

# Laudato Si' 2020

Theme: "Everything is Connected"

## A 9 day Retreat

16 – 24 May 2020



22 May 2020

Capuchin GEM (Green Environment Movement) – JPIC Office - OFM Capuchins

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Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Peace and Good.

To commemorate the 5<sup>th</sup> year anniversary of Laudato Si', we invite you to join us in a 9 day retreat.

Each day, we will provide you with materials from which you can find inspiration. All that is required of you is to provide yourself a few minutes each day to find a quiet place to read and reflect in peace.

For today, Day 7, we have three topics:

1. A microcosm of diversified life
2. A forest is life
3. How much oxygen does a tree provide?

Happy reading and God bless you always!

Office of the JPIC, OFM Capuchins

## Trees



## Trees

### 1. A microcosm of diversified life

When I was young, we had about seven trees of varying maturity in our small garden. The garden measures about fifty square meters and yet the trees make me feel like I am in a mini forest. These trees are home to maybe a hundred or more birds.

Every morning at around 4 o'clock, I would wake up to a chorus of birds preparing to start the day. I am fascinated by the transition of nature from a very still night to a commotion of activities. Then as the birds set off in flight, the trees slowly become quiet again save for the intermittently hum of the crickets. In the afternoon at around 6:00 o'clock just as the sun goes down the horizon, another chorus of birds would entertain my ears as they gather in the branches of the seven trees to roost for the night. At this time, I watch in amusement the apparent disorder of birds trying to find a place to perch for the night and as if at a signal from an invisible choir conductor, the music dies down. I often wait in anticipation for their 'concerts' at sunrises and at sunsets.

I like climbing trees, especially the seven trees in our garden. My favorite is an avocado tree situated at the center because it is easier to climb. Its branches are practically horizontal and they stretch out at regular intervals like spokes of a bicycle wheel. I would climb the tree and sit on one of its branches for long periods of time. Enjoying the breeze and daydreaming. I like staying in this mini forest of seven trees because it seems to be one of the coolest areas in my home.

On the month of April, I would climb the trees for another reason. Mangoes! It is the time when four of the seven trees would start bearing mango fruits. We had enough mango fruits to satisfy not only the gastronomic cravings of my family but also of our neighbors to which we share the gifts of nature. There is enough supply for everyone.

There are times when our curiosity takes the best of us that we would shake the base of the smaller trees in the garden just to discover what types of insects are going about their daily life in the trees. We never get disappointed. There will always be a variety of insects that would fall to the ground. We would turn over the insects to their proper standing positions and cheer them as they start to fly away. We often try to predict among us which insect would fly first or which insect would walk the fastest.

Well, the mini forest is not always the garden of Eden where all creatures live in harmony. Some of the creatures become food for other creatures too. Sometimes, while sitting on a branch of a tree, I would watch spiders spin webs in the branches. When an unsuspecting small insect finds itself caught in one of the webs, an eight legged creature would approach it, wrap its long legs around the insect and start spinning a web around it until it becomes a white ball after which, the spider would suck the life out of the poor creature.

Watching closely the bark of trees, I discovered early in my youth that the color of the tree trunks and branches is not really brown as we would usually color them at school. They vary from gray, to green to even reddish yellow. In the barks I would see different varieties of moss and smaller plants clinging in between the crevices. It is also often for me to see smaller insects crawling over the tree barks ranging from the glamorous looking orange or red lady bugs to the fiercely biting red ants.

At a young age, I was convinced that every tree was a world of its own; a microcosm of diversified life.

According to ***'The State of the World's Forests – 2020 (SOFO) Report'*** that was published by the United Nations:

*"The vast majority of terrestrial biodiversity is found in the world's forests – from boreal forests in the far North to tropical rainforests. Together, they contain more than 60 000 different tree species and provide habitats for 80 percent of amphibian species, 75 percent of bird species and 68 percent of mammal species. About 60 percent of all vascular plants are found in tropical forests. Mangroves provide breeding grounds and nurseries for numerous species of fish and shellfish and help trap sediments that might otherwise adversely affect seagrass beds and coral reefs, habitats for marine life."*

## 2. A forest is life

For the indigenous people, the forests, mountains, mangroves and seas are life.

Before I went to Rome, I was working with the FAS sisters in Sta. Ana, Cagayan, Philippines. We were assisting three communities of the Dopaningan Agta namely: Domasag, Turod and Palau Island. Domasag and Turod are at the foot of the 'Sierra Madre' Mountain ranges while Palau Island is one of the many islands situated at the northern tip of the Philippines.

The main sources of livelihood of the Agta communities from the forests are honey, rattan vines and wild orchids. While their source of livelihood from the sea are fishes and other sea creatures that are abundant in Palau island.

One day, I joined the Agtas of 'Palau Island' as they try to gather honey from a large bee hive. Insects are attracted to sweet smelling things maybe partly because they mistake it for flowers. Often times, when people from the city who use shampoos and good smelling soaps for hygiene go to the peripheries, they attract the insects. I sometimes overlook this fact and so tend to be stung by bees on more than one occasion.

We were already about ten meters away from the bees when one bee immediately gave me a sting at the back. The elder of the team advised me that it would be safer for me to wait in the river instead while they gather the honey. I missed the thrill of watching them smoke the bees and gradually harvest the hive. But at least I later got the consolation of tasting a purely natural honey unadulterated by sugar or molasses.

### According to World Wildlife Fund (WWF):

#### Over 2 billion people rely on forests

“Forests provide us with shelter, livelihoods, water, food and fuel security. All these activities directly or indirectly involve forests. Some are easy to figure out - fruits, paper and wood from trees, and so on. Others are less obvious, such as by-products that go into everyday items like medicines, cosmetics and detergents.”

#### Forests provide jobs for more than 13 million people across the world

“In addition, 300 million people live in forests, including 60 million indigenous people. Yet, we are losing them. Between 1990 and 2015, the world lost some 129 million ha of forest, an area the size of South Africa. When we take away the forest, it is not just the trees that go. The entire ecosystem begins to fall apart, with dire consequences for all of us.”

Source: [https://wwf.panda.org/our\\_work/forests/importance\\_forests/](https://wwf.panda.org/our_work/forests/importance_forests/)

## 3. How much oxygen does a tree provide?

**Arbor Day Foundation** says that, “*a mature leafy tree produces as much oxygen in a season as 10 people inhale in a year.*”

“*A single mature tree can absorb carbon dioxide at a rate of 48 lbs. /year and release enough oxygen back into the atmosphere to support 2 human beings.*”

According to **Mike McAliney** in his document: *Arguments for Land Conservation: Documentation and Information Sources for Land Resources Protection, Trust for Public Land, Sacramento, CA, December, 1993* **“One acre (4046.86 sq. meters) of trees annually consumes the amount of carbon dioxide equivalent to that produced by driving an average car for 26,000 miles. That same acre of trees also produces enough oxygen for 18 people to breathe for a year.”**

According to **New York Times**, “A 100-ft tree, 18” diameter at its base, produces 6,000 pounds of oxygen.”

**Northwest Territories Forest Management** cited that, “On average, one tree produces nearly 260 pounds of oxygen each year. **Two mature trees can provide enough oxygen for a family of four.**”

Source: <http://www.multiwood.in/blog/how-much-oxygen-does-one-tree-produce>

## Reflections

I was just thinking. One tree provides oxygen for two people. If a friar commits himself to take care of one tree for his lifetime, then he has already paid for his lifetime oxygen consumption and as a bonus, he has also treated another person with a lifetime supply of oxygen.

If one adult tree provides a habitat for many birds, small mammals, insects, fungi, smaller plants and many more, just imagine how many habitats we can provide if every Capuchin friary commits itself to care for at least five adult trees. The trees need not have to be in the friary itself. It can be in another area as long as the friars commit themselves to care for the trees.

If one acre of trees provide enough oxygen for 18 people. Just imagine how much oxygenation we would provide if every Capuchin circumscription would commit itself to one reforestation project.

1. One tree cared for by one friar for a lifetime.
2. Five trees cared for by one friary.
3. One reforestation project for each circumscription.

Is it possible? I believe it is.

May the Lord bless us, protect us from all evil and bring us to everlasting life. Amen.

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