

CARE OF CREATION K-5

“TO LOVE IS TO HEAL”

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OBJECTIVE:

Have you heard of *Laudato Si'*? In English, those words mean “praise be to you.” They are from a prayer of Saint Francis. This prayer praises God for creating all the different creatures and everything else on earth.

A few years ago, Pope Francis wrote a letter called an encyclical. He named it, “Laudato Si, on the Care of our Common Home.” In it, Pope Francis helps us see that everything God made affects us, and everything we do affects all of creation. Everything and everyone is connected.

With this issue, you and your family:

- can explore how we impact creation and how creation impacts us
- will find new ways of prayer
- can recognize that there may be feelings of trauma because of the COVID-19 pandemic and start to talk about that
- will look for ways to help heal each other and the earth

STEP 1: PRAY

In *Laudato Si'*, Pope Francis tells us that humans have hurt creation and need to heal it. But, he says, creation can help people heal too!

What are some ways that we connect with nature? Name your favorites. Here are some suggestions:

- Play outside in all the seasons
- Work and play in a garden
- Walk in a nature center
- Go swimming at a lake or other natural water places
- Climb a tree
- Listen to the rain or a thunderstorm
- Watch birds at a birdfeeder

If possible, go to a place where you feel the calmness of nature. If you are feeling sad or scared, let nature help those feelings heal. Think about how God our Creator made all this beauty.

Use this prayer to feel that our Creator is with you now and always. Read the words very slowly, pausing after each sentence.

Be still and know that I am God.

Be still and know that I am.

Be still and know.

Be still.

Be.

Amen

Prayer by Fr. Richard Rohr



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STEP 2: MAKE PERSONAL CONNECTIONS

FAITH PERSPECTIVE: A STORY OF THE NEW RAINFOREST

For family discussion:

Father Dennis Moorman is a Maryknoll priest who helps people with something called “trauma.” He explains “Trauma is anything that is overwhelming or too much to handle.”

We are going to talk about this as a family because we too have felt trauma because of the coronavirus, or COVID-19. All over the world, people have had many feelings. Some are: scared, sad, angry, worried, frustrated, lonely, and bored. Most people have several of these feelings. It is ok to cry, to need a hug, or to talk about this.

Let's each say how we have felt/feel.

[Be alert to children's responses; if needed, stop the discussion to cry, hold each other, etc.]

Father Dennis has another word for us to learn: spirituality. It is a hard word to describe, but here are some ways:

- Feeling connected with God
- Feeling that there is something bigger in life than we are, something that we can't see (such as God)
- Feeling connected with people and other beings, with nature and with God
- Praying
- Our soul, the life we have inside of us
- Knowing that God is with us and all of life comes from God

Father Dennis says he learned that trauma and spirituality are intertwined. Let's take a minute to intertwine our fingers and look at our hands. Can you see and feel how strong things can be when they are connected?

If the things that are intertwined are both happy things, that is good, but if one is hurtful, like trauma, we must find ways to untangle these feelings.

If we are to heal from the trauma, we must learn how to heal ourselves. One way is to breathe! In fact, the word “spirit” comes from a word meaning “breath.” Let's take a slow, deep breath, and slowly let it out. Let's do this three times.

Let's finish by saying a simple prayer:

Spirit of God, be with us as we heal.

Be with the world as it heals.

Thank you for all you have created for us. Amen.

NEIGHBOR FOCUS:

Pope Francis tells us in *Laudato Si'* that our earth, the seas and air have been hurt by people's actions. When our earth is hurting, humans and all creatures get hurt too. Here are some stories of hurt and healing from around the world:

#1 The hurt: In Japan, a huge earthquake in 2011 caused nuclear waste to poison the land, animals and people in some places. People and animals became sick. The land could not be used because it was poisoned.

The healing: Maryknoll Sister Kathleen Reiley decided that her life's work is to help the children who became sick. She works also with farmers who cannot farm because of the poisoned land who have chosen to work to end the use of nuclear energy.

#2 The hurt: There was a river in Peru that each day helped give life to plants, animals and people. In the 1970s, a tungsten mine was opened near that river and eventually waste from the mine so polluted the river it was as if it were dead. This caused much suffering.

The healing: Local people asked Maryknoll Sister Patricia Ryan to help them. Together, they have been able to get the nearby mines to begin cleaning up the river.

#3 The hurt: In an area of Thailand, trees in orchards were dying from a fungus in the roots of the trees. This meant the farmers could not do their work of growing fruit, and no one got food from those orchards.

The healing: Maryknoll missionaries Father Larry Radice and William and Kathleen Doerner were able to figure out that a great deal of herbicides had been used on these trees. That destroyed the natural balance in the soil. Farmers and missionaries worked together to rebuild the soil so it became healthy again.

#4 The hurt: A huge diversity of plants and animals live in the country called Panama. But millions of beautiful trees have been logged, or cut down, for wood to be sold to many places in the world. So many trees were destroyed that the animals and birds could no longer live there. They left or died. Plants also died, and then the water and air became polluted.

The healing: Maryknoll Sisters Jocelyn Fenix and Melinda Roper and lay missionary Clara Meza began replanting trees and learning and teaching others how to live gently with fewer resources. Slowly the new trees grew. Animals and birds began to live there again, the water and air is getting cleaner. A patch of the destroyed area is now lush and healthy.

Vocabulary:

- Nuclear waste: nuclear fuel gets used in a reactor; what is left is the waste. This leftover waste is dangerous to humans and other animals for tens of thousands of years.

- Nuclear energy: this is the energy in the core of an atom.

- Atom: minute particles that make up every object in the whole universe.

- Tungsten: a hard steel-gray metal; one way it is used is to make electric light filaments.

- Herbicides: a chemical preparation used for killing weeds

Help children learn about ecology, and feel connected and hopeful:

Discuss:

How do these stories show the connection between humans and the earth?

From time to time, bring this subject up again, encouraging children to talk about their feelings and look for signs of hope together.

UTILIZE RESOURCES:

Reading together:

Look for children's books that illustrate the way humans, animal and plant life and the earth are all connected. There are picture books through young adult titles, fiction and nonfiction. Here is a sampling:

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Living Sunlight, How Plants Bring the Earth to Life by Molly Bang and Penny Chisholm.

A Drop Around the World by Barbara Shaw McKinney

The Good Garden: How One Family Went from Hunger to Having Enough by Katie Smith Milway

Rachel Carson and Ecology for Kids: Her Life and Ideas with 21 Activities and Experiments, by Rowena Rae

Compost Stew: An A to Z Recipe for the Earth, by Mary McKenna Siddals

Wangari's Trees of Peace, by Jeanette Winter

Oil, by Jonah Winter and Jeanette Winter.

RESOURCES:

- [Saint Kateri Conservation Center](#): This is a national Catholic conservation group that promotes faith, integral ecology and life. In addition to a great variety of factual information, this site also has [prayers](#). It has a FaceBook page that regularly offers posts about lesser-known aspects of nature, focusing on unusual and intriguing animals and plants and incredible beauty.
- [Creation Care Kids](#): A variety of affordable e-resources for home and parishes. On [this site](#) is an online resource offering many examples of people (including children) working to restore balance and health to the environment. Have fun exploring these stories.

STEP 3: EXPLORE SCRIPTURE & TRADITION

READ ONE OF THE FOLLOWING:

In *Neighbor Focus*, we learned about people who work to heal people and nature. In our Scriptures, we also learn about these special kinds of helpers.

Based on the Book of Sirach 38:

1-8; Sirach was a wise writer and teacher who lived before Jesus was born. In this Scripture, he tells us about God's many gifts for healing:

God has given doctors and other medical workers important gifts. With these gifts, they have learned how to heal sick or hurt people.

God has also given the earth plants that can be used for medicines. And, God has given the gift of learning to researchers, people who look for more medicines.

We should respect and be grateful to God for all the dedicated workers!

God's creative work in our world continues without end!

BASED ON MATTHEW 4:23-25:

Jesus traveled all around the area called Galilee. Besides teaching, he healed and cured the sickness of many people. Because of this, people began coming from much further away, bringing their loved ones who were ill. There were many different kinds of sicknesses and problems, and Jesus cured them.

BASED ON JAMES 5:13-15:

James had advice for people who are sick: pray. He said, "Do you know anyone who is sick? Pray for that person! Ask others to pray for the sick person too!"

Reflect:

- What do these Scriptures tell us about God's love and healing?
- Can we ask God to help us heal ourselves, other people and God's creation in these difficult times?
- Where would you most like to see God's healing in our world?

Decide:

As a family, consider starting a prayer journal. List who and what you will pray for, what prayers you might use and write your own prayers. You may want to begin with this:

Let us pray for all the hospital and emergency workers. May they keep up their energy and stay healthy.

Let's pray for the medical researchers. Please help them have great insights, creativity and dedication to find the best medicines.

WHAT DOES THE CHURCH SAY?

The earth has been hurt in a great variety of ways.

There are many people who are treated very badly, and millions of people are extremely poor.

These are problems we have, but Pope Francis says they are not separate problems. They are connected with each other and it is very serious. We must work together to find ways to fight poverty, include all people with care, and protect nature.

Based on *Laudato Si'* 139.

STEP 4: TAKE ACTION

ENGAGE AS A FAMILY AND RAISE YOUR VOICE

How can we as a family help heal each other and the earth?

Using our prayer journal, let's make a list of ways we can help others even when we are in isolation, and also ways we can help heal the earth.

Suggestions:

- Plant flower, vegetable or herb seeds in your yard, in pots, window boxes, etc.
- Share some of these seeds with others who can plant them.
- Leave flowers or vegetables as a surprise for a neighbor who cannot garden.
- Make and eat a meal together.
- Make extra food to share with a neighbor.
- Research what kinds of issues you think need to be dealt with on a government basis. Then write letters to representatives, urging them to act on these issues, such as use of nuclear power, destruction of natural habitats, support for organic methods of farming.
- Regularly go for walks, looking for plants you don't know, looking for changes as the seasons change.
- Feed birds outside your windows; see how many different kinds come.
- Light a candle to remember what you have lost and what brings you hope.
- Display a world map and learn about different countries.
- Pray each day. Choose a country or region of the earth and pray for the people, land, and animals there, for their health and peace.
- Watch the video Signs of Hope. (Parents of the youngest children should view it first and decide if their children are ready for this video).
- On a white or black board, on a computer, or on a sheet of paper taped up in the kitchen, list things you have seen, smelled, touched, or tasted. Add to it often. Recognize these as gifts from God the Creator and say a thank you prayer.
- Once a month, discuss how your family is linked to creation and the impact you have on it. Can you reduce your use or purchase of certain things that hurt the environment, such as tee shirts, drinks in plastic bottles, etc.? Design a spider web with a photo of your family at the center. Throughout the web, put little notes (written or drawn) about how you interact with nature.
- Raise your voice by sharing what you did with others and challenging them to do the same.

BE A GLOBAL NEIGHBOR

You can be a partner with Maryknoll Fathers Dennis Moorman and Daniel McLaughlin in building a Therapy Center in São Paulo, Brazil. Father Dennis will be providing therapeutic support at this center and will meet with the administrative team to oversee the financing of this project. Your financial support will help with construction, furniture, materials and equipment and professional resources in order to welcome and support individuals and families with low income and limited access to therapy by providing access to individual and group therapies. Visit Maryknollsociety.org-work/brazil to learn more and donate to this project.

