



# THIS SEASON OF CREATION, LET'S JOIN 'TOGETHER'



**Let Justice  
and Peace Flow**  
Season of Creation 2023

A Mighty River  
Amos 5:24



**The Synodal Pathway**  
of the Catholic Church in Ireland



**Together** Gathering  
of the People of God

In advance of the first assembly of the Universal Synod, which begins on 4th October (the last day of the Season of Creation) an ecumenical prayer vigil is taking place in Rome in the presence of Pope Francis and representatives of different Churches, to unite us all in praise and silence, in listening to the Word. In extending this invitation Pope Francis reminded us that 'the path to Christian unity and the path of synodal conversion of the Church are linked.' In a special way, young people from across the world, from all Church backgrounds, have been invited to Rome and have been welcomed for a weekend of sharing, to journey together as the people of God to pray for the work of the Synod and the prayer of Our Lord Jesus Christ that one day we would all be one (John 17:21). Of course, not everyone has to go to Rome to be united in prayer.

Through baptism and the Scriptures, are we not sisters and brothers in Christ, united in a communion that is still imperfect but nevertheless real? Is it not Christ who calls us and opens a way for us to go forward with him as fellow travellers? Is it not Christ who calls us to go forward together with those who live on the margins of

our societies? On this journey, in a dialogue that reconciles, we want to remember that we need each other, not so that we might be stronger together but as a contribution to justice and peace in the human family and for all of God's Creation.

In gratitude for this growing sense of communion, we can find the momentum needed to meet today's challenges faced with the polarisations that fracture the human family and the cry of the earth. In encounter and mutual listening, let us walk together as the people of God. Let us enlarge the space of our tent (see Isaiah 54:2). Enlarging the space of the tent means that those who seem to be on the edges of our societies, or the Church are heard and valued. As we walk together and join our voices in prayer, we want to affirm our hope that all God's people will one day come together as one. By inviting us to welcome in our hearts those who are on the margins of society, the synodal journey means leaving no-one behind regardless of cultural or religious background, ability or disability, choice of lifestyle or relationships, documented or undocumented status, economic or life situation, each person's presence is a gift to others and precious.

Let's journey together  
with other Christian Churches  
with the people of God in all their  
diversity  
with those who hear the cry of the earth  
with those on the margins of our  
societies  
with young adults  
with people of all generations  
with all who are seeking meaning in life

As part of this international celebration, we are encouraging parishes to use the **Season of Creation River Ritual** as a moment to gather by a river or stream locally, to celebrate together, to welcome all and to pray; to hear creation's song and to hear creation's cry. 'Let justice roll on like a river, righteousness like a never-failing stream!' (Amos 5: 24).

## River Ritual for Season of Creation<sup>1</sup>



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Given the theme of this year's Season of Creation, and the reality that every Irish diocese has a river or sea access point – it seemed very appropriate to offer a ritual prayer that we could celebrate near a riverbank. We hope that this opportunity to gather out of doors in the cathedral of nature will be a support and inspiration for all involved.

As with all events held near running water, we strongly encourage planning teams to walk the area in advance in order to identify the safest gathering areas, and to have a safety plan with stewards on duty throughout. If you cannot access running water, you can create a river of blue cloth, beginning at the baptismal font and winding around church benches.

**A Practical Note:** Please consider this document a support for a gathered team who will plan their own local event, drawing on local myths, trees, fish and flowers! As you prepare for the Season of Creation, please remember that 'rather than events we are building encounters, to cultivate listening in the spirit of ecumenism, engaging in prophetic action for our common home and strengthened by eco-spirituality to commit and follow-up on our responsibilities as stewards of creation.'<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> From [seasonofcreation.org](https://seasonofcreation.org) Celebration Guide 2023.

Each section has 2 readers for balance. The central part has presentations from local groups. Once you have agreed on the outline of the event, please gather the necessary materials (for example we suggest the use of flags), walk the site together and share materials with readers in advance. Consider how sound will travel here, the effect of wind and rain, and how hospitality might be offered afterwards. Invite a choir – singing creates a bond, and where you need to use mics or speakers.

<sup>1</sup> This resource has been compiled by the *Laudato Si'* Working Group of the Irish Bishops' Conference in conjunction with the Irish Synodal Pathway. With special thanks to Noirín Lynch for compiling this River Ritual.



## Outline of Event

**MC:** When we speak of the climate crisis, we can feel overwhelmed, despairing even. Today, as a part of the Season of Creation celebrations, you are invited to join with others and feel supported and united – to be nourished and inspired. So, welcome. It is good that you are here with us.

The theme of this year's Season of Creation is 'Let Justice and Peace flow', and the image we use is that of a river. It's based on the words of the Prophet Amos when he cries out 'But let justice roll on like a river, righteousness like a never-failing stream!' (Amos 5: 24).

So here we are, by a river to do three things: to recognise what is, to realise how much is happening in quiet ways all around us, and to choose to engage or to join the mighty river of justice that flows in our land.

**Reader:** In his message for the Season of Creation, Pope Francis calls us to live in 'a right relationship with God, humanity and nature, so

that justice and peace can flow like a never-failing stream of pure water, nourishing humanity and all creatures.'<sup>3</sup> Using the image of the heartbeat of a mother and child, he asks us to listen to the heartbeat of mother earth. Peace and justice require that our hearts beat in time with creation and with God, so he says, 'Let us heed our call to stand with the victims of environmental and climate injustice, and to put an end to the senseless war against creation.'

In 1152, the boundaries of Irish dioceses were set so that its leaders could escape to Rome if needed to speak for the diocese. We gather on this riverbank now to speak for creation – to be the voices that shout loudly for peace, justice and dignity for all that God has created. All across our world others are doing the same. We are called to join that river of justice and peace, to take up climate and ecological justice, and to speak out with and for communities most impacted by climate injustice and the loss of biodiversity.

3 To read Pope Francis' message for the Season of Creation 2023 go to: [press.vatican.va/content/salastampa/en/bollettino/pubblico/2023/05/25/230525a.html](https://press.vatican.va/content/salastampa/en/bollettino/pubblico/2023/05/25/230525a.html)

## Recognising what is – the beauty of creation and the climate emergency

**Hymn Idea:** Choose or teach in advance so your community can join in with without hymn sheets!



- 'Come to the Water' by John B Foley SJ:  
[youtu.be/EcxRvfTC2D8](https://youtu.be/EcxRvfTC2D8)
- 'This is Holy Ground' by Christopher Beatty.  
Sung by John Michael Talbot:  
[youtu.be/1YCXLbQ6CIA](https://youtu.be/1YCXLbQ6CIA)

**Young Reader:** Scripture says: 'By the word of the Lord the heavens were made' (Psalm 33:6).

**MC:** Please close your eyes for a moment here by the river and listen. What can you hear? What can you smell? What can you feel – a breeze or raindrop? Breathe in oxygen gently now – this is a precious gift created by the grass under your feet. Breathe out carbon dioxide – a gift we offer the trees and plants. Breathing in and breathing out, notice that you are not an observer here, you are home. Every breath is life, is love, is sacred. God blesses this moment with Gods presence here with us.

**Young Reader:** In *Laudato Si'* (Pope Francis' letter on the environment) we hear that 'Standing awestruck before a mountain, (we) cannot separate this experience from God' (*Laudato Si'*, 234). Standing here, listening to creation, we can experience God's presence in a special way.

**MC:** From Pope Francis' letter to you, (*Laudato Si'*, 77): 'Creation is of the order of love. God's love is the fundamental moving force in all created things: 'For you love all things that exist and detest none of the things that you have made; for you would not have made anything if you had hated it' (Wisdom 11:24). Every creature is thus the object of the Father's tenderness, who gives it its place in the world. Even the fleeting life of the least of beings is the object of his love, and in its few seconds of existence, God enfolds it with his affection'.

Aware of the beauty, we are also aware that we take much for granted. We presume that our common home can carry the weight of too much carbon and too little clean air, of too much pollution and too little living lightly on the earth. We take for granted species that balance our delicate eco



system, and oceans that drown in plastic. We assume there is justice for all peoples and species, ignoring clear evidence that this is not true. Forests burn, seas die, species disappear forever. There is no way that we humans can stand apart from the great wounding of our planet, as if we are not affected by it all. For our ecological sins against God's creation as a people, we weep.

**Young Reader:** One lovely translation of 1 Corinthians 12 says this, 'The way God designed our bodies is a model for understanding our lives together as a church: every part dependent on every other part, the parts we mention and the parts we don't, the parts we see and the parts we don't. If one-part hurts, every other part is involved in the hurt, and in the

healing. If one-part flourishes, every other part enters into the exuberance.'<sup>4</sup>

**MC:** We are involved in the hurt and the healing, we must flourish or fail together.

- For all the ways we have taken our beautiful world for granted, **Kyrie Elison**.
- For all the times we have used creatures or creation disrespectfully, **Christe Elison**.
- For all the moments we have despaired, giving up on our common home, **Kyrie Elison**.

In this moment of silence now, we breathe with the earth, listening for her heartbeat, for God's presence. We recognise the hurt caused to our beautiful common home, and ask for courage to work for its healing.

4 1 Corinthians 12: 25-26, The Message translation

## Recognising what is being done – Movements for Peace, Justice and Ecumenism

### Music Ideas

- 'Peace is Flowing like a River' by Carey Laundry.
- 'Oh, How I Long for Peace' by Peggy Seeger: [youtu.be/onjWTza9QFE](https://youtu.be/onjWTza9QFE)



**MC:** We read in Isaiah: 'Listen carefully, I am about to do a new thing, now it will spring forth; will you not be aware of it? I will even put a road in the wilderness, rivers in the desert.' (Isaiah 43:19).

If we were to try and find answers alone, we would despair. Thankfully our faith calls us into communion, to work as one body, to live and learn as one people.

*Across your community there are active groups offering ways to engage. Invite representatives from 3 or 4 groups to come along. They should be part of the gathered group and step forward now to say the following: My name is \_\_\_\_\_*

*I represent \_\_\_\_\_ group today. We work in this place to \_\_\_\_\_. As each person speaks, a brightly coloured flag (no logos) is raised behind them. They signify the many groups at work in our community.*

*Finally, please read these or similar words:*

*'Laudato Si'* is a letter addressed to all peoples, and the *Laudato Si'* Movement and Trócaire offer training and support to all who would care for our common home, through their Christian faith. *Laudato Si'* Animators locally have gathered us today and will offer future resources for better biodiversity, education and healing of the earth. Let us all find ways to engage and make a difference. The call now is for us all to work together – to forge alliances – so that our common goals of healing and hope are realised.'

*Flags can be lowered as group reps return to their places.*





## Invitation to join the mighty river

### Music Ideas

- 'One Voice Ruth Moody' by The Wailin Jennys: [youtu.be/y-24qGCvo7A](https://youtu.be/y-24qGCvo7A)
- 'Let Justice Flow like a River' by Marty Haugen: [youtu.be/MfsiMIHlltc](https://youtu.be/MfsiMIHlltc)



**Reader:** In his message for this year's Season of Creation, Pope Francis invites us to transform three things.<sup>5</sup> First, he invites us to transform our hearts:

**Young Reader:** 'Let us join the mighty river by transforming our hearts. This is essential for any other transformation to occur; it is that 'ecological conversion' ...: the renewal of our relationship with creation so that we no longer see it as an object to be exploited but cherish it instead as a sacred gift from our Creator.

**Reader:** Pope Francis invites us to transform our lifestyles:

**Young Reader:** 'Let us add to the flow of this mighty river by transforming our lifestyles. Starting from grateful wonder at the Creator and creation, let us repent of our 'ecological sins', which harm our common home and our sisters and brothers. With the help of God's grace, let us adopt lifestyles marked by less waste and unnecessary consumption, especially where the processes of production are toxic and unsustainable. Let us be as mindful as we can about our habits and economic decisions so that all can thrive – our fellow men and women wherever they may be, and future generations as well.

**Reader:** Let us transform our public policies

**Young Reader:** Lastly, for the mighty river to continue flowing, we must transform the public policies that govern our societies and shape the lives of young people today and tomorrow. Economic policies that promote scandalous wealth for a privileged few and degrading conditions for many others, spell the end of peace and justice. It is clear that the richer nations have contracted an 'ecological debt' that must be paid (cf. *Laudato Si'*, 51). Justice also includes paying historic debts. The world leaders who will gather for the COP28 summit in Dubai from 30 November to 12 December next must listen to science and institute a rapid and equitable transition to end the era of fossil fuel. According to the commitments undertaken in the Paris Agreement to restrain global warming, it is absurd to permit the continued exploration and expansion of fossil fuel infrastructures. Let us raise our voices to halt this injustice towards the poor and towards our children, who will bear the worst effects of climate change.

**MC:** Our individual actions during the Season of Creation are important. Celebrating creation, taking part in clean-ups, planting trees, and reducing our carbon footprint are some of the immediate actions we can take. We must also recognise that as we need a mighty movement of justice, individual actions are no longer enough.

<sup>5</sup> Pope Francis' Message for the Season of Creation 2023 can be accessed at: [vatican.va/content/francesco/en/messages/pont-messages/2023/documents/20230513-messaggio-giornata-curacreato.html](https://vatican.va/content/francesco/en/messages/pont-messages/2023/documents/20230513-messaggio-giornata-curacreato.html)



## Ritual Response

### Music Ideas



- Some live gentle instrumental music here if possible. Or sing 'Come to the Water' again.
- All flag carriers come forward to stand around two items placed before the group – a bowl of bulbs or seeds and a bucket or deep bowl of river water. Raise the flags.

**Reader:** How am I part of the mighty river of justice and peace? Where are my life, my volunteering or my values conspiring with God to create a safer, kinder world for all creation?

Where might I choose to sow more seeds of justice or peace, of healing or hope this year.

**Young Reader:** We invite you to come to the water – to fill your bottles or jugs – and to bring that water home to your community and tell them of what you experienced here today. Speak of the mighty river of justice which we are called to, bless them with water from this river as they take on this challenge in this Season of Creation

We invite you too to take a bulb/seed and to plant it. As a sign of how you will engage with these and other groups in the healing of our planet, in the rewilding of our land and in the restoration of justice for all peoples and creation.

**MC:** Together we pray this years Season of Creation prayer

Creator of All,  
From your communion of love life sprung forth like a mighty river and the whole cosmos came into being. On this Earth of overflowing love, the

Word was made flesh and went forth with the life-giving waters proclaiming peace and justice for all creation.

You called human beings to till and keep your garden. You placed us into right relationship with each creature, but we failed to listen to the cries of the Earth and the cries of the most vulnerable. We broke with the flowing communion of love and sinned against you by not safeguarding the conditions for life.

We lament the loss of our fellow species and their habitats, we grieve the loss of human cultures, along with the lives and livelihoods that have been displaced or perished, and we ache at the sight of an economy of death, war and violence that we have inflicted on ourselves and on the Earth.

Open our ears to your creative, reconciling and sustaining Word that calls to us through the book of Scripture and the book of creation. Bless us once again with your life-giving waters so that the Creator Spirit may let justice and peace flow in our hearts and overflow into all creation.

Open our hearts to receive the living waters of God's justice and peace, and to share it with our suffering brothers and sisters, all creatures around us, and all creation.

Bless us to walk together with all people of good will so that the many streams of the living waters of God's justice and peace may become a mighty river all over the Earth.

In the name of the One who came to proclaim good news to all creation, Jesus Christ.

Amen.<sup>6</sup>

6 From [seasonofcreation.org](http://seasonofcreation.org)





### Closing Prayer

**MC:** As we close this time of prayer together, let us also pray for an important moment in the ecumenical movement taking place in Rome on 30 September in advance of the Universal Synod: 'Together I Gathering of the People of God.' Let us pray...

As a gathering of the people of God, Journeying and recognising Christ in the diversity of our traditions, we pray that, Together, we will grow in humanity, whatever our gifts and vulnerabilities. Together, we will continue to receive and care for the gift of creation. Together, we will announce Christ at the new frontiers of mission. Together, we will pray and work for peace and reconciliation across borders and between shores. Together, we will build fraternity with believers of other faiths. Together, we will seek the source of communion in God and in prayer. Amen.

