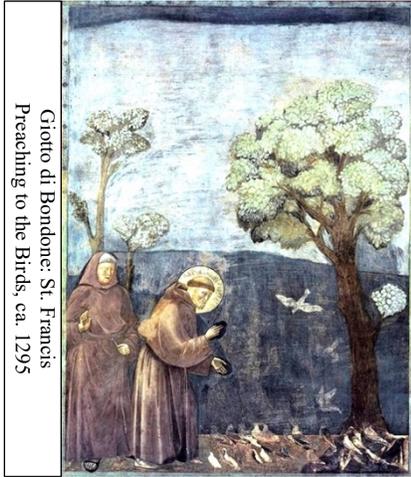


ECOLOGY AND ENVIRONMENT

Have on hand: O.F.S. Rule and Catechism



Our Opening Prayer:

**It is truly right and just, our duty and our salvation,
always and everywhere to give you thanks,
Lord, holy Father, almighty and eternal God.
For you laid the foundations of the world
and have arranged the changing of times and seasons;
you formed man in your own image
and set humanity over the whole world in all its wonder,
to rule in your name over all you have made
and for ever praise you in your mighty works,
through Christ our Lord. Amen.¹**

Someone should read from our *Rule*, Articles #11 and #18.

Now listen to Celano's examples of St. Francis telling how all things in creation are to be treasured: "This happy traveler, hurrying to leave the world as the exile of pilgrimage, was helped, and not just a little, by what is in the world. Toward the princes of darkness, he certainly used it as a field of battle. Toward God, however, he used it as the clearest mirror of goodness. ... He embraces all things with an intensity of unheard devotion, speaking to them about the Lord and exhorting them to praise Him. ... When the brothers are cutting wood he forbids them to cut down the whole tree, so that it might have hope of sprouting again. He commands the gardener to leave the edges of the garden undisturbed, so that in their season the green of herbs and the beauty of flowers may proclaim the beautiful Father of all. He even orders that within the garden a smaller garden should be set aside for aromatic and flowering herbs so that those who see them may recall the memory of eternal savor. He picks up little worms from the road so they will not be trampled underfoot. That the bees not perish of hunger in the icy winter, he commands that honey and the finest wine should be set out for them. He calls all animals by a fraternal name, although, among all kinds of beasts, he especially loves the meek. Who is capable of describing all of this? Truly, that fountain-like goodness, which will be all in all, already shone clearly in all for this saint. All creatures, therefore, strive to return the saint's love, and to respond to his kindness with their gratitude. They smile at his caress, his requests they grant, they obey his commands. ... It is no wonder that other creatures revere the greatest lover of the Creator."²

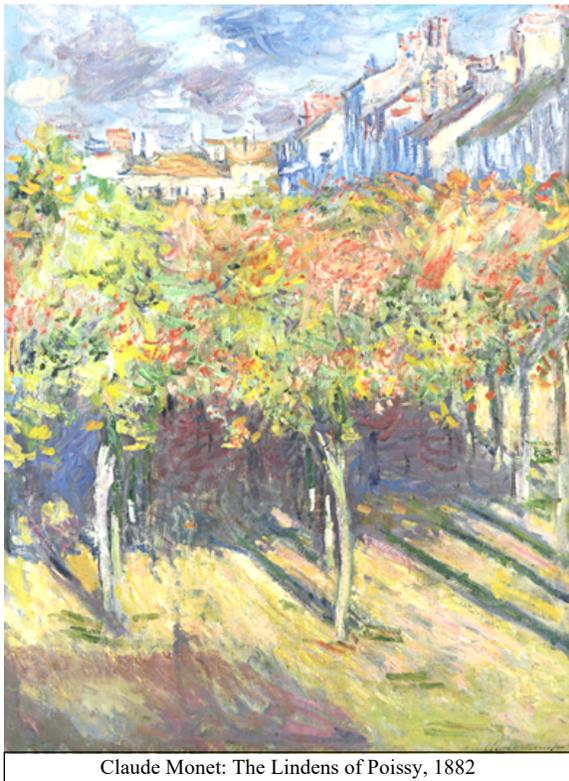
In his *First Letter*, St. John offers us this insight: "If someone who has worldly means sees a brother in need and refuses him compassion, how can the love of God remain in him? Children, let us love not in word or speech but in deed and truth." (1 John 3:17-18)

Ecology and environmental issues are the talk of our day. It is so well presented in our *Rule*, Article #11: "Let them be mindful that according to the gospel they are stewards of the goods received for the benefit of God's children." Many important messages are proclaimed here: "According to the gospel" – we are "stewards" [caretakers].

While as Catholics we believe in the right of private ownership, yet even more important is the reality about God placing this whole planet with its contents, its possibilities, its resources, and its operation for the benefit of all! Not just for the few who amass more of their world's resources at the detriment of their neighbor. Our Gospel values tell us that this world's resources must be shared. They were given to all – God did it!

This does not mean political socialism, as we have come to know it in this past century. But it does mean an essential sharing of resources that all can be cared for. Economic systems must also include care for the people deprived by the exigencies of nature, various tragedies, droughts, calamities, etc.

- Q1. What is the result when some individuals accumulate large amounts of wealth created from this world's resources put at our disposal, when at the same time there are other humans suffering basic deprivation of the means to live humanely?
- Q2. What balance is required in order to be Franciscan in ecology issues?
- Q3. Are all creatures of equal value – the inanimate, the plants, animals, humans? How does the Church prioritize them?
- Q4. In our *Rule*, Article #18, what is meant by “the Franciscan concept of universal kinship”?



Claude Monet: The Lindens of Poissy, 1882

So important is this concept of “universal kinship” that in his 2015 Encyclical Letter: *Laudato Si’ (On Care For Our Common Home)*, Pope Francis states in §1: “‘Laudato si’, mi’ Signore’ – ‘Praise be to you, my Lord.’ In the words of this beautiful canticle, Saint Francis of Assisi reminds us that our common home is like a sister with whom we share our life and a beautiful mother who opens her arms to embrace us. ‘Praise be to you, my Lord, through our Sister, Mother Earth, who sustains and governs us, and who produces various fruit with coloured flowers and herbs.’”³ §10: the vulnerable and of an integral ecology lived out joyfully and authentically. He is the patron saint of all who study and work in the area of ecology, and he is also much loved by non-Christians. He was particularly concerned for God’s creation and for the poor and outcast. ... He shows us just how inseparable the bond is between concern for nature, justice for the poor, commitment to society, and interior peace.”

- Q5. In the Encyclical *Laudato Si’*, how do you understand Pope Francis’ notion of an “integral ecology” which St. Francis intuitively grasped?
- Q6. What means do I use to show reverence for creation?
- Q7. What is the moral error in the economic principle that indicates the price of an item should be set by “what the market will bear”? (See *Catechism*, §2424)

For useful background to understanding our Catholic Faith today in this area, check the *Catechism*, §2402-§2406; §2414-§2420; and §2424-§2425.

¹ *Roman Missal*, PREFACE V OF THE SUNDAYS IN ORDINARY TIME

² FA:ED, *The Remembrance of the Desire of a Soul, Second Book*, 1245-1247, Vol. II, pp. 353-354 & 356, Chapter CXXIV, v. 165; Chapter CXXV, v. 166; and Chapter CXXVII, v. 168

³ See FA:ED, *The Canticle of the Creatures*, 1225, Vol. I, pp. 113-114