

Extinction Grieving Prayer, 2015

Use two candles; prepare suggested (or other) music and video. Adapt in any way that facilitates use.

Call to Prayer

*. . . today, the dusky seaside sparrow
became extinct. It may never be as famous
as the pterodactyl [tera daktel] or the dodo,
but the last one died today*

An excerpt from "Science" by Alison Hawthorne Deming

What you call resources, we call our relatives. Source unknown.

** Light the first candle. It honors all the species that have gone extinct
in our lifetimes.*



All: Great Giver of Life, we pause to remember our place at the beginning of the Sixth Great Extinction on Planet Earth. For 13.8 billion years creation has been groaning: bringing to birth, becoming more complex, more organized, more conscious. Now, for the first time, our species is ruining whole ecosystems, aborting entire groups of interdependent species. We remember that the world's nations are meeting to redress climate change, one of the major causes of extinctions.

Litany of Affirmation



We affirm the Sacred Mystery that caused and continues Creation.

We affirm the 13.8 billion years of our Universe.

We affirm the billions of galaxies, each with its billions of solar systems and stars.

We affirm the multiple transformations during the 4.5 billion years of Mother Earth's life so far, and the relentless evolution towards potentially ever-greater consciousness in the future.

We affirm the millions of species that have inhabited our planet in beautifully-webbed communities: microorganisms, plants, fish, birds, mammals

We affirm that we came from Earth and exist, like all species, in a communion of subjects.

We acknowledge that we play a part in violating this communion by our carelessness, ignorance, and indifference. Forgive us our part in the death of ecosystems and the resulting extinction of creatures in whom we believe divinity lives and acts.

Litany of Grief

We grieve humans' lack of awareness of, and concern about, the destruction of interdependent communities that have taken billions of years to develop.

We grieve the climate disaster that is extinguishing habitats and the multiple species within them.

We grieve the more than one-in-four flowering plants, the one-in-five mammals, the nearly one-in-three amphibians, and the one-in-eight birds that are vulnerable to being wiped out completely. (International Union for the Conservation of Nature)

We grieve the Golden Toad, native to Costa Rica. It has not been seen since 1989, when a single male was found, the last of its species.



We grieve the Pyrenean Ibex. The last of this species naturally born was a female, Celia, who died in 2000.

We grieve the St. Helena Olive, a small spreading tree, the last of which perished in 2003 primarily due to deforestation and invasive plants.



We grieve all our extinct brother and sister species, the amphibians, fish, birds, mammals, plants and trees, and their diminished habitats.

We grieve the humans whose sustenance and livelihoods are threatened by this disruption in the food web.

We grieve the deaths of ecological martyrs: Sister Dorothy Stang, Dian Fossey, Chico Mendes, and the over 900 other activists slain since 2004. (Global Witness)

** Add as you wish.*

Listen to and/or Sing: While listening to or singing this song, note the interconnections: war, bees, climate, soil. "Where Have All the Flowers Gone?" Kingston Trio: www.youtube.com/watch?v=Eyof5doUFzk.

Quiet reflection

** Extinguish first candle. Light second candle. It represents all threatened species and our desire to protect them.*

Watch “How Wolves Change Rivers” (4:33 min.):
www.youtube.com/watch?v=ysa5OBhXz-Q



Litany of Gratitude and Hope

We are grateful that 90% of species under the protection of the Endangered Species Act (U.S.) are recovering at the rate specified by their federal recovery plan.



We are grateful that British oil company Soco International agreed (June 2014) to suspend exploration in a national park in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), home to half the world's critically endangered mountain gorillas (pictured here) and thousands of other species. We thank the over 750,000 people who signed a petition to stop the oil drilling.

We are grateful that the Zoological Society of London released its list of birds most at risk of extinction based on evolutionary distinctness and global endangerment (EDGE) in April 2014. This information will help conservationists decide where efforts should focus first.

We are grateful that the California blue whales, nearly hunted to extinction at the turn of the 20th century, are slowly rebounding after the global hunting ban in 1986.



We are grateful for all of the habitats that have been saved so the interdependent species within them can escape extinction.

We are grateful for the many people throughout the world who dedicate their time and efforts to keeping habitats and species alive so they can give praise to their creator by their distinct lineages, attributes, and contributions to the web of life.

** Add as you wish.*

Action Suggestions

Let us not leave in our wake a swath of destruction and death which will affect our own lives and those of future generations. Pope Francis

To save species, we must save ecosystems. To save ecosystems, we must reduce climate change, pollution, poaching, invasive species, and over-consumption. Mentally check the list that follows for actions that you already take. There might be something there that you would also want to do.

Read quietly:

Consciously deepen appreciation of the glory of creation, its long story, the place of Divine Mystery in it, and humans' dependence upon it. Pray for the healing of creation.

Reduce all energy use. Transition to renewable energy sources.

Encourage institutions to invest in renewable energy and to divest from fossil fuels.

Drive less and/or reduce gas use by not exceeding 60 mph on the highways (and by other ways).

Avoid produce, meat, and poultry from factory farms. Buy recycled products.

Reduce use of plastic. Carry water in a thermos (not bottled water). Buy local.

Avoid genetically modified foods (GMOs). Lobby for laws to protect habitats and species.

Include climate change and other Earth-care concerns when choosing legislators.

Join (or cooperate with) a group working to conserve, restore, and protect habitats and species.



Share on any one of these topics:

What are your hopes for the Paris Climate Change Conference? What kind of Earth "could be"?
What are the most meaningful things we can do to co-create a better world?

Sending Forth

Leader: Great Giver of Life, we come from, and we dwell in, the magnificent world in which you live and act. Our species is causing extinctions; our species can prevent them. Let us not be thwarted by the immensity of the challenge, for the Power working within us can do more than we could ask or imagine. May the flame of this candle continue burning in our hearts, reminding us to help "our sister, Mother Earth, who sustains and governs us, and who produces various fruits with colored flowers and herbs." (St. Francis) Send forth your Spirit and we shall be empowered. **All:** And you will renew the face of the Earth. Amen.

** Extinguish second candle.*

Share a blessing of hope with one another. Celebrate possibilities!

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