



ENVIRONMENTAL SAINTS *and* MODELS

BY JOANNA DAILEY



"THE WORLD AND ALL THAT IS IN IT
BELONG TO THE LORD;
THE EARTH AND ALL WHO LIVE ON IT
ARE HIS."

(PSALM 24:1)

Yes, the Earth is God's, and it has been given to us as a gift.

Imagine! Our planet Earth, the stars, the solar system, the entire cosmos—all are gifts to us. And what gifts! The Earth and all that dwell in it—the plants, the animals, the rocks and trees, the stars that surround us each night, the sun that wakes us up in the morning, and the moon that bids us good night in the evening—are all gifts!



The following pages feature saints and people of faith that are particularly known for their love and care for these great gifts from God. You may wish to introduce these people to your group as models of how our faith calls us to care for the environment. On each feast day or day of death (or near to it), consider spending time introducing and discussing the person and pray the short prayer together.

Another option is to focus on one person for each week of the Season of Creation (for more on the Season of Creation, see pages 6–13). Begin the first week with an overview of the Season of Creation and consider Pope Francis and his encyclical "*On Care for Our Common Home*" and then follow with a saint or person of faith of the week for the next four weeks. A third option is to spend the first four weeks of the Season of Creation reflecting on these people as environmental models, and then devote the fifth week to identifying local "environmental heroes" or reflecting on ways your group can become "environmental heroes."

Ultimately, these "environmental" saints and people of faith serve as witnesses and models for recognizing God's great hymn of love found in the Earth. They help us remember . . .



"HOW CLEARLY THE SKY

REVEALS GOD'S GLORY!

HOW PLAINLY IT SHOWS WHAT HE HAS DONE!"

(PSALM 19:1) ■

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Saint Mother Théodore Guérin

Feast Day: October 3

Saint Mother Théodore Guérin (1798-1856) was born Anne-Thérèse Guérin in Étables, France. Her little town is near the beaches of northern France in the area called Brittany. As a child, she could walk along the seaside and wonder at God's creation of the vast ocean and the tiniest seashell. When she grew up, she became a Sister of Providence and a teacher, but she also learned how to help the sick by using plants and herbs as medicines. When she moved to Indiana in the United States, she found helpful herbs in the meadows and forests and used them to provide health care for sick people. She opened a pharmacy and offered medicine free of charge to those who were poor. In her shrine at Saint Mary-of-the-Woods in Indiana, the stained-glass windows picture three helpful plants and herbs familiar to Mother Théodore and to us today: echinacea (American Coneflower), linden leaves, and dandelion.

Prayer:

Thank you, God, for the gifts of helpful plants and herbs. May we always be mindful of those who are sick. May we remember them in prayer. Help us to use your gifts to provide them with the tender, loving care they need. Amen.





Saint Francis of Assisi

Feast Day: October 4

Saint Francis (c. 1181-1226) is well known for his love for all creatures. Did you know that Pope Saint John Paul II named him the patron saint of ecologists? Ecologists are scientists who study the relationship between organisms (plants and animals) and their environment. Saint Francis is also famous for writing a beautiful poem thanking God for “Brother Sun” and “Sister Moon” and all God’s gifts of nature. Saint Francis believed that all creatures are gifts of God’s love, and that all creatures on Earth are our brothers and sisters. Let us treat all of nature, and all plants and animals on Earth, as our brothers and sisters, our God-given family!

Prayer:

Saint Francis, we pray with you
the song of praise you wrote:
“Praised be You, my Lord, with
all your creatures!”





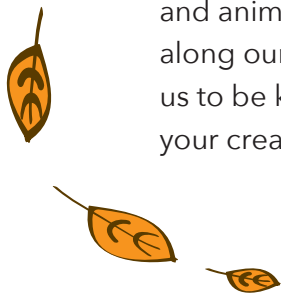
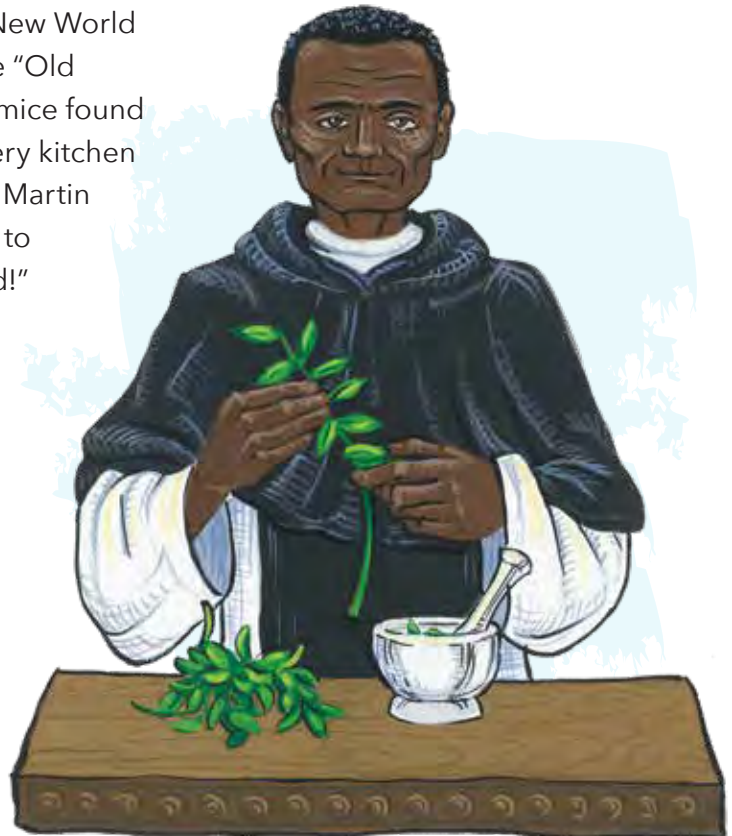
Saint Martin de Porres

Feast Day: November 3

Saint Martin de Porres (1579-1639) is the patron of African Americans, barbers and hairdressers, race relations, and social justice. Yet, if we look closely at his life, we see clearly that one of his gifts, among so many, was using the natural world to help both the people and animals he met in his daily life. Martin was a lay brother in the Dominican monastery in Lima, Peru. He was in charge of the infirmary and also in charge of giving alms, or money and other help, to those in need. He became an expert in the use of plants for medicine. He founded an orphanage for abandoned children and also the first animal shelter in the New World (across the ocean from the “Old World” of Europe). When mice found their way into the monastery kitchen to sample the grain there, Martin would say, “But they need to eat too. They are underfed!”

Prayer:

Thank you, God, for the witness of Saint Martin de Porres. Help us to care for each person and animal we meet along our way. Teach us to be kind to all your creatures!



Servant of God Dorothy Day



Day of Death: November 29, 1980

Dorothy Day (1897-1980) was a city girl. She was born in Chicago and, after dropping out of college, began a career as a reporter in New York City. There she lived for many years in a small house along the beach in Staten Island. The grandeur of the ocean led her to deep thoughts about God and about her own life. After her conversion to the Catholic faith, and the founding of the Catholic Worker community with Peter Maurin, she made a retreat on a farm. There she realized that a connection with nature was important to being truly human. Practical as ever, Dorothy realized that growing their own food could help the Catholic Worker community to become self-sustaining and also help feed those who came to the Catholic Worker soup kitchen every day.

Prayer:

Thank you, God, for giving us life through your gift of food. We pray with your Son, Jesus, that those who are hungry may receive their daily bread. Show us ways to share your gifts of food, shelter, and clothing with all who are in need. Amen.





Saint Kateri Tekakwitha

Feast Day: July 14

Saint Kateri Tekakwitha (1656–1680) is the first Native American to be declared a saint and is the patroness of the environment. As the daughter of a Mohawk father and an Algonquin mother, she grew up in the forests of northern New York State. While growing up in her uncle’s family, she was taught to respect the natural world and to be grateful for the gifts of food, water, and shelter. After her conversion to the Catholic faith, she sought out special places in the forest where she could pray. She had been partially blinded by smallpox as a young child, but she could still feel the breeze on her face, gently touch the rough bark of the trees, and smell the freshness of the Earth after a rain. She could still thank God for the gifts of the Earth.

Prayer:

Saint Kateri, help us, like you, to step lightly upon the Earth, to thank God for his gifts, and to raise our voices in prayer and praise. Amen.

