

Creation Novena



First Day: Gratitude for Creation

Scripture: *‘God saw everything he had made, and indeed, it was very good’* (Genesis 1:31).

Conversation: Lord, let me begin these nine days with gratitude, and say a simple ‘Thank you’ for all your creation. You are the God of small things as well as of the great expanse of the cosmos. Let me admire a different piece of your handiwork each day of this Novena: a leaf, a daisy, a twig, a pebble, a blade of grass, a seed, a star, the moon, a small feather, a ladybird, an empty snail-shell. You are present in each one of these nine works of art, and in all else. Let me notice you more and more, and say with glad surprise, ‘Hello, and thanks for this gift!’ Let me become a minor mystic over these days. In imagination I may find myself chatting with the gifts you send me, by speaking their story, conjuring up their history, their adventures and their future possibilities.

Laudato Si 233: *‘There is a mystical meaning to be found in a leaf, in a mountain trail, in a dewdrop, in a poor person’s face’.*



Second Day: Creation reveals God

Scripture: *'Ever since the creation of the world God's eternal power and divine nature, invisible though they are, have been understood through the things God has made'* (Romans 1:20).

Conversation: Dear God, Pope Francis reminds me that Nature is a precious book written by you. You began it long ago, and are writing it still, year on year. Nature is not simply a vast display of material things: no, each of your wonders is a word of love from you, a love-note. You are love itself, and lovers like to share their love and receive a response. When I walk outside, I will try to see the things around me as whispers of your love— the delicate young beech-leaf, the spider's web, the smooth water on the Canal, the little bird gathering dinner for its chicks. Thank you for showing me so much love, and so simply. It is all overwhelming once I begin to open my heart to what is around me. I am enveloped in a loving world.

Laudato Si 225: *'In everything God speaks to us and grants us a glimpse of his infinite beauty and goodness. Nature is filled with words of love'.*



Third Day: Awesome Wonder

Scripture: *'Look at the birds of the air; they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they?'* (Matthew 6:26).

Conversation: Dear Lord, your divine fingerprints are everywhere in creation. The great scientist Teilhard de Chardin saw this: he would lightly refer to clouds as your calligraphy. I can wonder at you playing with the clouds, having fun with shapes and colours. I can think of the sky as your artist's palette, and stand in awe of the sunrise and sunset: each of them are originals and carry your signature. Rocks have been described as your old notebooks: they silently tell what you were up to billions of years ago. In the dawn chorus you're saying, 'This is my take on sound'. The skin of a new baby is your take on softness and delicacy; the abundance of acorns on an oak are your take on generosity. When Spring comes you say, 'Watch what I can do with the colour green! Lord of all beauty, re-kindle the wonder and awe I had when I was exploring your world as a child: this will help me to find you now. 'Children's faces looking up, holding wonder like a cup.'

Laudato Si 85: *'There is a divine manifestation in the blaze of the sun and the fall of night'*



Fourth Day: Wounding and Healing Creation

Scripture: *'Take care that you do not despise one of these little ones; for I tell you, their angels see the face of my Father in heaven'*(Luke 18:10).

Conversation: Jesus, when you talked about 'the little ones' I know you meant small children, but we must now include also the little things of the created world. You want to defend every least part of your beautiful creation, but we disfigure and harm it, sometimes irreparably. Rubbish dumps must shock you, because you cast nothing away: everything has its special place in Nature's great symphony, whereas we create floating islands of plastic and turn the wonder-world of the coral reefs into cemeteries. Recently a report spoke of black snow falling in a coal-burning region of Siberia, and it was toxic. Sister Earth and her poorest people cry out to us because of the harm we inflict on them. Only if I feel their pain within myself will I commit to defending her. I am part of the body of Nature, and St Paul reminds us that if one part of the body suffers, the other parts should suffer with it (1 Corinthians 12:26). Forgive me for my insensitivity. Mother Earth says to us, 'Children, please tidy up the mess you've made.'

Laudato Si 19: *'Our goal is to turn what is happening to the world into our own personal suffering, and thus to discover what each of us can do about it'*



Fifth Day: Repair My House!

Scripture: *'Everyone whose spirit God had stirred got ready to rebuild the house of the Lord' (Ezra 1:5).*

Conversation: Lord, you said to the young Francis of Assisi as he was praying in the little church of San Damiano: *'Go repair my house, which, as you see, is falling into ruin'*. Lord, let me take this order as being said to myself today. I can do so little, but let me do what you want me to do. After all, sixteen-year-old Greta Thunberg has galvanised millions of young people to protect Sister Earth. The Great Green Wall of Trees was a wild idea in 1953, but is now beginning to stretch 8000km across Africa: 10km wide, it will ease droughts, provide living and jobs, and cut 250m tons of CO2 from the atmosphere. And I read that beautiful necklaces can be made from snipers' bullets. I can do something— join a group, plant bulbs, spare a dandelion, feed a bird. I can offer to you the pain I feel about our ravaged planet. I can pray. Let me listen to you whispering the day's orders to me. All it takes is one person's good deed to generate hope in others. **Laudato Si** 244: *' We come together to take charge of this home which has been entrusted to us, knowing that all the good which exists here will be taken up into the heavenly feast. Let us sing as we go. May our struggles and our concern for this planet never take away the joy of our hope'*.



Sixth Day: Gardening with Jesus

Scripture: *'The Lord God planted a garden in Eden, in the east and put Adam in the garden to till it and keep it' (Genesis 2:8, 15).*

Conversation: Lord, you died on a waterless and lifeless hill called Golgotha, The Place of the Skull. But your resurrection is revealed in a garden; there eternal life comes to bloom on earth in human form. In this garden Mary of Magdala bumps into you in a life-changing encounter: she had supposed you to be the gardener, which in a deep sense you are. You are the Head Gardener of creation! Through you everything is made and kept in existence. You care for all things, small and great, and you work so that everything may be in harmony and have abundant life. Your garden—which we call Our Common Home—is indeed sacred. Lord, gardeners have dreams for their gardens: if any garden were vandalised, all of them would be shocked and angry. But the garden of our Common Home is your showpiece, and we, one of its latest species to arrive, vandalise it to satisfy our whims. In spoiling your garden we hurt you. As I sit with you and survey your garden I want you to tell me how you feel about its desecration. Do you weep over it, as you once wept over Jerusalem? Give me a converted heart full of reverence for everything that you have made. Let us together tend my window-box, my little patch with its weeds, my flowering shrubs, and help me to become a true friend of all the earth as you are.

Laudato Si 236: *'The Eucharist joins heaven and earth and penetrates all creation: it motivates us to be stewards of creation.'*



Seventh Day: Moses and the Burning Bush

Scripture: *‘God called to Moses from within the burning bush, and Moses said, “Here I am”’ (Exodus 3:4).*

Conversation: Lord of history, by reflecting on Moses let me learn what you may be asking of me. Moses is a shepherd, a nobody; bottom of the social heap, and so just fine for your purposes. You draw him into your plan of salvation simply by setting fire to a bush! He is hooked by this: then you reel him in by calling him by name and by telling him your own name: so you set up a relationship with him that will last a lifetime. You remind him that you have always cared for his people, and tell him to take off his sandals because he is standing on holy ground, your ground. The poor man, completely out of his depth, replies humbly to all this, ‘Here I am’. Even I can say that!

Then you take over on the grand scale! You tell the awe-struck Moses that you have seen the misery of your enslaved people, and that you are now about to intervene to liberate them. You assure him that you have the power to defeat the high and mighty, and to bring the Hebrews into a land of milk and honey. Dear Lord, Moses must have been thrilled by all of this—till you tell him that *he* must do the work on the ground, and that you will back him all the way until the task is done.

Lord, when I fear that the ecological situation is a hopeless disaster, or that I can do nothing to save it, let me remember Moses, and remember too that you *are* the Lord of History! **Laudato Si** 231: *‘Love, overflowing with small gestures of mutual care, makes itself felt in every action that seeks to build a better world. When we feel that God is calling us to intervene in social affairs, we should realise that this is part of our spirituality.’*



Eighth Day: Hope of Eternal Glory

Scripture: *'See, I am making all things new!'* (Revelation 21:5)

Conversation: Dear Jesus, I like the words of the poet Francis Thompson: 'All which thy child's mistake/Fancies as lost, I have stored for thee at home:/Rise, clasp my hand and come'. Because your plans are above time, we must never despair, or think that something beautiful is irrevocably lost when it is spoiled or dies. In the final order of things there will be no rubbish dumps: all beauty will be restored. Help me to believe that you are already making all things new: that through your Incarnation creation has become part of you and will share in your divinisation. You have taken to yourself this material world, so the ultimate destiny of the universe—with all its humans, trees, flowers, pets, birds, gorillas and waterfalls—has already been secured through your Resurrection. When you said, '*Gather up the fragments so that nothing may be lost*' (John 6:12) you showed that you care for everything: with you there will be no waste, no left-overs. May I be like you. **Laudato Si 9, 221 & footnote 49:** '*Divine and human meet in the smallest detail, in the last speck of dust of our planet. Christ has taken to himself this material world which is now journeying toward its final perfection*'.



Ninth Day: The Meaning of the Eucharist

Scripture: ‘This is my body: this is my blood’ (Mark 14:22-23)

Conversation: Loving Lord, National Holy Wells Day, June 16, is drawing near, so while we gaze together on our little blue planet let us talk today about water. In your great plan for Nature, water and life go together, but we see the growth of deserts, the pollution of rivers and oceans, the scarcity of pure water, and its commercialisation which hits the poor so sharply. Water is holy, and wells are holy. By caring for them may we be energised to commit ourselves to the fair distribution of clean water throughout our Common Home.

In the Offertory of the Mass, the priest puts a drop of water into the chalice and says quietly: *‘By the mystery of this water and wine may we become sharers in the divinity of Christ, who humbled himself to share our humanity’*. Lord, I like to imagine how that drop of water would feel about being chosen out from all the other drops, to become divinised in the Eucharist. When you said at the Last Supper: ‘This is my body; this is my blood’ you were giving the bread and wine a new meaning: you were saying, ‘This is myself’. Both the bread and the wine are gifted with a sacred meaning, but so also is the unnoticed drop of water. It too is given new divine meaning in the Eucharist. Water then is sacred because you make it so. By caring for it we join you in bringing people life, life to the full. May we treasure its every drop and share it with those who thirst for it. You have promised that those who give even a cup of water to the needy will be rewarded (Matthew 10:4