

Earth As Our Home A Pilgrimage of Blessing...

A Prayer Service to Accompany the "Earth As Our Home" reflection booklet*
Created by the Catholic Sisters for a Healthy Earth

**The "Earth As Our Home" reflection booklet can be downloaded free here:
http://osfdbq.org/siteimages/publications/brochures/earth_as_our_home.pdf*

Pilgrimage: a journey made to a sacred place, as a quest or to pay homage

Blessing: a special favor, mercy or benefit; praise, devotion, worship; a favor or gift invoked from or bestowed by God

After a journey, how many of us say, "It is so good to be home!" What if we could say that every day? And say it not only about returning to the building we inhabit and the relationships there, but the entire environment, the entire Earth Community in which we move every day. It IS good to be here in THIS home we call Earth.



Our homes – both the physical structures we inhabit and Earth that provides for us – are sacred spaces. This pilgrimage will take us from space to space, room to room; acknowledging our need for forgiveness, bestowing our blessing upon it in gratitude and receiving the blessing each sacred space offers us if we are open.

How to Use this Prayer Service

Here are a few suggestions for using this prayer service. Please feel free to adapt as best meets your/your group's needs.

This pilgrimage is best if you physically move from space to space, but it can be done as a guided meditation, alone or in a group. The same format will be followed for each stop on this pilgrimage:

- Refrain (or verse) of a song – as a welcome to the space and again as the transition as you walk to the next space. This could be a song like "Holy Ground" or "All are Welcome." Choose an appropriate song that all can join in singing. Depending on the song selected, you may choose to use a different verse instead of just the refrain at each stop on the pilgrimage.

- A word of acknowledging this space/room. You are invited to make the connection between the function/meaning of the physical room and the same function/meaning in the Earth Community.
- Asking for forgiveness
- Asking for the blessing this space/room offers us
- Bestowing our blessing on this space/room in return

After the last space/room, we suggest you process back to the dining room where you can “break bread” together – this could be sharing a variety of breads, a full meal together, or another symbolic act of sharing. You can use this time to share any feelings and/or insights gained through this pilgrimage prayer experience.

You will need these materials for the journey:

- This prayer service
- *Earth As Our Home* booklet – to refer to the reflections for each space, if desired; or scripture or earth readings from other sources
- Blessing materials such as incense or a bowl of water with fronds – whatever works best for you/your group

If making this pilgrimage as a group, you may choose to designate a leader for the entire prayer journey, or you may prefer to have different participants lead the prayer at each site.

Adaptation

Please feel free to adapt the material and format as best meets your needs or the needs of the group. You may decide to make this pilgrimage more slowly by reflecting on one room/space per day, or per week. You are encouraged to repeat this pilgrimage - perhaps seasonally – as you, your family and/or community and our Earth continue to grow and change, and new insights and blessings emerge. If done seasonally, you may wish to change the song used to reflect the journey in each season. You may opt to make this pilgrimage each season of the liturgical year and reflect on the connections to the messages of each of those seasons.

You may also choose to use short passages from the works of Thomas Berry, Aldo Leopold, Ed Hays, various poets and others, or a scripture passage pertinent to each space as part of the pilgrimage.

May these pilgrimages help reveal your place in, and deep connection to, the entire sacred Earth Community and gift you in surprising ways.

Earth As Our Home: A Pilgrimage of Blessing

PORCH

- Refrain of a song

As we enter the sacred space of our porch, we recognize that it is the portal, the threshold where inner and outer meet; where the individual and community connect. Where, or what, is Earth's porch? *(Pause for a brief reflection. Perhaps read a brief passage from the Earth As Our Home booklet.)*

Becoming more mindful of this space, we ask forgiveness:

- for the times we have refused to cross this threshold, staying isolated in our comfort zone;
- for the times we have refused to cross the portal into other cultures or allowed other cultures in;
- for the times we have not paused here to enjoy the moment;
- for the times we have not created porches at work and play, forgetting to invite others into our lives;
- for the times we see our neighbors as strangers, immigrants as aliens;
- for the times we have ignored creation as we enter/exit our human-made structures...

We ask now to be open to receive the blessing (favor or benefit) our/Earth's porch offers us. *(Pause in silence to reflect and allow the blessing to emerge. When ready, each may share in litany fashion the blessing they received.)*

We now bless this sacred space *(use water, incense, etc.)* as we strive to be more attentive to these connections in our lives. *(Pause in silence to reflect and allow the blessing to emerge. When ready, each may share in litany fashion the blessing they wish to bestow on this space.)*

Refrain of a song – to transition/walk to the next space

GARAGE

- Refrain of a song

As we enter the sacred space of our garage, we recognize the temporariness it calls us to. Where, or what, is Earth's garage? *(Pause for a brief reflection. Perhaps read a brief passage from the Earth As Our Home booklet.)*

Becoming more mindful of this space, we ask forgiveness:

- for the times we have accumulated things only to place them in “storage” forgetting to use them or pass them on to others;
- for the times we have paid more attention to our wants than our needs, or the needs of others;
- for the times we have not noticed or protected Earth’s storage places (such as aquifers, seeds...);
- for the times we’ve focused on safeguarding/hoarding our things and missed the needs of others;
- for the times we have insisted on permanence at the expense of life-giving change;
- for the times we’ve tried to keep Earth’s bounty and beauty to ourselves, rather than sharing it with others...

We ask now to be open to receive the blessing (favor or benefit) our/Earth’s garage offers us. *(Pause in silence to reflect and allow the blessing to emerge. When ready, each may share in litany fashion the blessing they received.)*

We now bless this sacred space *(use water, incense, etc.)* as we promise to be more attentive to distinguishing wants and needs. *(Pause in silence to reflect and allow the blessing to emerge. When ready, each may share in litany fashion the blessing they wish to bestow on this space.)*

Refrain of a song – to transition/walk to the next space

LIVING ROOM

- Refrain of a song

As we enter the sacred space of our living room, we recognize it as the space where family life unfolds. Where, or what, is Earth’s living room? *(Pause for a brief reflection. Perhaps read a brief passage from the Earth As Our Home booklet.)*

Becoming more mindful of this space, we ask forgiveness:

- for the times we’ve been too busy to listen to one another or engage in meaningful conversations;
- for the times we’ve been impervious to the life unfolding around us in nature;
- for the times we’ve been too afraid to share of ourselves with others – our joys, our pains;
- for the times we’ve not seen ourselves as part of the Earth Community;
- for the times we’ve not listened to and learned from the land around us;
- for the times we’ve not balanced work, play and spiritual growth...

We ask now to be open to receive the blessing our/Earth's living room offers us. *(Pause in silence to reflect and allow the blessing to emerge. When ready, each may share in litany fashion the blessing they received.)*

We now bless this sacred space *(use water, incense, etc.)* as we strive to be more intentional in making a life together. *(Pause in silence to reflect and allow the blessing to emerge. When ready, each may share in litany fashion the blessing they wish to bestow on this space.)*

Refrain of a song – to transition/walk to the next space

KITCHEN

- Refrain of a song

As we enter the sacred space of our/Earth's kitchen, we recognize the holiness of nurturance. Where, or what, is Earth's kitchen? *(Pause for a brief reflection. Perhaps read a brief passage from the Earth As Our Home booklet.)*

Becoming more mindful of this space, we ask forgiveness:

- for the times we've been too busy to prepare and serve a home-cooked meal, frequenting fast food places or convenience foods;
- for the times we've not appreciated where our food has come from and all those who worked to bring it from field to our table;
- for the times we've complained about the cost of food without recognizing the price Earth pays for our convenience;
- for the times we've not made an effort to purchase food locally and know our farmers/producers;
- for the times we've purchased food out of season;
- for the times we've taken for granted the gifts of cooks...

We ask now to be open to receive the blessing our/Earth's kitchen offers us. *(Pause in silence to reflect and allow the blessing to emerge. When ready, each may share in litany fashion the blessing they received.)*

We now bless this sacred space *(use water, incense, etc.)* as we recognize our call to nourish and be nourished. *(Pause in silence to reflect and allow the blessing to emerge. When ready, each may share in litany fashion the blessing they wish to bestow on this space.)*

Refrain of a song – to transition/walk to the next space

DINING ROOM

- Refrain of a song

As we enter the sacred space of our/Earth's dining room, we recognize the importance of communion. Where, or what, is Earth's dining room? *(Pause for a brief reflection. Perhaps read a brief passage from the Earth As Our Home booklet.)*

Becoming more mindful of this space, we ask forgiveness:

- for the times we've not savored every bite, giving thanks;
- for the times we've been too busy or scattered to share a meal together, as a family or a community of friends;
- for the times we've failed to recognize the bread of life in our midst;
- for the times we've failed to be bread for others;
- for the times we've taken for granted the renewing energies of nature that feed our soul;
- for the times we've placed more importance on satisfying our physical hunger than on our hunger for belonging and right relationships with others and all creation...

We ask now to be open to receive the blessing our/Earth's dining room offers us. *(Pause to reflect and allow the blessing to emerge. When ready, each may share in litany fashion the blessing they received.)*

We now bless this sacred space *(use water, incense, etc.)* as we strive to strengthen and deepen our relationships. *(Pause to reflect and allow the blessing to emerge. When ready, each may share in litany fashion the blessing they wish to bestow on this space.)*

Refrain of a song – to transition/walk to the next space

YARD

- Refrain of a song

As we enter the sacred space of our/Earth's yard, we are awed by its many gifts. Where, or what, is Earth's yard? *(Pause for a brief reflection. Perhaps read a brief passage from the Earth As Our Home booklet.)*

Becoming more mindful of this space, we ask forgiveness:

- for the times we've not paid attention to the various forms of life in our yard;
- for the times we've called some plants "weeds" and used toxic chemicals to rid our yard of them;
- for the times we've insisted on trying to grow plants that are our favorites, instead of those that are native to our area;

- for the times we've placed more importance on how our yard "looks" to others, than on nurturing/preserving its biodiversity;
- for the times we've mindlessly littered Earth's yard as we walked or drove along;
- for the times we've only looked out our windows at our yard and not taken the time to "be" in it, to have fun there...

We ask now to be open to receive the blessing our/Earth's yard offers us. *(Pause in silence to reflect and allow the blessing to emerge. When ready, each may share in litany fashion the blessing they received.)*

We now bless this sacred space (*use water, incense, etc.*) as we seek to open our eyes and ears to creation's gifts. *(Pause in silence to reflect and allow the blessing to emerge. When ready, each may share in litany fashion the blessing they wish to bestow on this space.)*

Refrain of a song – to transition/walk to the next space

BEDROOM

- Refrain of a song

As we enter the sacred space of our/Earth's bedroom, we are aware of the call to honor the Sabbath. Where, or what, is Earth's bedroom? *(Pause for a brief reflection. Perhaps read a brief passage from the Earth As Our Home booklet.)*

Becoming more mindful of this space, we ask forgiveness:

- for the times when our "doing" became more important than our "being";
- for the times we have not allowed Earth to rest and renew, instead continually demanding Earth produce for us;
- for the times we've been too busy to pray/meditate/rest;
- for the times we've worn the statement "I've been busy," as a badge of honor and worth;
- for the times we've failed to hear Earth's call to us to come and sit a spell in her beauty;
- for the times we've been afraid of solitude and filled it with sounds and activity...

We ask now to be open to receive the blessing our/Earth's bedroom offers us. *(Pause in silence to reflect and allow the blessing to emerge. When ready, each may share in litany fashion the blessing they received.)*

We now bless this sacred space (*use water, incense, etc.*) as we remind ourselves to attune ourselves to the rhythms of life. *(Pause in silence to reflect and allow the blessing to emerge. When ready, each may share in litany fashion the blessing they wish to bestow on this space.)*

Refrain of a song – to transition/walk to the next space

BATHROOM

- Refrain of a song

As we enter the sacred space of our/Earth's bathroom, we are aware of the gift of water for cleansing. Where, or what, is Earth's bathroom? *(Pause for a brief reflection. Perhaps read a brief passage from the Earth As Our Home booklet.)*

Becoming more mindful of this space, we ask forgiveness:

- for the times we've taken the precious gift of life-giving water for granted, wasting rather than conserving it;
- for the times we've not given a second thought to waste water and those who work at water treatment facilities for the health of the community;
- for the times we've interrupted Earth's natural cleansing/filtering processes by disrupting her ecosystems with "development projects" – placing our homes where **we** want them, not where Earth says we can;
- for the times we've ignored the majority of the world's people who do not have access to fresh, potable water nor to sanitation systems;
- for the times we've treated Earth as our waste bin;
- for the times we've only been concerned about our bodily cleanliness and appearance, and have forgotten to tend to our inner being...

We ask now to be open to receive the blessing our/Earth's bathroom offers us. *(Pause in silence to reflect and allow the blessing to emerge. When ready, each may share in litany fashion the blessing they received.)*

We now bless this sacred space *(use water, incense, etc.)* as we recognize Earth's call to transform "waste" into "resource." *(Pause in silence to reflect and allow the blessing to emerge. When ready, each may share in litany fashion the blessing they wish to bestow on this space.)*

Refrain of a song – to transition/walk to the next space

ATTIC

- Refrain of a song

As we enter the sacred space of our/Earth's attic, we are called to ponder the treasures of our hearts. Where, or what, is Earth's attic? *(Pause for a brief reflection. Perhaps read a brief passage from the Earth As Our Home booklet.)*

Becoming more mindful of this space, we ask forgiveness:

- for the times we've allowed the dust to accumulate on the treasures of our hearts;
- for the times we've believed there was an "away" to throw unwanted things to;
- for the times we've packed away our treasures and dreams, refusing to share them with others;
- for the times we've been blind and deaf to Earth's treasures offered to us every day;
- for the times we keep running in place, never finding an "attic space" for a time of contemplation and day-dreaming;
- for the times we've buried our hopes and have been blind to the life-hope Earth sprouts around us each day...

We ask now to be open to receive the blessing our/Earth's attic offers us. *(Pause in silence to reflect and allow the blessing to emerge. When ready, each may share in litany fashion the blessing they received.)*

We now bless this sacred space *(use water, incense, etc.)* as we overflow with gratitude for our hopes, dreams and heart-treasures. *(Pause in silence to reflect and allow the blessing to emerge. When ready, each may share in litany fashion the blessing they wish to bestow on this space.)*

Refrain of a song – to transition/walk back **to the dining room.**

Conclude by returning to the dining room to break and share bread together. This could be simply bread, a full meal or other symbolic sharing ritual. Invite each person to share the feelings and insights that emerged for them; what they learned about themselves and our Earth Community on this pilgrimage.

CATHOLIC SISTERS FOR A HEALTHY EARTH

Our Mission: *Respecting the interdependence of creation, we will promote eco-literacy and influence a just relationship with the environment.*

Catholic Sisters for a Healthy Earth is made up of representatives from the following congregations of women religious:

Congregation of the Humility of Mary, Davenport, IA
chmiowa.org

School Sisters of Notre Dame, Central Pacific Province, St. Louis, MO
ssndcp.org

Sinsinawa Dominican Sisters, Sinsinawa, WI
sinsinawa.org

Sisters of Charity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Dubuque, IA
bvmcong.org

Sisters of St. Francis, Clinton, IA
ClintonFranciscans.com

Sisters of St. Francis, Dubuque, IA
osfdbq.org

Sisters of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Dubuque, IA
dubuquepresentations.org



This prayer service and the original booklet are available as free downloads at any of the above websites.