

Caring for God's Creation: Family reflections, actions

St. Francis of Assisi cared for poor people and sick people. He loved animals, and even preached homilies to them. He praised all creatures as brothers and sisters under God. During the week of his Oct. 4 Feast Day, let's look at how we care for the earth and its creatures — and then take steps to do better! This examination of conscience also includes looking at how we treat our fellow humans.

How to use this guide:

1. After reading the question for the day, think about a time when your behavior hurt or disrespected God's creations — the earth and its creatures. This is your examination of conscience.
2. Ask God for forgiveness, in either silent or spoken prayer. Promise to do an act of repentance.
3. Choose one simple action you can do that same day, to show your caring for creation. The ideas below are starter lists. Do what's right for you.

Daily Questions

Sunday: Do I think often about God's gifts of love in my life — including my family, friends, pets, teachers, food, shelter and the outdoors? The Holy Spirit calls us to share this love from God: What can I/we do today, to answer the Spirit's call?

Ideas: prayer after family meal or at bedtime, taking an outdoor walk together, calling grandparents, aunts and uncles, to say "hi, I'm thinking about you. I love you."

Monday: We don't all look alike, think alike or act the same, but we're all God's creations. God values diversity. And, He doesn't make junk. Do I try to show love, care and concern for all living beings? How can I act to honor God, by doing something loving for His diverse home on earth, and those who live here?

Ideas: Watch a nature show together and discuss. Share with a family member how you admire an ability or personal quality they have that makes them special to you. Read Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s "I have a dream" speech.

Tuesday: We sometimes forget to treat with respect people, animals or our environment. Is there a person who needs to hear you say, "I am sorry; please forgive me?" Have you been careless with nature: littering, being unwilling to share, not watching out for the welfare of animals? Take a step today, to help heal that broken relationship.

Ideas: Write a note of apology to the friend or family member you've offended; pick up roadside trash with your family.

Wednesday: Have I used my God-given gifts to honor and protect the diverse, interdependent, fragile nature of all life and to preserve it for all future beings?

Ideas: Refill or create a simple bird bath or bird feeder. Plant a flower or shrub that supports pollinating insects. Re-use paper. Take a short shower: Wet; lather up and turn off the water until you're ready to rinse. Turn off the water while brushing your teeth.

Thursday: Have I looked for ways to protect the diverse, interdependent, fragile nature of all life and to preserve it for all future beings? Am I willing to dig in, and do some research on this?

Ideas: Check out a book about pro-environment family activities. You can use Leon County's digital library or go to the branch library nearest you. Check websites for Leon County Extension Service (<http://sfyl.ifas.ufl.edu/leon>) and Sustainable Tallahassee (<https://sustainabletallahassee.org>) for ideas for ways you can contribute to healing the environment. Bringing Nature Home, by Douglas Tallamy is a good resource.

Friday: Am I doing what I can to prevent pollution, greed, overconsumption, loss of habitat, disease, war, extinction of species, oppressive laws and structures? Do I support organizations that work for a healthier and more peaceful world?

Ideas: Pick a charity that helps people or animals, promotes peace and justice or works for clean water, air and healthy open spaces. Plan to give some money or volunteer time in the near future.

Saturday: Have I encouraged family members and friends to take care for creation seriously? Have I been judgmental or mean-spirited toward myself or others when we're not perfect, and don't treat creation as God would have us?

Ideas: Compliment someone who you've seen doing something good for the environment. Set a good example for a sibling or a parent; for example, refill a sturdy water bottle to limit use of single-use plastics; keep spent batteries out of the trash; just say no to single-use plastic straws.

Adapted from: Care for Creation (a Franciscan spirituality of the earth) by Illia Delio, Keith Warner, Pamela Wood, Franciscan Media.