



# JAEI

## December 2021 Environmental Prayer Diary

*The purpose of this Prayer Diary is to provide subjects for your reflection and prayer as the Spirit moves you)*

### ***Covid-19 Pandemic Daily noon-time prayer***

God bless the world,  
Give it wisdom at this time,  
Grant us relief and release,  
Be with those who are ill,  
And bless the carers fighting this pandemic,  
For Jesus Christ's sake,  
Amen

Photo: Alan Hillert

**#PrayTogether  
#StaySafeTogether**

### **Confession**

Jesus, Christ, Lamb of God  
who takes away the sins of the world,  
give us the holiness that commits us to all of your creation  
that we have made sick.

Forgive us for not knowing how to be a good neighbour,  
for not knowing how to love as you have loved us.

Forgive us for the pandemic of heartbreak,  
injustice and oppression.

Forgive us for the pandemic of selfishness and individualism  
we have created.


Forgive us for the pandemic of indifference  
and for not washing the wounds of the sick.



Forgive us for the pandemic of consuming  
to the point of sickness and for almost  
extinguishing your creation.

Forgive us for the pandemic of apathy  
when it comes to doing what you have asked us to do.

Forgive us for the pandemic of lack of love for ourselves,  
our neighbours and for all of your creation.

*Karla Selene Evangelista Segoviano,  
Methodist Church, Mexico*

 **World Council  
of Churches**

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| <p><b>Wednesday</b></p> | <p><b>1</b></p> |   |
| <p><b>Thursday</b></p>  | <p><b>2</b></p> | <p><b>Wildlife Conservation Day (4 December)</b></p> <p>Each year on <b>December 4th</b>, Wildlife Conservation Day seeks to spread awareness about preserving and protecting the natural world and its inhabitants. Additionally, the observance strives to put an end to wildlife crime and supporting the Endangered Species Act.</p> <p>Despite increased efforts to tackle the surge in poaching, ruthless criminal networks continue to plunder the wild to supply skyrocketing demand for rhino horn, illegal ivory, tiger/lion parts and pangolin scales. Wildlife crime is the most immediate threat to wild elephants, tigers, lions, rhinos and pangolins. There is real concern about connection between illegal trade of wildlife to regional conflicts, national security and even terrorism.</p> <p>WWF is urging governments -particularly those of demand countries such as China, Vietnam, Thailand and others across the globe -to strengthen law enforcement, invest in more boots on the ground and commit to long-term demand reduction efforts.</p> <p><b>Pray:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• For Governments around the world to act boldly in strengthening law enforcement.</li> <li>• For the Environmental Management Inspectorate (EMI) - Green Scorpions – who are entrusted with the protection of our natural heritage.</li> </ul>  |

Friday

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## World Soil Day (5 December)

Theme for 2021 – **“Halt soil salinization, Boost soil productivity”**

World Soil Day highlights the importance of soil and the need to use it sustainably. However, across the Globe, our soils are becoming increasingly **salinated** (*becoming saltier*).



### **How's Your Heart-Soil?**



“My cat Janie is pressed to the floor by the sliding glass window, ears low, whiskers forward. On the back lawn, little birds hop around eating the grass seed my husband just scattered. While Janie enjoys this, my husband does not. His purpose was to grow grass, not to entertain little cats.

In the parable of the sower, Jesus compared the condition of our hearts to soil types. The hard path represents the heart hardened to God's Word. The rocky soil represents a shallow heart unable to withstand trouble or persecution. The soil choked with weeds represents a heart distracted by worries and prosperity. And the fertile soil represents a heart that produces a fruitful life.

We want hearts that produce great works for God's Kingdom. However, just as farming is hard work, so is the Christian life.

### **Ploughing**

Soil and hearts both need ploughing to allow seed to settle deep enough to grow and to create paths for roots. Sometimes God plough our lives with trials and tough times that turn our life - our soil upside-down. We can also plough with prayer, asking the Lord to break up our hard parts, turning our lives over for examination, and letting His Holy Spirit aerate our hearts. The act of ploughing is painful and sweaty - but worth it.



### **Weeding**



Soil and hearts need careful maintenance to remove rocks and weeds. “The worries of this life, the deceitfulness of wealth and the desire for other things” act just like weeds. By stealing our resources of time, energy, money, and focus, they inhibit our growth. They block the view of the Son and His empowering light. We need to be vigilant for weeds and brutal about removing them.

### **Fertilise**

Soil and hearts also need proper fertilising. For plants, the proper balance of water and nutrients leads to the greatest growth and highest yield. Likewise, our hearts need a constant and balanced diet of prayer and Bible study, fellowship and worship. Then we can yield the fruit of service and giving, ministry and outreach.



### **Harvest!**

“Like seed sown on good soil, hear the word, accept it, and produce a crop—thirty, sixty or even a hundred times what was sown” (Mark 4:20)

How can you take care of your heart-soil today?”





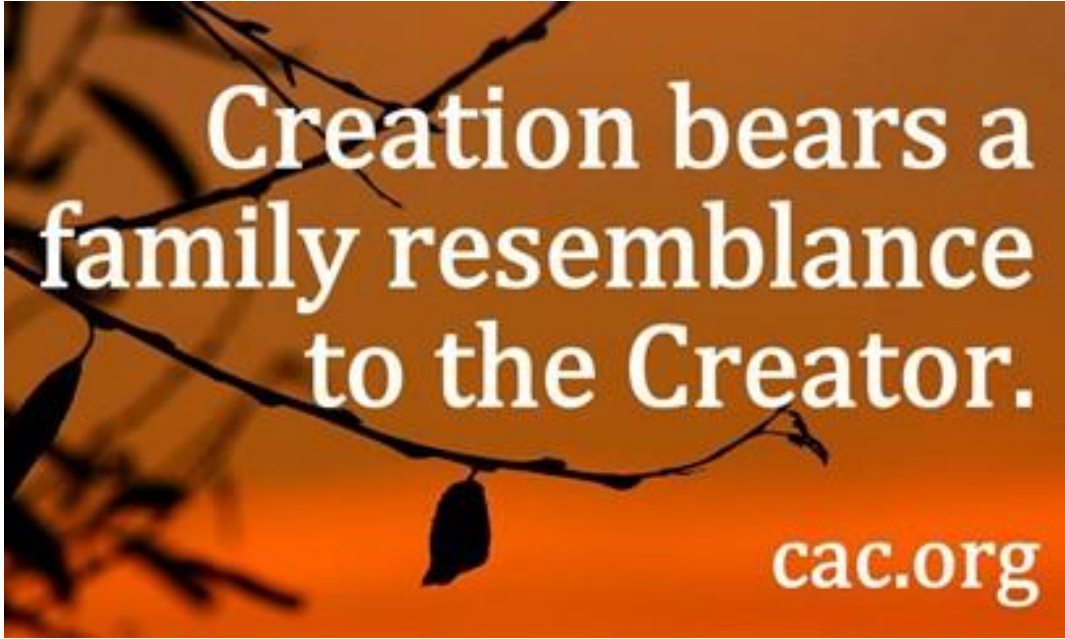
**Sarah Sundin**


<https://www.sarahsundin.com/hows-your-heart-soil/>

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| <p><b>Saturday</b></p> | <p><b>4</b></p> | <p><b>International Cheetah Day</b></p> <p>Celebrate International Cheetah Day on 4th December – the cheetah is Africa’s most endangered big cat.</p> <p>The EWT launched its Cheetah Conservation Project in 2011, with the aim of increasing Cheetah numbers, and maintaining their welfare and genetic integrity across southern Africa and beyond. Working hand-in-hand with reserves across the country, the project has yielded great success the Cheetah population growing from 217 wild Cheetahs on 41 reserves, to more than 380 Cheetahs on 60 reserves. Cheetahs have also been reintroduced to Malawi, where they had become extinct.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learn all you can about these amazing animals and share your findings with others, especially children.</li> <li>• Support the Endangered Wildlife Trust’s Cheetah Conservation Project.</li> <li>• Help sponsor an Anatolian shepherd dog for farmers in Namibia to help reduce livestock-cheetah (through the EWT).</li> <li>• Pray that organisations involved in cheetah conservation receive the funding they need.</li> </ul> <p><b><i>The world’s fastest land animal is racing against extinction. Help us win the race.</i></b></p>  |
| <p><b>Sunday</b></p>   | <p><b>5</b></p> | <p><b>Second Sunday in Advent</b></p> <p><b>Advent reminds us of God’s promises of redemption and reconciliation for the entire world.</b></p> <p>The opening chapter of Genesis shows God’s deep love for all of creation - the plants, animals, and birds that live on the earth and in the skies, as well as humans. Genesis tells us of how God declares creation to be good and to have inherent worth.</p> <p>As in previous years, climate change’s impacts have been devastating – cyclones, severe weather, wildfires and drought.</p> <p>During Advent, we may reread Mary’s encounter with the angel Gabriel who foretells her important role in becoming the mother of Jesus. Mary’s response is told in Luke 1:46-55. This prayer of praise and worship at God’s greatness and goodness is called The Magnificat. In her prayer, Mary expresses her confidence in GOD, who works justice on behalf of those who are vulnerable and unimportant in the world’s eyes and who can work in ways beyond our comprehension.</p> <p>The groaning of creation and the plight of our all those suffering from the effects of climate change draws us to our need for God. Like Mary, we look to God to restore and redeem the creation and human communities that were created to be good. We place our hope in Christ’s return and redemption of the entire earth.</p> <p>The Gospel of Luke also tells us that Mary pondered her experience with the angel Gabriel in her heart. During this season, we can commune with God in creation by going for a walk outside and enjoy the outdoors rather than following the crowds into a shopping centre or spending endless hours in front of a screen.</p> <p>Advent calls us to prepare our hearts for the birth of Jesus, our Lord, Saviour, and Healer of all nations and the whole Earth.</p> <p><b><i>Monica Tang</i></b></p> |





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| <p><b>Monday</b></p>    | <p><b>6</b></p> | <p>“According to Scripture, the world we live in is God’s creation. It is the visual, fragrant, audible, touchable, and tastable manifestation of God’s love, the place where God’s desire that others be and be well finds earthly expression.”</p> <p><b>Norman Wirzba</b><br/><i>Author, Professor, Speaker</i></p>  |  |
| <p><b>Tuesday</b></p>   | <p><b>7</b></p> | <p><b>Read Matthew 14:22-33</b><br/><b>“Tell me to come to you across the water.”</b></p> <p>It has been a very long day! Jesus was trying to find some downtime even before the crowds followed him around the lake. He has spent all day healing, then feeding, the crowds. Now, finally, he spends time alone with his Father.</p> <p>Meanwhile, out on the lake, a storm blows up and the disciples are struggling. Yet again, Jesus responds. He walks towards them. They are understandably terrified.</p> <p>I have to hand it to Peter! I’m not sure I would have stepped out of that boat. I do sometimes jump into a situation with both feet – but that’s usually because I’m overly confident in myself. Peter was placing his confidence in Jesus.</p> <p>Sadly, Peter’s confidence in the Lord did not last very long! But Jesus was there to rescue him.</p> <p>He’s there to rescue me too, when I feel like walking in faith is just too hard; when the waves of doubt are rolling beneath me; or when the troubles of life feel overwhelming.</p> <p>May the experience of his presence strengthen us to dare to reach out to others, even when that feels like walking on water, to trust that all will be well.</p> <p><i>Jesus, hold out your hand and grip mine tightly. Strengthen my faith so that I can reach out to my sisters and brothers. Amen.</i></p> <p><b>This reflection and prayer were written by Francis Stewart of CAFOD Theology Team.</b><br/><a href="http://cafod.org.uk">http://cafod.org.uk</a></p> |   |
| <p><b>Wednesday</b></p> | <p><b>8</b></p> | <p>Never be in a hurry;<br/>do everything quietly<br/>and in a calm spirit.<br/>Do not lose your inner peace<br/>for anything whatsoever,<br/>even if your whole world seems upset.<br/>What is anything in life<br/>compared to peace of soul?</p> <p><b>Francis de Sales</b></p>  |   |

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| <p><b>Thursday</b></p> | <p><b>9</b></p>  | <p><b>All Creation Sing (Joy to the World)</b></p> <p>Joy to the world, the Lord is come<br/> Let earth receive her King<br/> Let every heart prepare Him room<br/> And heaven and nature sing<br/> And heaven and nature sing<br/> And heaven and heaven and nature sing</p> <p>All of heaven and all creation sing<br/> The wonders of His love<br/> All of heaven and all creation<br/> sing<br/> The wonders of His love</p> <p>He rules the world with truth and<br/> grace<br/> And makes the nations prove<br/> The glories of His righteousness<br/> And wonders of His love<br/> And wonders of His love<br/> And wonders, wonders of His love</p> <p>All of heaven and all creation<br/> sing<br/> The wonders of His love<br/> All of heaven and all creation sing<br/> The wonders of His love.</p>  |
| <p><b>Friday</b></p>   | <p><b>10</b></p> |    |

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| <p><b>Saturday</b></p> | <p><b>11</b></p> | <p><b>International Mountain Day</b></p> <p><b>2021 Theme: “Sustainable Mountain Tourism.”</b></p> <p>Mountains cover nearly 27 per cent of the Earth's land mass and play a crucial role in sustainable economic growth. International Mountain Day was established by the United Nations in 2002, in occasion of the International Year of Mountains in 2003.</p> <p>Sustainable tourism in mountains can contribute to creating additional and alternative livelihood options and promoting poverty alleviation, social inclusion, as well as landscape and biodiversity conservation. It is a way to preserve the natural, cultural and spiritual heritage, to promote local crafts and high value products, and celebrate many traditional practices such as local festivals.</p> <p>Mountain tourism attracts around 15 to 20 percent of global tourism. Tourism, however, is one of the sectors most affected by the Covid-19 pandemic, affecting economies, livelihoods, public services and opportunities on all continents. In mountains, the restrictions of the pandemic have further compounded the vulnerabilities of mountain communities.</p>  <p>This crisis can be seen as an opportunity to rethink mountain tourism and its impact on natural resources and livelihoods, to manage it better, and to harness it towards a more resilient, green and inclusive future.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Raise awareness of mountains on 11 December by organising safe, socially distanced activities, including virtual presentations and events, photo and art competitions, and hikes. The Magaliesberg offers a wealth of hiking trails and quiet spots – and isn't too far away.</li> <li>• Join the conversation on social media using the hashtag #MountainsMatter. Pass on some of the key messages or share about the tourism in the mountains near you. Post a photo of your favourite mountain moment and share it with us and your friends.</li> </ul> <p><b>Isaiah 52:7</b></p> <p><b>7</b> How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those who bring good news, who proclaim peace, who bring good tidings, who proclaim salvation, who say to Zion, “Your God reigns!”</p> |
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| <p><b>Sunday</b></p> | <p>12</p> | <p><b>Third Sunday in Advent</b></p> <p><b><i>“Blessed are The Feet of Those Who Bring Good News”</i></b></p> <p>Advent brings a time of waiting, sometimes patiently or not so patiently, for the arrival of many things, namely Christ, in our lives. Advent brings a time of hope, of celebrating, of expectant joy. God is coming to live among us!</p> <p>Advent is a time of waiting but waiting doesn't mean standing still. In this season of Advent, we are reminded of all those who have prepared the way for the good news throughout history. The prophets, priestesses, proclaiming the good news, preparing the way for the infancy of this great truth. It is also a time of Mary singing the lullaby of revolution; the lullaby and joy as resistance to what is the norm in our economic, greed-based society. Those who bring good tidings, peace, and the one who will bring salvation are not for commercialization.</p> <p>How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those who bring good news...of those who climb up the famous peaks to get a new vantage point to see the world, to see the beauty of creation. This Advent, may we embark on our own journey of movement as we (patiently) await the arrival of joy. May we sing joy as resistance to the order of things, and practice faith-based economics that remind us of creation. If the world is the theatre for God's glory, as John Calvin writes, then it is up to us, as human beings, to draw ourselves again and again to the living waters of the world, to protect our environment, and to stand at the mountaintop and see the beauty and run down to proclaim the Good News.</p> <p><b>Prayer.</b> In this season of waiting, it is so easy to become so busy that we miss the joy of your coming. Help us slow down and help us breathe. Remind us that your marvellous power in the world surrounds us and calls the Christ into the world. In the name of the one who comes we pray. Amen.</p> <p><b>Joanna Hipp</b><br/><i>Presbyterian Ministry Resource Committee, Charlotte, North Carolina.</i></p> |
| <p><b>Monday</b></p> | <p>13</p> | <p>I awake this morning in the presence<br/>of the holy angels of God.<br/>May heaven open wide before me<br/>above me and around me<br/>that I may see<br/>the Christ of my love<br/>and his sunlit company<br/>in all things of earth this day.</p> <p><b>J. Philip Newell</b><br/><i>Celtic prayers from Iona</i></p>   |

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| <p><b>Tuesday</b></p>   | <p><b>14</b></p> | <p>"We don't have a right to ask whether we're going to succeed or not. The only question we have a right to ask is what's the right thing to do? What does this earth require of us if we want to continue to live on it?"</p> <p><b>Wendell Berry</b></p>   |  |
| <p><b>Wednesday</b></p> | <p><b>15</b></p> |    |   |
| <p><b>Thursday</b></p>  | <p><b>16</b></p> | <p><b>Reconciliation Day</b></p> <p>Today reconcile with nature and have an "outside day" with the children .....</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Help your children to discover a hidden universe. Find a scrap board and place it on bare dirt. Come back in a day or two, lift the board, and see how many species have found shelter there. Identify these creatures with the help of a field guide. Return to this "universe" once a month, lift the board and discover who's new.</li> <li>• Collect stones- different shapes, different colours ..... (even the youngest children love gathering rocks) display them somewhere prominent.</li> <li>• Start a new family tradition - <i>the "green hour"</i> - switch off technology and spent time for unstructured play and interaction with the natural world. Even fifteen minutes is a good start. Encourage some independent exploration as your child develops new skills and greater confidence.</li> <li>• Invent your own nature game or have a nature treasure hunt.</li> <li>• Replace part of your lawn with indigenous plants</li> </ul> |   |
| <p><b>Friday</b></p>    | <p><b>17</b></p> | <p>"Spirit of God, you established the dance of Creation.<br/> Bring life out of death, bring order out of chaos.<br/> Call us to radical action to care for the web of Creation<br/> To share our resources justly and to work for the renewal of our Mother Earth.<br/> May we commit ourselves to pray and act for climate justice.<br/> Amen</p>  |   |


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| <p><b>Saturday</b></p> | <p><b>18</b></p> | <p>“I knew that a system of values which concerns itself only with our relationship to other people is incomplete and therefore lacking in power for good. Only by means of reverence for life can we establish a spiritual and humane relationship with both people and all living creatures within our reach.”</p>   |    |
| <p><b>Sunday</b></p>   | <p><b>19</b></p> | <p><b>Fourth Sunday in Advent</b></p> <p><b><i>But Ask the Animals and They Will Teach You</i></b></p> <p><sup>7</sup> “But ask the animals, and they will teach you; the birds of the air, and they will tell you; <sup>8</sup> ask the plants of the earth, and they will teach you; and the fish of the sea will declare to you. <sup>9</sup> Who among all these does not know that the hand of the LORD has done this? <sup>10</sup> In his hand is the life of every living thing and the breath of every human being. Job 12:7-10 (NRSV)</p> <p><b>Donna Phillips</b> (Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary) writes:</p> <p>“In March of 2014, I embarked upon my first trip to the Grand Canyon in Phoenix Arizona with a dear friend. As I approached the mouth of the canyon, I was struck with awe at the beautiful sight that lay before me and I gasped for breath.</p> <p>The pictures of the canyon that I had seen previously could not adequately capture the spectacle of it and I imagined that God had chiselled this amazing work of art in earth and stone for all to see. The wonder of the experience was best captured by a little boy who had simultaneously arrived at the canyon with his family. “Oh Wow,” he exclaimed! “I know, right,” I responded with equal excitement.</p> <p>In the hours that followed, as my friend and I trekked through nature’s wonder, we encountered a tree that had not yet received its spring foliage. Lighted upon the tree was a beautiful black bird whose fanned tuff of feathers around its head, and beautiful singing voice caught our attention. We stopped to listen to it sing and I couldn’t resist the urge to sing along so I launched into the song <i>Simple Gifts</i>. The black bird immediately stopped singing and cocked its head as if listening to me. Fearing that I had disturbed its song, I fell silent. The black bird began to warble again. Intrigued, I began to sing again too. The bird stopped its song, cocked its head curiously; so this time, I just kept right on singing for a while. As soon as I stopped, the bird resumed its musical discourse. Pretty soon a crowd formed around that tree as the bird and I sang our little duet. Eventually, I had to move on but that moment felt divine. For just a moment, I felt one with nature and with God. I said goodbye to the bird as I moved along and thanked it for sharing such a wonderful gift with me. As an afterthought, I wondered what would happen to that bird, and then, I thought about all of the birds, and animals, and plants, and nature’s wonders that we humans carelessly attend and realized that nature was not just put here for us to use and enjoy; but that, we...that I ... was put here to care for nature.”</p> |  |

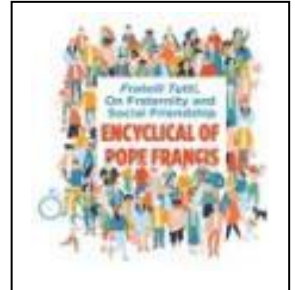
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|         |    | <p><i>Prayer: God of the trees and forests, rivers and seas, hills and vales, and the creatures that walk the earth, during this season of Advent help us to remember the earth in all of its fullness is yours, and that we are stewards of the abundant life you have given. And just as the star that shown over Bethlehem lit the way to the place where the Christ child lay, giving hope to a world in need, help us to be the lights that guide others to see that all you have created is truly precious.</i></p>  |
| Monday  | 20 | <p><b>An Event for Everyone – Luke 2:8-11</b></p> <p><sup>8-12</sup> There were shepherds camping in the neighbourhood. They had set night watches over their sheep. Suddenly, God’s angel stood among them and God’s glory blazed around them. They were terrified. The angel said, “Don’t be afraid. I’m here to announce a great and joyful event that is meant for everybody, worldwide: A Saviour has just been born in David’s town, a Savior who is Messiah and Master. This is what you’re to look for: a baby wrapped in a blanket and lying in a manger.”</p> <p><sup>13-14</sup> At once the angel was joined by a huge angelic choir singing God’s praises:<br/> Glory to God in the heavenly heights,<br/> Peace to all men and women on earth who please him.</p> <p><sup>15-18</sup> As the angel choir withdrew into heaven, the shepherds talked it over. “Let’s get over to Bethlehem as fast as we can and see for ourselves what God has revealed to us.” They left, running, and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby lying in the manger. Seeing was believing. They told everyone they met what the angels had said about this child. All who heard the shepherds were impressed.</p> <p><sup>19-20</sup> Mary kept all these things to herself, holding them dear, deep within herself. The shepherds returned and let loose, glorifying and praising God for everything they had heard and seen. It turned out exactly the way they’d been told!</p> <p><b>(The Message)</b></p> |
| Tuesday | 21 | <p>Through the silence of nature,<br/> I attain Thy divine peace.<br/> Oh sublime nature,<br/> in thy stillness let my heart rest.<br/> Thou art patiently awaiting the moment<br/> to manifest through the silence of sublime nature.<br/> Oh nature sublime, speak to me through silence,<br/> for I am awaiting in silence like you the call of God.<br/> Oh nature sublime,<br/> through thy silence I hear Thy cry.<br/> My heart is tuned to the quietness,<br/> that the stillness of nature inspires.</p> <p><b>Hazrat Inayat Khan</b></p>   |

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| <p><b>Wednesday</b></p> | <p><b>22</b></p> | <p>“The human spirit needs places where nature has not been rearranged by the hand of man.”</p> <p><b>Author Unknown</b></p>  |
| <p><b>Thursday</b></p>  | <p><b>23</b></p> | <p><b>The Symbols of Christmas</b></p> <p>People often use the word “magical” to describe their Christmas memories from childhood. I hope that was your experience. I have to confess that I am fortunate enough to have some rather “mystical” Christmas memories, too. Two of my earliest God-experiences took place around Christmas time, the first when I was about five years old. It was evening and all of my family was in the kitchen with the lights on. It was bright in there, but I was in the living room where it was dark with just the Christmas tree lit. I had the sense that the world was good, I was good, and I was part of the good world; and I just wanted to stay there. I remember feeling very special, very chosen, very beloved, and it was my secret. The family in the kitchen didn’t know what I was knowing. I have to laugh now to see how my ego was involved, but that doesn’t mean it wasn’t a true and holy experience. God meets us where we are, even as a five-year-old.</p> <div data-bbox="1270 331 1513 568" data-label="Image"> </div> <div data-bbox="435 864 751 1055" data-label="Image"> </div> <p>The second experience happened when I was in first or second grade. I was in church and had gone up to look at the Nativity scene on Epiphany when the three kings and their camels finally arrived to see Jesus, Mary, and Joseph. I remember feeling how lucky I was to live in this world where it all makes sense and it’s all good. It is all focused on the birth of this little baby.</p> <p>Looking back, it’s no wonder that the incarnation became the heart of my understanding of the Gospel. In both those moments, at the Christmas tree and the Christmas crib, it was like I’d been taken over to another world, the world as it’s meant to be, where the foundation is love and God is in everything. It was like I saw the “real world” inside of which everybody is truly living, but they simply don’t know it!</p> <p>Howard Thurman (1900–1981), the Black theologian and mystic, also saw great power in the symbol of Christmas. For Thurman, the “Mood of Christmas” was not merely in the Christ Child, but in what Christmas is offering us across the entire sweep of creation and time. He writes:</p> <p><i>The symbol of Christmas—what is it? It is the rainbow arched over the roof of the sky when the clouds are heavy with foreboding. It is the cry of life in the newborn babe when, forced from its mother’s nest, it claims its right to live. It is the brooding Presence of the Eternal Spirit making crooked paths straight, rough places smooth, tired hearts refreshed, dead hopes stir with newness of life. It is the promise of tomorrow at the close of every day, the movement of life in defiance of death, and the assurance that love is sturdier than hate, that right is more confident than wrong, that good is more permanent than evil.</i></p> <p>I pray that this Christmas, we are each gifted with some magical or mystical experience, reminding us that we are beloved, part of a good world, stirring with the “newness of life.”</p> <p><b>From Richard Rohr’s daily meditations</b><br/> <a href="http://www.cac.org">www.cac.org</a></p> |

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| <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Friday</b></p> | <p style="text-align: center;"><b>24</b></p> | <p><i><sup>18</sup> I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory about to be revealed to us. <sup>19</sup> For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the children of God; <sup>20</sup> for the creation was subjected to futility, not of its own will but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope <sup>21</sup> that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and will obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. <sup>22</sup> We know that the whole creation has been groaning in labour pains until now; <sup>23</sup> and not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly while we wait for adoption, the redemption of our bodies. <sup>24</sup> For in hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what is seen? <sup>25</sup> But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.</i></p> <p><b>Romans 8:18-25</b></p> <p>This has been a difficult year. But in this deep darkness, God is with us. Creation groans with us. Creation has been subjected to futility, not by its own will but by the will of all of us who have dominated all of the resources of Mother Earth, who have not been good stewards of her gifts to us. But we worship a God of creation, a God of life and death and resurrection. We know what comes at the end of this season. God comes to us as the light of the world, enfleshed in the body of a baby. This season of Advent is a season of the groans of labour pains.</p> <p>While we groan with Mother God and Mother Earth, may we also act as midwives, bringing new life and hope where we see suffering. May we give, act, and pray when the traumatic effects of climate change strike frontline communities around the world. May we refuse to profit from the destruction of Mother Earth and divest from fossil fuels. May we deepen our relationship with creation by learning about the environment where we live. May we dream up new ways of living in community with God, humans, and creation. May we support those working to heal creation through the development of renewable energy. May we breathe in energy from Mother Earth and breathe out gratitude for all the ways she supports life.</p> <p>We know that this Christmas light will set creation and all of the world free from its bondage to decay. We hope for that which is not yet seen, and we work to transform the pangs of death into the groans of labour. Through this hope for creation, we find our bodies redeemed and transformed, and we see glimpses of God's glory revealed to us.</p> <p><b>Prayer:</b> Mother God, comfort us in our suffering and challenge us in our complacency. We are so eager to see your glory revealed to us. Hold our hands as we breathe and push to create spaces where your new life may flourish. Liberate us from the bondage of decay we see in our lives, our systems, and in your creation. Sustain our hope and anticipation for you to break into our world once again. Amen.</p> <p><b>Angela Williams,</b><br/><i>Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary</i></p> |
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| <p><b>Saturday</b></p> | <p><b>25</b></p> | <div data-bbox="758 174 1129 757" data-label="Image"> </div> <p data-bbox="475 741 1522 1066">           God grant you the light in Christmas, which is faith;<br/>           the warmth of Christmas, which is love;<br/>           the radiance of Christmas, which is purity;<br/>           the righteousness of Christmas, which is justice;<br/>           the belief in Christmas, which is truth;<br/>           the all of Christmas, which is Christ.         </p>   |
| <p><b>Sunday</b></p>   | <p><b>26</b></p> | <p data-bbox="448 1149 1203 1686">           God, whose love reaches to the highest heavens,<br/>           how can we keep silent?<br/>           God whose righteousness stands like the tallest mountain<br/>           how can we keep silent?<br/>           God whose justice is deeper than any ocean<br/>           how can we keep silent?<br/>           God whose grace flows like a never ending river<br/>           how can we keep silent?<br/>           How can we not proclaim your majesty<br/>           from generation to generation?<br/>           How can we not raise the lamp of salvation,<br/>           for all the world to see?<br/>           God whose love reaches to the highest heavens.<br/>           We praise your mighty name..         </p> <p data-bbox="448 1727 608 1760"> <b><i>John Birch</i></b> </p> |
| <p><b>Monday</b></p>   | <p><b>27</b></p> | <p data-bbox="448 1809 687 1843"> <b>Psalm 139:9-10</b> </p> <p data-bbox="448 1865 943 2018"> <sup>9</sup> If I rise on the wings of the dawn,<br/>           if I settle on the far side of the sea,<br/> <sup>10</sup> even there your hand will guide me,<br/>           your right hand will hold me fast.         </p>   |

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| <p><b>Tuesday</b></p>   | <p><b>28</b></p> | <p><b>Encyclical Letter <i>Fratelli Tutti</i> of Pope Francis on the Fraternity and Social Friendship</b></p> <p><b><i>An Absence of Human Dignity on The Borders</i></b></p> <p>39. Then too, “in some host countries, migration causes fear and alarm, often fomented and exploited for political purposes. This can lead to a xenophobic mentality, as people close in on themselves, and it needs to be addressed decisively”.<sup>[40]</sup> Migrants are not seen as entitled like others to participate in the life of society, and it is forgotten that they possess the same intrinsic dignity as any person. Hence they ought to be “agents in their own redemption”.<sup>[41]</sup> No one will ever openly deny that they are human beings, yet in practice, by our decisions and the way we treat them, we can show that we consider them less worthy, less important, less human. For Christians, this way of thinking and acting is unacceptable, since it sets certain political preferences above deep convictions of our faith: the inalienable dignity of each human person regardless of origin, race or religion, and the supreme law of fraternal love.</p> <p>40. “Migrations, more than ever before, will play a pivotal role in the future of our world”.<sup>[42]</sup> At present, however, migration is affected by the “loss of that sense of responsibility for our brothers and sisters on which every civil society is based”.<sup>[43]</sup> Europe, for example, seriously risks taking this path. Nonetheless, “aided by its great cultural and religious heritage, it has the means to defend the centrality of the human person and to find the right balance between its twofold moral responsibility to protect the rights of its citizens and to assure assistance and acceptance to migrants”.<sup>[44]</sup></p> <p><b><i>Prayerfully consider how this is affecting our own Country</i></b></p> |
| <p><b>Wednesday</b></p> | <p><b>29</b></p> |    |



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| <p><b>Thursday</b></p> | <p><b>30</b></p> | <p>Deep peace of the quiet earth to you<br/>         Deep peace of the still air to you<br/>         Deep peace of the forgiving heart to you<br/>         Deep peace of the Son of Peace.</p> <p><b><i>Celtic Prayer</i></b></p>   |
| <p><b>Friday</b></p>   | <p><b>31</b></p> | <p>New Year upon us, come softly. We bring no seeds of vain intention but give what remains of our battle worn hearts. Through loss, through fright, through sickness and uncertainty, we have walked as vulnerable children overwhelmed in a world of disarray. Yet, in the midst of heartbreak, we learned there is strength in compassion. In the centre of loneliness, there is a deep hunger for touch and tender ness. In the aftermath of a storm, we learned our human spirit can be resilient. And if time has taught us anything, it's shown us how much we really need each another.</p> <div data-bbox="1015 562 1513 891" data-label="Image"> </div> <p><b><i>Wishing you a peaceful New Year 2022</i></b></p> |

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