pray: God, we are awed by your creation and its constant cycles of transformation. Christ's resurrection is manifested in every season, whether it is a time to harvest, to plant, or to await new life. We gather today as we seek guidance for how to respond to the challenges and changes in our planet and in our lives. Amen.

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: PHILL 1:20-21

"Brothers and sisters: Christ will be magnified in my body, whether by life or by death. For to me life is Christ."

Leader: As we prepare for the celebration of the Feast day of St. Francis of Assisi on October 4th, we remember how St. Francis lived his Christian faith by embracing the poor, the broken, and all of creation. He embodied and modeled "living in Christ". Take a few minutes to consider how do you "live in Christ"? How do you answer the call to serve God and all creation?

Reader 2: MT 20:1-16A

"Why do you stand here idle all day?"

They answered, "Because no one has hired us."

He said to them, "You too go into my vineyard."

Leader: The parable of the vineyard is a tough one for most of us. We tend to focus on the phrase "The first will be last and the last will be first." However, perhaps Christ's question of "Why do you stand here idle all day?" merits our attention. God's vineyard is in trouble. It needs tending. Should we stop idling and go into God's vineyard where together we embrace the poor, the broken, and all of creation? Do we answer the call to serve all of creation, just as St. Francis answered?

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 take the St. Francis/Laudato Si Pledge and live out the vision of Laudato Si and our Catholic faith through prayer, concrete action, and advocacy. Or I will be conscious of my food waste during the week and strive to reduce it as much as I can.

Leader: We close with a prayer of hope:

Reader 3:

Loving God,

May we never lose hold of the hope that is in you. We pray for our common home, scarred by conflict and natural disaster. Bring healing to its lands and cleansing to its waters. Bring justice to its peoples and peace to its nations. Bring life for today and hope for the future. God of all Eternity, ignite in us, your people, the hope that we will heal our broken world, and grow in us the perseverance to keep praying and working towards that day when your creation will once again be whole and free.

We ask all these things in and through the matchless name of your Son, Jesus Christ. Amen.

Prayer adapted from a responsive prayer from Hope for Creation