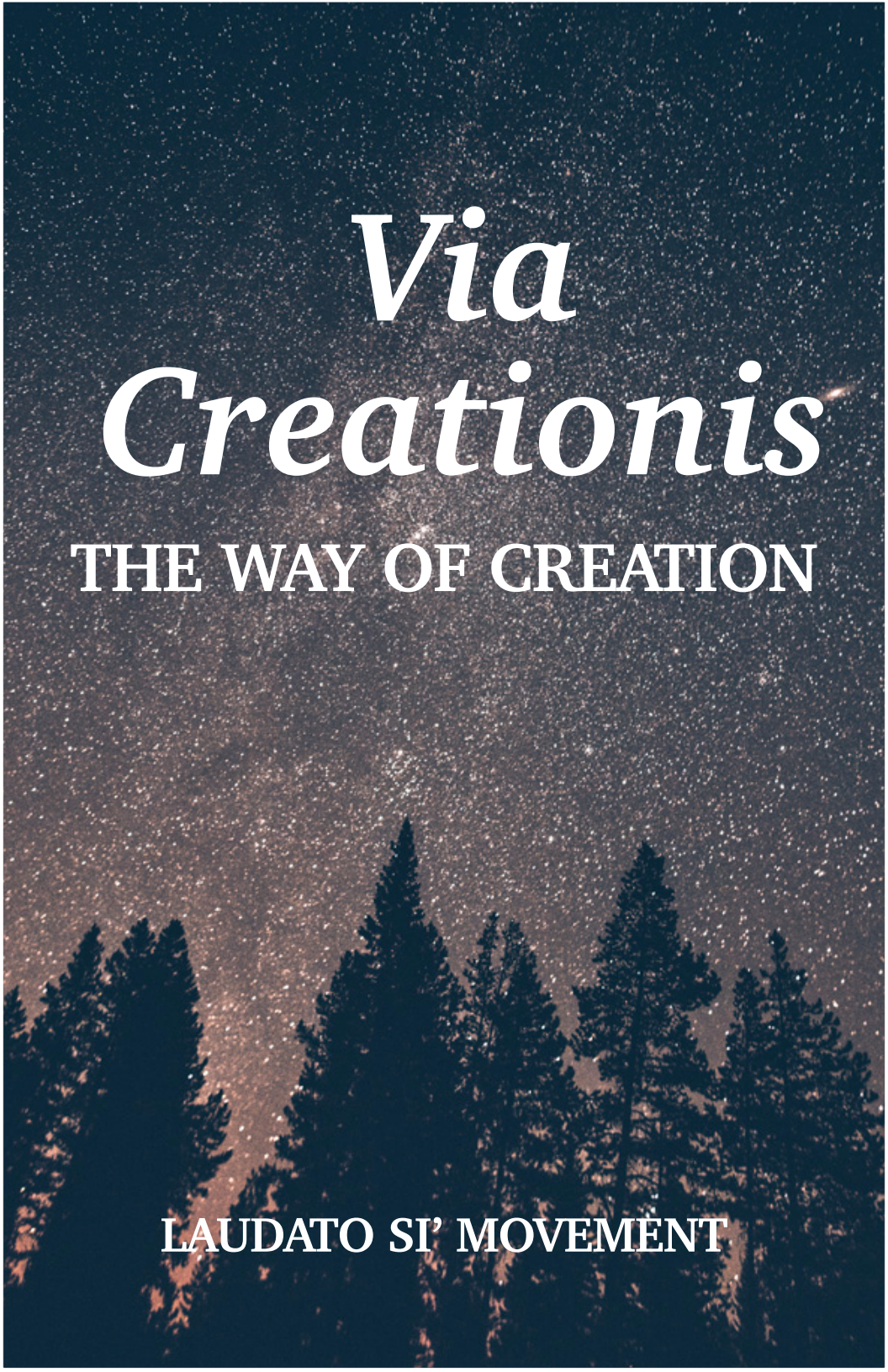




Via Creationis

THE WAY OF CREATION

LAUDATO SI' MOVEMENT

Via Creationis: Contemplating the Mystery of Creation

"When we contemplate with wonder the universe in all its grandeur and beauty, we must praise God."

Laudato Si' 238

"Scientific studies have splendidly enriched our knowledge of the age and dimensions of the cosmos, the development of life-forms and the appearance of humans. These discoveries invite us to even greater admiration for the greatness of the Creator."

Catechism of the Catholic Church, 283

Date and Time: Sunday Sept. 12, immediately following 4:00 PM Vigil Mass.

Location: Cathedral of St. Jude the Apostle

Abstract: *The Via Creationis* is a devotion to help us reflect on the mystery of Creation and praise our Creator for its wonders. Participants walk seven stations, following the seven days of Creation in Genesis, using scripture and related scientifically-based mediations as we imitate God in beholding, contemplating, and acknowledging the dignity and worth in all that he has made.

What to Expect: One hour of communal prayer and contemplation using the stained glass windows in the nave of the church as "stations." At each station, there will be a reading, responsory prayer, and praise for God the Creator.

Sources: Text by Laudato Si' Movement, with portions of the meditations on creation inspired from the "Universe Story" by the Wheaton Franciscans.

INTRODUCTION

- Words of welcome/explanation
- Sign of the Cross,
- **Pope Francis' Prayer for Our Earth:**

*All powerful God,
you are present in the universe
and in the smallest of your creatures.
You embrace with your tenderness all that exists.
Pour out upon us the power of your love,
that we may protect life and beauty.
Fill us with your peace, that we may live
as brothers and sisters, harming no one.
O God of the poor,
help us to rescue the abandoned
and forgotten of this earth,
so precious in your eyes.
Bring healing to our lives,
that we may protect the world and not prey on it,
that we may sow beauty,
not pollution and destruction.
Touch the hearts
of those who look only for gain
at the expense of the poor and the earth.
Teach us to discover the worth of each thing,
to be filled with awe and contemplation,
to recognize that we are profoundly united
with every creature
as we journey towards your infinite light.
We thank you for being with us each day.
Encourage us, we pray, in our struggle,
for justice, love and peace. – Amen*

1st Station

THE GOODNESS OF LIGHT

- ℣. We adore you, O Creator, and we bless you.
℟. Because by your holy Word you have created the world.

A reading from the Book of Genesis (1:1, 3-4):

In the beginning... God said: Let there be light, and there was light. God saw that the light was good. God then separated the light from the darkness.

A meditation on creation:

About 14 billion years ago, there was a bang – a very Big Bang. A sacred flaring forth. The universe began as the primordial flaring, a dramatic outburst. Mysteriously, without us understanding what happened before the first fraction of a second, a fiery microscopic fireball blew up, resulting in the most colossal of explosions. Energy of unthinkable proportions was released. Ardent matter was blasted in all directions. There was light - a lot of light. The cosmos began to unfold. A few million years later, the materials released by the Big Bang gradually cooled down and began to cluster, pulled by gravity. Eventually, the first stars were born. The dazzling spheres, releasing massive energy from the nuclear fusion in their cores, adorned the vast expanses of the early universe.

- ℣. God saw that the light was good.
℟. For the goodness of all Creation, praise be to God!
- ℣. Thank you, dear Creator, for the sacred gift of light.
℟. Amen.
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2nd Station

THE GOODNESS OF CELESTIAL BODIES

- ℣. We adore you, O Creator, and we bless you.
℟. Because by your holy Word you have created the world.

A reading from the Book of Genesis (1:14, 16, 18):

Then God said: Let there be lights in the dome of the sky... God made the two great lights, the greater one to govern the day, and the lesser one to govern the night, and the stars... God saw that it was good.

A meditation on creation:

Eventually, stars clustered into galaxies. These whirlpools of cosmic matter evolved into all kinds of beautiful shapes and colors, blending the gleaming white of the flocked stars together with a diverse palettes of clouds of dust and gases – yellow, orange, red, pink, purple, blue, and more. Throughout billions of years, the cosmos birthed at least a trillion of these stunning galaxies, each of them holding billions of stars. The primeval stars collapsed in massive explosions – also known as supernovas – sparking long cycles of stellar birth and collapse that formed new chemical elements, essential for life to flourish later.

- ℣. God saw that stars and galaxies were good.
℟. For the goodness of all Creation, praise be to God!

About 6 billion years ago, in one of those trillion galaxies – our very own Milky Way – yet another supernova took place. But this was a special one for us. An old star, the ancient mother of our Sun, ran out of fuel and collapsed through a massive explosion. A cloud of cosmic dust was released, fertile ground for new stars

and planets to form. This cloud, from which we all come, contained everything ranging from the calcium in our bones to the carbon in our muscles, and beyond.

In this cloud, about 4.6 billion years ago, a new star was born, the Sun. Sometime after that, the Earth and other planets formed from the same supernova debris. Earth was a fireball, a soup of molten rock. Soon after, the Moon came into being and started orbiting Earth, most likely after the impact of a large body. Our sacred Earth was full of creativity ready to be unleashed.

℣. God saw that the Sun, Moon, and planets were good.

℟. For the goodness of all Creation, praise be to God!

℣. Thank you, dear Creator, for the sacred gift of celestial bodies.

℟. Amen.

3rd Station

THE GOODNESS OF THE SKY, EARTH, AND SEA

℣. We adore you, O Creator, and we bless you.

℟. Because by your holy Word you have created the world.

A reading from the Book of Genesis (1:6, 8):

Then God said: Let there be a dome in the middle of the waters, to separate one body of water from the other. God made the dome, and it separated the water below the dome from the water above the dome. And so it happened. God called the dome “sky.”

A meditation on creation:

In parallel, about 4.44 billion years ago, a dome started to form, stretching as a thin blanket covering Earth. The primeval atmosphere was made mainly from gasses escaping from the planet’s boiling core. As the sky dome gradually built up, it started protecting Earth from incoming asteroids and comets as well as from solar radiation, while also creating the pressure needed for liquid water to form. As the dome evolved, it eventually became the sacred air we now breathe.

℣. God saw that the sky was good.

℟. For the goodness of all Creation, praise be to God!

℣. Thank you, dear Creator, for the sacred gift of the sky.

℟. Amen.

A reading from the Book of Genesis (1:9-10):

Then God said: Let the water under the sky be gathered into a single basin, so that the dry land may appear. And so it happened: the water under the sky was gathered into its basin, and the dry land appeared. God called the dry land "earth," and the basin of water he called "sea." God saw that it was good.

A meditation on creation:

Soon after, about 4.43 billion years ago, Earth gradually cooled and its surface of molten rock turned into a crust of rock. In parallel, the water vapor escaping through volcanoes from its boiling interior formed clouds that discharged rain. The process lasted a very long time, drenching the young planet. Water came together in countless streams and rivers that flowed into gradually forming majestic seas. Lakes, lagoons, and wetlands were formed along the way. In the coldest places, snow and mighty glaciers dominated the scene. Sacred water blessed all corners of the globe.

✠. God saw that the water was good.

✠. For the goodness of all Creation, praise be to God!

About 335 million years ago, the "supercontinent" Pangea emerged, with a vast ocean surrounding it. About 175 million years ago, Pangea started to break apart, gradually becoming the seven continents, with a myriad of islands in between. Over

billions of years, water and sky molded the Earth's rocks into all sorts of mountains, hills, plateaus, and plains, stones, pebbles, sand grains, and clay.

℣. God saw that the land was good.

℟. For the goodness of all Creation, praise be to God!

℣. Thank you, dear Creator, for the sacred gift of the earth and the sea.

℟. Amen.

4th Station

THE GOODNESS OF PLANTS

℣. We adore you, O Creator, and we bless you.

℟. Because by your holy Word you have created the world.

A reading from the Book of Genesis (1:11-12):

Then God said: Let the earth bring forth vegetation: every kind of plant that bears seed and every kind of fruit tree on earth that bears fruit with its seed in it. And so it happened: the earth brought forth vegetation: every kind of plant that bears seed and every kind of fruit tree that bears fruit with its seed in it. God saw that it was good.

A meditation on creation:

About 3.5 billion years ago, water enabled the stupendous to happen: life emerged. The first single-celled microorganism was born in the sea. About 2.7 billion years ago, cyanobacteria became the first oxygen producers using photosynthesis. Precious oxygen gradually started to build up in the dome of the sky. Over 1 billion years ago, cells joined with each other for survival and development – the first multicellular organisms were born. Life started to become increasingly complex and diverse.

℣. God saw that multicellular beings were good.

℟. For the goodness of all Creation, praise be to God!

Eventually, the first algae emerged, the very first plants. Some species of algae evolved to survive outside of water – the first mosses emerged, the tiny ancestors of all terrestrial plants. They proliferated into various species and eventually developed the first vascular tissues, with tubes transporting water and nutrients to grow larger. This is how ferns and other leafed plants were born. In parallel, and essential for plants to thrive, a blanket of soil began to develop on top of rocks. Microbes, fungi, and other creatures transformed dead plants into soil to feed and sustain later generations of bigger plants. About 300 million years ago, conifers emerged and sacred forests of cedars, pines, cypresses, redwoods, spruces, and more began to take over the land.

℣. God saw that plants and soil were good.

℟. For the goodness of all Creation, praise be to God!

Later on, about 130 million years ago, the first flowers bloomed and their corresponding fruits ripened. An explosion of flowering plants transformed the face of the earth. They come together in lush rainforests, vast grasslands and savannas, dense mangrove and boreal forests, and even overcame the harshness of arid deserts and icy tundras. Sacred plants with their exuberant array of flowers have adorned our beautiful earth since then.

℣. God saw that flowers and fruit were good.

℟. For the goodness of all Creation, praise be to God!

℣. Thank you, dear Creator, for the sacred gift of plants.

℟. Amen.

5th Station

THE GOODNESS OF WATER AND AIR CREATURES

- ✠. We adore you, O Creator, and we bless you.
- ✠. Because by your holy Word you have created the world.

A reading from the Book of Genesis (1:20-21):

Then God said: Let the water teem with an abundance of living creatures, and on the earth let birds fly beneath the dome of the sky. God created the great sea monsters and all kinds of crawling living creatures with which the water teems, and all kinds of winged birds. God saw that it was good.

A meditation on creation:

In parallel to the emergence of aquatic plants, about 600 million years ago, worms and jellyfish appeared in the seas. They featured the first nervous systems, allowing them to sense their environment and swim around. They then evolved into all sorts of invertebrate creatures, with growing complexity and intelligence – molluscs, sea snails, trilobites, crabs, lobsters, shrimp, squids, octopus, and more. Fish with cartilage and bones emerged, ranging from tiny seahorses, eels, and coral fish, to huge sharks, swordfish, and manta rays – and everything in between.

Later, after a long evolutionary journey on land, marine reptiles and mammals emerged. Still breathing air on the sea surface, they ventured into deeper waters and became great swimmers. Reptilian divers as marine dinosaurs, sea turtles, and crocodiles,

fin-footed creatures like seals, walruses, manatees, and dugongs, as well as full-fledged cetaceans as majestic whales, dolphins, orcas, and narwhals evolved.

℣. God saw that fish, marine reptiles and mammals were good.

℟. For the goodness of all Creation, praise be to God!

About 390 million years ago, the first flying creatures emerged from water, an ancient species of dragonfly. All kinds of flying insects would follow, as flies, beetles, ladybugs, fireflies, grasshoppers, and pollinators as butterflies, moths, bees, and wasps.

In parallel, after a long evolutionary journey as fish-turned-reptiles, birds eventually emerged about 150 million years ago. After mastering flying through their light feathers, they evolved into an awe-inspiring array of sacred flapping life. Giant condors and tiny sparrows, musical canaries and discreet hummingbirds, solitary eagles and dancing flocks of starlings, colorful parrots and camouflaged owls, running ostriches and swimming cormorants.

℣. God saw that flying insects and birds were good.

℟. For the goodness of all Creation, praise be to God!

℣. Thank you, dear Creator, for the sacred gift of water and air creatures.

℟. Amen.

6th Station

THE GOODNESS OF LAND CREATURES AND HUMANS

- ✠. We adore you, O Creator, and we bless you.
- ✠. Because by your holy Word you have created the world.

A reading from the Book of Genesis (1:24-25):

Then God said: Let the earth bring forth every kind of living creature: tame animals, crawling things, and every kind of wild animal. And so it happened: God made every kind of wild animal, every kind of tame animal, and every kind of thing that crawls on the ground. God saw that it was good.

A meditation on creation:

About 500 million years ago, in tandem with the colonization of land by plants, the first insects appeared as well. From tiny ants and giant stick insects, communal termites and solitary mantids, colorful beetles and stealthy leaf insects, silent shield bugs and musical cicadas and crickets. About 370 million years ago, the first amphibians appeared. Feasting on insects and loving the water, they evolved into countless types of frogs, toads, salamanders, and newts. Some time later, about 320 million years ago, some evolved into reptiles with lungs and shelled eggs. They branched off into all sorts of forms and shapes – tiny lizards and giant dinosaurs, slithering snakes and rigid tortoises, climbing geckos and morphing chameleons.

About 200 million years ago, warm-blooded mammals appeared for the first time, feeding milk to their little ones. First with a

rodent-like appearance, they then evolved into a sacred line-up of incredible diversity. Tiny mice and towering giraffes, bouncing kangaroos and climbing monkeys, hairless hippos and furry bears, fragile kittens and mighty elephants, and beyond.

¶. God saw that animals were good.

¶. For the goodness of all Creation, praise be to God!

A reading from the Book of Genesis (1:26-27):

Then God said: Let us make human beings in our image, after our likeness. Let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, the birds of the air, the tame animals, all the wild animals, and all the creatures that crawl on the earth. God created mankind in his image; in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.

A meditation on creation:

After a long journey of over 3.5 billion years, the miracle of life eventually turned into the miracle of humans. After an incredible journey in the sea, of microorganisms, bacteria, invertebrates and fish, and an equally incredible journey on land, of amphibians, reptiles, mammals, and primates, the first human ancestors walked on Earth, over 2 million years ago, in Eastern Africa.

Homo Habilis developed the ability to create some rudimentary stone tools. Homo Erectus improved both social coordination and the sophistication of tools, and even learned how to use fire. Homo Sapiens emerged, with a radically expanded consciousness. They began to interact with each other and their natural surroundings in increasingly complex ways. About 40,000 years ago, human language began, artistic expressions as painting and music emerged, and the first rituals took place to connect with the

divine mystery. About 12,000 years ago, the revolution of agriculture began. Humans learned how to grow food from plants and animals, allowing them to settle down in villages and towns and produce increasingly sophisticated storytelling, all sorts of artistic endeavors, and, eventually, writing. Most importantly, both good and evil behaviors intensify. On one hand, humans become capable of unthinkable atrocities, such as slavery and war. On the other hand, paradoxically, humans become capable also of unthinkable compassion and selflessness, often nourished by spiritual experience.

℣. God saw that human beings were good.

℟. For the goodness of all Creation, praise be to God!

℣. Thank you, dear Creator, for the sacred gift of humans.

℟. Amen.

7th Station

THE GOODNESS OF EVERYTHING

- ℣. We adore you, O Creator, and we bless you.
℟. Because by your holy Word you have created the world.

A reading from the Book of Genesis (1:31, 2:3):

God looked at everything he had made, and found it very good...
God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it he rested from all the work he had done in creation.

A meditation on creation:

A few thousand years ago, the love story began between God and the People of Israel. God taught His chosen people about the goodness of the whole cosmos and the importance of contemplative rest. We were invited to enjoy and be thankful for the created world that is “very good”.

℣. As God saw, we also see that everything is good, very good.

℟. All Creation is good, very good. Praise be to God!

About 2,000 years ago, the Creator became a creature. The womb of a young Jewish woman was the setting for the incredible mystery of the Incarnation. A few decades later, that Creator-and-creature was nailed to a cross, redeeming the whole cosmos – ranging from the most distant stars to the tiniest insects in our midst.

Ÿ. As God saw, we also see that everything is good, very good.

℞. All Creation is good, very good. Praise be to God!

In recent times, we have learned to look at everything God has made with awe-inspiring detail – ranging from the telescopic detail of astronomical wonders to the microscopic detail of biological wonders.

Ÿ. As God saw, we also see that everything is good, very good.

℞. All Creation is good, very good. Praise be to God!

Yet, in the last few decades, instead of contemplating how everything is “very good” and instead of letting the Earth rest, too many of us have seen how everything is “very exploitable.” Driven by greed and selfishness, we have ravaged our forests, polluted our waters, poisoned our soil, disrupted our climate, and decimated non-human populations, while also trashing the most vulnerable among us humans. We raise a heartfelt cry of lament and repentance for this sacrilege.

Now, more than ever, we uplift the sacredness of all Creation. We honor God as Creator. We celebrate the cosmos’ web of matter and the planet’s web of life.

Ÿ. As God saw, we also see that everything is good, very good.

℞. All Creation is good, very good. Praise be to God!

Ÿ. Thank you, dear Creator, for the sacred gift of all Creation.

℞. Amen.

CLOSING

Hymn: *Canticle of the Sun*

*Most High, all-powerful, good Lord,
Yours are the praises, the glory, the honor, and all blessings.*

To You alone, Most High, do they belong,
and no man is worthy to mention Your name.

Praised be You, my Lord, with all your creatures;
especially Brother Sun, who is the day, and through whom You
give us light.

And he is beautiful and radiant with great splendor,
and bears a likeness to You, Most High One.

Praised be You, my Lord, through Sister Moon and the stars;
in heaven You formed them clear and precious and beautiful.

Praised be You, my Lord, through Brother Wind,
and through the air, cloudy and serene,
and every kind of weather through which You give sustenance to
Your creatures.

Praised be You, my Lord, through Sister Water,
which is very useful and humble and precious and chaste.

Praised be You, my Lord, through Brother Fire,
through whom You light the night;
and he is beautiful and playful and robust and strong.

Praised be You, my Lord, through Sister Mother Earth,
who sustains us and governs us and who produces
varied fruits with colored flowers and herbs.

Praised be You, my Lord,
through those who give pardon for Your love,
and bear infirmity and tribulation.

Blessed are those who endure in peace
for by You, Most High, they shall be crowned.

Praised be You, my Lord,
through our Sister Bodily Death,
from whom no living man can escape.

Woe to those who die in mortal sin.
Blessed are those whom death will find in Your most holy will,
for the second death shall do them no harm.

Praise and bless my Lord,
and give Him thanks,
and serve Him with great humility.

Amen.

❖ Sign of the Cross. (Or final blessing if priest is present.)