Living Sustainably
Prayers and Reflections

Creation We Care
Educating for Sustainable Futures
How to use this book

1. Begin with the Opening Prayer on page 1.
2. Select one or more prayers or reflections from pages 2-19.
3. Conclude with the Closing Blessing and Prayer on page 20.

What is prayer?

Prayer is the raising of one’s mind and heart to God or the requesting of good things from God. To pray is to respond to the wonder and mystery of life. In the Christian tradition, prayer fosters a personal and living relationship with God as Trinity.

The Religious Life of the School P-12, Catholic Education Archdiocese of Brisbane

What is this prayer for?

This prayer resource invites participants to explore living sustainably in terms of self, others and the natural world.

How do we pray?

We can pray in many different ways. In gathered prayer, it is useful to follow the suggested model – we gather, we listen, we respond, we go forth – to remind us of the need to have a beginning and an ending, the inclusion of sacred texts and the active participation of all present. This prayer resource is made up of three areas, a common opening prayer, a selection of reflective experiences and a closing prayer.
Leader: As we gather in prayer today, we acknowledge the traditional owners of this land. (pause) God’s signature is in every part of creation. When we notice the traces of God in our world - in ourselves, in others and in nature - we realise that heaven is not ‘up there’ but all around us. This is a sign that the reign of God is emerging among us here and now. With this in mind, we pray together . . .

All: God of creation, you made us to live ‘dignified and fulfilled lives.’i Give us: awareness to see traces of you in the world around us; courage and passion to live sustainably; strength to repair what we have damaged; and wisdom to change our minds, our hearts and our ways. ii We make this prayer through Jesus, who shows us the way. Amen

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i Pope Francis, Evangelii Gaudium 1:2.

Brisbane Catholic Education Sustainability Commitment

The Leader invites the participants to look closely at the artwork representing the sustainability commitment of Brisbane Catholic Education, and then reads the following explanation of the artwork.

**Reading:** Brisbane Catholic Education Sustainability Commitment

The centre symbol is the Aboriginal symbol for trees and represents the environment. The centre circle represents the Earth.

The U shaped symbol, repeated outside the centre circle, is the Aboriginal symbol for conferencing. Here it represents the members of the Sustainability Committee, Brisbane schools and office communities. The symbols are uniform as we are all gathered in agreement. The lines radiating out from the centre circle represent the message being taken to our communities and then further to the wider communities.

The outside symbol is a unifying circle. It is joined to show our united commitment to sustainability and our strong connection to Mother Earth. The circles in Aboriginal art represent the woman’s womb and new growth.

**Response:**

In Aboriginal societies, symbols are used to tell stories. Think for a moment of a story about promoting sustainability. Share this story with a partner.
Encountering God in the natural world

Viewing:

The Leader invites each member of the group to spend a few minutes gazing at the picture of one of the leaves opposite – observing all its attributes.

(The Leader may also supply a basket of fresh leaves, seeds, stones or other natural objects to be used during the reflection. It might be useful to have a couple of magnifying glasses on hand as well.)

*Look at the structure of the leaf:*
*the stem, the veins, the blade . . .*
*How many colours, or variations in colour, can you see?*
*How many different textures are there?*
*How does this object speak to you of God?*

Response:

The Leader invites the group to share their thoughts and feelings and then to consider the quote:

“What we plant in the soil of contemplation, we shall reap in the harvest of action”.

Meister Eckhart
St Francis of Assisi – patron saint of those who promote ecology

**Viewing:**

*Praying with an icon.*

Sit comfortably and focus on breathing. *(pause)*
Take some moments to gaze at the image of St Francis. *(pause)*
He holds a Tau Cross close to his heart. *(pause)*
His hands show the wounds of Christ’s crucifixion. *(pause)*
Focus on the eyes of Francis in the picture. *(pause)*
Connect with the image of this saint now living in the presence of God. *(pause)*

**Response:**

Francis of Assisi is the patron saint of those who promote ecology. In his prayer, Canticle of Creation, he calls out to all creation as brother and sister; as deserving of love and respect. As brothers and sisters with all of creation, pray the blessing from Numbers that St Francis gave to Brother Leo.

Optional website exploring Franciscan spirituality including the prayer *Canticle of Creation:*
http://www.franciscans.org.au
May the Lord bless you and keep you. May He show His face to you and be merciful to you. May He turn His countenance to you and give you peace.

(Numbers 6:24-26)
Humanity and the environment in relationship

Reading:

*Fraternity, The Foundation And Pathway To Peace*, Pope Francis,
(Message for XLVII World Day of Peace 2014)

The human family has received from the Creator a common gift: nature. The Christian view of creation includes a positive judgement about the legitimacy of interventions on nature if these are meant to be beneficial and are performed responsibly, that is to say, by acknowledging the “grammar” inscribed in nature and by wisely using resources for the benefit of all, with respect for the beauty, finality and usefulness of every living being and its place in the ecosystem. Nature, in a word, is at our disposition and we are called to exercise a responsible stewardship over it. Yet so often we are driven by greed and by the arrogance of dominion, possession, manipulation and exploitation; we do not preserve nature; nor do we respect it or consider it a gracious gift which we must care for and set at the service of our brothers and sisters, including future generations.

Response:

The Leader invites the group to take a few moments to reflect on the reading from Pope Francis.

The Leader invites the group to share their thoughts and feelings:

*How does this document reflect the notion of living sustainably?*
Deep listening – ‘Dadirri’

Reading: Dadirri by Miriam-Rose Ungunmerr-Baumann

Dadirri is inner, deep listening and quiet, still awareness. Dadirri recognises the deep spring that is inside us. We call on it and it calls to us. This is the gift that Australia is thirsting for. It is something like what you call ‘contemplation’. When I experience dadirri, I am made whole again. I can sit on the riverbank or walk through the trees; even if someone close to me has passed away, I can find my peace in this silent awareness. There is no need of words. A big part of dadirri is listening.
Our Aboriginal culture has taught us to be still and to wait. We do not try to hurry things up. We let them follow their natural course - like the seasons.

Response:

The Leader invites the group to take a few moments to reflect on the reading by Miriam-Rose Ungunmerr-Baumann.
Sit comfortably and focus on breathing. (pause)
Allow a particular phrase from the reading to capture your attention. (pause)
Draw those words into the presence of God. (pause)
Wait on God. (pause)
Spend some time in the still silence. (pause)

Viewing Option
Living justly, kindly & humbly

Viewing:

Watch the Brisbane Catholic Education Peace Studies film at: http://youtu.be/bw7WuI48dLE

Reflect for a few minutes on the quotes and ideas presented in the video. Which of the ideas do you feel most strongly about?

Reading: Micah 6:8

What does the Lord require of me but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with our God?

Response:

Reflect for a few minutes on this reading and the video. Consider what are some positive simple steps that can be taken. The Leader invites the group to share their thoughts and feelings with a partner.
Let there be peace and let it begin with me. Work for peace and justice.
Song to the Creator  (play soft music during this reflection)

Reading: Psalm 104: 1-4, 24, 33

Bless the LORD, O my soul!
O LORD my God, how great you are,
clothed in majesty and honour,
wrapped in light as with a robe!

You stretch out the heavens like a tent.
On the waters you establish your dwelling.
You make the clouds your chariot;
you ride on the wings of the wind.
You make the winds your messengers,
flame and fire your servants.

How many are your works, O LORD!
In wisdom you have made them all.
The earth is full of your creatures.

I will sing to the LORD all my life,
sing psalms to my God while I live.
May my thoughts be pleasing to him.
I will rejoice in the LORD.
Alleluia

View: View images and quotes from this video.
http://youtu.be/vKzmL9fehwg

Allow a particular phrase or sentence to capture your attention.
Sit with those words and allow them to become a prayer to God. (pause)
Share aloud the phrase or sentence that captured your attention.

Viewing Option  View Psalm 104 - Alps time lapse photography http://youtu.be/mkFPwLXT8tg
How many are your works, O LORD!
In wisdom you have made them all.
The earth is full of your creatures.
I will sing to the LORD all my life,
sing psalms to my God while I live.
May my thoughts be pleasing to him.
I will rejoice in the LORD.
Alleluia
Caring for country – GhostNets Australia

Reading:

For Indigenous peoples “Caring for country” means participating in activities on Aboriginal lands and seas that promote ecological, spiritual and human health. There are strong associations between caring for country and positive health outcomes for indigenous peoples.¹

Ghost nets are fishing nets that have been abandoned at sea, lost accidentally, or deliberately discarded. They travel the oceans of the world with the currents and tides; unattended and continually fishing indiscriminately as they progress through the waters. Because of winds and currents, the shores of the Gulf of Carpentaria attract significant ghost net marine debris – originating from all parts of South East Asia.²

“The Ghost Net Project is for people from (Indigenous) communities to find ways to work together to get rid of marine debris in their sea country.” (Djawa Yunupingu, Dhimirru.) GhostNets Australia, through its large network of renowned fibre artists, facilitates workshops that use traditional weaving and fibre techniques to transform destructive marine debris into works of art. This Ghost Net basket was created by Maria Ware using materials from reclaimed ghost nets.

Viewing:

Link to the story “The Young Man and The Ghost Net” Moa Island Torres Strait. GhostNets Australia” http://youtu.be/GnN3t-5nf3g

¹ C. Burges (2009), Healthy country, healthy people, MJA, 190(10) p. 571.
² GhostNets Australia www.ghostnets.com.au
Ghost Net basket, original artwork by Maria Ware, Ngalmun Lagau Minaral Arts, Moa Island, Torres Strait.
Christians Living Sustainably

Reading:

For Christians, ‘bridging the gap between creation stewardship and sustainability’ is vital. Living sustainably means that we nurture the sort of prosperity ‘that is based on a moderate consumption of resources and that integrates itself into the material cycles and rhythms of nature and that offers participation opportunities for all.’

The foundation of sustainability is a faith-centred culture of life. This means respecting and caring for ourselves, others and the natural world - God’s works of creation. The Celtic cross reflects this idea with the circle symbolising unity and integration.

Response:

The Leader invites one of the participants to read the following prayer, attributed to Saint Patrick (390-461 A.D.).

*Christ be with me, Christ within me, Christ behind me,*
*Christ before me, Christ beside me, Christ to win me,*
*Christ to comfort me and restore me.*

*Christ beneath me, Christ above me, Christ in quiet,*
*Christ in danger, Christ in hearts of all that love me,*
*Christ in mouth of friend or stranger.*

The participants reflect: What does the prayer say about living sustainably in terms of self, others and the natural world?

Optional YouTube clip:
The Deer’s Cry, http://youtu.be/GGHWiAGpIP0
Closing Prayer

Leader:

Creator God,
Moment by moment, you bless us with the gifts of life.

All: We accept your gifts with grateful hearts and with willing hands. We are ready to live sustainably in the world with awareness, courage, passion and strength.

Leader:

May the God of creation fill us with abundant, joyful life;

May the peace of Christ abound in our hearts;

And may the Holy Spirit encourage us to walk gently on the earth.

All: Amen