

**WORLD ENVIRONMENT DAY HOMILY 2015**  
**St. Monica's Parish, June 13-14, 2015**  
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**Member of St. Monica Faith and Justice Committee**

Given that World Environment Day actually occurs on June 5, it is a marvelous gift that the readings for our liturgies this weekend provide us with such rich images for our celebration of this special day.

I really love the wonder aroused in the first reading and the Gospel when a small twig and a seed, planted or sown, know just what to do in order to grow into magnificent trees, without the human observer-sower even understanding how this has occurred. And haven't we all been experiencing some of this over the last weeks of spring? Even with the knowledge that science has given us, we nevertheless stand in awe as the first tiny green shoots appear in what has just been frozen hard earth, and we are in awe at the blossoms which slowly appear, or sometimes too quickly burst forth, on trees and bushes. Our hearts quicken as the robins know that they can return from their winter journey. We have done nothing to contribute to all of this! Nature just unfolds quite miraculously before our eyes. It is filled with a spiritual power which calls forth this life from what appeared dead, according to the self-awareness and purpose embedded from the beginning in all of creation. The Spirit, Sophia, is the spiritual power of God present in what we see and love. In contemplating this, we are speechless.

The readings also point to a further dimension. This unfolding of life in creation would be a source of wonder in itself. However, embedded within in is a further purpose – to be for the good of others. And so the fields bring forth grain which can be harvested and then prepared as food. The tree brings forth fruit which, again, can be eaten. The tiny mustard seed grows into a great shrub with large branches so that the birds of the air can make nests in its shade. isn't this magnificent? Creation knows that it lives in relationship. It lives not only for itself, but also to care for, and nurture life in others. And all of this mirrors an infinitely creative, loving and intelligent Source/Creator. Creation has so much to teach us! There was a time when humans were open to the teaching and wonder of creation. Unfortunately, over the last centuries, as humans became fascinated with their mechanical/technical proficiency, and power to manipulate creation for their own needs, the natural powers of creation to flourish and to live in

relationship, have been very seriously damaged. Creation has continued to make every effort to pursue its divine patterns and purpose, but is now severely limited due to human interventions and disrespect. Creation keeps trying to teach the human race, but we are blinded and distracted by our self-preoccupations and priorities. As a result, instead of following creation's wisdom to bring forth life and the nurturing of helpful relationships, we have, in many ways, created a culture of death, of fear and suspicion, of domination, of alienation and disrespect.

Yet, the Spirit, Sophia, is ever moving with her creative energy in the midst of this growing destructiveness. In this springtime, she is awakening us once again to the beauty and wisdom of creation, to our crucial relationship to it, and it to us. How will we respond?

Grass-roots movements around the globe are calling for new ways of living in relationship. It does mean change – very major change – but change for the Common Good. We know how world leaders have been resisting such far-reaching change, so attached are they to fear and their own visions of self-interest. While our individual efforts to love creation do make a difference, it is only change of structures and laws at national and global levels, which will **now** truly save our planet. Can we assure our leaders that we are ready to accept the implications of major change to our own lives? It all comes down to the question: Do we love enough to let go of what has been familiar, secure, comfortable, in order to embrace a new way of living which benefits creation, and so, all of humanity?

Pope Francis has seen the need to speak out at this crucial time and he will be issuing a new Encyclical this month on the subject of creation and the environment. Always concerned about showing mercy and love to the most vulnerable, he can see that not only the vulnerable and the poorest of human beings are suffering from the conditions of Climate Change, but also the vulnerable species, lands and waters in creation. As the Earth suffers from Climate Change, it is the most vulnerable of human beings who are most impacted. The U.N. theme chosen for World Environment Day 2015 is “sustainable lifestyles”. Our consumer habits must come under the microscope. How much do we buy, and do we truly need what we buy? How do we travel? From where do our clothing and other goods come, and how does this impact the most

vulnerable of workers? How much do we throw away and how? How do our consumer habits contribute to carbon emissions? The UN Environment Programme says, “By 2050, if current consumption and production patterns remain the same, and with a rising population expected to reach 9.6 billion, we will need three planets to sustain our way of life. Living well within planetary boundaries is the most promising strategy for ensuring a healthy future .” How can we re-connect with a “holy” relationship with Creation, with the environment, where we live in balance, reverence, gratitude?

Are we listening to the message of World Environment Day, the wisdom and generosity of creation, our Scriptures, and Pope Francis? They are all calling us to be active in bringing change in our own lives, and in the life of our parish community and environment. Do we hear their call to speak out to the world leaders as they prepare for the U.N. Conference on Climate Change to take place in December, 2015?

May the Spirit guide us all!