VIA CREATIONIS

The Way of Creation

Facilitator version

INTRODUCTORY NOTES[1]

"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

- ***WHAT:*** Similar to how the Via Crucis commemorates the mystery of the Passion, the Via Creationis commemorates the mystery of Creation. It does so by reading side by side the two sacred books that God wrote: *liber scripturae* and *liber naturae,* the Book of Scripture and the Book of the Cosmos, as St. Augustine and other saints have taught throughout history. By reading both books together we gain a richer appreciation of the great mystery of God's creation of the cosmos.

  Given its ecumenical nature, a shortened version of the Via Creationis was prayed in a Vatican event in Saint Peter's Square, in the presence of Pope Francis and leaders of all major Christian churches.

- ***WHY:*** As Christians, we have put so much emphasis in our understanding of God as Redeemer that we have neglected the importance of God as Creator. In fact, Benedict XVI taught that "In recent decades the doctrine of Creation had almost disappeared from theology.. The Redeemer is the Creator and if we do not proclaim God in his full grandeur - as Creator and as Redeemer - we also diminish the value of the Redemption." The Via Creationis helps us to prayerfully ponder this mystery and praise our Creator for the marvels of Creation.

- ***WHERE:*** It is highly encouraged to pray the Via Creationis outdoors, in the "Cathedral of Creation". Could be an urban park or garden, the countryside, or wild nature – the more silent, the better. Having a waterbody at hand – sea, lake, river, pond, or stream – would be ideal for the water-related stations, but is not essential if inconvenient.

- ***WHEN:*** Weekends are particularly good to pray the Via Creationis given their symbolism, be it on Saturday – the "last day" of the Genesis sequence in which God engages in contemplative rest enjoying the beauty of the cosmos – or Sunday – the "first day" of the Genesis sequence in which God initiates the mystery of the creative enterprise. Moreover, the Feast of Creation of September 1st and accompanying Season of Creation (till Oct 4) are particularly special to pray with the Via.

- ***HOW:*** Following the Via Crucis logic, it is recommended that you: 1) identify beforehand 9 places that would be most suitable for each of the 9 stations (could be very close to each other or quite distant), and 2) prepare images depicting each station (as nature photographs, nature objects, paintings, sculptures, or homemade artworks), that you either place beforehand in each of the 9 places or simply carry with you to display in each station. Same as the Via Crucis, which has many variants (with various arrangements and amounts of stations), multiple ways of praying the Via Creationis are welcome. This guide provides some suggestions which can be adapted at will.

- ***METHODOLOGICAL NOTE:*** Reading side-by-side the Book of Genesis and the Book of the Cosmos (via our scientific instruments) by no means implies that both readings match each other. They are entirely different genres and different methods, not meant to match. (The Via Creationis choice to move the station about celestial bodies – being the 2nd station rather than the traditional "4th day" of Genesis 1 – simply aims to enable a smoother narrative flow of the two books side by side)

  This understanding is emphasized by the following facts: (1) On one hand, Genesis 1 is not a literal

[1] *These introductory notes were prepared for Catholic audiences, but can be freely adapted to other denominational settings.*

description of the process of Creation, nor it is meant to be *the* exclusive biblical account of the process of Creation, as there are other Creation stories with different sequences – such as Genesis 2, Psalm 104, or the Book of Job (each of them shedding light on different aspects about the mystery of Creation). Of course, Genesis 1 is the most famous one, as it is the Bible's opening chapter, which is why it is featured in the Via Creationis. (2) On the other hand, the Big Bang is a scientific theory and it might change in the future, but it is the best possible theory at this point in time (2024 AD) with the instruments scientists have available to "read" the Book of Nature; same applies to the other aspects of the state of scientific knowledge.

The Church warmly welcomes the scientific insights about the epic of cosmic evolution. Beyond the Catechism's citation above, various Church leaders have also echoed this, such as Joseph Ratzinger: "Physics and biology, and the natural sciences in general, have given us a new and unheard-of creation account with vast new images, which let us recognize the face of the Creator" (*In the Beginning,* Eerdmans (1995), 24). Bottom line, our extraordinary scientific discoveries require new pastoral resources and devotions for Christians of the 3rd millennium – and this is a humble attempt to help fill that gap.

Here is a "Participant version" that you can adapt and share with participants to use during the prayer (and you can keep this document as your "Facilitator version"). You can share directly as a digital document for participants to read from their phones (recommended for environmental reasons) or you can print it.

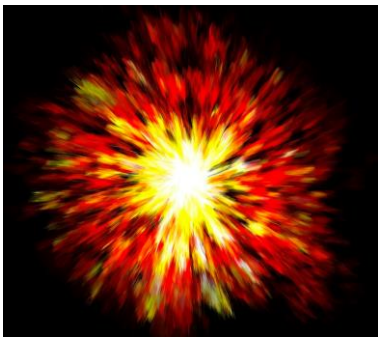
INTRODUCTION

- Words of welcome (the points of "What" and "Why" sections above could be used; citations can be adapted to other denominational contexts).
- Sign of the Cross.
- *Optional: hymn, preferably of creation and/or praise themes.*

1st Station
THE GOODNESS OF LIGHT

℣. We adore you, O Creator, and we bless you.[2]
℟. Because by your holy Word you have created the world.

[2] This opening mirrors the Via Crucis opening. An alternative formula could be something like:
℣. Praise be to you, Creator God. / ℟. We thank you for your magnificent Creation.



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 reading from the Book of the Cosmos*:*

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. Eventually, there was light. A lot of light. The cosmos began to unfold.

℣. God saw that the light was good.
℟. How good is all Creation. Praised be God!

Optional: silence and/or sensorial reflection about the station's theme, based on natural elements at hand.

℣. Thank you, dear Creator, for the sacred gift of light.
℟. Amen.

Optional: hymn, preferably of creation and/or praise themes.

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 reading from the Book of the Cosmos*:*

A few million years later, the materials released by the Big Bang – mostly hydrogen and helium – 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. Eventually, the primeval stars collapsed in massive explosions – also known as supernovas. These long cycles of stellar birth and collapse formed new chemical elements, essential for life to flourish later.

℣. God saw that the stars were good.
℟. How good is all Creation. Praised be God!

Eventually, stars clustered into galaxies. These flying whirlpools of cosmic matter evolved into all kinds of beautiful shapes and colors, blending the gleaming white of the flocked stars together with the 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.

℣. God saw that the galaxies were good.
℟. How good is all Creation. Praised be God!

About 6 billion years ago, in a random galaxy – our very own Milky Way Galaxy – 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 fabulous cloud of cosmic dust was released, fertile ground for new stars and planets to form. A fabulous cloud of cosmic dust from which we all come, containing everything ranging from the calcium in our bones to the carbon in our muscles, and beyond.

℣. God saw that our ancestral supernova was good.
℟. How good is all Creation. Praised be God!

About 4.6 billion years ago, out of remnants of that supernova explosion, a new star was born, the Sun. Our majestic Sun. Our sacred Sun.

℣. God saw that the Sun was good.
℟. How good is all Creation. Praised be God!

Sometime after that, orbiting around the Sun, the Earth and other planets formed, also coming from the same supernova debris. Earth was a fireball, a soup of molten rock. Our sacred Earth was full of creativity ready to be unleashed.

℣. God saw that Earth was good.
℟. How good is all Creation. Praised be God!

Soon after, the Moon came into being and started orbiting Earth, most likely after the impact of a large body. The giant rock has been our faithful companion since then. Our sacred moon has adorned our night skies since then.

℣. God saw that the Moon was good.
℟. How good is all Creation. Praised be God!

Optional: silence and/or sensorial reflection about the station's theme, based on natural elements at hand.

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

Optional: hymn, preferably of creation and/or praise themes.

3rd Station
THE GOODNESS OF THE SKY

℣. 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 reading from the Book of Nature*:*

In parallel, about 4.44 billion years ago, a dome started to ensemble, 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.
℟. How good is all Creation. Praised be God!

Optional: silence and/or sensorial reflection about the station's theme, based on natural elements at hand.

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

Optional: hymn, preferably of creation and/or praise themes.

4th Station
THE GOODNESS OF 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 *(1:9-10):*

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 reading from the Book of the Cosmos*:*

Soon after, about 4.43 billion years ago, Earth gradually cooled and its surface of molten rock turned into a crust of rock. A beautiful shell of sacred rock.

℣. God saw that the Earth's crust was good.
℟. How good is all Creation. Praised be God!

In parallel, the water vapor escaping through volcanoes from its boiling interior formed clouds that discharged rain. A lot of rain. The process lasted a very long time, drenching the young planet and gradually forming majestic seas. A never-ending dance of waves and currents suffused the sacred seas.

℣. God saw that the sea was good.
℟. How good is all Creation. Praised be God!

The incessant parade of clouds also meant that water soaked the land. Flowing water came together in countless streams and rivers. 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 freshwater bodies were good.
℟. How good is all Creation. Praised be God!

Over billions of years, water and sky molded the Earth's rocks into all sorts of sculptures, stones, pebbles, sand grains, and clay. A sacred blanket of rocky ornaments covered the earth.

℣. God saw that rock materials were good.
℟. How good is all Creation. Praised be 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, adorned with all sorts of mountains, hills, plateaus, and plains. A rich array of sacred landscapes.

℣. God saw that the continents were good.
℟. How good is all Creation. Praised be God!

Optional: silence and/or sensorial reflection about the station's theme, based on natural elements at hand.

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

Optional: hymn, preferably of creation and/or praise themes.

5th 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 reading from the Book of Nature*:*

About 3.5 billion years ago, water enabled the stupendous to happen: life emerged. The first single-celled microorganism was born in the sea. The miracle of life burst forth.

℣. God saw that life was good.

℟. How good is all Creation. Praised be God!

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.

℣. God saw that cyanobacteria were good.
℟. How good is all Creation. Praised be God!

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, including the first sea sponges. The sacred community of living beings multiplied faster and faster.

℣. God saw that multicellular beings were good.
℟. How good is all Creation. Praised be God!

Eventually, the first algae emerged, the very first plants – of microscopic size for starters, then increasingly larger. Sacred algae came in many forms – pond scum, seaweeds, giant kelps, and more.

℣. God saw that algae were good.
℟. How good is all Creation. Praised be God!

Eventually, some shore-dwelling algae evolved to survive outside of water – the first mosses emerged, the tiny ancestors of all terrestrial plants. Cushy green mats began to carpet rocks by the shores. 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. Reproducing via spores, they evolved into many shapes and forms, including tree ferns with solid trunks. Sacred forests began to take over the land.

℣. God saw that moss and ferns were good.
℟. How good is all Creation. Praised be God!

In parallel, and essential for plants to thrive, a blanket of soil began to develop on top of rocks. Microbes, fungi (who also evolved in fascinating ways), and other creatures transformed dead plants into sacred soil to feed and sustain later generations of bigger plants.

℣. God saw that soil was good.

℟. How good is all Creation. Praised be God!

Sometime later, about 300 million years ago, conifers emerged. Featuring the first seeds in iconic cones and needle-like leaves, dense forests began to form also in colder and more arid regions. Spectacular cathedrals proliferated, with thick columns of cedars, pines, cypresses, redwoods, spruces, and more, reaching colossal sizes in some cases.

℣. God saw that conifers were good.
℟. How good is all Creation. Praised be 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. Wildflowers, grasses, shrubs, climbing plants, broad-leaf trees, and cacti evolved into all sorts of colors and forms. 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 flowering plants were good.
℟. How good is all Creation. Praised be God!

Optional: silence and/or sensorial reflection about the station's theme, based on natural elements at hand.

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

Optional: hymn, preferably of creation and/or praise themes.

6th 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 reading from the Book of the Cosmos*:*

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 sacred invertebrate creatures, with growing complexity and intelligence – molluscs, sea snails, trilobites, crabs, lobsters, shrimp, squids, octopus, and more. Curiously, evolution also entailed predation and extinction. Curiously, anticipating the Cross, life entailed death to evolve into further beauty and diversity.

℣. God saw that aquatic invertebrates were good.
℟. How good is all Creation. Praised be God!

About 500 million years ago, fish emerged. They featured cartilage and bones, which also protected their nervous system – a key development for further complexity. They evolved into countless types of sacred fish, ranging from tiny seahorses, eels, and coral fish, to huge sharks, swordfish, and manta rays – and everything in between.

℣. God saw that fish were good.
℟. How good is all Creation. Praised be God!

After a long evolutionary journey in land, the first marine reptiles emerged about 250 million years ago and the first marine mammals about 50 million years ago. Still breathing air on the sea surface, they ventured into deeper waters and became great swimmers. Reptilian divers as marine dinosaurs, sea turtles, crocodiles, and marine iguanas, fin-footed creatures as seals, walruses, manatees, and dugongs, as well as full-fledged cetaceans as majestic whales, dolphins, orcas, and narwhals.

℣. God saw that marine reptiles and mammals were good.
℟. How good is all Creation. Praised be God!

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

℣. God saw that flying insects were good.
℟. How good is all Creation. Praised be God!

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 birds were good.
℟. How good is all Creation. Praised be God!

Optional: silence and/or sensorial reflection about the station's theme, based on natural elements at hand.

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

Optional: hymn, preferably of creation and/or praise themes.

7th Station
THE GOODNESS OF LAND 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 *(1:24-25):*

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 reading from the Book of Nature**:*

About 500 million years ago, in tandem with the colonization of land by plants, the first insects appeared as well. They gradually evolved into all sorts of sacred landbound creatures: 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. Other invertebrates also proliferated, such as worms, snails, pill bugs, centipedes, millipedes, and spiders.

℣. God saw that terrestrial invertebrates were good.
℟. How good is all Creation. Praised be God!

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. Sacred four-legged creatures began to take over the land.

℣. God saw that amphibians and reptiles were good.
℟. How good is all Creation. Praised be God!

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. Prickly porcupines and scaly pangolins, tiny mice and towering giraffes, bouncing kangaroos and climbing monkeys, hairless hippos and furry bears, watery platypuses and waterless camels, electric squirrels and lazy sloths, fragile koalas and mighty tigers, long-eared rabbits and long-tusked elephants, and beyond.

℣. God saw that mammals were good.
℟. How good is all Creation. Praised be God!

Optional: silence and/or sensorial reflection about the station's theme, based on natural elements at hand.

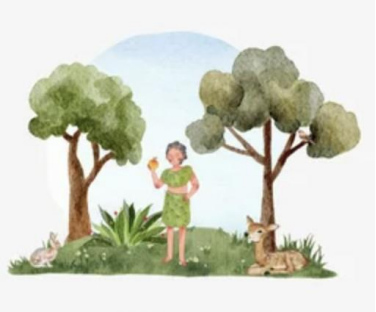
℣. Thank you, dear Creator, for the sacred gift of land creatures.
℟. Amen.

Optional: hymn, preferably of creation and/or praise themes.

8th Station
THE GOODNESS OF 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 *(1:26-27):*



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 reading from the Book of the Cosmos*:*

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, the Homo lineage began.

℣. God saw that early Homo creatures were good.
℟. How good is all Creation. Praised be God!

The lineage most likely started with the Homo Habilis, who developed the ability to create some rudimentary stone tools. Then, eventually, they evolved into the Homo Erectus, who improved both social coordination and the sophistication of tools, and even learned how to use fire. The prevalent pattern: the ever increasing size of the brain. Moreover, they began to show a new level of empathy towards sick and injured members.

℣. God saw that the Homo Erectus were good.
℟. How good is all Creation. Praised be God!

About 300,000 years ago, the first Homo Sapiens emerged, with a radically expanded consciousness. With lighter bones, smaller jaws, and bigger skulls with very large brains, 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.

℣. God saw that Homo Sapiens were good.
℟. How good is all Creation. Praised be God!

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. Creativity explodes on all fronts. Increasingly sophisticated tools: pottery, textiles, wheels, and much more. Increasingly sophisticated cultural expressions: storytelling, all sorts of artistic endeavors, and, eventually, writing. And much more. Most importantly, both good and evil behaviors intensify. Sin and virtue take center stage. 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, in many cases nourished by spiritual experience. The drama of human history, with all its lights and shadows, intensifies.

℣. God saw that human cultures were good.
℟. How good is all Creation. Praised be God!

Optional: silence and/or sensorial reflection about the station's theme, based on natural elements at hand.

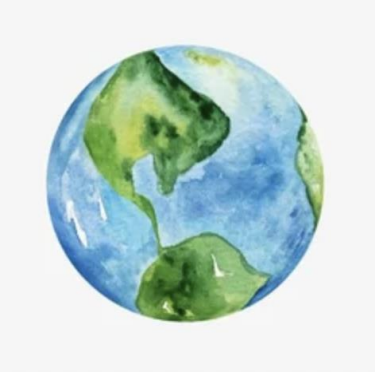
℣. Thank you, dear Creator, for the sacred gift of humans.
℟. Amen.

Optional: hymn, preferably of creation and/or praise themes.

9th 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 reading from the Book of History*:*

A few thousand years ago, the love story began between God and the People of Israel. Among other things, we were taught about the goodness of the whole cosmos and the importance of contemplative rest. We were invited to enjoy and be thankful for this created world that is "very good".

℣. Same as God, we also see that everything is good, very good.
℟. How good, very good, is all Creation. Praised be 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.

℣. Same as God, we also see that everything is good, very good.
℟. How good, very good, is all Creation. Praised be 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.

℣. Same as God, we also see that everything is good, very good.
℟. How good, very good, is all Creation. Praised be 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 all 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. Now, more than ever, we honor God as Creator. Now, more than ever, we celebrate the cosmos' web of matter and the planet's web of life.

℣. Same as God, we also see that everything is good, very good.
℟. How good, very good, is all Creation. Praised be God!

Optional: silent contemplation of the natural surroundings.

℣. Thank you, dear Creator, for the sacred gift of all Creation.
℟. Amen.

Optional: hymn, preferably of creation and/or praise themes.

CLOSING

- *Optional: "A Prayer for our Earth", Our Father, and/or Glory Be.*
- Sign of the Cross. (Or final blessing if a priest is present.)

Text drafted by Laudato Si' Movement, with portions of the Book of the Cosmos readings inspired from the "Universe Story" meditation by the Wheaton Franciscans, inspired in turn by the book "The Universe Story" by Brian Swimme and Thomas Berry. Images by Autumn & Annie.

Note: all scientific timelines and details will need to be amended as our "reading skills" (i.e. science) get sharper and new discoveries help us better interpret the Book of the Cosmos. Also, needless to say, the Book of the Cosmos presented here is far from being comprehensive; longer (or shorter) versions could be developed, depending on time available and the audience.