

Leader Philosopher, writer, Passionist priest, and ecologist Thomas Berry succinctly stated, “The destiny of humans cannot be separated from the destiny of earth.” Like Saint Francis of Assisi before him, Berry calls us to remember our connection to the Earth and to take it seriously.

For Catholic health care the reminder is doubly urgent, our commitment to the sick and the poor demands that we take careful stock of our behaviors and environmental impact. As it is impossible for people to be healthy on a sick planet, we must work toward the healing of the environment as well as the patients and families in our care.

As we each contemplate our own connection to the Earth, let us listen to the wisdom of scripture and tradition.

Reader 1 From the book of Genesis, *Common English Bible* translation

The Lord God formed the human from the topsoil of the fertile land and blew life’s breath into his nostrils. The human came to life.

(pause)

Reader 2 From Thomas Berry in “The Spirituality of the Earth”

We come into being in and through the Earth. Simply put, we are Earthlings. The Earth is our origin, our nourishment, our educator, our healer, our fulfillment. At its core, even our spirituality is Earth derived. The human and the Earth are totally implicated, each in the other.

(pause)

Reader 3 From Pope Francis in *Laudato Si*

We have to realize that a true ecological approach always becomes a social approach; it must integrate questions of justice in debates on the environment, so as to hear both the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor.

Leader We are created by God of the stuff of the Earth. We are dirt and clay, water and carbon animated by the breath of God. Even the name given to the first human reflects the dust from which we were formed. Adam was named for the ground from which he was created. The Hebrew word *adamah* means, dirt, earth, ground. Humans are the earth and are intimately linked to its well-being.

As we celebrate the Feast of Saint Francis, let us recommit ourselves to daily actions in care of and connection to God's good creation.

Reader 4 Please respond, *Creator God, inspire us.*

Make us more aware of our connectedness to the Earth, the poor and its creatures. Help us see how our purchases and politics impact the environment.

All Creator God, inspire us.

Reader 4 Move us to small acts of conservation, even at our own inconvenience. Walk or bike rather than drive; recycle and compost rather than throw away, may our chosen limitations mean expanded opportunities.

All Creator God, inspire us.

Reader 4 Make us advocates for institutional changes. On our boards, in our offices, in our parishes, schools and communities give us the courage to be champions for sustainable policies and practices.

All Creator God, inspire us.

Leader As we conclude, let us share a word of hope and look to our invitation and opportunity. Once more, hear the words of Thomas Berry,

There are cosmological and historical moments of grace as well as religious moments of grace ... Such is the context in which we must view this transition period into the 21st century as a moment of grace. A unique opportunity arises. For if the challenge is so absolute, the possibilities are equally comprehensive. We have identified the difficulties but also the opportunities before us.

**All Creator God, inspire us.
May we be agents of your grace,
and instruments of your peace.
Strengthen us to become tireless
Protectors of your creation,
and prophets of a hopeful future for all your creatures.
Amen.**