WORLD ENVIRONMENT DAY Model 1

June 5

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.

Call to Worship

All over the world the effects of the "El Niño" phenomenon have been felt: unseasonable and torrential rains, in unusual places; snow where there nas been none for many years; arduous drought, and more. Humanity suffers as a consequence: "It is believed that in this century 90 Amazonian tribes have disappeared."

As true followers of Augustine, our concern should not be so much for the land, as if it were a goddess enraged because it is being exploited, as for humanity itself. Our ecological concern is an ethical concern, of justice and solidarity with those who suffer the consequences of these disasters.

The "El Niño" phenomenon is provoked by a lack of care in our relationships with Nature, which we offend relentlessly with our projects, with our residues, with our selfishness and drive for profits. Nature is at our service, because God gave it to us "to subjugate it," but we should use it with respect and care because we have also been ordered "to care for it."

It is our hope that this celebration might help us to discover that we should change anti-ecological habits, because if we do not respect Nature in all its forms, we will be offending one another.

• - - -

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 will all of you.

Prayer

All: Come, God of the NORTH, God of the Earth. We invoke you and call you. You bring us the stars, stones, high mountains and fields of grain. Send forth your strength. Be here now!

Come, God of the EAST. We invoke you and call you, Whirlwind, God of the birds that fly, God of the rising sun, of all there is to know. Send forth your light. Be here now!

Come, God of the SOUTH, God of fire. We invoke you and call you. You bring us the warmth of summer. Send us your fire. Be here with us now!

Come, God of the WEST, God of water. We invoke you and call you. You bring us feelings of care and love. You bring us the cleansing rain, the rivers and the sea. Send forth your soothing love. Be here with us now!

Come, God of the center, Spirit of our hearts and our lives. We invoke you and call you. You bring us power, creativity and adventure. You bring us laughter and tears. You are our hope. It is you we long for. Send forth your Spirit. Be here now!

First Reading: Genesis 1:1 - 2:4

Leader: We who have lost our sense and our senses - our touch, our smell, our vision of who we are; we who frantically force and press all things, without rest for body or spirit, hurting our earth and injuring ourselves: we call a halt.

We want to rest. We need to rest and allow the earth to rest. We need to reflect and to rediscover the mystery that lives in us, that is the ground of every unique expression of life, the source of fascination the calls all things to communion.

We declare a Sabbath, a space of quiet, for simply being and letting be, for recovering the great forgotten truths, for learning how to live again.

Litany

A Prayer of Sorrow

Reader 1: Our response will be: "We have forgotten who we are." **All**: *We have forgotten who we are.*

Reader 1: We have forgotten who we are. We have alienated ourselves from the unfolding of the cosmos. We have become estranged from the movements of the earth. We have turned our backs on the cycles of life. **All**: *We have forgotten who we are.*

Reader 2: We have sought only our own security. We have exploited simply for our own ends. We have distorted our knowledge. We have abused our power. **All**: *We have forgotten who we are.*

Reader 1: Now the land is barren. And the waters are poisoned. And the air is polluted. **All**: *We have forgotten who we are.*

Reader 2: Now the forests are dying. And the creatures are disappearing. And the humans are despairing.
All: *We have forgotten who we are.*

Reader 1: We ask for forgiveness. We ask for the gift of remembering. We ask for the strength to change.
All: *Help us to remember who we are.*

Commentary of St. Augustine

"This is what I love when I love my God. And what is this? I put my question to the earth and it replied, 'I am not he.' I questioned everything it held and they confessed the same. I questioned the sea and the great deep, and the teeming live creatures that crawl, and they replied, 'We are not God; seek higher.'

"I questioned the gusty winds and every breeze, with all its flying creatures, told me, 'Anaximenes was wrong; I am not God.' To the sky I put my question, to sun, moon and stars, but they denied me: 'We are not the Go you seek.'

"And to all things that stood around the portals of my flesh, I said, 'Tell me of my God. You are not he, but tell me something of him.' Then they lifted up their voices and cries, 'He made us.' My questioning was my attentive spirit, and their reply, their beauty." (–Confessions X, 6)

•

Litany

A Prayer of Gratitude

Reader 1: Our response will be: *We rejoice in all life.* **All***: We rejoice in all life.*

Reader 1: We live in all things. All things live in us. **All:** *We rejoice in all life.*

Reader 2: We live by the sun. We move with the stars. **All**: *We rejoice in all life.*

Reader 1: We eat from the earth. We drink from the rain. We breathe from the air. **All**: *We rejoice in all life.*

Reader 2: We share with the creatures. We have strength through their gifts. **All**: *We rejoice in all life.*

Reader 1: We depend on the forests. We have knowledge through their secrets. **All**: *We rejoice in all life.*

Reader 2: We have the privilege of seeing and understanding. We have the responsibility of caring. We have the joy of celebrating. **All**: *We rejoice in all life.*

Reader 1: We are full of the grace of creation. We are grace-ful. We are grateful. We rejoice in all life.
All: *We rejoice in all life.*

Leader: Blessing

– 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.