

Laudato Si' 2020

Theme: "Everything is Connected"

A 9 day Retreat

16 – 24 May 2020



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Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Peace and Good.

To commemorate the 5th 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 9, we have three topics:

1. The State of the World's Forests 2020
2. Desert Bloom
3. Green Friaries

Happy reading and God bless you always!

Office of the JPIC, OFM Capuchins



"¹¹ And God said, "Let the earth put forth vegetation, plants yielding seed, and fruit trees bearing fruit in which is their seed, each according to its kind, upon the earth." And it was so. ¹² The earth brought forth vegetation, plants yielding seed according to their own kinds, and trees bearing fruit in which is their seed, each according to its kind. And God saw that it was good." - **Genesis 1: 11-12**

1. The State of the World's Forests 2020

In the report given by the United Nations entitled, **The State of the World's Forests 2020**, the following information were given:

"Forests cover 31 percent of the global land area."

"More than half of the world's forests are found in only five countries (the Russian Federation, Brazil, Canada, the United States of America and China) and two-thirds (66 percent) of forests are found in ten countries":

Russian Federation – 20.1%

Brazil – 12.2%

Canada – 8.5%

United States of America – 7.6%

China – 5.4%

Australia – 3.3%

Democratic Republic of Congo – 3.1%

Indonesia – 2.3%

Peru – 1.8%

India – 1.8%

The rest of the world – 33.9%

"The total forest area is 4.06 billion hectares."

"The area of primary forest worldwide has decreased by over 80 million hectares since 1990."

"It is not only the trees that make a forest, but the many different species of plants and animals that reside in the soil, understorey and canopy. Estimates of the total number of species on Earth range from 3 million to 100 million."

"In both low- and high-income countries and in all climatic zones, communities that live within forests rely the most directly on forest biodiversity for their lives and livelihoods, using products derived from forest resources for food, fodder, shelter, energy, medicine and income generation."

"Rural people often participate in the value chains of forest biodiversity, for example by collecting wood and non-wood products from nearby forests for personal use or sale, or engaging in forest-product industries or value addition."

"Indigenous peoples depend to a high degree on forest biodiversity for their livelihoods, although this relation is in flux as their linkages with national and global monetary economies grow. Areas managed by indigenous peoples (approximately 28 percent of the world's land surface) include some of the most ecologically intact forests and many hotspots of biodiversity."

"Along tropical coasts, 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 – the habitats of a myriad of marine species."



*“¹ The wilderness and the dry land shall be glad, the desert shall rejoice and blossom; like the crocus ² it shall blossom abundantly, and rejoice with joy and singing.” - **Isaiah 35: 1-2***

2. Desert Bloom

The deserts are often described as waterless and desolate areas with little or no vegetations. But with the right season and fair amount of rainfall, a dry desert can suddenly come to life. This phenomenon of deserts suddenly bursting out with green plants, numerous flowers and buzzing animal life is what we refer to as ‘desert bloom’.

A desert bloom is a phenomenon of nature that is observed in many deserts throughout the world. They usually occur at the season of spring when a sufficient amount of rainfall promotes the germination of seeds and the growth of plants. Imagine a desert that is empty and dry one moment, suddenly being transformed by rainfall into a green carpet filled with flowers and small animals!

In a place that is desolate and dry, nature suddenly comes alive with green plants and flowers. In the midst of desolation and dryness, hope and life appears. From seeming death comes life. It reminds me of the passage often mentioned during advent regarding the coming of the Lord. *“¹ There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots.” - **Isaiah 11:1***



*“¹⁹ I will put in the wilderness the cedar, the acacia, the myrtle, and the olive; I will set in the desert the cypress, the plane and the pine together- **Isaiah 41: 19***

3. Green Friaries

Despite the dynamism of nature and its ability to recover itself, the rate of deforestation being made by mankind is just too fast to allow nature to heal itself. Many forests that used to be habitats for many species of trees and animals are progressively being converted into areas that are not suitable for their

survival. Some areas that used to be sources of life for many species are slowly becoming areas of desolation for them. They become symbolic deserts in need of ‘desert blooms’.

In the 7th day of the retreat, I have shared with you that even just a small cluster of trees can already be a haven for many species. They can already become mini, green forests in the midst of concrete jungles.

Capuchin convents are scattered worldwide. These small pockets of land are potential mini forests and gardens for many species of plants, birds, mammals and insects. Much of the land entrusted to the care of the Capuchins can become new forests if we would choose to plant trees in them.

When faced by challenges, we need to identify the things that we cannot control and the things where we can make a difference. For those we cannot control, we still try our best to do something about them. However, for the things where we know we can make a difference, we cannot afford not to do anything.

The responses of governments and great nations regarding the care of environment belong to the things we cannot control. Even so, we know that we need continue on campaigning and informing them in order to encourage them to protect the environment. However, there are some areas where we know, we can truly make a difference. These areas are our convents and lands.

If we start working on the things we can influence, the area of our influence will increase.

A Chinese proverb once said: “A journey of a thousand miles must begin with a single step.”

I now invite you to take the first small steps with me. Let us plant trees and create gardens in our convents. Let us transform our lands into areas of reforestation. Let us create ‘small desert blooms’ that will gladden the heart and will provide sanctuaries to homeless species of plants, birds, mammals and insects. Let us work for a greener environment. Let us begin it in our own gardens.

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