



*In gratitude for your support and the role you play  
in helping our elderly and infirm Religious  
live out their lives in modest dignity.*



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*Every part of the earth is sacred...  
All things are connected...*  
- Chief Seattle



*A selection of Prayers and Reflections  
on the Sacredness of Earth from  
Support Our Aging Religious*

# *Sacredness of Earth*

*Reflected in the Bible*

*Echoed in Church Documents*

*Voiced in Interfaith Prayers*

*Expressed in Poetry and Prose*

*Revealed in Work and Play*



*... we cannot continue to use the goods of the earth as we have in the past . . . The ecological crisis is a moral issue.* - Pope Paul II, January 1, 1990.

Dear Friends of SOAR!

The moral dilemmas of the ecological crisis are beyond the scope of this booklet. Instead, we offer a few poetic, philosophical, and prayerful reflections on our oneness with all of creation. These profound reflections speak to the heart, mind, and soul of compassion, the beauty of nature, gratitude to God for the gift of creation, and determination to guard this awesome gift.

Through this booklet we extend our thanks to you, our friends. Let us work together to ensure a flourishing Earth and sustainable future for children around the world.

The SOAR! Board of Directors and Staff

## *Sacredness of Earth ...*

*The earth brought forth every kind of  
plant that bears seed  
and every kind of fruit tree on earth  
that bears fruit with its seed in it.*

*God saw how good it was.*

*Evening came, and morning followed  
-- the third day.*

~ Genesis 1:12-13

*The heavens declare the glory of God,  
the vault of heaven proclaims his handiwork;  
day discourses of it to day,  
night to night hands on the knowledge.*

*No utterance at all, no speech,  
no sound that anyone can hear;  
yet their voice goes through all the earth,  
and their message to the ends of the world.*

~ Psalm 19:1-2

## *Reflected in the Bible*

*The flowers appear on the earth. The time of  
the singing of birds is come.*

~ Song of Songs 2:12

*Jesus said to his disciples ...*

*I am telling you not to worry about your life...*

*Think of the flowers; they never  
have to weave;*

*yet I assure you, not even Solomon*

*in all his regalia was robed  
like one of these.*

~ Luke 12:22,27-28

*How many are your works, O Lord!*

*The earth is full of your riches...*

*You founded the earth on its base,  
to stand firm from age to age.*

~ Psalm 104: 1,5

## *Sacredness of Earth*

“From the patristic period to the present, the church has affirmed that misuse of the world’s resources or appropriation of them by a minority of the world’s population betrays the gift of creation since ‘whatever belongs to God belongs to all.’”

~ Economic Justice for All, no. 34

“Our very contact with nature has a deep restorative power; contemplation of its magnificence imparts peace and serenity. The Bible speaks again and again of the goodness and beauty of creation, which is called to glorify God.”

~ John Paul II  
*1990 World Day of Peace Message*

## *Echoed in Church Documents*

“Our tradition calls us to protect the life and dignity of the human person, and it is increasingly clear that this task cannot be separated from the care and defense of all of creation.”

~ US Catholic Bishops  
*Renewing the Earth, 1991*

“Environmental pollution is making particularly unsustainable the lives of the poor of the world ... We must pledge ourselves to take care of creation and to share its resources in solidarity.”

~ Pope Benedict XVI  
during Angelus address,  
August 27, 2006



## *Sacredness of Earth*

May it be beautiful before me.  
May it be beautiful behind me.  
May it be beautiful below me.  
May it be beautiful above me.  
May it be beautiful all around me.  
In beauty it is finished.  
In beauty it is finished.

~ Navajo Chant

Let us be aware of the source of being  
common to us all and to all living things....  
Let us plead with ourselves to live in a way  
which will not deprive other beings of air,  
water, food, shelter, or the chance to live.  
With humility, with awareness of the  
existence of life, and of the sufferings that  
are going on around us, let us pray for the  
establishment of peace in our hearts and on  
the earth.

~ Thich Nhat Hanh

## *Voiced in Interfaith Prayers*

How wonderful, O Lord, are the works of  
your hands; the sun and the stars, the  
valleys and hills, the rivers and lakes all  
disclose your presence. The beasts of the  
fields, the birds of the air bespeak your  
wondrous will. In your goodness you have  
made us able to hear the music of the world,  
a divine voice sings through all creation.

~ Hebrew Prayer

*Great Spirit  
give us hearts to understand,  
never to take  
from creation's beauty more than we give,  
never to destroy wantonly for the  
furtherance of greed,  
never to deny to give our hands for the  
building of earth's beauty,  
never to take from her what we cannot use...*

~ U.N. Environmental Sabbath Program

## *Sacredness of Earth*

*...All praise be yours, my Lord, through  
Sister Earth, our mother,  
who feeds us in her sovereignty  
and produces  
various fruits with colored flowers  
and herbs . . .*

~ St. Francis of Assisi, Canticle of the Sun

In eternity there is indeed something true and sublime. But all these times and places and occasions are now and here. God himself culminates in the present moment, and will never be more divine in the lapse of all the ages.

~ Henry David Thoreau, Walden

## *Expressed in Poetry and Prose*

Never lose an opportunity to see anything that is beautiful. It is God's handwriting—a wayside sacrament. Welcome it in every fair face, every fair sky, every fair flower.

~ Ralph Waldo Emerson

i thank you God for most this amazing day: for leaping greenly spirits of trees and for the blue dream of sky and for everything which is natural, which is infinite, which is yes

~ e.e. cummings



## *Sacredness of Earth*

The most profound motive for our work is this knowing that we share in creation. Learning the meaning of creation in our daily lives will help us to live holier lives. It will fill the world with the spirit of Christ, the spirit of justice, charity, and peace.

~ On Human Work, no. 25

The best remedy for those who are afraid, lonely or unhappy is to go outside, somewhere where they can be quiet, alone with the heavens, nature, and God, because only then does one feel that all is as it should be and that God wishes to see people happy amidst the simple beauty of nature.

~ Anne Frank



## *Revealed in Work and Play*

Our task must be to free ourselves from our prison by widening our circles of compassion to embrace all living creatures and the whole of nature in its beauty.

~ Albert Einstein

Finding what brings peace and joy to your heart is important after a hard day at work, or just living in our intense world. Walking through your garden at the end of the day can rejuvenate you. I wonder if God, Allah, Jehovah, Shiva, or Gaia or whatever Supreme Being you have come to know, looks down on the Garden that He or She created with all the different varieties of life and “oohs and aahs”? It is a curious thought, but I think so.

~ Teresa Watkins, Gardener with Soul

## *Sacredness of Earth*



Let us pray –

Let ordinary people  
meet by the millions across the borders.  
Let them create a universal network  
of love and friendship.

Let billions of human beings  
co-operate to create a good future  
for their children and grandchildren.

Let us survive  
in peace and harmony with Mother Earth.

~ Haggen Hasselbalch

### Sources:

The New American Bible, 1996  
Documents of the US Conference of Catholic Bishops  
Earth Prayers from Around the World, ed. Elizabeth Roberts  
& Elisas Amidon

*SOAR! is a non-profit organization founded in 1986 as the direct result of a Wall Street Journal article that brought attention to the retirement needs of women and men religious in the United States. A concerned group of lay people formed the organization to raise national public awareness of the religious retirement crisis and provides financial resources to Catholic religious congregations to care for their elderly and infirm members.*

*Recent studies show that the total underfunded retirement liability for these religious congregations is more than \$7.5 billion. The median age of women religious is 69.8 years and that of men is 64.7. Current average annual Social Security benefit for religious is \$4,290 (12/31/06) compared to \$12,024 (10/13/06) for lay recipients. To date, SOAR! has distributed almost 800 grants totaling more than \$9 million to congregations in 43 states and Puerto Rico.*

*For more information, or to contribute to SOAR!, visit our Web site at [www.soar-usa.org](http://www.soar-usa.org).*