

## Ecumenical Advocacy Days 2009 – “Enough for All Creation”

Sunday, March 15, 2009

### Ecumenical Franciscan Evening Prayer: Celebrating 800 Years of the Traditions of Francis & Clare

#### Call to Worship: *(all stand)*

Leader: Creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the children of God ...

**All:** **And not only creation, but we ourselves, groan inwardly while we await the redemption of our bodies.** *(based on Romans 8:19,23)*

#### Opening Prayer

Leader: Most High, all-powerful, all Good God, you have blessed the whole church and indeed the entire world through the message, model, and inspiration of St. Francis and St. Clare of Assisi. Whether in praise of your creation, through the modeling of their simple life, or through the dedicated work of ministry, their voices have echoed from the hills of Assisi, across time, and to the farthest reaches of the world.

We give thanks, O God, for these models of poverty, chastity, and obedience. We also rejoice in the charisms of hospitality and humility that continue to shine out in the ministry of Franciscans and Franciscan-hearted people all over the world.

As we celebrate the 800<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of the Franciscans, help us all to be true heirs to Francis love of the earth, and of every creature and every person as an unrepeatable act of love from you.

Help us to be true instruments of peace, and workers for justice. Help us to speak the truth in love and live in true reverence for the earth. Allow us to be bridge builders across ideological divides and true reconcilers, so that you, O God can truly be “all in all.”

We make this prayer in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord.

**All:** **Amen.**

Leader: Let us now be attentive as different representatives of the Franciscan community share stories of Francis, Clare, and others that contribute to a Franciscan-ecumenical care for creation ethic.

*Leader sits (and if necessary) gestures for all to sit. Each reader proceeds to the podium in turn.*

#### Litany of Franciscan Ecology

##### *Sung Response*

Friar: From an early Franciscan source, *The Mirror of Perfection*, we read:

Next to fire, Francis had a special love for water .... So whenever Francis washed his hands, he chose a place where water would not be trodden underfoot as it fell to the ground.

For the same reason, whenever he had to walk over rocks, he trod reverently and fearfully, out of love for Christ who is called the Rock ...

He told the friar who cut and chopped wood for the fire that he must never cut down the whole tree, but remove branches in such a way that part of the tree remained intact, out of love for Christ, who willed to accomplish our salvation on the wood of the cross.

In the same way he told the friar who cared for the gardens not to cultivate all the ground for vegetables, but to set aside a plot to grow flowers to bloom in their season, out of love for him who is called Rose of Sharon and Lily of the Valley.

Indeed, he told the brother-gardener that he should always make a pleasant flower-garden, and cultivate every variety of fragrant herb and flowering plant, so that all who saw the herbs and flowers would be moved to praise God.

### *Sung Response*

Sister: Elizabeth Dreyer, a theologian and scholar of Clare of Assisi, writes:

During the time Clare was being considered for canonization, Sister Angeluccia testified that Clare exhorted the sisters to “praise God when they saw beautiful trees, flowers and bushes; and likewise, always to praise God for and in all things when they saw all people and creatures.”

Clare invites all of us to nurture deferential ways toward others and, by extension, toward all of creation .... One way to approach the meaning of deference is to think about the human gesture of “bowing.” In her testament, Clare herself makes this statement:

“... on bended knee and bowing low with both body and soul, I commend all my sisters ...”

In its authentic forms, bowing symbolizes recognition of the beauty and dignity of human persons. ... In our time, we need to nurture our “bowing skills” towards others and extend them to the entire creation.

### *Sung Response*

Secular: In a recent work, Franciscan scholars Sister Ilia Delio, Friar Keith Warner, and Pamela Wood reflected:

While praying before the cross, Francis heard the words, “Francis, go rebuild my house; as you see, it is all being destroyed.”

He took these words literally at first. He began to rebuild the church of San Damiano stone by stone. But as he reflected on these words, he came to understand a deeper meaning .... The “house of God” is, first, the human person. The Word dwells in human flesh not in stone buildings.

As the Word dwells in the human person, so too the Word dwells in creation. The Word who is made flesh in the person of Jesus Christ is the same Word through whom all things are made.

What Francis heard originally, “go, rebuild my house,” became much larger for him; it became the entire “house” of creation.

The Incarnation of God opened up the eyes of Francis to the inner truth of creation as the very place where God is revealed – or concealed when humans fail to see God humbly present in the magnificent diversity of creation.

### *Sung Response*

Ecumenical: Eloi Leclerc, in his book *The Canticle of Creatures*, refers to his own experience during the Second World War to explain his personal appreciation of that lyric, composed by St. Francis himself:

It is April 1945, and he and four other Franciscans are part of a trainload of people being moved they know not where by the SS.

“Black night fills our souls. And yet, on the morning of April 26, when one of us is in his last moments and the light has almost left his eyes, what rises from his heart to his lips is not a cry of despair or rebellion, but a song .... a song of praise: Francis’ *Canticle of Creatures*! Nor do we have to force ourselves to sing with him. It rises spontaneously out of our darkness and nakedness, as though it were the only language fit for such a moment.

At such a moment, astounding thought it seems, we experience wonder before the world; we experience the sacred in the world. ... In utter distress and need can we can more deeply appreciate a mouthful of bread, a sip of water, a ray of sunlight, and now and then ... the warm greeting of a passerby.”

### *Sung Response*

#### **Commitment and Re-commitment to Franciscan Values**

Leader: At this time, we call upon the representatives of the Franciscan family here present, and all others with a Franciscan heart, to affirm some of the values that are at the heart of Franciscan life, with words taken from the various documents that guide some of the communities of the Franciscan Family.

With St. Francis of Assisi as model, let us strive to be people of peace and justice, committed to the work of the poor, living in right relationship with God, neighbor and creation, and humbly listening to the voice of God wherever it is found.

*All Franciscan Friars stand.*

Franciscan Friars: The rule and life of the lesser brothers is this: To observe the holy gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, living in obedience without anything of our own, and in chastity.

I counsel, admonish and beg my brothers that, when they travel about the world, they should not be quarrelsome, dispute with words, or criticize others, but rather should be gentle, peaceful and unassuming, courteous and humble, speaking respectfully to all as is fitting. Whatever house they enter, they are first to say, “Peace to this house.”

Those brothers whom God favors with the gift of working should do so faithfully and devotedly, so that idleness, the enemy of the soul, is excluded yet the spirit of holy prayer and devotion, which all other temporal things should serve, is not extinguished.

*Friars are seated. All Franciscan Sisters stand.*

Franciscan Sisters: In exchange for their work, the brothers and sisters to whom God has given the grace of serving or working may accept anything necessary for their own material needs and for that of their brothers and sisters. Let them accept it humbly as is expected of those who are servants of God and followers of most holy poverty. Whatever they may have over and above their needs, they are to give to the poor. Let them never want to be over others. Instead they must be servants and subject to every human creature for God's sake.

Let all the brothers and sisters zealously follow the humility and poverty of our Lord Jesus Christ. Though rich beyond measure, he wanted to choose poverty in this world and emptied himself.

*Sisters are seated. All Secular Franciscans and those from Protestant Franciscan Communities and other Ecumenical Franciscans stand.*

Secular Franciscans

+ Ecumenical Franciscans:

"Christ, poor and crucified", victor over death and risen, the greatest manifestation of the love of God for humanity, is the "book" in which the brothers and sisters, in imitation of St. Francis, learn the purpose and the way of living, loving, and suffering.

They discover in Him the value of contradictions for the sake of justice and the meaning of the difficulties and the crosses of daily life. With Him they can accept the will of God even under the most difficult circumstances and live the Franciscan spirit of peace, rejecting every doctrine contrary to human dignity.

Mindful that the Holy Spirit is the source of their vocation and the animator of common life and mission, let us seek to imitate the faithfulness of St. Francis to his inspiration. Let us listen to the exhortation of the Saint, to desire above all things "the Spirit of God at work within us."

*All stand.*

**All: Gaining inspiration from the example and the writings and works of St. Francis and St. Clare, and filled with the grace of the Holy Spirit, let us faithfully live the great gift which Christ has given: the revelation of the love of God. Let us seek to bear witness to our faith before all:**

**-- in our families;**

**-- in our work;**

**-- in our joys and sufferings;**

**-- in our associations with all men and women, brothers and sisters of the same God;**

**-- in our presence and participation in the life of society;**

**-- in our relationships with all creatures and creation**

**Amen.**

## **Sign of Peace**

Leader: As Francis often said to those he encountered, “God give you Peace” and “Peace and all Good to you!” let us take a moment to share a sign of peace with one another.

*All share a brief sign of peace.*

## **Final Blessing and Meditation**

Leader: May God bless us and keep us.  
May God make his face shine upon us  
and be gracious to us.  
May God give us holy peace.

**All: Amen.**

## **Final Song**

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