

OPEN SPACE

September 2021, vol. 14, no. 1



Four Elements: <https://earthhavenlearning.ca/blog/the-four-elements/18>

Engaging the signs of the times:

**A HOME FOR ALL:
2021 SEASON OF CREATION**

FORUMWORD

OPENSOURCE

is published
by the Jesuit Forum
for Social Faith and Justice.

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*As the world becomes increasingly interdependent and fragile, the future at
once holds great peril and great promise — The Earth Charter*

*The capacity of Earth, our common home, to sustain life is rapidly being
undermined. Each year, tens of thousands of species, each a unique
manifestation of the Creator, are driven to extinction. Already, this ecological
crisis causes immense human suffering, suffering that will grow as the crisis
accelerates. Indeed, life on Earth is now facing its greatest threat since the last,
great mass-extinction 65 million years ago.*

*This year's ecumenical **Season of Creation** (September 1 to October 4) calls us
to reflect on "A home for all? Renewing the Oikos of God." Oikos ("eco") is a
Greek word meaning the home or the household—which can be understood as
the whole inhabited Earth. [See: https://www.seasonofcreation.org](https://www.seasonofcreation.org)*

*We reflect on the oikos to understand "the integral nature of the many
relationships that hold the web of life together" and to reflect on our call "to till
and keep God's garden, and participate in the renewal of the whole inhabited
Earth, so that life may flourish and all may have a just and sustainable home¹."*

*Pope Francis notes that "ecology studies the relationship between living
organisms and the environment" (Laudato Si', 138). Indeed, an integral ecology
may be understood as the study of interrelationships: our relationships to one
another, our relationships with other living beings and the Earth, and even our
relationship with our Creator.*

*Pope Francis also reminds us that the ecological crisis is a concrete
manifestation² of a deeper ethical, cultural, and spiritual crisis of modernity
(LS 119). Resolving this crisis requires not only technological, political, and
economic transformation, but also a change of heart that reconnects us to the
wider community of life.*

*In this OpenSpace, we invite you to reflect on "all our relations" via a
meditation on the four traditional elements of earth, water, fire, and air. As we
explore these relationships, consider :*

- *How we are intimately connected with all life and the elements. In so
doing, take time to experience gratitude for these connections, including
our connection to the Creator of all.*
- *How humans—particularly the wealthiest among us—are currently
threatening the integrity of creation, putting countless species at risk of
extinction, destroying the artistry of our Creator, and endangering billions
of human lives.*
- *Pathways towards a genuine ecological conversion, including actions to
renew and regenerate our common household.*

*Each section begins with an invitation for you to take time to connect with
earth, water, fire, or air using the elemental breaths practice originally taught
by the Sufi teacher Hazrat Inayat Khan.*

Mark Hathaway, Executive Director

A HOME FOR ALL: 2021 SEASON OF CREATION

-BY MARK HATHAWAY

*Humanity is part of a vast evolving universe.
Earth, our home, is alive with a unique community of life....
The protection of Earth's vitality, diversity, and beauty is a sacred trust.*
— The Earth Charter

Earth

Be praised, my Lord,
through our sister Mother
Earth, who feeds us and
rules us, and
produces various fruits with
coloured flowers and herbs.
— St. Francis, *Canticle of
the Creatures*

Take a moment to stand comfortably, keeping your knees soft, your feet shoulder-width apart.

Close your eyes and become aware of your breathing....

As you breathe, become aware of your connection with the ground beneath your feet. Breathe in and out through your nose.

Imagine that you are drawing the air up through the soles of your feet to your heart and then returning the breath back down to the Earth as you exhale.

Become aware of all that is solid within you, particularly your bones and the feeling of support from the Earth itself.

Take some time to simply breathe in and out in this manner.

As you maintain this awareness, experience yourself as living, breathing Earth.

Your Connection to Soil

[Ecological] conversion calls for... gratitude and gratuitousness, a recognition that the world is God's loving gift. - LS 220

Every element in your body has cycled through millions of other living creatures over time.

The remains of your ancestors—both human and other-than-human—as well as from your more distant living cousins in the web of

life, form the organic matter that enriches soil and makes it fertile.

Each time you eat, you are fed—directly or indirectly—by the living soil that nurtures your food.

Good soil, rich in humus, is very much alive. A single gram of soil can contain billions of bacteria and other micro-organisms, millions of fungi, hundreds of thousands of algae and protozoa, and hundreds of nematodes³.

Rich, organic soil is a vibrant and living ecosystem that enables communication between plants via the fungal network.

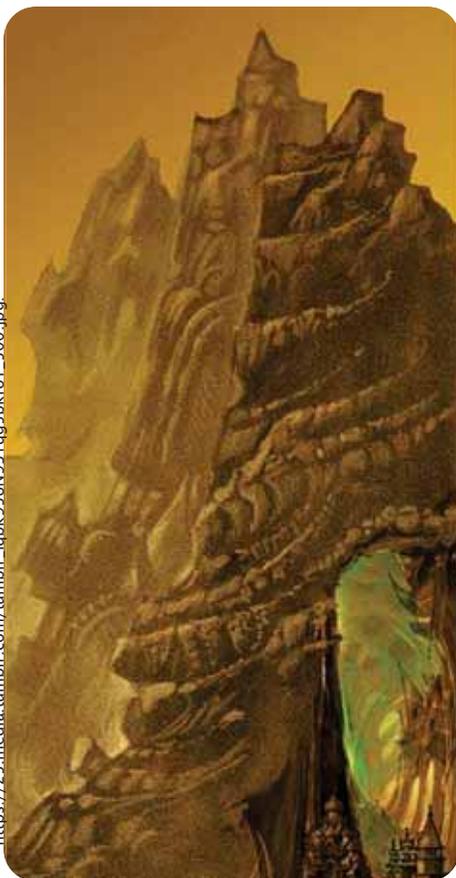
In Genesis 2, the human (*adam*) is formed from this living soil (*adamah*) and the Creator breathes life into this creation. You are living, breathing soil.

Ultimately, your body will return to the soil, becoming food for other living creatures. Soil is a gift given to you and you, in turn, will give your body back to the soil in a relationship of sacred reciprocity.

Take some time to experience gratitude for the living soil upon which you depend for sustenance, as well as for the beauty of all the growing plants and animals that depend upon soil.

Feel gratitude, too, for the Creator who sustains us all through the living soil.

— continued on page 4



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Lament for the Soil

We lament and mourn the loss and degradation of the gift of living, healthy soil.

It can take centuries to produce a single centimeter of topsoil.

Over the past 150 years—and particularly since 1950—nearly half of the Earth's fertile soil has been lost due to deforestation and conventional farming practices⁴.

Indeed, every year, 75 billion tonnes of soil is lost, and 12 million hectares—nearly the size of Nova Scotia and New Brunswick combined—turns to desert⁵, even as a growing population needs more food.

The use of pesticides and chemical fertilizers have accelerated this process, killing the living creatures that maintain the soil's fertility

over time and depleting organic matter, while tilling accelerates erosion.

All these undermine the ability of soil to hold water, contributing to both droughts and flooding.

Practices like clear cutting forests or converting forests to cropland further contribute to soil loss.

The same practices that degrade soil often contribute to global heating: Soil is the largest land-based carbon sink, but industrial farming practices (use of chemical fertilizers, tilling the soil, etc.) have turned soil into a net carbon emitter. Globally, soils have lost 30-70% of their carbon content—contributing to the greenhouse gas effect and the climate crisis⁶.

When we lose or degrade soil, we undermine the capacity of Earth to generate food and forests, to hold and slowly release reserves of water, and to stabilize global climate.

Ultimately, a loss of living soil is a loss of the capacity to sustain and regenerate life itself.

Take a moment to experience grief for the loss of the living soil upon which all terrestrial life depends.

Conserving and Regenerating Soil

What we most need to do is to hear within us the sound of Earth crying. -Vietnamese Zen Master Thich Nhat Hanh

Let our lament and grief, as well as our love for and connection to living earth, call us to a change of heart and meaningful action.

While the natural soil regeneration takes centuries, humans can accelerate this process. The **Rodale Institute**, for example, has demonstrated that regenerative farming practices that build organic matter using compost, minimal tillage,



Courtesy of <https://institutoeterra.org/>

*Instituto Terra is the result of the initiative of the couple, **Lélia Deluiz Wanick Salgado** and **Sebastião Salgado** in returning to nature what decades of environmental degradation had destroyed. Some 2.7 million trees have healed a hole in the Mata Atlântica, the Atlantic Forest that was heavily deforested in the 20th century in the mountainous coastal region of southern and eastern Brazil. There are now 293 different plant species growing in this area, including grasses, mosses, flowers, shrubs and trees. Many of the plants do not exist anywhere else in the world.*

and other ecological methods can increase the carbon content of soil by 30% over thirty years⁷.

Around the globe, people have regenerated degraded land in ten to forty years by planting trees, using compost, building contoured swales to capture water, and employing a wide diversity of plant and animal species to create more diverse food ecosystems.

In Brazil, tracts of functional rainforest have been restored. In parts of Burkina Faso, desertification has been reversed. On the Loess Plateau of China, a large agricultural area has been brought back to life⁸.

All of these are signs of hope. On the one hand, humans cannot (by themselves) create living, fertile soil. We need the wisdom and labour of countless organisms to generate and sustain humus.

Yet, humans can work lovingly and intelligently with other organisms to renew and regenerate the life of soil. We can also learn from the wisdom of those who live intimately with the land, particularly Indigenous Peoples.

Each of us can contribute to this process—seeking out foods produced more sustainably, including organic products and those with a lower carbon footprint (less meat and fish, more plants).

We can compost our organic waste, returning it to the soil to enrich it. If we are able to garden, we can use the most sustainable methods possible, avoiding the use of chemicals that can undermine the health of soil and growing a wide diversity of plants.

We can also advocate for more sustainable agricultural practices and policies. We can support farmers employing these methods, via community shared agriculture or buying at local farmers markets.

We can also support sustainable agriculture in the global South by supporting small-scale farmers via alternative trade networks that ensure a fair wage and safe working conditions for producers.

Conclusion

Take a moment to return to the earth breath, breathing in and out through your nose as you experience your connection to the living soil.

Feel gratitude for the gifts of the soil and the gifts of all the living creatures who sustain and who are sustained by that soil.

Express your gratitude to them and to our Creator and commit yourself to working for the sustenance and regeneration of healthy soils.

Water

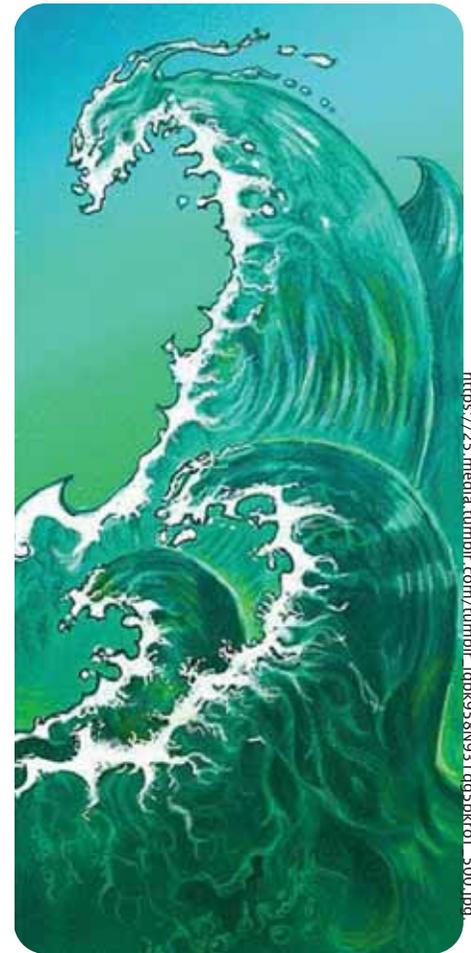
Be praised, my Lord ,
through Sister Water; she is
very useful, and humble, and
precious, and pure.
— St. Francis, *Canticle of
the Creatures*

Now, shift your awareness to the water within you, all that is flowing, all that is fluid.

Standing again with your knees slightly bent, inhale through your nose, but exhale through your mouth.

Imagine that, as you breathe in through your nose, you draw the air up to your heart. As you breathe out through your mouth, imagine the breath moving up through the crown of your head and then the emerging water spraying forth like a fountain of rain.

Feel the droplets of water refreshing and renewing you. Experience yourself as living, breathing water.



https://25.media.tumblr.com/tumblr_lpbk958N931q95bkrot_500.jpg

Your Connection to Water

If we approach nature... without this openness to awe and wonder, if we no longer speak the language of fraternity and beauty in our relationship with the world, our attitude will be that of masters, consumers, ruthless exploiters, unable to set limits on their immediate needs. By contrast, if we feel intimately united with all that exists, then sobriety and care will well up spontaneously. — LS11

You are nearly two-thirds water. For the first nine months of life, you lived immersed in a tiny sea. You were born out of the waters.

In Genesis, the first day of creation is marked by the breath of God moving over the face of the waters.

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The water within you is the union of two elements, hydrogen and oxygen. Hydrogen came into being 13.8 billion years ago in the original flaring forth of the cosmos.

Oxygen was born in a supernova explosion, over 5 billion years ago. In water, these two elements—the primordial substance of the cosmos mixed with stardust—are combined to sustain all life on Earth. Connecting to water, we remember our ancient origins.

Remember the rain that fell for the first 300 million years of Earth’s history, setting the stage for the emergence of life. Remember the birth of the oceans, the same oceans you carry in your blood, which has the same salt content as the ancient seas.

If no life had existed on Earth, the water on our planet might have disappeared long ago—slowly breaking apart into hydrogen and oxygen, the former escaping from the atmosphere, leaving behind a desert world.

Yet, you live on a planet covered instead by oceans, lakes, and rivers. Three quarters of the planet’s surface is covered in water. This water flows through all living creatures, linking us all through both time and space.

The water in your body has flowed through bacteria, ancient sea creatures, dinosaurs, and your human ancestors from time immemorial.

You are living, breathing water, blessed by this miraculous substance sustaining all life. Take some time to experience your gratitude for water, for all the living creatures who have enabled our planet to retain its water, and for the Creator who made them all.

Lament for the Waters

Let us lament and mourn the rapid loss and pollution of water.

While water is essential to all life, only a tiny fraction of that water is fresh (3%), and most of that water is inaccessible. Only 0.5% of water is available to terrestrial creatures to meet their basic needs⁹, yet all depend upon it.

Water is vital to human well-being. We need water to drink, to clean, to cook, and to grow our food; yet 1 in 3 people do not have access to adequate supplies of clean water, resulting in countless hours of labour to gather water and widespread water-borne illnesses, including the deaths of nearly 300,000 children each year¹⁰.

Even in a water-rich nation like Canada, many Indigenous communities still live under boiled-water advisories.

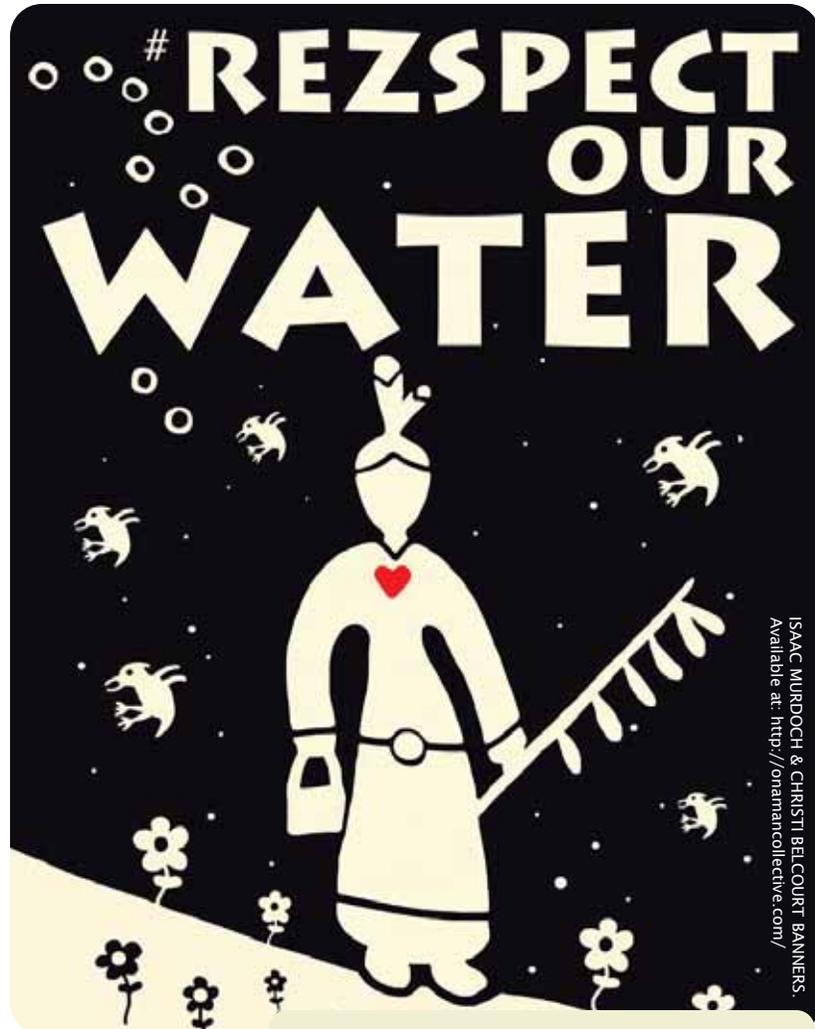
Agriculture accounts for 85% of human water consumption. It takes 15,500 liters of water to produce a kilogram of beef or 24,000 liters to produce a kilogram of chocolate¹¹.

In many parts of the world, agriculture depends on irrigation—yet the deep aquifers and rivers upon which this depends are being rapidly depleted or polluted.

The giant Ogallala aquifer under the plains of the United States—accumulated after the last ice

age—is rapidly being drawn down, with 30% of the portion under Kansas now gone. In parts of India, up to 70% of wells have run dry as groundwater is consumed.

Mountain glaciers which feed many of the world’s great rivers—including those in the Himalayas upon which billions in China, India, and other parts of Asia depend—may largely disappear over the next century due to climate change.



In a report tabled in Parliament (2021), by Auditor General Karen Hogan said many Indigenous communities will continue to live without access to clean water.

Hogan found that since the government made that commitment, 100 advisories have been lifted. But 60 remained in effect in 41 First Nations communities as of November 2020, and some communities won't be able to get clean water out of their taps for many years.



Art by: Jhaimarr Joshe Angelo P. San Miguel

plankton, responsible for nearly 50% of the Earth's oxygen production.

Meanwhile, plastics are killing seabirds and ocean life while microplastics have contaminated nearly all of the Earth's waters.

Water is key to all life, but this precious gift is being squandered and destroyed at a rapid rate.

Take time to experience grief for the loss and contamination of the water upon which all living creatures depend.

Many Industrial practices including the production of single-use plastics and the release of toxic chemicals need to cease.

Mining operations also need to change—and the demand for minerals and energy that drives the development of new mines needs to be drastically reduced.

We have the capacity and technology to provide all people with sufficient clean water for their needs, but we are not doing so.

Models exist for changing agriculture (such as agroecology and permaculture) and industrial practices (closed-loop systems) that could be employed more widely.

We need to truly value water as something precious—more valuable than energy, minerals, or non-essential comforts.

At a personal level, we can eat foods that require less water and reduce our demand for products that contaminate water.

We also need to advocate for policies and practices that actively seek to protect water, and which ensure that all people—and all living creatures—have access to safe, clean water.

Conserving and Renewing Water

Let our lament and grief, as well as our love for the waters, call us to a change of heart and meaningful action.

Water is precious, but often we squander water needlessly.

Changes to agricultural practices can prevent runoff and conserve water, particularly when rich organic soil is regenerated, the use of chemicals eliminated, and massive livestock operations are replaced by more sustainable models.

New methods of irrigation can greatly reduce the draw on water, as can the selection of crops that use less water and a movement to more plant-based diets.

Conclusion

Take a moment to return to the water breath, breathing in through your nose and out through your mouth. Experience your connection to the living waters flowing through you.

Feel gratitude for the gift of water and the gift of all the living creatures who sustain and are sustained by water.

Express your gratitude to them and to our Creator and commit yourself to working for the conservation and regeneration of water.

– continued on page 8

Indeed, glacier runoff from many smaller glaciers in Canada, Europe and South America has already markedly decreased, threatening essential sources of water.

Both agriculture and industry are polluting the world's water. Massive runoff from chemical fertilizers and animal wastes is causing "dead zones" at the mouths of many of the Earth's great rivers.

Water is also being contaminated by toxic chemicals due to hydraulic fracturing (fracking) for oil and gas, by pipeline leaks, and tanker accidents.

Even the Earth's immense oceans are endangered. Ocean acidification—due to CO2 being absorbed by seawater—dissolves calcium shells, affecting coral reefs. This process also affects forms of

Fire

Be praised, my Lord, through all your creatures, especially through my lord Brother Sun, who brings the day; and you give light through him. And he is beautiful and radiant in all his splendour! Of you, Most High, he bears the likeness.

— St. Francis, *Canticle of the Creatures*

Shift your awareness once again. Standing, breathe in through your mouth and out through your nose.

As you do so, on the inbreath, imagine that you draw the breath through your solar plexus. As you exhale through your nose, imagine your breath existing through your heart, radiating light and heat.

Become aware of your blood as it pulses through your heart, arteries, and veins, bringing nutrients and oxygen to all the cells of your body.

Your Connection to Fire

Nature cannot be regarded as something separate from ourselves or as a mere setting in which we live. We are part of nature, included in it and thus in constant interaction with it.

-LS 139

Become aware of the energy that sustains you, the fire born in the unimaginable force of the first moments of creation.

Remember that the food that nourishes you is energy stored from the sun itself. This energy flows to you from the plants, perhaps through other animals, and into your own body.

The wisdom of plants—the miracle of photosynthesis—turns sunlight into food. The sun sustains you and pulses through your veins.

Theologically, food is connected with the gift of the Eucharist, as well as to community and the joys of sharing. Fire is associated with Pentecost and the Holy Spirit.

Earth, our home, is fortuitously located in the “Goldilocks” zone where life is possible. Our sunward neighbour, Venus, has a searing surface temperature of 475 C, while Mars averages a frigid -60 C.

Amazingly, the surface temperature of Earth has remained relatively constant throughout time, even though the sun is 40% warmer today than when the Earth was formed.

Why is this so? Once again, life processes—particularly, the emergence of photosynthesis—accounts for this phenomenon. Plants learned to break down CO2 and turn it into food and free oxygen.

Over time, the carbon removed from the atmosphere was sequestered in the oceans; the soil; in vast reservoirs of coal, peat, oil, and natural gas; in limestone; and in living organisms, removing CO2 and other greenhouse gases from the atmosphere.

Otherwise, Earth’s atmosphere might closely resemble that of Venus, leading to a runaway greenhouse gas effect, raising surface temperatures to about 300 C. Life as we know it would cease to exist¹².

Feel gratitude for the sun, for the plants that capture sunlight and turn it into food, for the living processes that have carefully regulated the temperature of our planet, and to the Creator whose wisdom guides them all.

A Lament for Fire

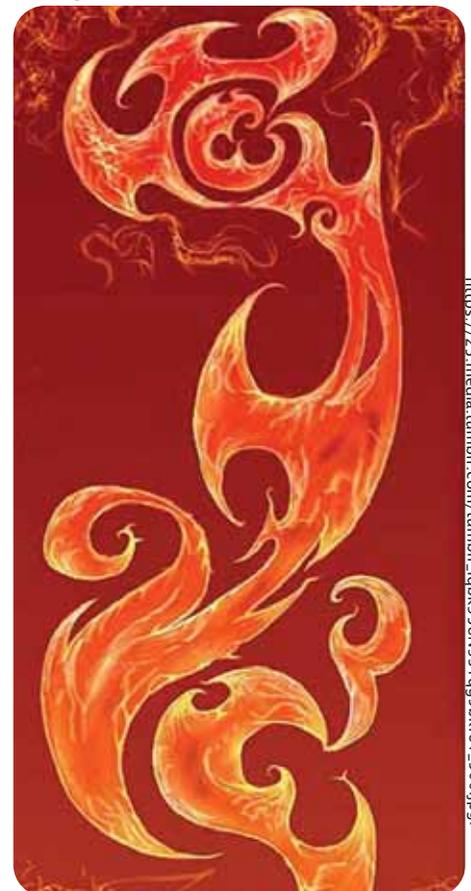
Let us mourn and lament the fire that has now been unleashed upon the Earth.

While our living planet has, over time, removed greenhouse gases from our atmosphere, enabling Earth to remain comfortably cool, over the past two centuries this balance has been disrupted.

By rapidly burning oil, gas, and coal—and by degrading soils holding carbon—the delicate balance that has regulated the temperature of our planet has been destroyed. Over the past few decades (particularly since 1980), average global temperatures have risen around 0.5 C—although in polar regions this change has been much more drastic.

If we continue with our current projected rate of emissions (even with promised reductions), the Earth is likely to warm another 2.5-4 C¹³, even though most scientists agree that any warming about 1.5 C over pre-industrial levels would be disastrous.

With global heating, forest fires become more frequent. Those fires release CO2 and accelerate climate change.



https://25-media.tumblr.com/tumblr_lpbk958N9311q95bkro1_500.jpg



Wildfires in British Columbia (2021). Courtesy of Canada Press

Melting ice means that the Earth reflects less solar radiation, also accelerating heating, while melting permafrost releases methane, a powerful greenhouse gas.

The devastating effects of global heating are already beginning to manifest themselves: More extreme weather, massive fires, rising sea levels, the extinction of species, the loss of traditional life-ways among Indigenous Peoples, the rising incidence of mosquito-borne diseases, and decreasing crop yields.

A mere 100 large corporations have been responsible for 71% of greenhouse gas emissions¹⁴ and the wealthiest 10% of humans are responsible for nearly half of consumption-related emissions.

Yet, the poorest and most vulnerable people are those who often experience the negative impacts of the climate crisis most acutely—as well as the myriad of other living organisms threatened with habitat loss, and even extinction.

While all living beings need energy, the unbridled consumption of fossil fuels on the part of a relatively small minority of humans—including some of the

most powerful global corporations—now threatens the well-being, and even the survival, of much of Earth's life.

Take a moment to experience grief for the fiery heat trapped by greenhouse gases that has been unleashed upon the Earth, threatening the lives and well-being of a myriad of creatures.

Reducing Greenhouse Gas Emissions

Let our lament and grief, as well as our love for all living creatures, call us to a change of heart and meaningful action.

The more quickly and decisively we act, the easier (and less costly) it will be to contain the damage.

Yet almost every nation—including large per-capita emitters like Canada—propose too little action taken over too long a time frame.

To keep within a safe temperature range, greenhouse gas emissions need to fall by 45% globally by 2030 in comparison 2010 levels¹⁵.

Justice demands that high per-capita emitters like Canada should reduce emissions by

60-70%, yet few politicians are proposing such drastic cuts.

Quick and decisive action is needed to reduce overall energy consumption, eliminate the production and use of fossil fuels, electrify transportation, and sequester carbon in soil and forests.

As well, funds must be provided to poorer nations to transition to greener energy and agriculture as quickly as possible.

At a personal level, working to reduce greenhouse gas emissions means driving and flying much less frequently, conserving energy at home, eating less meat and more organic and local food, divesting from fossil fuels, using public transit when possible, and walking and cycling more.

Perhaps even more importantly, each of us needs to strongly advocate at a local, regional, and national level to wind down fossil fuel industries, promote regenerative agriculture, finance public transit and energy retrofits, and increase funding for energy transitions and climate change mitigation both nationally and internationally.

– continued on page 10

Conclusion

Take a moment to return to the fire breath, breathing in through your mouth and out through your nose as you experience your connection to the living fire pulsing through you.

Feel gratitude for the gifts of fire and the gifts of all the living creatures who sustain and are sustained by fire—and who work to contain fire and sequester carbon.

Express your gratitude to them and to the Creator and commit yourself to work to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Air

Be praised, my Lord, through Brothers Wind and Air, and clouds and storms, and all the weather, through which you give your creatures sustenance.

— St. Francis,
Canticle of the Creatures

Finally, shift your awareness to the air surrounding you, both within and without. Breathe in and out very gently through your mouth.

Imagine, as you breathe, that you draw air in through every pore of your skin, and that likewise you breathe out through your skin.

Let the perception of your skin as a boundary gradually dissolve as you become conscious of your connection to all beings through air.

Your Connection to Air

With each breath, you inhale atoms that have been part of nearly every living creature that has ever lived.

As you inhale, you breathe in atoms that every human over the course of history has ever breathed. Through the breath, you are connected with all the saints,

all the prophets, and all your ancestors.

You are also connected to the first organisms to emerge in the ancient seas, to the trilobites, to whales swimming the oceans, to all the forests, to all creatures great and small. With each out-breath, you return some part of yourself to the greater community of life.

The oxygen you need to survive is the gift of plants who turn sunlight into food and oxygen. Without plants, all oxygen, over time, would oxidize minerals and other substances until almost no free oxygen would exist.

Oxygen is a gift from other creatures, upon whom we depend on each second of every day.

Trees and other plants naturally cleanse the air of pollutants. The world's forests absorb about 1/3 of all fossil fuel emissions¹⁶—including a variety of air pollutants.

In Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek (as well as in many other languages), the words for breath and for spirit are identical. The spirit of the Creator is also the Creator's life-sustaining breath. We are one in the spirit; we are united in the breath that we share.

With every breath, feel your gratitude for air, for the creatures that sustain it, for the gift of life, and for the Creator of them all.

A Lament for Air

Let us lament and mourn the pollution of the air that sustains life.

The air we breathe is no longer clean. The fossil fuels that have released greenhouse gases have also released pollution that threatens the well-being of us all.

Other industrial pollutants have released poisons into the atmosphere, many of them toxic or carcinogenic. The pollution gen-

erated from the burning of fossil fuels alone may be responsible for the deaths of one in five people—nearly 8.7 billion in 2018¹⁷.

Even compared to the 4.6 million or so estimated to have died from COVID-19 since the pandemic began over a year and a half ago, this is a very large number.

Air pollution contributes to heart disease, asthma, emphysema, and lung cancer and may also damage the nervous system, the immune system, and major organs. Pollution can also damage forests while acid rain can destroy aquatic life in lakes.

With more stringent regulations in the global North, many polluting industries moved to poorer nations in the global South. Air pollution often more severely affects poorer workers living in large urban centres, but ultimately affects all people and living creatures.



https://25.media.tumblr.com/tumblr_lpbk958N931q95bkr01_500.jpg

Many of the same corporations and consumption patterns by the wealthiest ten percent are largely responsible for this ongoing legacy of poor health and death.

Take a moment to experience grief for the pollution of the air upon which all living creatures depend.

Cleaning the Air

Let our lament and grief, as well as our love for the air, call us to a change of heart and meaningful action.

The reports of air pollution clearing as factories shut down and people reduced their commutes during the early months of the COVID-19 pandemic illustrate what happens when our use of fossil fuels is drastically reduced.

At a personal level, reducing our consumption of fossil fuels and the use of polluting products such as plastics and other petrochemicals would contribute to reducing air pollution.

Politically, advocating to eliminate the use of fossil fuels and toxic chemicals of all kinds would contribute to cleaning the air. More stringent standards are needed, not only at a national level, but also globally.

Conclusion

Take a moment to return to the air breath, gently breathing in and out through your mouth as you experience your connection to the living air.

Feel gratitude for the gift of air and the gifts of all the living creatures who sustain and are sustained by air, including the trees and plants who cleanse the air.

Express your gratitude to them and to our Creator and commit yourself to working to protect air and reducing pollution in all its forms.

Final Reflection

The universe unfolds in God, who fills it completely. Hence, there is a mystical meaning to be found in a leaf, in a mountain trail, in a dewdrop, in a poor person's face... — LS 233

Earth, water, fire, and air are woven together in the living, suffering body of our planet. The entire web of life is under threat as hundreds of thousands of species—each a unique and precious reflection of the wisdom of our Creator—are being lost forever.

Thomas Berry believed that humans could only have evolved on a planet as beautiful as our own. Our intelligence, our emotions, and our spirituality evolved in intimate contact with the more-than-human world. All other beings are our teachers and mentors.

Certainly, we need other living beings to sustain soil, water, food, and air, but we also need them to nurture our souls. We are part of a greater community of life, and we can only fully realize our humanity as loving participants in that diverse community.

It is also true to say that humans, alone, cannot “save” the Earth. We need the wisdom of the microbes, the fungi, the plants, the insects, the sea creatures, and the animals to heal what we have broken. We also need the wisdom of the myriad, diverse Indigenous Peoples who have, over time, discovered ways to live well in specific places.

Let us seek, then, to reach out and be good allies with all these beings to repair and regenerate the web of life.

Let ours be a time remembered for the awakening of a new reverence for life, the firm resolve to achieve sustainability, the quickening of the struggle for justice and peace, and the joyful celebration of life.
—The Earth Charter



**FOR THE LOVE
OF CREATION**

For the Love of Creation¹⁸ is a national initiative that brings together faith bodies and faith-based organizations in Canada under a unified banner to mobilize education, reflection, action, and advocacy for climate justice.

To encourage dialogue on climate change, it developed Faithful Climate Conversations, a series of guides to facilitate small group conversations on climate change: *Creation, Climate and You*; *From Concern to Action*; and *Building a Better Future* are available at <https://forthe loveofcreation.ca/engagement/>

A Letter of the Faithful is also currently being written using a collaborative process involving faith communities across Canada.

See <https://forthe loveofcreation.ca/theology/> or use the self-guided process available at <https://jesuitforum.ca/videos/flc-letter/> to participate in the theological reflection process.

Finally, join the campaign to work with other communities to:

- Increase our national GHG emissions reduction target;
- Invest in a just transition to a fair, inclusive, green economy;
- Implement the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, including, but not limited to, the right of free, prior and informed consent; and
- Commit equal support for climate change adaptation and mitigation measures in the global South.

"The Earth is what we all have in common"
-Wendell Berry

AVAILABLE NOW

For more information or to order a copy visit:
<https://www.jesuitforum.ca>

On care for our common home: A dialogue guide for Laudato Si' offers a way to engage in the dialogue that Pope Francis is calling for. It includes excellent quotes from Pope Francis and comprises 9 sessions with reflections on the text, side stories, photos, and cartoons to bring the Pope's ground-breaking and challenging letter to life. Each session ends with questions for group sharing.

Living with Limits, Living Well!: Hints for neighbours on an endangered planet offers a way for small groups to engage on the interconnectedness of poverty, inequality, globalization, ecology, and spirituality. The guide explores new ways of envisioning authentic sustainable progress, departing from a traditional and very restrictive GDP measurement approach, to uncover more meaningful ways of appraising genuine human development. It is similarly meant to be used in the context of a small group conversation.

To order a copy or for more information, see: <https://jesuitforum.ca/resources/dialogue-guides/>

Open Space is a publication of the Jesuit Forum
for Social Faith and Justice

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Questions for small group dialogue:

1. What struck you most in this meditation?
2. How do you experience your connection with earth, water, fire, air, and other living beings? How does this connection nurture your spirituality?
3. What losses move you most strongly to mourn, to lament, and grieve?
4. Where do you feel called to a change of heart? What concrete actions do you feel moved to undertake?

For more information about the Forum dialogue process,
see: tiny.cc/forumprocess

For textual references, see: www.tiny.cc/OS14-1-refs