

## FRANCIS AND FRANCIS: *PREACHING AND THE SACRAMENTALITY OF CREATION*

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*The world is charged with the grandeur of God.  
It will flame out, like shining from shook foil;  
It gathers to a greatness, like the ooze of oil  
Crushed. Why do men then now not reckon his rod?  
Generations have trod, have trod, have trod;  
And all is seared with trade; bleared, smeared with toil;  
And wears man's smudge and shares man's smell: the soil  
Is bare now, nor can foot feel, being shod.*

*And for all this, nature is never spent;  
There lives the dearest freshness deep down things;  
And though the last lights off the black West went  
Oh, morning, at the brown brink eastward, springs —  
Because the Holy Ghost over the bent  
World broods with warm breast and with ah! bright wings.<sup>2</sup>*

### The World is Charged

As I walked around St. Mary's lake on the Notre Dame campus, I was deep in thought, outlining a paper about the sacramentality of creation. Suddenly, my eyes opened. I grew attentive to the sunlight on the water. I felt the warmth of God's gaze. I basked in the sunshine as it flickered through the trees. As I walked and looked, I realized how deeply the sun and the out-of-doors have "flamed out" to shape my personal image of God.

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<sup>1</sup> Originally composed for the Academy of Homiletics annual conference, 2019.

<sup>2</sup> Gerard Manley Hopkins, S.J., "God's Grandeur" from *Gerard Manley Hopkins: Poems and Prose* (Penguin Classics, 1985).

The earliest experience that I can remember was digging in the sandbox. The sun shone from above to warm my blond hair. My three-year old toes wiggled in the hot sand as I leaned against my grandpa's old tractor tire which encircled me. Freedom, joy, and love washed over me. Enfolded by that warmth and wrapped in sunshine, a sense of a benevolent "Someone" surrounded me.

Fifteen years later, when I was in forestry school in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan, I came to conversion in the setting sun over Lake Superior. As I sat busting sod in the garden, the intimacy of the Holy Spirit surrounded me, not like an impersonal metaphysical beam of light, not as a hard glare of judgment, but as a gaze at a beloved daughter, as a Creator who valued me. Earthly sunshine didn't compare. Words that came from my mouth in praise were both lovely and unintelligible. Sunlight, radiance, warmth, the brilliance of the sunset—all were iconic for me as I fell through beauty into the arms of a loving God. "The world is charged with the grandeur of God," writes the young Jesuit Gerard Manley Hopkins. At that moment, my life too, was charged and changed.

## The Bent World

As we look at beauty and the radiant vision of God, we also see a darkness through which "generations have trod, have trod, have trod..." St. Paul tells us, "...we know that the whole creation has been groaning in labor pains until now" (Rom 8:22). "All is seared with trade; bleared, smeared with toil and wear's man's smudge and shares man's smell..." There is a deep groaning in the created world. We see a gray murkiness and we ask, "What is wrong with us?"

Pope Francis, a modern-day Jesuit, in his encyclical letter *Laudato Si'*, moans with us:

The violence present in our hearts, wounded by sin, is also reflected in the symptoms of sickness evident in the soil, in the water, in the air and in all forms of life. This is why the earth herself, burdened and laid waste, is among the most abandoned and maltreated of our poor; she "groans in travail" (Rom 8:22). We have forgotten that we ourselves are dust of the earth (cf. Gen 2:7); our very bodies are made up of her elements, we breathe her air and we receive life and refreshment from her waters.<sup>3</sup>

Theologians, preachers, and poets strain to express that innermost "sickness." We ask about original sin. We speak of injustice and suffering. We cry of wounded-ness, peril, and

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<sup>3</sup> Pope Francis. Encyclical Letter *Laudato Si'*: *On Care for our Common Home* (Washington, DC: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2015), 2. (Quotes from *Laudato Si'* are abundant in this paper, so they will forthwith be simply designated "Francis, page number.")

brokenness. We bemoan death, despair, and guilt. We recognize that life can be a dark, bitter, hard, existence. We try to express anguished deeps caught in the raw pain of grief... Words fall short in articulating the experience. The muck is real. The life which we live falls short. The radiance for which God has created us can feel a long way off. Jesus turns to the women of Jerusalem and says, “Don’t weep for me, weep for yourselves and for your children” (Lk 23:28).

What happens when we forget that we ourselves are dust of the earth? What happens when we only see darkly Who it is that has made us?

### Seeing the World Upside-Down

Often when we have forgotten something, we need to ask, where are we only seeing dimly? What is not clear? We live in an era where eyesight and vision is changing. I see a hunger among some of the technologically-saturated young for a greater closeness to the created world. Lay MDiv students and seminarians beg to come and pick weeds and dig in my garden and learn to grow things.

At the same time, other searches go on, in many directions: neo-paganism is ascending, seeking for a down-to-earth connection with the created world. The medieval world of Tolkien and Renaissance Faires and video-game-robed sword-fighters hold a strong appeal. In conversations about why Thor and Wonder Woman and other superhero movies and young adult fantasy are so popular, my son Tom suggests that his generation is in search of a mythology by which to live, having rejected (or never known) Christianity as a viable meta-narrative. As Christians, how can we respond to that? As spiritual leaders, before we celebrate worship, how are we to understand who it is that we address? As homilists, how are we to speak within a context where perception is changing?

In order to connect with those impulses and search for answers, we turn to an early medieval, brown-robed saint: St. Francis of Assisi. He had a way of seeing creation that radicalized his day and may benefit ours.

Early in his itinerant preaching ministry, G.K. Chesterton tells us,<sup>4</sup> St. Francis came to a crossroads outside of his city of Assisi. Where the roads came together, that little fool for Christ in his little brown robe stood on his head. And when he was upside down, he looked at his beloved city and he saw the whole place differently: The buildings which were so massive when they were right side up? The largest of them looked ponderous and

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<sup>4</sup> G.K. Chesterton, *St. Francis of Assisi* (New York: Doubleday Image Books), 1990.

precariously heavy when it was upside down, like it could drop at any moment. On the flip side, those tiny crawly creatures that went unnoticed when Francis had soared like a giant above them? They danced daintily in the dirt when his eyes were down in the dust among them.

As St. Francis looked at the earth from his upturned position, it was impressed upon him (according to Chesterton's account) that all of it—from the tallest building to the smallest millipede—hung (pendent) upside down by a thread ... the thread of the mercy and the love of God. It was suspended and hanging, totally reliant upon the One who had made it.

Standing on his head at those crossroads changed the way St. Francis saw: his dazzling joy was that he saw the world dependent. He had nothing to lose. So for the little saint from Assisi, his freedom was that the greatest became the least and the smallest of the small became the most valuable.

There's another Francis who sees the world upside down as well. For if we turn the institution on its head, if we turn the Catholic Church upside down, then the man at the top goes to the bottom. In the first act of his papacy, instead of the accustomed gesture of blessing his people, Pope Francis bowed and asked for them to pray for him. By becoming Pope, he has become least of all, servant of all, totally dependent, hanging by a thread on the mercy and the love of God. If he sees the world upside down, the Pope is free to be the least of all; and those who live in the dirt: the poor, the marginalized, the oppressed, and the unseen? They become the most valuable of all.

Chesterton suggests that perhaps the one who sees the world upside down, actually sees it the right way up.

### **The Spirituality of Dependence Leads to Interdependence**

At the heart of a healthy perception of reality, then, is this recognition that we are totally and thoroughly dependent on our Creator:

A spirituality which forgets God as all-powerful and Creator is not acceptable. That is how we end up worshipping earthly powers, or ourselves usurping the place of God, even to the point of claiming an unlimited right to trample his creation underfoot. The best way to restore men and women to their rightful place, putting an end to their claim to absolute dominion over the earth, is to speak once more of the figure of a Father who

creates and who alone owns the world. Otherwise, human beings will always try to impose their own laws and interests on reality.<sup>5</sup>

Benedict XVI suggests that we moderns prefer autonomy and do not want to concede our dependence on a Creator: “It [dependence] is seen as the real barrier to human freedom, the basis of all other restrictions, the first thing to be eliminated if humankind is to be effectively liberated.”<sup>6</sup> And yet... a great part of human suffering seems never to be overcome in human history. Human endeavors end up in blind alleys. The world is in a bad way; we are a world of autonomous individualists unwilling (and seemingly unable) to come together. It seems to run contrary to our nature to practice radical interdependence.

Nevertheless, human beings *are* dependent by nature. We are helpless at birth. We are powerless at death. We cannot flourish except by being interdependent with others. Also, in moments of deep lament, when all looks really bad, those seem to be the times that people *do* come together. From the great injustice of slaves on a plantation and the trauma of soldiers in war, to the small tribulations of travelers stuck in an airport and neighbors out of power, difficulty can bring people together. Radical interdependence can arise in the midst of lament.

When recognizing our dependence on the Creator and our interdependence with creation takes the form of both giving and receiving love, that love sets a person free; free to be in fruitful solidarity with other humans and with the created world. In love with the Creator and the creation, St. Francis thus could express camaraderie with each and every person and creature that he met. He was not an abstract “lover of nature,” but in love with each—the leper as fellow traveler, the sun as brother, the moon as sister.

## Solidarity with Creation

Pope Francis builds off of St. Francis’ vision of solidarity with all of creation in his 2015 encyclical *Laudato Si’*. He begins with these words:

“Praise be to you, my Lord.” In the words of this beautiful canticle, Saint Francis of Assisi reminds us that our common home is like a sister with whom we share our life and a beautiful mother who opens her arms to embrace us. “Praise be to you, my Lord,

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<sup>5</sup> Francis, 75.

<sup>6</sup> Pope Benedict XVI, *In the Beginning... A Catholic Understanding of the Story of Creation and the Fall* (Huntington, IN: Our Sunday Visitor Press, 1990), 84.

through our Sister, Mother Earth, who sustains and governs us, and who produces various fruit with colored flowers and herbs”.<sup>7</sup>

The pontiff voices that theme of interdependence through his subtitle “Care for our Common Home.” His moral challenge, a summons to profound interior conversion in the midst of the ecological crisis, is written as an address to “every person on the planet,” for we all share a common home, the earth, and it is our mutual responsibility to take care of it. We are all connected. We are connected to the human family. We are connected to the created world. We are also connected with those who will come after us in the future. Therefore, we are called to act.

On whose behalf are we called to act? We are to give a preferential option in caring for the poor. The Francis who innocently stood on his head at the crossroads of Assisi saw that those who are marginalized are of great value. The pope from Argentina sees the poor similarly:

In the present condition of global society, where injustices abound and growing numbers of people are deprived of basic human rights and considered expendable, the principle of the common good immediately becomes, logically and inevitably, a summons to solidarity and a preferential option for the poorest of our brothers and sisters. This option entails recognizing the implications of the universal destination of the world’s goods, but, as I mentioned in the Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*,<sup>8</sup> it demands before all else an appreciation of the immense dignity of the poor in the light of our deepest convictions as believers. We need only look around us to see that, today, this option is in fact an ethical imperative essential for effectively attaining the common good.<sup>9</sup>

As we strive for solidarity in attaining the common good, we acknowledge that much is broken in our relationships with the earth and each other. Not only creation groans. We ourselves groan as we await a more perfect world. Pope Francis suggests that St. Francis is a model to whom to turn in order to see that healing is possible.<sup>10</sup> In the lament of the earth, the

“harmony between the Creator, humanity and creation as a whole was disrupted by our presuming to take the place of God and refusing to acknowledge our creaturely limitations. This in turn distorted our mandate to “have dominion” over the earth (cf.

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<sup>7</sup> Francis, 1.

<sup>8</sup> Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, 123.

<sup>9</sup> Francis, 158.

<sup>10</sup> Francis, 66.

Gen 1:28), to “till it and keep it” (Gen 2:15). As a result, the originally harmonious relationship between human beings and nature became conflictual (cf. Gen 3:17-19). It is significant that the harmony which Saint Francis of Assisi experienced with all creatures was seen as a healing of that rupture. Saint Bonaventure held that, through universal reconciliation with every creature, Saint Francis in some way returned to the state of original innocence.<sup>11</sup>

While he was not immune to the weightiness of earthly lament, the saint from Assisi spent his time singing. He sang a song of the joy of the Creator in His creation. He sang of the beauty of the solidarity of human beings.<sup>12</sup> The greatest is actually the least and the least the greatest—this was not an intellectual mantra for Francis but a way of life. Though he suffered profound pain through his blindness and his stigmata and he died at an early age, Francis tapped into that well of strength that Manley Hopkins called the “dearest freshness” through which “nature is never spent.” And as he lay on his bed in the last moments of his life, the little poor man from Assisi asked to be laid on the bare ground to die. In his upside down vision, “praise and thanks to God would spring to their most towering height out of nakedness and nothing.”<sup>13</sup> Lying in the dirt was as close to God as he could get in this earthly life.

## God in All Things

As we turn to Francis and Francis for a spirituality of creation to inform our worship and our preaching, we have to avoid one common misunderstanding. The modern western mindset has difficulty differentiating between the Ignatian perception of “God *in* all things” and the eastern/New Age pantheistic understanding of “God *is* all things.” Pope Francis and Gerard Manley Hopkins are both Jesuits, deeply formed in an Ignatian theology which celebrates the distinction of Creator and creation. Therefore, neither of them collapses the Spirit of God to be synonymous with the “life force of trees and flowers,” and yet they are both commonly misread from that perspective.

In his Canticle, St. Francis praises the Creator “through” that which is created. This is a spiritual eyesight that is becoming blurred, even in Christian circles. St. Augustine gives the metaphor of a sponge in the ocean to explicate how God richly indwells the created world but is not synonymous with creation:

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<sup>11</sup> Bonaventure, “The Major Legend of Saint Francis,” VIII, 1, in *Francis of Assisi: Early Documents*, vol. 2 (New York-London-Manila, 2000), 586.

<sup>12</sup> Chesterton, 15.

<sup>13</sup> Chesterton, 145.

And I saw you, Lord, in every part containing and penetrating it (God's creation), Yourself altogether Infinite; as if Your Being were a sea, infinite and immeasurable everywhere, though still only a sea: and within it there were some mighty but not infinite sponge, and that sponge filled in every part with the immeasurable sea. Thus I conceived Your Creation as finite and filled utterly by Yourself and You were Infinite. And I said; "Here is God, and here is what God has created; and God is good, mightily and incomparably better than all these; but of His goodness He created them good: and see how He contains and fills them."<sup>14</sup>

With the image of God as the sea and the stuff of creation as the sponge, the sponge is both "shot through" with and enfolded by God. Within this theology of creation, St. Francis is in solidarity with the sun and the moon and the earth, free to delight in creation, for he is made of the same atoms that swirl and molecules that dance. At the same time, St. Francis is free to praise God as God. All creation, thus, is iconic, a window through which we look into the resplendence of the All-loving Trinity.

The universe unfolds in God, who fills it completely. Hence, there is a mystical meaning to be found in a leaf, in a mountain trail, in a dewdrop, in a poor person's face. The ideal is not only to pass from the exterior to the interior to discover the action of God in the soul, but also to discover God in all things.<sup>15</sup>

Manley Hopkins can say that for all of the weary trudging of human existence, "for all this, nature is never spent"—for deep down within things, there is a freshness that comes from the Spirit of God, like a brisk breeze from the ocean refreshes on a sweltering day, for the "world is charged with the glory of God."

This eyesight is what undergirds the theology of the sacramentality of creation—the belief that the visible created order leads us to the Invisible and Uncreated One. Throughout our lives, through all created things, we are never done learning to perceive the Transcendent One; learning to see God in all things is a lifelong pursuit.<sup>16</sup> Another Jesuit tells us that experiences of the revelation of God through the created order can be easily overlooked; we may even imagine that we do not experience them at all. Yet there are moments in our lives when the experience of the Spirit occurs more obviously in our conscious minds.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Augustine of Hippo, *Confessions*, Book 7, Ch. 5, part 7

<sup>15</sup> Francis, 233.

<sup>16</sup> Teilhard de Chardin, S.J., *The Divine Milieu* (New York: Harper and Row, 1960), 47.

<sup>17</sup> Karl Rahner, "The Holy Spirit and the Mysticism of Everyday Life" in *The Content of Faith*, ed. Karl Lehmann, Albert Raffelt, and Harvey D. Egan (New York: Crossroad, 1999), 367-369.



St. Francis praised God in a cave in the mountains; he worshipped him through the face of the poor and needy; he rejoiced and sang to the birds. His God who was both very near and very distant was willing to be accessed at all times and in all places. God didn't *have* to be near him. God *wanted* to be there with him. That same encounter is offered to us as well.

## **To Awaken the Senses in Liturgy and Worship**

So how do we more fully integrate this overarching eyesight: the sacramentality of creation, a spirituality of dependence upon God and solidarity with creatures and creation, into our Sunday morning services? And why does it matter that we do?

A former church go-er says that he feels closer to God when he goes for a run in the woods on Sunday morning. A woman who participates in a Goddess Circle in the full moon digs deeply into her roots in Mother Earth to awaken the wildness within her. A young man discovers God on a mountaintop when he hikes the Appalachian Trail and then searches to replicate that experience in the “blah” of ordinary life.

Might it feel at times that Christian worship/liturgy is at odds with the allure of the created world? “The Lord and his people speak to one another in a thousand ways directly, without intermediaries.”<sup>18</sup> The sunrise over the ocean is much more beautiful than any worship space than we can create. So, what do folks need *us* for?

As I write this paper for an ecumenical audience, each Christian denomination and each individual congregation has to wrestle with that contemporary question: *what do folks need us for?* Among the many branches of Christianity, there are many variations of doctrine and history in relation to creation and liturgical celebration. Some mainline Protestant denomination have embraced (sometimes implicitly, sometimes explicitly) an independent/individualistic/cerebral/leave-creation-behind-with-the-mud-on-your-shoes-at-the-door theology of creation, for intellectual thought is of greatest value. Other worship styles are more embodied as worshippers sway or kneel or dance, hold or clap or raise hands. Music styles vary but music is almost always a component of the sacramental sense of God's presence. Church architecture and the use of physical space are theologically driven and revelatory of the builders' creed about creation. In any ecumenical gathering, we recognize that we all come from different starting points in regard to the sacramentality of creation.

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<sup>18</sup> Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, 143.

But there is one thing common to almost all Christian strains: we believe that the privileged place for an encounter with God is within our liturgies and worship services. Jesus gathered his followers together. The Holy Spirit is the Tie that binds us as believers. At its best, it is within a community of faith where we recognize our dependence on God and our interdependence and solidarity with one other. Through the way that we move our bodies, design our spaces and sing our songs, we invite the infinite Lord to become intimate with us together.

One way that we can become more creation-centered is in the awakening of all five senses in worship—incorporating beauty in smells and sounds, deliberately planning how to involve movement and touch, making more lovely our spaces, tasting the goodness of God. From dependence to solidarity to experiencing God in all created things to an awareness of transcendence to a common mission, the gathering together of God’s people is the locus for our mutual interaction and growth.

St. Francis was on a mission to rebuild God’s church. We must be as well.

### **Preachers Aflame**

As church-builders, affinity with the created world cannot be temporarily thrown on (or off) like throwing on a liturgical garb. The sacramentality of creation is a way of perceiving. Solidarity is a way of life. Dependence is a continual radical re-orientation of how we pray, seeing the world upside down. We cannot authentically radiate what we do not have:

We are not asked to be flawless, but to keep growing and wanting to grow as we advance along the path of the Gospel; our arms must never grow slack. What is essential is that the preacher be certain that God loves him, that Jesus Christ has saved him and that his love has always the last word. Encountering such beauty, he will often feel that his life does not glorify God as it should, and he will sincerely desire to respond more fully to so great a love. Yet if he does not take time to hear God’s word with an open heart, if he does not allow it to touch his life, to challenge him, to impel him, and if he does not devote time to pray with that word, then he will indeed be a false prophet, a fraud, a shallow impostor. But by acknowledging his poverty and desiring to grow in his commitment, he will always be able to abandon himself to Christ, saying in the words of Peter: “I have no silver and gold, but what I have I give you” (Acts 3:6). The Lord wants to make use of us as living, free and creative beings who let his word enter our own

hearts before we pass it on to others. Christ's message must truly penetrate and possess the preacher, not just intellectually but in his entire being.<sup>19</sup>

A preacher is called to be an icon, a window into God. Our spiritual life precedes what we say. We are to be aflame with the joy of the gospel in a deeply mystical way, not in a wild and "out there" performance that points to ourselves, but as one who glows with joy from within. As the Lord's mouthpiece, when people see us, they ask, "Is this what God is like?"

As ministers of the Gospel, what we choose to preach also reveals much about our own experience. We focus on certain topics. We fashion the words of a homily or reflection in a characteristic way. Particular Scriptural passages jump out at us. This selection of topics and words reveals the lens through which we as preachers see the created world. Where do we spend our time—beholding radiance or dreariness? Our own lens shapes the faith lenses of our congregation.

Our world hungers for saints who are in love with the Creator and the creation. How do we get there? "We let ourselves go in trust and soak up the radiance of God until we exude the holy light ourselves."<sup>20</sup>

### **Preaching Beauty in an Age of Ugliness**

Even as the preacher is iconic, so our preached words are as well. We name lament. We name grace.<sup>21</sup> We name the One whose agency brings us from death to life. To be faithful in preaching the Paschal Mystery means that we incorporate each of those three elements. If we leave out lament, we preach a "fluffy" gospel; we also lose that bond of interdependence that the moan of mutual difficulty summons. If we do not preach grace and offer a vision of what life could be, we preach a "cold" gospel; we leave our folks in desolation and despair. If we omit the agency of God, we preach a Savior-less gospel; there is no One to help us; we leave our people to pull themselves up by their own bootstraps (as though they could even do that).

One of the ironies that I have found in teaching preaching students the homiletical "valley form" (in its many varieties), is that over and over again, students (and preachers) do well in bringing listeners "down." We can be concrete and articulate about the struggles of human life; secular communications (the news, the internet, TV shows, etc.) provide plenty of vocabulary to

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 151.

<sup>20</sup> Rahner, "The Holy Spirit and the Mysticism of Everyday Life," 371.

<sup>21</sup> For a rich description of "naming grace," see Mary Catherine Hilker, O.P., *Naming Grace: Preaching and the Sacramental Imagination* (New York: Continuum Publishing Company, 1997).

describe ugliness and suspicion and despair. The pain, the hopelessness and the sin of the human race can smack us in the face. Jesus accepted that finitude. He came into it. He named it. He embraced it. That is the solidarity of the incarnation. But then when we try to turn and name the beauty and power of God living and active right now in our lives, we float into platitudes and trite expressions for redemption and salvation. To be true to the creatureliness of our lives, the challenge is to use sensory language to articulate our own experience of Good News: What does Jesus' salvation feel like in a tactile way? What does resurrection taste like? What do you smell when you experience hope? God desires to encounter us through all of the senses of creaturely experience, not simply through intellectual abstractions. "All creation and human experience are potential sacraments of communion with God."<sup>22</sup> How we smell, taste, see, hear and feel is revelatory of the Spirit's immanence within the created world:

What is more, Saint Francis, faithful to Scripture, invites us to see nature as a magnificent book in which God speaks to us and grants us a glimpse of his infinite beauty and goodness.<sup>23</sup>

In our preaching, we also attest to our experience of that Other who invites us to relationship, who draws us forth toward divinization, the "You" of whom Augustine calls out, "You flashed, You shone, You dispelled my blindness." Our people often sense the Creator's call, but glory has to be named or it may pass by unnoticed, for ugliness can blare so much more loudly.

At this point in history, our people need the message of beauty. Then they in turn can live and proclaim a gospel that loves the earth. Awakening the imagination through the allure of beauty has the potential to bring our congregation into an encounter with the Holy Trinity so that they themselves can build a life of solidarity with the created world.

Then too, there is the recognition that God created the world, writing into it an order and a dynamism that human beings have no right to ignore. We read in the Gospel that Jesus says of the birds of the air that "not one of them is forgotten before God" (Lk 12:6). How then can we possibly mistreat them or cause them harm? I ask all Christians to recognize and to live fully this dimension of their conversion. May the power and the light of the grace we have received also be evident in our relationship to other creatures and to the world around us. In this way, we will help nurture that sublime fraternity with all creation which Saint Francis of Assisi so radiantly embodied.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> German Martinez. *Signs of Freedom: Theology of the Christian Sacraments* (New York: Paulist Press, 2004), 71.

<sup>23</sup> Francis, 12.

<sup>24</sup> Francis, 221.

## Radiance of the Vision

Back at St. Mary's lake, the ripples on the water pick up the sunlight. The kingdom of God is here, but it has also not yet come. The geese still fight. Bluegills are gobbled up. Oak trees succumb to overtopping grapevines. Creation continues to groan as it awaits fulfillment (Rom 8:22). We wait and we hope. We work for the coming of the kingdom as we wait. We are given little tastes, touches of light in our waiting: that there is a Love deeper than the love of this earth, that there is a Beauty beyond what we can smell and hear, that there is a Wind stronger than our breath, that there is a Hope deeper than what we can imagine, that there is More here than meets the eye. Come, Holy Spirit! We want to see you!

*Because the Holy Ghost over the bent  
World broods with warm breast and with ah! bright wings.*