

An Ecological Examination of Conscience

Francis of Assisi called animals “Sister” and “Brother” and viewed humans as one part of a wider family of creation. Franciscan writers Ilija Delio, Keith Douglass Warner, and Pamela Wood recommend adapting a historic Christian practice of “examination of conscience” to focus on how we have harmed or helped our relationships with the Earth:



To prepare to do an ecological examination of conscience, take a few minutes to quiet yourself and enter into a state of prayer. Going back over your day or week, ask yourself the following questions:

1. Is my whole life centered on God’s overflowing love in my life, revealed through Jesus and through all of creation?
2. Do I accept with a grateful heart the gifts of God’s goodness and diversity in creation?
3. Do I pray for the forgiveness of sins between humans and the created world, and for the healing and reconciliation of our broken relationship with creation?
4. Have I used my God-given gifts to honor and protect the diverse, interdependent, fragile nature of all life and to preserve it for all future beings?
5. Have I stolen from or damaged the habitat of other creatures by wasting or consuming more than I need?
6. Do I seek to eliminate from the world whatever keeps all creatures from their full development intended by their Creator: pollution, greed, overconsumption, and loss of habitat, disease, war, extinction of species, oppressive laws and structures?
7. Have I encouraged others to take care for creation seriously?

After spending time with these questions, hold in your mind and heart the ways in which you have lived in disharmony with creation. . . .

Offer these mistakes up to God and ask for the strength and the wisdom to learn to live with integrity within the web of creation.