



# Blessed Be

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September 2015

Welcome back to our spirituality resource leaflet which we are currently sending with the Australian Grail Newsletter. In it, we hope you'll find something for your contemplation, ideas to think about, prayers to use and possibilities for further reading. These items have been contributed by different people and reflect the Grail's Christian foundation as well as its openness to the spirituality of other faith traditions. We will be publishing another edition around Christmas, and if you have anything pertaining to the season that you would like to contribute, please contact us at [helenlmacauley@gmail.com](mailto:helenlmacauley@gmail.com).

It is Spring and in harmony with the Pope's encyclical, *Laudato Si'*, we are focusing on spirituality and the environment.

*This poem by Rachel Carson was submitted by Ruth Crowe*

WHEN WE LOOK...

To stand at the edge of the sea,  
to sense the ebb and flow of the tides,  
to feel the breath of the mist moving over  
a great salt marsh,  
to watch the flight of shore birds  
that have swept up and down  
the surf lines of the continents for  
untold thousands of years,  
to see the running of the old eels  
and the young shad  
to the sea,  
is to have knowledge of things  
that are as nearly eternal  
as any earthly life can be.

*And from Fran Warner we have a number of pieces.....*

Others, in order to find God, will read a book. Well, as a matter of fact there is a certain great big book, the book of created nature. Look carefully at it top and bottom, observe it, read it. God did not make letters of ink for you to recognize him in; he set before your eyes all these things he has made. Why look for a louder voice? Heaven and earth cries out to you, "God made me." You can read what Moses wrote; in order to write it, what did Moses read, a man living in time? Observe heaven and earth in a religious spirit.

Augustine, quoted in *Ask the Beasts: Darwin and the God of Love*, Elizabeth Johnson, 2014, Bloomsbury, London, p. 152.

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One day, Francis and his followers came to a valley where birds of many kinds were gathered. When he saw them, Francis left his companions and ran towards the birds. They apparently were waiting for him. Instead of taking wing as they usually would do they stayed while he spoke to them.

“My companions, the birds,” he said,  
“you should praise your Creator very much  
and always love him;  
he gave you feathers to clothe you,  
wings so that you might fly,  
and everything else that you need.  
God has made you most noble of his creatures,  
giving you a home in the purity of the air;  
and though you neither sow nor reap,  
he protects you and governs you  
without any anxiety on your part.”

The birds began to crane their necks, extend their wings, open their mouths, and gaze at him. Then he blessed them and, making the sign of the cross over them, he gave them permission to fly away to some other place.

Then he went his own way, rejoicing and giving thanks to God whom all creatures venerate humbly and in their own way. From that day on, he solicitously admonished all birds, all animals and reptiles and even creatures that have no feeling to praise and love their Creator. Daily, when the name of the Saviour was invoked, he saw and experienced their obedience.

(1 Cel XXI) Quoted in *Peace of Heart: Based on the Life and Teachings of Francis of Assisi*, Ave Maria Press, Notre Dame, 1995, p. 83.

A philosopher asked Saint Anthony:

‘Father, how can you be enthusiastic when the comfort of books has been taken from you?’

Anthony replied: ‘My book, O philosopher, is the nature of created things, and whenever I want to read the word of God, it is right in front of me’.

.....

To be a contemplative, it is necessary to walk through nature softly, to be in tune with the rhythm of life, to learn from the cycles of time, to listen to the heartbeat of the universe, to love nature, to protect nature, and to discover in nature the presence and power of God. To be a contemplative it is necessary to grow a plant, love an animal, walk in the rain, and profess our consciousness of God in a lifetime of pulsating seasons.

*Illuminated Life: Monastic Wisdom for Seekers of Light*, Joan Chittister, Orbis Books, New York, 2000, p.83 and p. 86.

I still am awed by celestial happenings like comets, eclipses, and media showers. And as I gaze on these heavenly wonders, I somehow connect to the countless humans or human-like others who did the same, eons before my birth. The infinite cosmos and its mysteries help me keep my life in perspective. More than ever, the commonplace of nature fills me with amazement – every bird feather with its one million parts.

Janet Fout, quoted in *Last Child in the Woods: Saving our Children from Nature-Deficit Disorder*, Richard Louv, Atlantic Books, New York, 2005, p. 194.

Our Aboriginal culture has taught us  
to be still and to wait.  
We do not try to hurry things up.  
We let them follow their natural courses – like the seasons.  
We watch the moon in each of its phases.

We wait for the rain to fill our rivers and water the thirsty earth.  
At dawn we rise with the sun...  
When twilight comes, we prepare for the night.

There are deep springs within each one of us. Within this deep spring,  
Which is the every spirit of God, is a sound.  
The sound of Deep calling to Deep.

The sound is the Word of God – Jesus.

Miriam Rose- Ungenmerr, Address to International Liturgy Assembly, 1988, quoted in *Let the Many Coastlines be Glad: A Pastoral Letter on the Great Barrier Reef*, Catholic Bishops of Queensland, 2004.

## GOD IN ALL

He inspires all,  
He gives life to all, He dominates all, He supports all.  
He lights the light of the sun.  
He furnishes the light of the night.  
He has made springs in dry land.  
He is the God of heaven and earth,  
of sea and rivers,  
of sun, moon, stars,  
of the lofty mountain and the lowly valley, the God above heaven,  
and in heaven,  
and under heaven.

St Patrick, quoted in *The Wisdom of the Celts*, David Adam, Lion, Oxord, 1996, p 11.

See yourselves reflected in all the flowers and fruits. Each lovely in itself, but what diversity!

We live as a rule as if everything belonged to us. We forget too easily that it is really only lent by God, our maker.

Taste nature's sweetness and goodness. Experience God's good news in nature.

Sin is misusing other creatures for ends other than the purpose for which God created us.

Each new day of creation in the Bible is concluded with the words: And God saw that it was good.

From sayings of Jacques van Ginneken, SJ, founder of The Grail

I thank you God for this most amazing day:  
For the leaping greenly spirits of trees  
And a blue true dream of sky;  
And for everything  
Which is natural which is infinite  
Which is yes.

*E. E. Cummings*

*I (Helen MacAuley) have recently been reading Stephanie Kaza's book, 'Mindfully Green'. So, where, on a practical level, do we start to reconnect with our world and reduce the harm we cause?*

Stephanie Kaza, a Buddhist, is a professor in Environmental Studies at the University of Vermont. Citing Gary Snyder, she suggests we start by considering the food we eat. She puts forward some questions we should ask ourselves about the food we eat:

- Where does the food come from?
- What do I actually need?
- What is my fair share?
- How do my choices impact on the food available to others?
- What or who was harmed in the production of the food?

Whatever else we do, we all eat and, if we can do so mindfully, our meals can become a spiritual practice that will enrich our lives.

Stephanie Kaza, *Mindfully Green*, Finch Publishing, Sydney 2013

*From Alison Healey*

#### THE PEACE OF WILD THINGS

When despair for the world grows in me  
and I wake in the night at the least sound  
in fear of what my life and my children's lives may be,  
I go and lie down where the wood drake  
rests in beauty on the water, and the great heron feeds.  
I come into the peace of wild things  
who do not tax their lives with forethought  
of grief. I come into the presence of still water.  
And I feel above me the day-blind stars  
waiting with their light. For a time  
I rest in the grace of the world, and am free.

*Wendell Berry*

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We hope you will continue to enjoy what we send you.

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