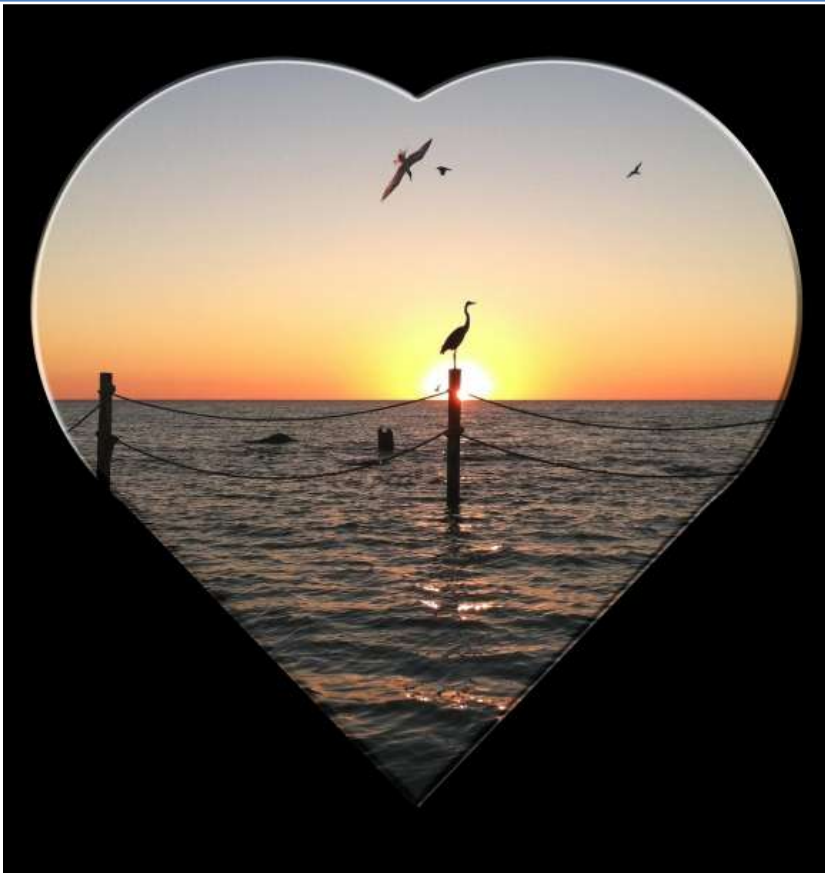


2015

Guided Rosary on Caring for Creation



Franciscan Action Network offers this guided rosary with an emphasis on Caring for Creation as a response to the call to prayer in Pope Francis' "Laudato Si"

Guided Rosary with emphasis on care for creation in light of Pope Francis' "Laudato Si"

The purpose of the following meditations on the rosary are primarily to help us realize that Christ came into this world and that, like Christ, we are called to shape the world around us in a way that reflects our inherent dignity and worth as well as the dignity and worth of God's creation that surrounds us.

That isn't to say that this is an authoritative method of reflection; the life of Jesus is something that we as human beings will not ever be able to fully understand and there are endless ways and angles we can look at the significant events in Christ's life through the eyes of Mary, His Mother and ours. This is simply another way of examining the mysteries that form the basis of our salvation history, one that focuses on the relationship between God in the form of Jesus and the Earth that God created.

Franciscan Action Network is a grassroots organization amplifying the justice efforts of Franciscans and Franciscan-hearted people around the country. Inspired by the Gospel of Jesus, and the example of Saints Francis and Clare, the Franciscan Action Network (FAN) is a collective Franciscan voice seeking to transform United States public policy related to peace making, care for creation, poverty, and human rights.

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Joyful Mysteries:



1. Annunciation: Mary gives the great Yes to God and in doing so gives that same Yes to us when the angel appears to her and delivers the good news that she will bear the child of God. Obedience, an important aspect of Franciscan thought, is perhaps epitomized by Mary's response to God's plans.

a. God gives us many responsibilities, and they hinge on free will. How often do we give, like Mary, an emphatic Yes! to God's plans?

b. In specific relation to the environment, we've been charged by God to care for the creation around us

(Genesis 1:26,28, Leviticus 25:23 etc). Do we accept this responsibility or eschew it?

2. Visitation: Mary visits her cousin, Elizabeth. Elizabeth is overjoyed to see Mary and exclaims so, shouting out “Most blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb.” Mary’s response is one of humility, and it is here that she proclaims the Magnificat and an “upside down” world where the powerless are lifted up while the

powerful are cast down. As Catholics, we are called to be one with the poor and the marginalized.



- a. Pope Francis has said that “The earth herself, burdened and laid waste, is among the most abandoned and maltreated of our poor.” (“Laudato Si,” 2). Do we view the world around us as such? Do we recognize that abuse of the world around us as taking advantage of something that is vulnerable and entrusted to our care?

- b. The increasingly destructive natural disasters we’ve seen in recent human times (as well as receding coastlines) is a result of climate change brought about, in part, because of human action. Again reflecting on the words of Pope Francis, who once echoed the words a peasant had told him that “God always forgives, we men sometimes forgive, nature never forgives. If you slap it, it will always slap you back.” Also realize that God lifts up the vulnerable from their lowly positions; are we cognizant of God’s coming justice and do we look to implement ecological justice in our relationship with the world?

3. Nativity: Meditating on the mystery of the nativity, we’re reminded that God was not



removed from the world God created, but rather came into it and was received with joy. Christ was born in the most humble of circumstances among those who reaped and sowed the Earth and its creatures for a living.

- a. God did not simply put Earth and all creation into being then walk away; the beautiful thing about Christianity is that God lived in the world with all of its problems and among the people, environments and animals that gave (and continues to give) Earth its character. Are we equally joyful to live in this world, and is that evident with how we live our lives? Are we, like the humble Christ, happy to be among the lowly and those closest to the Earth?
 - b. Are we able to see Christ's presence in even the smallest or seemingly insignificant creatures and are we filled with the same irrepressible joy that St. Francis was in finding God in all things?
4. Presentation in the Temple: Mary and St. Joseph go to the Temple, in accordance to the Jewish religious laws of the time, to present the baby Jesus and dedicate Him to God.



Entrusted with the most precious gift of all time, the Christ-child, they willingly and humbly took care of Him and gave Jesus back to God.

- a. As previously reflected on, we've been charged with caring for God's creation and we too are called to present ourselves to the Lord. Do we fully present ourselves in God's service with relation to taking care of what God has given to us? Do we willingly, happily and completely take responsibility over the Earth we've been entrusted to?
- b. Mary and St. Joseph are fully aware of the religious environment they live in and respond accordingly. They realize that they are part of a greater whole. Do we do the same in the environments in which we are placed? What about in regard to all creation?
- c. A good hymn for reflection would be "All Creation Worships You," and speaks to how we as human beings are a small part of a large chorus singing of God's goodness and glory.

5. Discovery of the child Jesus in the Temple: the Holy Family, realizing that Jesus was not with them when they left Jerusalem, had to turn back to look for Him. Jesus was right



where they should have expected Him to be; in the Temple teaching. He also filled those listening to Him with great wonder.

a. We so often search for Christ in the world around us, but is creation one of those places? Call to mind the words in St. Paul's letter to the Colossians: "For by Him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through Him and for Him. And He is before all things,

and in Him all things hold together" (1:16-17). Are we able to see Christ in all things, and are we able to "travel back," like Mary did, and receive Him with joy?

Sorrowful Mysteries:

1. Agony in the garden: Knowing that the time when His horrifying death was to be fulfilled, Jesus left his followers to pray in the garden at Gethsemane. He left his companions,



whom He loved very much, to find solitude and consolation in nature, and there was able to receive the comforting presence of angels.

- a. Do we, like Christ before us, look for God and look for God's comforting solace in nature? Are we able to find solace from God's presence in the small things in life, those moments of respite among flowers, trees and vegetation?

- b. Reflect on Genesis 2:15: "The Lord God took man and put him in the

garden of Eden to work it and keep it." Human beings began in the garden to be in union with God; do we return there, in either the physical or spiritual sense?

2. Scourging at the pillar: Jesus is taken and tied to a stone pillar, where he is cruelly whipped and scourged. His agonizing death begins, and those who have had a chance to stop the horrible events or stand with Christ have neglected to do so.



- a. Have we neglected standing with God in solidarity of protecting the integrity of God's creation?

- b. Again call to mind our responsibility to stand with the lowly, the persecuted and the downcast. If we were present at the scourging, what party would we be? Those who openly persecuted and whipped Jesus, those who ran away or would we try to protect His dignity? What response would that look like today

as God's creation, as well as the disadvantaged, are "scourged" by a world that is often hostile to anything that stands in the way of interests of the most powerful? As the USCCB said in a statement in February 2010: "People living in poverty-both at home and abroad-contribute least to climate change but they are likely to suffer its worst consequences with few resources to adapt and respond." Like Christ, they are innocent of any wrongdoing and yet are punished for seemingly no reason.

3. Crowning of thorns: In order to humiliate Jesus, a crown of thorns was woven and placed on His head. This perhaps epitomizes that we are able to betray the inherent goodness in both our fellow human beings and the world that God has created by twisting them to our own narcissistic purposes.



- a. Do we have a tendency to view the world around us as something to be used for our own purposes? Do we twist creation to the point of abuse?

- b. Though the thorns were meant to cause Jesus pain and humiliation, He was eventually crowned in a glory that continues through our faith and witness. All creation, however, is supposed to give witness to God's glory. As Pope Francis points out, "The earth, our home, is beginning to look more and more like an immense pile of filth"

(Laudato Si, 21). How can we help our planet to again reflect the glory of God?

4. Carrying of the Cross: I don't think there are very many reflections as deep or as rich as that of the 4th Sorrowful Mystery. We are able to see Jesus in all of His human frailty; we see Him stumble, struggle and fall. We see the cruelty of the temporal rulers continue to make its way to the brutal climax. But we also are witnesses to small acts of hope through the actions of Simon and Veronica as well as Jesus' strength in continuing to get up after falling. And these things are what we are called to do in our spiritual journey as well as helping one another in theirs.



- a. This mystery calls to mind how we can alleviate Christ's suffering, even today, through simple acts of kindness. Every time we perform an

action-regardless of how small or seemingly insignificant-we are like Simon or Veronica helping carry Christ's cross or wiping Christ's bloody face. Acts such as picking up garbage strewn on the ground, planting a tree or garden, recognizing the humanity of a homeless person with a smile or a kind word or turning off a light switch all help to more fully bring Jesus' glory to fuller recognition in the world.

5. Crucifixion: Christ our Lord dies on the cross. A profoundly heartbreaking event,



commemorated whenever we gaze upon a crucifix, celebrate Mass or meditate on this mystery, it's a terrible but necessary component of our salvation history.

a. What is the first mental image that comes to mind when you think about the death of Jesus? What do His surroundings look like? For many, we probably think about dark, stormy clouds while His followers are mourning His death and others are cheering

it. The light of Jesus, at least temporarily, has been extinguished.

- b. When we "crucify" Christ by doing things detrimental to harkening His Kingdom, we summon those same storm clouds. We're called to love and care for all of God's creation in its infinite goodness.
- c. Remember also the Earth rumbled and shook, terrifying the people who were witnesses to the crucifixion. As Christ groans in agony, so does the Earth and as Earth groans in agony so does Christ.

Glorious Mysteries:

1. Resurrection: The most glorious of all miracles! Christ Our Lord is risen from the dead!



- a. Acquiescing to the fears of Jesus' enemies, Pilate agrees to place guards outside of the tomb to ensure that no one can steal the body and then claim that Jesus had risen. However, an angel from heaven comes down, there is an earthquake and the stone rolls away; the guards flee in fear. Once again, we see that Earth testifies to the mighty power of God in the single most significant event in our salvation history.
 - b. Mary Magdalene, in John's Gospel, at first mistakes the risen Jesus with a gardener. Are we able to see the face of Jesus in all of those around us? Are we able to appreciate the vocational calling of those who work the land, especially since we so heavily benefit from it?
2. Ascension: Jesus leaves his disciples and is taken by a cloud into heaven. Before He leaves, though, He promises that the Holy Spirit will guide them to the end and that He will never be truly absent.



- a. Imagine what it must have been like for the disciples when Jesus was taken from Earth; how they must have felt, how lost they might have been, how shocked they were. After a while,

two angels appeared and said to them: “Men of Galilee, why are you looking at the sky? This Jesus who has been taken up from you into heaven will return in the same way as you have seen Him going into heaven.” (Act 1:11). Though Christ has left them (at least in person), they still have work to do!

- b. Are we active in trying to bring about the Kingdom of God in our own world? Do we accept the responsibilities given to us by Jesus? Relating to our call to be stewards of creation, do we embrace the call to take care of the world around us? Or do we simply stare at the sky hoping that change will happen around us by someone else and not through us?
3. Descent of the Holy Spirit: The “birthday” of the Church, this is when we celebrate Pentecost and the coming of the Holy Spirit to the followers of Jesus who were gathered together. A rushing sound like that of mighty wind blew suddenly through the sky and tongues of fire rested on each of them (Acts 2:1-4).



- a. Despite being from different places from all over the world, after the Holy Spirit filled everyone gathered together they were all able to understand each other without the previous language barrier. We're part of a universal church (that's what the Greek word "catholic" means), and have been since the time of the early apostles. Meditating on Pentecost is also a reminder that we are all called to a universal mission, and that is to spread the Gospel and embrace the responsibilities we've been given, including that of care for creation.

- b. After receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit, the disciples are able to proclaim the Gospel and openly evangelize, whereas before they had folded under the pressure of the systems they had lived in. St. Peter, who had denied even knowing Jesus, shortly after Pentecost preached to those who had gathered and baptized 3,000 individuals in one day (Acts 2:41). People were healed, trepidations overcome and the fire that would consume the entire world to this day, begun by a single spark on Calvary, began to take off. Remember that we are called to action and that everything that might hold us back can be overcome by the power of the Holy Spirit that we have already received.



c. The Holy Spirit manifests itself in the sounds of a gust of wind and in the appearance of fire, two simple yet powerful elements. Like St. Francis, who gave praise to these beautiful manifestations of God's glory in his Canticle of Creation, we too should realize that the power of God is present in "Brother Fire" and "Brother Air."

4. Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary: This tenet is not found in scripture but instead has been passed down in our tradition. Our Blessed Mother, at the end of her life here on Earth, is assumed bodily into heaven.



a. "Laudato Si" includes some reflections on Marian thought as relating to the environment: "Mary, the Mother who cared for Jesus, now cares with maternal affection and pain for this wounded world. Just as her pierced heart mourned the death of Jesus, so now she grieves for the sufferings of the crucified poor and for the creatures of this world laid waste by human power. Completely transfigured, she now lives with Jesus, and all creatures sing of her fairness." ("Laudato Si," 241.) Though she is no longer physically present in the world, just like her son Jesus she continues to care for and weep for the world she left and the destruction being wrought.

b. Some traditions tell that in absence of her body, Mary left behind the smell of flowers and the sound of birds singing. Mary, model of purity and grace, left behind depictions

of nature attesting to her admirable virtues.

5. Crowning of Our Lady as Queen of Heaven: Mary, taken bodily into heaven, is crowned by the Blessed Trinity as Queen.



Mother of the Prince of Peace and the King of Kings, Mary continues to advocate for us, her children.

a. Mary, in saying yes, agreed to be the mother of all humankind through the glory of Christ, and in this mystery is given her rightful title as Queen of All People. In the words of St. Francis, we are to praise "Sister Mother Earth" who "feeds us and rules us." Mary, on a spiritual level, also does these things through the grace of God. Are we able to respect and honor that reality? We are children

of both Mary and the Earth, and hopefully live, love and honor both.

Luminous Mysteries:

1. Baptism of Jesus in the Jordan: water has always had a tremendous significance in the Bible and in our faith life. It is a sign of renewal, new life, and the cleansing of sin. By



following Jesus in the Sacrament of Baptism, we too are following His example and must try to live our life as closely as possible to His.

- a. Bring to mind the simple wonder of water; its purity, its cleanliness, sung about by St. Francis in his Canticle of the Creatures: “All praise be yours, my Lord, through Sister Water so useful, humble, precious and pure.” Do we realize just how precious and important water is to us, or do we take it for granted? How do our actions reflect our mentality?

- b. We, as humans, are mostly composed of water, as is our planet. When God became human in the form of Jesus Christ, He therefore physically took on a form composed mostly of water.

2. The Miracle at the Wedding in Cana: Jesus, at the urging of Mary, performs His first miracle by changing a jug of water into wine at wedding. We know that through Mary’s help and intercession, we can also be transformed by Christ spiritually and in worldview.



- a. Continuing with a meditation on the underappreciated wonder that is water, we come to the unfortunate mental image that we as human beings have so often abused this precious resource. There are so many places where people cannot access clean or drinkable water, a fact lamented upon by Pope Francis in “Laudato Si,” where he devotes an entire section of the encyclical to “The Issue of Water” and how once again our current climate crisis disproportionately harms the poor. Images of people walking hundreds of miles a week for filthy drinking water, filth-infested rivers and streams and oil-polluted oceans and seas are unfortunately things we’ve all probably seen. How can we, through the intercession of Mary and through the strength

of Christ Jesus, assist in the transformation of our precious water systems from filthy and abused to once again glorious and life-giving?

3. Revelations about the Kingdom of God: Jesus often talked with His followers and disciples in a series of parables when speaking about the coming glory of the Kingdom of God. Remember that He emphasized receiving the Good News as a child would, and



therefore spoke with simple language and short stories; remember also that He often used depictions of nature, farming, field work and animals to make the message known.

- a. Think about some of the parables that Jesus used that have a distinct twist specifically relating to nature; the sower and the seeds, the weeds in the grain, the seed growing secretly, the story of the mustard seed and so on. Jesus, through parables, wants us to have a better understanding of the Kingdom of God, and therefore

often uses nature as a way to speak to us about that; nature, therefore, is so many times used as something to mirror God and the glory of the Kingdom.

- b. How can we better come to understand God's "mirror," or as many great thinkers have called it, the "Book of Creation?" How often do we read and relate what comes to us through the Holy Scriptures to what God has written in the Book of Creation?
4. Transfiguration of Jesus on Mt. Tabor: Jesus takes Peter, James and John up to a high mountain to pray. There, Jesus is transfigured and His full glory is revealed to His disciples. The voice of God, coming from a cloud, booms "This is my beloved Son, with whom I'm well pleased; listen to Him."



disciples. The voice of God, coming from a cloud, booms "This is my beloved Son, with whom I'm well pleased; listen to Him."

- a. Recall that Peter isn't able to fully grasp the situation; seeing Jesus with Moses and Elijah, he is filled with fear and hastily asks if they

should make tents for Christ and the two prophets. He speaks before really realizing what he's asking or fully taking into account what he's witnessing. Often, our actions are driven by compulsion, without much thought to what the consequences are to us or the world around us, or about how the little ways that God's glory is revealed. We hustle through life sometimes without stopping to recognize that Christ is present always and everywhere and that that presence is inherently good.

- b. Do we act in hasty ways that are not only ignorant but also detrimental to forming a close relationship with God, each other and creation? Can we perhaps take a moment to slow down and think of how we have a bigger impact than maybe we might first expect?
5. Institution of the Eucharist: the Eucharist is the sum and summit of our Catholic faith. We already know that Christ is present always and everywhere, but His presence is most tangible in the Blessed Sacrament.



- a. Recall the words the priest says when he offers up the Eucharist to God: "Blessed are You Lord God of all creation for it is through Your goodness that we have this bread and wine to offer. Fruit of the land and work of human hands it will become for us our spiritual food and drink." It is through both the Earth God created and that which is provided for us spiritually that God nourishes our bodies and our souls.
- b. Before they become for us the Body and Blood of Christ, the elements are really very basic items: unleavened bread and simple wine. There was a process to get them there though; just as we should be grateful for and cognizant of the efforts it took to get lunch or dinner to our table, so too should we be mindful that there was an effort to get the bread and wine to the "altar of the world," in the words of St. John Paul II.
- c. The Eucharist is considered a sacrament of initiation, even though we are able to receive Communion multiple times a week. Every time we do so, we renew our baptismal and confirmation promises and receive the spiritual sustenance necessary to truly live out our faith in everyday life. May we grow closer to Jesus every time we receive Communion or meditate on this mystery.

Franciscan Crown Rosary:

1. Annunciation:
2. Visitation:
3. Nativity:
4. Presentation:
5. Finding of Christ in the Temple:
6. Resurrection:
7. Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary: