

WORLD ENVIRONMENT DAY Model 2

June 5

“Nature in Service to Humanity”

The U.N. General Assembly designated June 5 as World Environment Day, to deepen public awareness of the need to preserve and enhance the environment. That date was chosen because it was the opening of the U. N. Conference on the Human Environment, which led to the establishment of the U. N. Environment Program.

Opening Song

Leader: In the name of the Father, of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. **All:** Amen.

Leader: May the Creator and Lord of the Earth and of Life itself be with all of you.

Pardon [Needed: A world globe, a spray can, a small battery, a chunk of charcoal]

Leader: We seek forgiveness as we bring forth symbols that we place around the globe.

A. A spray can

Reader: In 1992 there were alarming reports of blindness in fish, rabbits and cattle in southern Chile. Doctors reported an increase in the number of patients with allergies and diseases affecting the skin and the eyes. The Program of the United Nations for the Environment calculates that for each loss of one per cent of the ozone layer, 50,000 cases of skin cancer and 100,000 cases of blindness due to cataracts are caused in the world. We seek pardon for the destruction of Nature and of the ozone layer for our own comfort.

All: Forgive us, Lord.

B. A small battery

Reader: The gold seekers have invaded the indigenous lands of the Amazon, poisoning its rivers with mercury. We ask pardon for contaminating the waters and, as a consequence, provoking diseases among those who will use those waters.

All: Forgive us, Lord.

C. A chunk of charcoal

Reader: There are 200 million people caught up in what has been called “the energy crisis of the poor”: the shortage of wood for fuel. Almost half of humanity has not yet reached the era of fossil fuels and depends on wood for heat, light and cooking. A study by the Institute Beijer of Stockholm shows that one of the principal factors that contribute to deforestation is not the rural use of wood for fuel, something that is basically sustainable, but rather the conversion of large quantities of wood into charcoal for sale to inhabitants of large and small cities (in developing countries). Charcoal is used to meet the needs of the cities because it is much lighter than wood, and consequently much more inexpensive to transport. We ask pardon for spoiling trees and plants, causing the disappearance of species created by God.

All: Forgive us, Lord.

Biblical Readings

A. Wisdom 13: 1-9 or Wisdom 7:16-21

B. Psalm 8 (sung)

C. Luke 12:22-31

Commentary by St. Augustine

Suggested readings: A. Commentary on Psalm 32, II, 15 or
 B. On Order, I, 1, 2-3

Reflection or Homily

Spontaneous Petitions

These may be motivated by showing some wheat, corn, water, a flower, an animal, a tool, an aluminum can, a piece of paper, etc. Either the actual item, or a picture of the item, may be shown. If it is thought too difficult to call forth spontaneous petitions, then petitions may be prepared before hand and read aloud by one or more readers.

Gifts [Needed: A mirror; dirt or sand; a natural medicine, medicinal herb or root; a science book]

Leader: We bring now our gifts in which are expressed our desire to improve and to preserve Nature, which God has handed over to us. They also symbolize scientific advances.

A. A mirror

Reader: All together, renewable energy represents an important contribution to our supply of energy. The Philippines, Brazil and Norway obtain nearly half their energy from them. This mirror symbolizes solar energy, the cleanest that exists, since it does not contaminate anything and it does not destroy anything. This is how we want to be: respectful and clean persons that do not offend anybody and who are at the service of all. **All:** Amen.

B. Dirt or Sand

Reader: The Indians of the rain forests, such as the Kuna of Panama and the Kenyah of Indonesia, have maintained ecosystems for centuries. The Kuna live on islands without sand or coral in the Caribbean. They cultivate a great variety of nutritional products. They recycle carefully the nutrients and leave their orchards to lie dormant every five to ten years, creating others in different parts of the forest. The Kuna have covered all their needs by means of this management system of the land without destroying the forest on which their lives depend. May this handful of earth demonstrate our desire to use all things well, to not leave residues that will delay hundreds of years in becoming absorbed and eliminated by nature. May our children find an earth which has been healed and more cared for than the one that we ourselves have found. **All:** Amen.

C. Natural medicines, medicinal herbs, roots, etc.

Reader: The Indians of the northwestern forests of the Amazon use more than 1300 kinds of plants as medicine. The National Institute of Cancer of the United States has identified more than 2000 plants in the wet tropical forests that offer possibilities of combating cancer. These medicines are proof of the fact that we want to take advantage of the goods of Nature for the good of humanity. May God grant us the power and the intelligence necessary for discovering their value in curing those in need. **All:** Amen.

D. A book, preferable a book of science or geography

Reader: Conservation projects will fail if there is not a change of attitude. Therefore, the organizations that sponsor conservation make education a great priority, giving unprecedented emphasis to developing educational programs and to incorporate them into study plans of the elementary schools. Books open our minds and enlighten us about new realities. That we might be open to change, that our minds be open to all things new, and that we might have the strength and courage to leave our comfortable state and adapt ourselves to different manners of improving the current situation. **All:** Amen.

Our Father (may be sung or spoken)

Ecological Commitment

Leader: God, eternal Father and loving Creator of Nature, We give you thanks for life, because you have given of yourself and you have created out of love.

All: We give you thanks, Lord.

Leader: Your spirit rested on the waters, and by your word you formed the sun, the moon, the stars and the infinite universe above our head.

All: Praised may you be for them, Lord.

Leader: You made the earth, humble, small and beautiful, as a prelude of what would be, and you opened the skies above, that they might be generous and give the earth water and light.

All: Blessed may you be, Lord of the sky and the land.

Leader: you determined that colors and sounds become plants, fruits and flowers, insects and fish and mammals of all sizes and kinds.

All: Glory to you, Lord of all living beings.

Leader: As the crown of all Creation, you made us, human beings, in your image and likeness, and gave us the capacity to walk and talk with you, enjoying your company.

All: We are happy to be united as your family.

Leader: You were generous with our earth and with our peoples. You formed a paradise called America that brings us closer to the greatness of your mystery.

All: You alone are great and holy.

Leader: Your most beautiful work was to choose a woman, Mary, to bear your Son, Jesus Christ, to save and release your creation from sin. We recognize your love and the beauty of your intervention in our history out of the immense silence of eternity.

All: In the face of the admirable work, I (Say your name) who am dedicated to your service and to the service of your Church, renew my commitment, acquired at baptism, and with the aid of Mary, our Mother, and of St. Augustine, I accept the challenge of living my personal life and my relationships with others in a more ecological way. This I solemnly promise, Lord.

With the help of your grace, I desire to contemplate the mystery of Creation and Redemption, and to dedicate my work to your plan of salvation.

I am in your hands, Lord.

– Prayer of the Congress on Augustinian Eco-theology, January, 1995

Final song and farewell

– Permission is granted to download, duplicate and distribute this Prayer Service for World Environment Day for use as an aid to prayer. Please credit the Augustinian Secretariate for Justice and Peace and www.midwestaugustinians.org/justpaxworldenviropray.html. Include the words "Used with permission" if printed or otherwise published.