

In the name of God – Giver of Life, Bearer of Pain, Maker of Love.

I. Ocean Sunday (Water)

As announced on St John's FaceBook page, today we are celebrating the first Sunday of Creation Season, and even more specifically, today is Ocean Sunday.ⁱ

Listen again to Job 38's references to water and creation in connection babies and child-rearing:

⁸Or who shut in the sea with doors when it burst out from the womb?— ⁹when I made the clouds its garment, and thick darkness its swaddling band, ¹⁰and prescribed bounds for it, and set bars and doors...ⁱⁱ

And the association between water and play in the Psalm makes me think of the cartoon Finding Nemo... I can imagine the marine life singing and enjoying their habitat.ⁱⁱⁱ

And in the Gospel of Luke, a vocation intimately involved with water is used to kick off a conversation of trust, perseverance, and risk-taking.^{iv}

These biblical excerpts give voice to a relationship with God that is intertwined with our awareness of, understanding of, and relationship to creation in our Christian formation and discipleship.

Since the oil spill earlier this year and my participation in a Spring Beijing Circle, I've been reflecting on *my own* relationship – my own dependence – on water, oil, and petroleum-based products ...like many plastics, for example the hot topic – plastic bags!^v

Earlier this month, the attempt to ban plastic bags in California was rejected, against claims that plastic bags harm our environment and cost millions of dollars to collect and dispose of in landfills.^{vi}

National Geographic published an article last year about plastics that end up in the ocean, highlighting concerns for marine life ingesting plastic parts or pollutants from decomposing plastics.^{vii}

This will be an ongoing discussion, important in the public sector but also in the Church. One significant way *we keep* the conversation going is through our celebration of Creation Season in our liturgy.

II. Creation Season

The Liturgical Calendar is a wonderful gift – setting aside space and time to reflect on different aspects of life together as members of God's family. Creation Season in particular invites us to rekindle a sense of responsible wonder for all of God's creation, rooted in a sense of awe of the Creator.

The *Season of Creation* website outlines,

We celebrate Christ, the creator, and the wonders of creation. In the liturgy, we follow the lead of the psalm writers and celebrate with creation — with the forests, the rivers and the fields, which praise the Creator in their own way.^{viii}

There are a variety of accounts on how the “wonders of creation” came to be, including the Creation accounts in Genesis.^{ix} And within Christianity, there are a variety of interpretations of the Genesis stories. What I find fascinating are shared characteristics of

1. Ordering chaos, giving purpose to creation, and making it complex,
2. as well as the ongoing dynamic of the creation process ...

Even more, considering the historical-social context of Genesis, we actually get a story focused on the God of the Hebrew people who is *THE-most-powerful-Creator*. Creation, in part, is a sign pointing to and teaching about God. Through our encounters with the whole of our cosmos, we get a more full understanding of who God is and God's love for us.

We hear this in Job, which is not meant to make light of Job's loss and sorrow but to broaden perspective.^x God said, “Hold up, Job. Don't you remember, I AM the One who...? Come on, remember when I ...? I'm the same God today as I was then, and I will be the same God tomorrow and the next day and the next...”

“If I care that much about the birds of the air and the flowers in the fields, how much do you think I care for you?”

Peter seemed to have lost perspective for a moment, too. When suddenly blessed with fish overflowing, he responded with a tone of shame: He cried out, “I'm not worthy,” instead of crying out, “yes and amen!” to God's faithfulness.

It's not just about the plastic bags, oil, water, or fish; it's about God and God's love for the whole world.

III. Falling in Awe Again

One of the invitations in Creation Season is to “fall in awe again” with this loving Creator.

We often associate a sense of awe with experiences in nature, like visiting Yosemite, going to the beach, or gazing at poppy fields. So, it's popular to bring home sand from Hawaii or other souvenirs to remind us of our awe-filled experiences. Yes?

But... how do we connect with this awe and wonder from day to day?

In addition to naming that our choices to celebrate or degrade, prohibit or encourage the fulfilling of Divine purpose in the world, what stewardship practices help us “fall in awe” with the Creator again?

Maybe you need to practice being a ‘Tree hugger’ for the next few weeks. Not to mistake the tree for God but as a full-sensory way of remembering of God through your gifts of sight, smell, touch. An experience that may stoke a sense of Divine awe.

When I pull out a re-usable bag instead of a plastic one at the grocery store, it's a way for me to cultivate a sense of awe. It's a simple moment of remembering. For me, it's one small practice of connecting the dots from the bag, to oil, to water, to all of creation, to my Creator.

Given that it's Ocean Sunday, I encourage you this week to reflect on your relationship with water...not just for the sake of caring for the limited gift of water in the world but also about how water is connected to receiving and giving God's love.

The Deans' message in the e-news this week offered some Creation Season resources for reflection and action... first rooted in prayer.

Appropriating Ephesians, “I pray that you may have the power to comprehend, with all the saints, what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of [Cosmic] Christ that surpasses knowledge, so that [the world] may be filled with all the fullness of God.”^{xi}

Appropriating a Sunday School song, I pray that you do discover practices around water that remind you of God's “love like an ocean in [your] soul”^{xii}