

Novena to St Francis

For a world under threat

Nine brief reflections asking St Francis of Assisi to pray for us and our world, based on his beautiful Canticle of the Sun.

This novena is a song of penitence and praise, guiding us to care for the earth and for our most vulnerable sisters and brothers, especially the Amazon peoples. They are currently under grave risk from coronavirus, given their fragile situation, often in remote locations far from government services.

Communities with whom we work are reporting a sharp increase in predatory attacks on land. People smugglers are also active and those being trafficked are in more danger than ever, having no access to healthcare.

The pandemic shows us that “we have not heard the cry of the poor and our seriously ill planet,” warns Pope Francis, describing this as “a time to choose what matters and what passes away”. (*Urbi et Orbi, 2020*)

Use these prayers over nine days or at nine moments of personal prayer. Each has four phases: Canticle; Amazon voice; penitential prayer; plea for intercession.

First prayer: Sun

“We praise you, Lord, for all your creatures, especially for Brother Sun, who is the day through whom you give us light.” (*St Francis of Assisi*)

“I dream that this Amazon, so beautiful and diverse, a gift from God, this earth which gives life, our life, our mother, is not transformed into a desert.” (*Fr. Henri de Roziers, Pastoral Land Commission, Brazil*)

Creator God,
We are nourished by your radiance.
Forgive us for the harm we cause your earth,
the heat and drought unleashed by climate change.

St Francis, you loved our sacred world,
you praised God ceaselessly
for his dazzling creation.
May we learn from your example.

St Francis, pray for us.

Second prayer: Night sky

“We praise you, Lord, for Sister Moon and the Stars, in the heavens you have made them bright, precious and fair.” (*St Francis of Assisi*)

“We want the forest to remain quiet, the sky to remain clear,

the evening darkness to really fall
and for the stars to be seen.”
(*Davi Kopenawa, spokesperson for the Yanomami people of Brazil*)

Creator God,
your night sky offers rest and stillness,
yet we flood our cities with light.
Forgive us for our wasteful ways.

Brother Francis, you chose poverty not plenty,
walking lightly on the earth.
May we follow in your path
and reduce the trace we leave.

St Francis, pray for us.

Third prayer: Wind and air

**“We praise you, Lord, for Brothers Wind and Air,
fair and stormy, all weather’s moods,
by which you cherish all that you have made.”** (*St Francis of Assisi*)

“We ourselves are water, air, earth and life of this environment created by God.”
(*Guaviare people, Colombia*)

Creator God,
we have disturbed the natural cycle,
upset Earth’s fragile balance.
Forgive us for our lack of care.

St Francis, joyful steward of creation,
you lived in peace with nature and with God.
Inspired by your witness,
may we defend our common home.

St Francis, pray for us.

Fourth prayer: Water

**“We praise you, Lord, for Sister Water,
so useful, humble, precious and pure.”** (*St Francis of Assisi*)

“Now they even want to take our rivers, which have been ours forever.”
(*Rusbel Castornoque, Kukama people, Peruvian Amazon*)

Creator God, from your gift of water flows all life,
yet we pollute your clear springs.
Forgive us, as the earth cries out.

St Francis, you drank deeply
from Christ’s living water.
May we, like you, live simply
and prize the good things of the earth.

St Francis, pray for us.

Fifth prayer: Fire

**“We praise you, Lord, for Brother Fire,
through whom you light the night.
He is beautiful, playful, robust, and strong.”** *(St Francis of Assisi)*

“The gift we have received is a fire,
a burning love for God
and for our brothers and sisters.” *(Pope Francis, homily, 6 October 2019)*

Creator God,
your flames blaze yet leave us whole.
But our fires destroy at reckless speed;
great forests fall beneath our feet.
Forgive us for our part in this.

St Francis, you loved wild places,
the trees and all their birds within.
May we protect each blade of grass,
be mindful of each breath of air.

St Francis, pray for us.

Sixth prayer: Earth

**“We praise you, Lord, for Sister Earth,
who sustains us with her fruits,
coloured flowers, and herbs.”** *(St Francis of Assisi)*

“There will be a point when we will not have this richness. And then what will we do?”
(Yésica Patiachi Tayori, Harakbut indigenous people, Peru)

Creator God,
we grieve for our Amazon sisters and brothers
whose lands are wrecked by greed.
We take more from the earth than we need. Forgive us.

St Francis, joyful steward of creation,
from you we learn to live with less,
to give and not to take.

St Francis, pray for us.

Seventh prayer: Those who suffer

**“We praise you, Lord, for those who pardon for love of you,
who bear sickness and trial.”** *(St Francis of Assisi)*

“I speak for my brothers and sisters who are threatened, assassinated,
who do not hold the rights to their land...
How long must we wait for a reply?” *(Rosildo da Silva, Jaminawa Arará people, Brazil)*

Creator God, open our hearts
to the sufferings of the landless poor
who endure violence and threat.
Forgive us for the sin of indifference.

St Francis,
you were jailed and beaten,
brother to the outcast.
May your compassion be our guide.

St Francis, pray for us.

Eighth prayer: Peace

**“Blessed are those who endure in peace,
by you Most High, they will be crowned.”** *(St Francis of Assisi)*

“We want to support a culture of peace and respect –
not violence and violation.” *(Final document, Amazon Synod, 2019)*

Creator God, we give you thanks
for those who work for peace
and dignity for all your children.

Brother Francis,
you came to heal, not harm the world.
You showed us how to live as one.

St Francis, pray for us.

Ninth prayer: Creation

**“Most High, all-powerful, all-good Lord,
all praise is yours, all glory, honour and blessings.
To you alone, Most High, do they belong.”** *(St Francis of Assisi)*

“Let us sing as we go.
May our struggles and our concern for this planet
never take away the joy of our hope.” *(Pope Francis, Laudato Si’)*

Creator God we praise your world
and look with awe on all that is.
May we commit to heal the earth
and share your gifts in faith and trust.

Brother Francis, in purity of heart
you gazed upon the world with love.
We ask you joyfully to intercede for us,
As guardians of our common home.

St Francis, pray for us.