



WEEK FIFTEEN

SPF: Say Prayers Frequently

Prayer for the New Year

On September 1, we celebrate the Ecclesiastical (Church) New Year. This day has also been set aside by the Ecumenical Patriarch as a special day of Protection for the Environment. During prayers this week, read Psalm 103 (104), which is read at the beginning of Vespers.

PRAISE TO THE LORD FOR HIS CREATION AND PROVIDENCE

Bless the LORD, O my soul! O LORD my God, You are very great: You are clothed with honor and majesty, Who cover Yourself with light as with a garment, Who stretch out the heavens like a curtain. He lays the beams of His upper chambers in the waters, Who makes the clouds His chariot, Who walks on the wings of the wind, Who makes His angels spirits, His ministers a flame of fire. You who laid the foundations of the earth, So that it should not be moved forever, You covered it with the deep as with a garment; The waters stood above the mountains. At Your rebuke they fled; At the voice of Your thunder they hastened away. They went up over the mountains; They went down into the valleys, To the place which You founded for them. You have set a boundary that they may not pass over, That they may not return to cover the earth. He sends the springs into the valleys; They flow among the hills. They give drink to every beast of the field; The wild donkeys quench their thirst. By them the birds of the heavens have their home; They sing among the branches. He waters the hills from His upper chambers; The earth is satisfied with the fruit of Your works. He causes the grass to grow for the cattle, And vegetation for the service of man, That he may bring forth food from the earth, And wine that makes glad the heart of man, Oil to make his face shine, And bread which strengthens man's heart. The trees of the LORD are full of sap, The cedars of Lebanon which He planted, Where the birds make their nests; The stork has her home in the fir trees. The high hills are for the wild goats; The cliffs are a refuge for the rock badgers. He appointed the moon for seasons; The sun knows its going down. You make darkness, and it is night, In which all the beasts of the forest creep

about. The young lions roar after their prey, And seek their food from God. When the sun rises, they gather together And lie down in their dens. Man goes out to his work And to his labor until the evening. O LORD, how manifold are Your works! In wisdom You have made them all. The earth is full of Your possessions—This great and wide sea, In which are innumerable teeming things, Living things both small and great. There the ships sail about; There is that Leviathan Which You have made to play there. These all wait for You, That You may give them their food in due season. What You give them they gather in; You open Your hand, they are filled with good. You hide Your face, they are troubled; You take away their breath, they die and return to their dust. You send forth Your Spirit, they are created; And You renew the face of the earth. May the glory of the LORD endure forever; May the LORD rejoice in His works. He looks on the earth, and it trembles; He touches the hills, and they smoke. I will sing to the LORD as long as I live; I will sing praise to my God while I have my being. May my meditation be sweet to Him; I will be glad in the LORD. May sinners be consumed from the earth, And the wicked be no more. Bless the LORD, O my soul! Praise the LORD!

Dive In: Take a Hike

Your challenge this week is to take a hike as a family. It might be a long trek for those of you who are feeling adventurous. For those less inclined, it could be just a walk in a local park. The main thing is that you do it together and you go somewhere beautiful. Make sure to take numerous breaks to admire the beauty of God's creation. Print out Psalm 103 (104) in the SPF to read on your hike. This is the psalm we read during Vespers—praise for the beauty of God's creation. Here are some other suggestions for your walk:

- Take paper and something to write or color with, and have everyone write or draw about what they see.
- Don't forget the camera to take lots of pictures.
- Consider collecting any trash you might find along the way to help clean up.
- When you get home, take time to share your thoughts, writings, artwork, and pictures with each other.

Take pictures, and don't forget to share with us!

#soakuptheSON

Vitamin D: Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew I

Our ecumenical Patriarch, Bartholomew I, has been called the Green Patriarch because of his concern for the environment—God’s creation. Here are some quotes from him on the environment. Read them and discuss how you and your family can be better stewards of God’s creation. Adapt the discussion as necessary for the age of your child(ren).

We have traditionally regarded sin as being merely what people do to other people. Yet, for human beings to destroy the biological diversity in God’s creation; for human beings to degrade the integrity of the earth by contributing to climate change, by stripping the earth of its natural forests or destroying its wetlands; for human beings to contaminate the earth’s waters, land, and air—all of these are sins.

We have been commanded to taste of the world’s fruits, not to waste them; we have been commissioned to care for the world, not to waste it. When Christ fed the multitudes with a few loaves and fish on a hill in Palestine, he instructed his disciples to “gather up all of the remaining fragments, so that nothing may be lost” (John 6:12). This instruction should serve as a model in a time of wasteful consumption, where even the refuse of affluent societies can nourish entire populations.

It should not be fear of impending disaster with regard to global change that obliges us to change our ways with regard to the natural environment. Rather, it should be a recognition of the cosmic harmony and original beauty that exists in the world. We must learn to make our communities more sensitive and to render our behavior toward nature more respectful. We must acquire a compassionate heart—what St. Isaac of Syria, a seventh-century mystic, once called a heart that burns with love for the whole of creation: for humans, for birds and beasts, for all God’s creatures.

