

## Living the Good News Today

*"You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."*

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In the music issue of our parish hymnal (*Today's Missal*), there is a beautiful hymn called "*The Jesus Song*" (#413). Tom Booth, the composer, based this song on the treasured *Jesus Prayer* and the Chaplet of Divine Mercy. It seems like a simple song at first: two distinct parts that are repeated as a chant. Whenever I hear or sing this song, however, it reminds me of St. Peter affirming to Jesus: "*You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.*" By singing from the heart, we tell Jesus that we trust in Him.

Earlier this month, my husband Jeff and I hosted a Zoom call for our monthly Franciscan Justice Circle. Each month, our Delaware Valley members choose a theme, and when we gather, we spend an hour in focusing on an important theme and sharing how it affects our lives.

In conjunction with the US Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB), the Catholic Climate Covenant organized a national conference between June 14<sup>th</sup> and July 27<sup>th</sup> with nine webinars. The theme for the conference was "*Laudato Si' and the US Catholic Church: A Conference Series on Our Common Home.*" Several of our Circle members participated in these webinars. One of our members thought that the webinar on Ecological Spirituality was worthy of our attention in August, as it offered a spiritual prelude to the Season of Care for Creation (Sept. 1-Oct. 4). The presenter was Sr. Mary Beth Ingham, CSJ (General Superior, Sisters of St. Joseph of Orange).

The purpose of the national conference was to encourage a greater understanding of the Laudato Si' Action Platform's seven goals: (1) Response to the Cry of the Poor; (2) Ecological Economics; (3) Adoption of Sustainable Lifestyle; (4) Ecological Education; (5) Ecological Spirituality; (6) Community Resilience and Empowerment; and (7) Response to the Cry of the Earth.

This weekend, we are invited to reflect upon Christ in our lives—the Son of the living God. Where do we find Christ? Do we see God in all Creation? Are we good guardians of God's Creation? Are we curious about Church teaching on how to care for our common home? If not, how do we get started?

Earlier this summer, the ecumenical Season of Creation website posted planning materials for this year's celebration. In the introduction to the planning guide, the organizers expressed their vision:

*"Each year from September 1 to October 4, the Christian family unites for this worldwide celebration of prayer and action to protect our common home. As followers of Christ from around the globe, we share a common call to care for creation. We are co-creatures and part of all that God has made. Our wellbeing is interwoven with the wellbeing of the Earth. We rejoice in this opportunity to safeguard our common home and all beings who share it. This year, the theme for the season is 'Let justice and peace flow.'"*



**Let Justice  
and Peace Flow**  
Season of Creation 2023

What is ecological spirituality? In order to appreciate its value in our lives, it requires discernment on our part. Like the encyclical *Laudato Si'*, it asks us to see the connection between care for the Earth and care for the poor—an integral ecology. To live in the spirit of ecological spirituality, we are to respond to Christ's call to ongoing conversion of heart. Sr. Mary Beth used a quote from St. Francis of Assisi to open our eyes and hearts to the challenges that we face:

*"Be conscious... of the wondrous state in which the Lord God has placed you, for He created you and **formed you to the image of His beloved Son according to the body, and to His likeness according to the spirit.** (Admonition 5)"*

From the moment of our Baptism, we are formed into the Body of Christ and become God's sons and daughters. We witness to the living Christ powerfully through the sacramental action of our Church. When we celebrate the Eucharist as a community, the Word of God and the Eucharist send us into the world with renewed purpose: to bring the light of Christ to the world. Sr. Mary Beth's Powerpoint slides can be found in their entirety at this link:

["Ecological Spirituality" \(PowerPoint Slides\)](#)

In the Season of Creation planning guide, there is a section devoted to quotes from ecumenical church leaders about the theme of "*Let Justice and Peace Flow.*" Each input reflects a deep appreciation for Christ as the Son of the living God. Here is one that invites us to commit our lives to Christ:

*"This Season of Creation will be an opportunity to pray, reflect and act together as the People of God for our common home. Like tributaries joining forces to become a mighty river, the ecumenical family will come together on a synodal path of care for our common home through justice and peace." (Sister Alessandra Smerilli, Secretary of the Vatican Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development)*

The responsorial psalm (Ps. 138) is a beautiful acclamation of God's constant love and presence in His Creation. In his encyclical, Pope Francis urged people of good will to treasure God's gifts to us:

*"The urgent challenge to protect our common home includes a concern to bring the whole human family together to seek a sustainable and integral development, for we know that things can change. Humanity still has the ability to work together in building our common home. Young people demand change. They wonder how anyone can claim to be building a better future without thinking of the environmental crisis and the sufferings of the excluded." (Laudato Si', n. 13)*

Let our hands work together as God's hands:

*"Forsake not the work of Your hands."*