

# GREEN - Spring

## PRAYER:

1. In daily personal prayer spend contemplative time outdoors or looking out a window praying with and for the EARTH.
2. On or about April 22<sup>nd</sup> use the Earth Day Prayer “Love for the Universe” prepared by the Eco-Justice Committee.
3. Allow current issues, like climate change, mountaintop removal, Keystone XL Pipeline to be a spur to prayer.
4. When you are leader of corporate prayer include EARTH in spoken intentions/petitions; or design a weekly prayer for EARTHs needs.
5. Choose a location and time of day that can accommodate you or your group and which has immediate access to the outdoors (weather permitting).
6. If your gathering space is indoors, plan to include EARTH elements in the setting—especially, EARTH, Air, Fire and Water
7. In your ministry--within parish, school, family or volunteer activities raise up EARTH concerns when you are gathered for prayer.

## MEALS:

1. As you say grace before meals (and after) include thanking not only God but the EARTH and all who till and care for her for the food you have.
2. Barbequing - Use propane which burns cleaner than wood or charcoal.
  - a. If you're wedded to charcoal try a more natural charcoal product.
  - b. When you're done grilling, use natural cleaning products such as an organic grill cleaner
3. Perhaps consider a solar oven
4. Use a cloth napkin and remember why you do so. Be grateful for the trees saved by not using disposables.
5. Shopping local is another great idea, and one that leads down the road to the green lifestyle.
6. Choose locally-grown foods whenever possible—shopping at Farmers' Markets, or buying through a CSA or buying club.
7. Cook at least one meal “from scratch” each week, taking the time to be creative, learn new recipes, expand your taste buds and support your health.
  - a. Try to eliminate processed foods
  - b. Use leftovers
  - c. Ask for locally produced food
8. If you eat meals prepared by others—whether a food-service, in-house cafeteria, or even a local restaurant (NOT fast food) ask kitchen staff/manager to utilize fresh, in-season fruits and vegetables whenever possible. Be sure to compliment them when they do—and eat heartily!
9. Read labels—note country of origin, number of long-syllable chemical ingredients, whether it contains GMO ingredients (or proclaims that it **doesn't** since the US doesn't demand fair labeling), as well as looking for Organic items.
10. Don't buy products with excess packaging (eg. wrapped “single-serving” items) or use single use paper and plastic ware, etc. Avoid Styrofoam always. If you must use disposables, take the time to locate recycled and compostable products—then do it!

11. Never use hot, running water to defrost frozen foods. Plan ahead and place frozen items in the refrigerator overnight or use the microwave oven
12. Rinse vegetables and fruits in a sink or a pan filled with water instead of under running water.

### **SPRING CLEANING:**

1. Plan to clean one room a day
2. Get rid of all that stuff you never use. Recycle old items while spring cleaning, gather up all old clothes, toys, and furniture that is still usable and donate it to a local charity that helps families in need or sell it in a yard sale
3. Open your windows to air out the house on days before air conditioning is needed
4. Start by getting rid of the clutter
  - a. Give usable items to charity
  - b. For bigger items that have been unused for years, put them on the curb for pick up perhaps with a "For Free" sign attached
5. Clean out cabinets and closets in every room
6. Vacuum to get rid of the dust on floors and on and under furniture
  - a. Air out pillows
7. Change furnace filters
8. Wash drapes or put them in the dryer for 20 minutes to get rid of dust mites
  - a. Air them out on a clothesline
9. Clean and air out winter blankets and comforters before storing them for winter
10. Dust, then wash walls to scrub off stains and dirt
  - a. use a rag and bucket of warm water, and perhaps some soap or vinegar
  - b. Use a microfiber cloth or piece of an old shirt for wall cleaning
11. Clean your windows using a mixture of vinegar and water with a bit of peppermint oil which is a bug deterrent
12. Floor cleaning:
  - a. Vacuum your carpets or perhaps hire a carpet cleaner to get rid of deep dirt and allergens
  - b. Scrub bathroom floors on hands and knees (if possible) to get around all the nooks and crannies
  - c. Use a microfiber mop for wood floors
  - d. A water and vinegar solution will clean and disinfect both wood and tile floors
13. Change your mindset about using paper towels and use old towels as rags and a squeegee that will actually do a better cleaning job and that can be washed and used again.
14. Make your own cleaning supplies. Most of your home can be cleaned with recipes that are a combination of hot water, vinegar, and baking soda or washing soda; add a few drops of essential oil for scent if you prefer

15. Clean and store winter equipment and supplies e.g. snow blowers, shovels, de-icer, sand etc.
16. Clean and store winter items e.g. coats, hats, mittens, scarves, boots etc.
17. Practice the Three Rs: Reduce, Reuse and Recycle

#### **WATER:**

1. Each time you use water remember what a sacred gift it is—and how millions throughout the world have no access to clean water. Be grateful and careful.
2. Instead of running water from the tap until it is cold enough to drink, keep a jug of water in your refrigerator
3. Designate one glass for your drinking water each day or refill a water bottle. This will cut down on the number of glasses to wash.
4. Instead of buying bottled water, buy a metal or plastic water bottle, fill it from the tap and keep it in the refrigerator to use for outings.
5. Save water that you run—eg. While waiting for it to warm up—in a bucket and water plants or use for something else later
6. If you have children, teach them to turn off faucets tightly after each use
7. Install a low-flow faucet aerator, which can cut water use in half
8. Setting cooling systems and water softeners for a minimum number of refills saves both water and chemicals, plus more on utility bills
9. Look for products bearing the EPA WaterSense Label for items that been certified to save 20% or more without sacrificing performance
10. Report (or fix if you can) broken pipes, open hydrants and errant sprinklers to the property owner or your water provider
11. Know where your master water shut-off valve is located. This could save water and prevent damage to your home

#### **ENERGY USE:**

1. Do an audit at the turn of the seasons.
  - a. Consider an energy audit of your home, workplace, school, church, etc. Look at helpful websites to locate resources—groups like IPL—Interfaith Power and Light—can offer tips and resources to get started.
2. Get a programmable thermostat and set it so that heat or AC is regulated for when you and your family are there and adjusted for when you are at work or in bed. When out of your home for a prolonged time—out of town or vacation—adjust your thermostat.
3. Always turn out lights when leaving a room—unless someone else is there.
  - a. Use compact fluorescent or the new LED lights
  - b. When replacing fixtures, look for “Energy Star” items which are rated to use less power. “Cheap” items are usually no bargain.
4. Outdoor solar lighting can be added to your garden or walkway. These solar lights recharge in the sun and can be set to automatically turn on when the sun goes down.

5.

#### **PLANT CARE:**

1. Collect water from your roof to water your garden
2. Planting rosemary is a natural and low-tech way to block mosquitos
3. Choose shrubs and groundcovers instead of turf for hard-to-water areas such as steep slopes and isolated strips.
4. Plant in the fall when conditions are cooler and rainfall is more plentiful
5. Group plants with the same watering needs together to avoid overwatering some while under-watering others
6. Put a layer of mulch around trees and plants. Chunks of bark, peat moss or gravel slows down evaporation.
7. Use a layer of organic material on the surface of your planting beds to minimize weed growth that competes for water
8. Use a minimum amount of organic or slow release fertilizer to promote a healthy and drought tolerant landscape.
9. Next time you add or replace a flower or shrub, choose a low water use plant for year-round landscape color
10. Direct water from rain gutters and HVAC systems toward water-loving plants in the landscape for automatic water savings
11. Water only when necessary. More plants die from over-watering than from under-watering
12. Use a trowel, shovel, or soil probe to examine soil moisture depth. If the top two to three inches of soil are dry it's time to water
13. Leave lower branches on trees and shrubs and allow leaf litter to accumulate on the soil. This keeps the soil cooler and reduces evaporation
14. Plant with finished compost to add water-holding and nutrient-rich organic matter to the soil
15. If you accidentally drop ice cubes when filling your glass from the freezer, don't throw them in the sink. Drop them in a house plant instead
16. When you have ice left in your cup from a take-out restaurant, don't throw it in the trash, dump it on a plant
17. When you give your pet fresh water, don't throw the old water down the drain. Use it to water your trees or shrubs
18. When cleaning out fish tanks, give the nutrient-rich water to your plants.
19. For hanging baskets, planters and pots, place ice cubes under the moss or dirt to give your plants a cool drink of water and help eliminate water overflow
20. Have your plumber re-route your gray water to trees and gardens rather than letting it run into the sewer line. Check with your city codes, and if it isn't allowed in your area, start a movement to get that changed

## HONORING EARTH:

1. Plan to celebrate EARTH DAY (officially - April 22) BUT... every day is EARTH DAY so perhaps choose another day to your liking (see Earth Day Prayer above)
2. Wear brown or green when celebrating EARTH
3. Participate in one of the EARTH DAY activities
4. Become an EARTH advocate by encouraging others to honor, celebrate and care for EARTH
5. Journal some experiences you've had with God's good EARTH
6. Try to spend some time outdoors on a regular basis to see and soak in the beauty of nature
7. Perhaps visit a garden to smell the flowers or admire the growing vegetables.
8. Plan a regularly scheduled meeting for an outdoor venue on the grounds or at a nearby park and maybe bring a picnic lunch.

## ACTIVITIES:

1. Start, revive or continue growing a flower or vegetable garden.
  - a. Pull weeds by hand. Use a long handle, flat screw driver to dig them out
  - b. For weed killer - mix one ounce of white vinegar with one ounce of cheap gin and eight ounces of water, then pour or spray on the weeds.
2. Pour boiling water on the weeds in the rocks and driveway cracks.
3. Plant window boxes with herbs or flowers
4. Help organize ways to donate usable items to charities.
5. Collect recyclables for fund-raising for charities
6. Clean up: organize a neighborhood clean-up for trash—join or start an “Adopt-a-Highway” program if your state or county has one. Involve family, school groups, parish, work groups.
7. Personally adopt a stretch of brook or stream or roadway and keep it litter-free. Check on a weekly basis.
8. Consider forming or joining an “Eco-Committee” in your area and work with others to share ideas, projects and support.
9. Get outside. Go for long walks, bike rides, or runs and explore your neighborhood you have missed over winter.
10. Go for a walk in the woods looking for wildflowers and bird nests. Take photos or sketch what you find.
11. Clean out your birdbath being sure to keep it clean and filled with clean water on a regular basis
12. Fill and hang out a hummingbird feeder

The above suggestions can be adjusted to your particular circumstances and needs. You probably have many other practices that you already do. Discuss with your local living group/family other ideas that you could do to raise awareness. Make changes in a step-at-a-time fashion—adding a new focus or practice each month. Be patient and persevering—the Planet is worth it. We are all in it for the long haul.