



The Ecological Stations of the Cross

A project sponsored by the Office of Peace, Justice and Integrity of Creation, of the Franciscan Province of St. Barbara (OFM).

Location: The Garden of Learning, across from St. Elizabeth's Church, Oakland, California.

Created by: Anne Symens-Bucher (Project initiator and coordinator)

Adapted by Franciscan Action Network (FAN)

FAN contact: Br. Mark Schroeder, O.F.M. (bromarko@att.net)

*These 22 Stations include the "traditional" 14 and a few more based on Francis' *Canticle of the Creatures*.*



The Stations are formatted for five pages, if you copy them back to back (print p. 2-11). Color graphics will reproduce in black and white. We suggest a sung refrain after every Station. Also feel free to add a practical suggestion/application after each Point to Ponder. *Catherine Symens-Bucher, with her mother Anne, showing what each Station looks like*

STATION I CHRIST CONDEMNED TO DEATH

Humans Condemn Earth's Atmosphere

We know you, Christ, through the wondrous Earth you crafted and dwell within. May we awaken and see how we daily condemn to death your creation. Like Pilate, we wash our hands of responsibility that is ours. May we stop our gluttonous use of energy that leads to the release of tons of greenhouse gases into Earth's finely crafted atmosphere, and contributes to climate change.

Point to Ponder: *The International Climate Change Commission has verified that humans are at least partially responsible for the heating of Earth's surface. This will cause polar ice to melt, low lying areas to flood, crop growth success to be challenged. These events will most especially affect the poorest among us. (US Bishops, Global Climate Change)*



STATION II CHRIST RECEIVES HIS CROSS

Earth as Suffering Servant (Isaiah)

O Christ, through you all things were made. You gave us the Earth as our sister and mother and filled her with your Spirit. Earth serves all creatures so splendidly and graciously, but we often treat her as nothing more than a storehouse of goods. May we awaken to see both Earth's suffering and generosity. May we only harvest wood from Earth's forests in ways that are sustainable, and may we leave ancient forests to grow in peace.

Point to Ponder: *Only 5% of old growth timber that was in the US borders in 1780 still remains. Of these acres, 80% of the timberland is owned by private logging companies who are committed to harvesting the trees.*

STATION III CHRIST FALLS FOR THE FIRST TIME

The Poor and Unjust Systems

Christ, we see you alive in all your creation, and know your love extends in a special way to the poor and suffering. Like you, the poor fall so often under unjust social systems that strangle their right to food, housing, health care and meaningful work. May we awaken to see how our economic systems and multinational corporations could be made more just. May we create just systems in solidarity with all peoples and nature.

Point to Ponder: *In Mexican maquiladoras (international companies operating along the Mexican-US border), average wages of Mexican workers are \$2.00/hr. In spite of all their hard work, families often do not make enough money to move above the poverty line.*

STATION IV JESUS MEETS HIS MOTHER

We Meet Christ in Mother Earth

Just as you met and received comfort from your mother, so too can we receive comfort through the provision of Mother Earth. You express your love through her, and we are truly welcome and at home on Earth. May we be aware of the healing, nurturing love with which you care for us and all creation. May we awaken to know your wisdom and care through nature. May we, like you, know our sacredness as children of God and as children of Earth.

Point to Ponder: “Nature becomes a Gospel that speaks to us of God. But this capacity for contemplation and knowledge, this discovery of a transcendent presence in creation, must lead us to rediscover our fraternity with the earth, to which we have been linked since creation.” John Paul II. Homily, January 26, 2000.

STATION V SIMON OF CYRENE IS MADE TO BEAR THE CROSS

Earth Saints

Christ, your Earth must stand under her cross of climate change, water pollution, chemical and radiation poisoning, strip mining and deforestation. There are those among us who stand up for her to alleviate the burden. Earth saints like Rachel Carson, Francis of Assisi, Hildegard of Bingen, and Chico Mendes have felt the Earth’s pain and offered their service to her. May we too respond to alleviate the burden of your suffering Creation.



Point to Ponder: *Rachel Carson wrote SILENT SPRING, a book that detailed the harm pesticide use was causing to Earth’s health. For her courage and stance she was ridiculed. A Federal investigation, however, found her book to be factual and implemented controls on pesticide use and production. Ms. Carson’s work gave impetus to the founding of the US Environmental Protection Agency.*

STATION VI CHRIST'S FACE IS WIPED BY VERONICA

A Refreshed Face of Revelation—The Book of Nature

One person had the courage to challenge the powerful and give you some relief. She then saw your face, Christ, in a new way. May we too learn to challenge the culture of death and see you revealed in the book of nature, as well as the book of scripture. And may we honor your revelation in Earth with the fervor we offer our scripture.

Point to Ponder: St. Paul, like Veronica, saw Christ's face in nature, saying that since the creation of the world (some 15 billion years ago!), God's invisible qualities—God's eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made (Romans 1:20). God's design is read in nature, informing scripture, and read in scripture, informing our relationship with nature.

STATION VII JESUS FALLS FOR THE SECOND TIME

Abundance for Future Generations

We know you as Immanuel, Christ with us. You have been with us for fifteen billion years through your creation of this universe, our home. Yet we demand short-term profits from the marketplace, rejecting the healthy development of sustainable enterprises. May we embrace your sense of ecological justice for future generations, and reject our desire to grasp at short-term wealth that weakens our economy and natural systems. May your peace allow us to trust in the Earth and her patiently unfolding processes.

Point to Ponder: The genetically modified (GM) food industry insists their products can alleviate starvation for millions but this technology is not sustainable. Proponents claim GM varieties reduce pesticide use, but while that was initially true, over time pesticide use has actually increased. (NW Science and Environmental Policy Center.) Organic farming, however, is sustainable, its technology is freely available to the world and it offers self- and local community empowerment.

STATION VIII JESUS MEETS THE WOMEN OF JERUSALEM

Women and Education, Hunger, and Poverty

Christ, you look with compassion on women: the birth-givers, the nurturers, and the comforters. May we commit to bringing women out of poverty; providing adequate nutrition, healthcare and education; and honoring the lives of all women.

Point to Ponder: "To choose life involves rejecting every form of violence: the violence of poverty and hunger, which oppresses so many human beings; the violence of armed conflicts... and the violence of mindless damage to the natural environment." John Paul II, Homily, January 27, 1999.

STATION IX JESUS FALLS FOR THE THIRD TIME

Redemption for All Creation

Christ, you created all things, and you liberate all life as well: human, hummingbird, whale, Sequoia, and bacteria. We cry out to you to save our Earth, and you answer that your liberation of Earth arises within each of us. May we understand that your hands are our hands, that your love can work through each of us, that the Earth groans for redemption. May we become deeper lovers of you by loving each other, by loving the world.

Points to ponder: “God entrusted the earth to human beings ‘to till it and keep it’. When this principle is forgotten and they become tyrants rather than the custodians of nature, sooner or later nature will rebel.” John Paul II, Homily, November 12, 2000.

STATION X JESUS IS STRIPPED OF HIS GARMENTS

Humans Strip the Earth in the Urge for Domination

Christ, those who worship at the altar of control, domination, and death do not tolerate your message of love, life and freedom. The Romans tried to silence your message of freedom by stripping you of everything. We Americans, snared in our culture of domination, control and death, strip your body the Earth of her topsoil, her rainforests, her coral reefs, her ranges, her habitats, her species, and her peace. May we embrace your humility. May we let go of our controlling, dominating attitudes. May we let go of our fear, and live with trust and faith in the Earth’s graciousness.

Point to Ponder: *“We have so oppressed the natural world that natural systems are faltering, and extensive disruption of biosystems is occurring... Yet all of our basic institutions, industry, commerce, education and religion, are absorbed into this destructive commercial-industrial context... [O]ur economic system refuses to evolve into a new, more sustainable system.” (Thomas Berry, THE GREAT WORK, 109)*



STATION XI JESUS IS NAILED TO THE CROSS Cosmic Christ Is Not Embraced

Christ of the cosmos, we continue to drive the nails when we try to bind you to a cross of small visions. We need to see you through the revelation of some fifteen billion years of creative delight we call the cosmos. May we be free of our limited visions of you. May we greet you living abundantly in our lives as revealed in science, literature, cosmology, imagination and play.

Point to ponder: *All things came to be through you, and without you nothing came to be. (Jn 1:3) "God is constantly speaking only one thing. In this one utterance God speaks the Son and at the same time the Holy Spirit and all Creation." (Meister Eckhart) "The Third nature of Christ (neither human nor divine but Cosmic) has not noticeably attracted the explicit attention of the faithful or theologians." (Teilhard de Chardin)*



STATION XII CHRIST DIES ON THE CROSS

Species Extinction

Christ, through you is manifested uncountable numbers of species of animals and plants. Each individual of each species is born with your blessing, and makes up the full mosaic of your heart. Our choices have led to the unprecedented death of entire species, and with their loss the universe forever loses a cherished gift. May we, through your grace, transform ourselves into a culture of life. May we humbly honor the life of every creature and the ecosystems that support them.

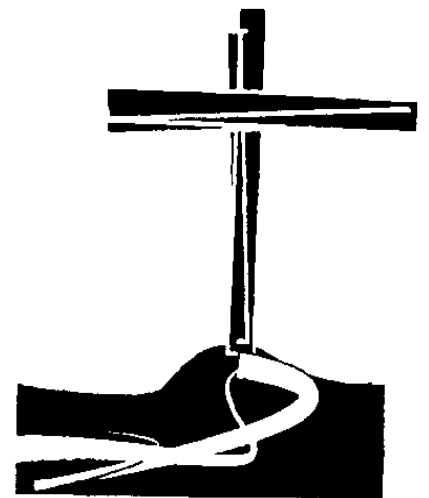
Point to Ponder: While estimates of species extinction vary, it is certain that at least 140 of Earth's plant and animal species are condemned to extinction every day (State of the World, 1992).

STATION XIII HIS BODY IS TAKEN DOWN FROM THE CROSS

Older Ways Removed and New Ways Born

Christ, we live in rapidly changing times. A new paradigm is emerging. Our focus turns now to seeing ourselves differently. We see ourselves now as part of an integral natural world, and no longer as the masters of nature. May we gently lift Earth off the cross of human domination and unreflective greed. May we know the joy and freedom of an abundant world community.

Point to Ponder: The marvelous direction of evolution (the universe unfolding and revealing God's mind) is toward an increase in abundance, diversity and possibility. This abundance happens through cooperation, only rarely through competition. The path to prosperity, wealth, health, love and an abundant Earth is through giving, sharing and cooperating. Unfortunately, many of us hope to give at the point when we finally feel we have received enough. We do not, however, receive by taking (a stale and a false thought). Truly, as the Prayer of St. Francis says, it is in giving (cooperating) that we receive!



STATION XIV HIS BODY IS LAID IN THE TOMB Dark Night of the Earth Soul

Christ, you were buried and those who loved you wept at your death. Yet even as strip mines, toxic dumps and nuclear waste bury much of your Earth's grandeur, we do not want to give up the hope that we will know your beautiful heart once more. May we, through your grace, have the faith that we can change, choose life, and love this Earth and you more deeply. May our tears heal our hearts and give us strength to carry on.

Point to Ponder: *"There is the lucky dark, none to observe me, darkness far and wide; no sign for me to mark, no other light, no guide except for my heart—the fire, the fire inside!"* (John of the Cross)

CANTICLE OF CREATION STATIONS

STATION XV BROTHER SUN

Most high, all powerful, good Lord,
to you the praise, the glory, the honor and all blessing;
and to you only, Most High, do they belong.

All praise be yours, my Lord, with all of your creation,
and first, Sir Brother Sun, who brings the day its illumination from you.
He is beautiful and radiant with great splendor;
and of you, Most High, he bears the likeness.

Brother Sun, our dearest elder brother, has been giving and will give life to all Earth's children for billions of years. Brother Sun creates energy and light by fusing hydrogen in his belly, the hydrogen given by God in the original breath that flared forth our cosmos. May we humans humbly and intelligently accept and use his radiant gifts of light and energy.

Intentions: We desire a planet where human homes are designed for passive solar heating, reducing the need for fossil fuel burning. We desire a planet where solar collection (e.g., PV solar panels) is used to generate electricity for our homes and workplaces. We desire a planet with alternative energy technologies that are inexpensive and available to all the world's people.



STATION XVI SISTER MOON AND STARS

All praise be yours, my Lord, through Sister Moon and Stars;
in the heavens you formed their clarity and preciousness, and beauty.

A look through a telescope is the same as gazing on the most marvelous of all natural wonders. It is as entering through the portals of a powerful temple of worship. There are billions of star-sisters in our galaxy, and billions of other galaxy-sisters that swirl and move as God appointed. May we acknowledge our humble place in the immensity, and yet rejoice to be such beloved, unique children of the Creator.

Intentions: We desire to know you God both in the quiet of the moonlit night as well as in the radiance of the daylight. We desire an awareness of our special nature as children of God, and humble hearts when facing the immensity of the universe.

STATION XVII BROTHER WIND AND AIR

All praise be yours, my Lord, through Brother Wind, and through the air and clouds, in calm or any weather, by which you give your creatures nourishment.

Brothers Wind and Air have evolved so splendidly throughout the growth of Mother Earth. Once, our Earth was adorned in a brown-orange atmosphere, the “air” rich in nitrogen, carbon dioxide and methane. Earth’s earliest prokaryotic bacteria grew and flourished, and breathed out oxygen, weaving a new clear blue nitrogen/oxygen/carbon dioxide cloak for Mother Earth—an atmosphere to support life as we know it today. May we be aware of the invisible life forces amongst us.

Intention: We desire a planet that maintains the sweet air all creatures need for healthy lives. We desire the insights and energy to create newer and cleaner manufacturing technologies. We want to understand Brothers Wind and Air’s moods, and know them for the breath of God they are.

STATION XVIII SISTER WATER

All praise be yours, my Lord, through Sister Water,
who is most useful and humble and precious and pure.

Sister Water, your physical fluid flows through every living, conscious, Spirit-filled being. Indeed, we live on a water planet, and you regulate all aspects of Earth’s life: heat, chemical exchange, weather and nutrition. May we learn to be more fluid, humble, and giving, as are you.

Intention: We desire clean potable water for the Earth’s poor, especially in areas ruined by war. We desire pristine ocean habitats for all sea creatures. We desire all water supplies to be declared sanctuaries, and never war targets. We desire a baptism of all living creatures, a blessing of water and spirit.

STATION XIX BROTHER FIRE

All praise be yours, my Lord, through Brother Fire,
through whom you illuminate the dark and he is beautiful
and joyful and healthy and strong.

Brother Fire, you have been present in all Creation since its first flaring forth 15 billion years ago! But only in the last one and a half million years have human hands held the skill to bring you forth, releasing Brother Sun's energy stored in sticks and grasses. There you are birthed with the aid of Brother Air...what are you then? A dance of union, the mystery of life.

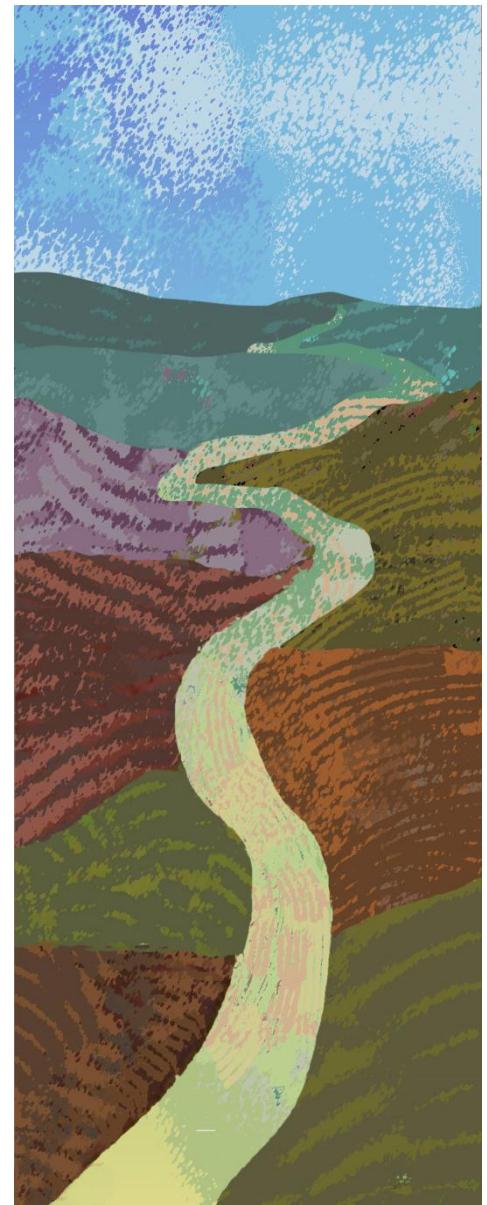
Intention: We desire clean-burning technologies for our auto-mobiles and factories. We desire warm places for the entire world's poor to sleep. We desire hearts burning with wonder and gratitude before the mystery of creation's power and mystery.

STATION XX SISTER MOTHER EARTH

All praise be yours, my Lord,
through our Sister Mother Earth,
by whom we are sustained and governed,
and who produces diverse fruits
with colored flowers and herbs.

Our Mother Earth, you provide for us what we need each day, freely, and in ways that are magnificent, complex in their interrelationships, and beyond our wildest imaginations. May we live and work and love in tune with the natural rhythms of your way. May we be present at every moment to the delightful presence of your hues, forms, ridges, textures, sour-bitter-sweet tastes, bird songs and shadows.

Intention: We desire colored flowers and herbs and all foods free from pesticides and filled with their natural flavors. We desire a world in which all peoples have access to sufficient, locally grown foods. We desire a world in which all creatures have access to the healthy bio-systems that gave rise to their way of being and continue to sustain them.



STATION XXI GRANT PARDON

All praise be yours, my Lord,
through those who grant pardon for sake of your love,
and who suffer sickness and tribulation.
Blessed are they who endure in peace; by you Most High,
they will be crowned.

Divine spirit, give us hearts that can pardon those who destroy Mother Earth, who pollute the clean ocean waters, who release toxins into the air, who despoil the soils and groundwater with chemicals, who destroy habitats and thus the species who live there. May we acknowledge our own interconnectedness with these people, and pardon ourselves. May this forgiveness release the power of compassion within us, and give us the insight, joy and courage to work for peace on this Earth. May we be “instruments of your peace” in this world today, embracing nonviolence and rejecting war.

Intention: We desire forgiveness—everywhere, in every heart. We desire a renewed covenant between humans and nature, based on mutual respect, understanding and the principles of the common good. We desire an end to war and to all forms of violence.



STATION XXII SISTER DEATH

All praise be yours, my Lord, through Sister Death,
from whose embrace no mortal can escape.
Grievous those who die in mortal sin.
Blessed are those she finds doing your will, for no second death will harm them.
Praise and bless my Lord, and give him thanks, and serve him with great humility.

Sister Death, it is you we so often ignore and fear. We do not look forward to your loving embrace, and yet within that embrace is the promise of Mother Earth and the family of brothers and sisters. The promise of renewal, the promise of life that never ends but only changes, the promise that spirit pervades all physical life, and that spirit is eternal. May we honor and acknowledge the gift of your embrace, Sister Death.

Intention: We desire to daily embrace the fact of our limited life spans. We desire to live each day to its fullness, grateful for its gifts, its lessons, its love and its challenges. We desire to grow in spirit, our eternal aspect, our true selves, and allow spirit to enliven the work of our bodies, our minds and our souls.