

## Ensure Environmental Sustainability

### Call to Prayer

### Two Images from the Word of God

### Reflection:

How are my/our actions subtracting from the goodness of creation?

How can I "be responsible" for Earth, for Earth's inhabitants?

How do I distinguish between what I "want" and what I need?

Reflecting on the image of all creation as One Body: what parts of the body are hurting? How is the pain affecting the whole body?



### Prayers for Our World



Response: God of goodness, hear our prayer.

*We pray for your guidance to protect our forests and soil.*

*We pray for your knowledge to find the way to cleanse our waters.*

*We pray for your insight to protect threatened species.*

*We pray for your compassion to reach out to all those affected by floods, droughts, hurricanes and corrupt stewardship.*

*We pray for your strength to restore the beauty of your handiwork.*

*We pray for your wisdom to find the way to restore our humanity and provide adequate housing and sanitation to all populations.*

*We pray for your grace that each of us may be responsible for Earth's resources in our daily lives.*

### Closing Prayer:

Good and gracious God, maker of all, you adorn all creation with splendor and beauty, fashioning humans in your image and likeness. Awaken in every heart reverence for the work of your hands, and renew among your people a readiness to nurture and sustain your precious gift of life. Amen.



### Notes for using this prayer:

The theme for March is the 7th Millennium Development Goal: Ensure Environmental Sustainability. Please be aware that this goal is broader than ecology. It includes improving slums, access to safe drinking water and sanitation and political action. Please read through the notes below and decide how this prayer service can best be adapted to meet the needs of your learning community.

The readings are taken from The Message: a contemporary translation of Scripture. The purpose of using this translation is to help the students hear familiar passages in a new way.

The Call to Prayer is based on information found at: <http://www.iisd.org/sd/>.

You may want to include a video as part of the prayer service. Some possible suggestions are:

- ✓ <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Qp3eooTJkY4> a 6 minute video that starts with beautiful images, moves into what is happening to the earth and then into concrete actions that can be taken.
- ✓ <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lx-1XFQDIUU> a 5 minute video, professionally done that includes the whole scope of the goal.
- ✓ <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9gGr5Nkp0yQ&feature=related> a 3 minute video done by students at a high school in Hawaii. It shows common aspects of life on campus that thwart sustainability (dripping faucets, lights left on, litter on campus, etc.).
- ✓ Another possibility is to have student put together a PowerPoint of images that show how we are **not** following the principles of environmental sustainability to aid their peers in reflecting on this goal.

For this prayer you will need:

- ✓ To decide if you will use a video or a PowerPoint prepared by students
- ✓ To choose a leader and readers for the prayer
- ✓ To decide if you want to add music to this outline
- ✓ Copies of the readings below for the readers.
- ✓ Copies of the prayer guide (first page of this file) for those participating, or ability to project it so it can be read by those participating.

Call to prayer: (Prayer leader reads the following)

Sustainable development has been defined in many ways, but the most frequently quoted definition is from *Our Common Future*:

*"Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. It contains within it two key concepts:*

*the concept of needs, in particular the essential needs of the world's poor, to which overriding priority should be given; and*

*the idea of limitations imposed by the state of technology and social organization on the environment's ability to meet present and future needs."*

All definitions of sustainable development require that we see the world as a system—a system that connects space; and a system that connects time.

When you think of the world as a system over space, you grow to understand that air pollution from North America affects air quality in Asia, and that pesticides sprayed in Argentina could harm fish stocks off the coast of Australia.

*(continued on next page)*

And when you think of the world as a system over time, you start to realize that the decisions our grandparents made about how to farm the land continue to affect agricultural practice today; and the economic policies we endorse today will have an impact on urban poverty when our children are adults.

We also understand that quality of life is a system, too. It's good to be physically healthy, but what if you are poor and don't have access to education? It's good to have a secure income, but what if the air in your part of the world is unclean? And it's good to have freedom of religious expression, but what if you can't feed your family?

The concept of sustainable development is rooted in this sort of systems thinking. It helps us understand ourselves and our world. The problems we face are complex and serious—and we can't address them in the same way we created them. But we *can* address them.

Let us pray for insight and creativity to meet the needs of sustainable development.  
Let us pray for honesty and the grace to commit ourselves to sustainable development.  
Let us pray.

(Take a moment for quiet reflection, or an appropriate song/piece of music before moving to the next part of the prayer.)

**Two Images:** *(I would suggest a reader for each reading, or the readings could be divided into sections and read by more than one person.)*

#### 1st Reading Genesis 1:1-2:4 (excerpt from *The Message*)

A reading from Genesis: First this: God created the Heavens and Earth—all you see, all you don't see. Earth was a soup of nothingness, a bottomless emptiness, an inky blackness. God's Spirit brooded like a bird above the watery abyss.

God spoke: "Light!" and light appeared. God saw that light was good and separated light from dark. God named the light Day, he named the dark Night. It was evening, it was morning— Day One.

God spoke: "Sky! In the middle of the waters; separate water from water!" God made sky. He separated the water under sky from the water above sky. And there it was: he named sky the heavens; it was evening, it was morning— Day Two.

God spoke: "Separate! Water-beneath-Heaven, gather into one place; Land, appear!" And there it was. God named the land Earth. He named the pooled water Ocean. God saw that it was good. God spoke: "Earth, green up! Grow all varieties of seed-bearing plants, every sort of fruit-bearing tree." And there it was. Earth produced green seed-bearing plants, all varieties, and fruit-bearing trees of all sorts. God saw that it was good. It was evening, it was morning— Day Three.

God spoke: "Lights! Come out! Shine in Heaven's sky! Separate Day from Night. Mark seasons and days and years, Lights in Heaven's sky to give light to Earth." And there it was. God made two big lights, the larger to take charge of Day, the smaller to be in charge of Night; and he made the stars. God placed them in the heavenly sky to light up Earth And oversee Day and Night, to separate light and dark. God saw that it was good. It was evening, it was morning— Day Four.

God spoke: "Swarm, Ocean, with fish and all sea life! Birds, fly through the sky over Earth!" God created the huge whales, all the swarm of life in the waters, and every kind and species of flying birds. God saw that it was good. God blessed them: "Prosper! Reproduce! Fill Ocean! Birds, reproduce on Earth!" It was evening, it was morning— Day Five.

God spoke: "Earth, generate life! Every sort and kind: cattle and reptiles and wild animals—all kinds." And there it was: wild animals of every kind, Cattle of all kinds, every sort of reptile and bug. God saw that it was good. God spoke: "Let us make human beings in our image, make them reflecting our nature so they can be responsible for the fish in the sea, the

birds in the air, the cattle, And, yes, Earth itself, and every animal that moves on the face of Earth." God created human beings; he created them godlike, reflecting God's nature. He created them male and female. God blessed them: "Prosper! Reproduce! Fill Earth! Take charge! Be responsible for fish in the sea and birds in the air, for every living thing that moves on the face of Earth."

Then God said, "I've given you every sort of seed-bearing plant on Earth and every kind of fruit-bearing tree, given them to you for food. To all animals and all birds, everything that moves and breathes, I give whatever grows out of the ground for food." And there it was. God looked over everything he had made; it was so good, so very good! It was evening, it was morning— Day Six.

Heaven and Earth were finished, down to the last detail. By the seventh day God had finished his work. On the seventh day he rested from all his work. God blessed the seventh day. He made it a Holy Day because on that day he rested from his work, all the creating God had done.

This is the Word of God.

### 2nd Reading: 1 Cor 12:14-30 (excerpt from *The Message*)

A reading from the First Letter of Paul to Corinth: A body isn't just a single part blown up into something huge. It's all the different-but-similar parts arranged and functioning together. If Foot said, "I'm not elegant like Hand, embellished with rings; I guess I don't belong to this body," would that make it so? If Ear said, "I'm not beautiful like Eye, limpid and expressive; I don't deserve a place on the head," would you want to remove it from the body? If the body was all eye, how could it hear? If all ear, how could it smell? As it is, we see that God has carefully placed each part of the body right where he wanted it.

But I also want you to think about how this keeps your significance from getting blown up into self-importance. For no matter how significant you are, it is only because of what you are a part of. An enormous eye or a gigantic hand wouldn't be a body, but a monster. What we have is one body with many parts, each its proper size and in its proper place. No part is important on its own. Can you imagine Eye telling Hand, "Get lost; I don't need you"? Or, Head telling Foot, "You're fired; your job has been phased out"? As a matter of fact, in practice it works the other way—the "lower" the part, the more basic, and therefore necessary. You can live without an eye, for instance, but not without a stomach. When it's a part of your own body you are concerned with, it makes no difference whether the part is visible or clothed, higher or lower. You give it dignity and honor just as it is, without comparisons. If anything, you have more concern for the lower parts than the higher. If you had to choose, wouldn't you prefer good digestion to full-bodied hair?

The way God designed our bodies is a model for understanding our lives together ...: every part dependent on every other part, the parts we mention and the parts we don't, the parts we see and the parts we don't. If one part hurts, every other part is involved in the hurt, and in the healing. If one part flourishes, every other part enters into the exuberance.

This is the Word of God.

### Reflection: (Parts in bold are included if a video or PowerPoint is shown.)

**Leader:** We have just heard anew the story of creation and the words: God looked over everything he had made; it was so good, so very good! We have heard Paul's analogy of a body: different-but-similar parts arranged and functioning together. **Now let us turn our eyes to our world.** (Show video/PowerPoint and then have the Leader continue.) Let us take a few moments to reflect on the questions on our prayer aid.

(If the Learning Community is a small group you may want to have the participants share their reflections with one another.)

**Prayers for Our World:**

Leader: Our response is "God of goodness, hear our prayer."

*We pray for your guidance to protect our forests and soil.*

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Leader: Together let us pray our closing prayer. (It is on the prayer aid.)