

Everyday Pilgrimages: the Earth is the Lord's

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During the Season of Creation, from September 1 to October 4, many pilgrimages are occurring across the United States. Making a pilgrimage to a holy place is an ancient practice in many religions that endures to this day. During this pivotal year, marking both the 800th anniversary of St. Francis of Assisi's *Canticle of the Creatures* and the 10th anniversary of Pope Francis's groundbreaking encyclical *Laudato Si'*, the Laudato Si Movement – North America has invited us to join in a Pilgrimage of Hope for Creation to rediscover the beauty of God's creation through prayer, reflection, and action. You can learn more at the [Pilgrims of Hope for Creation web page](#) about what pilgrimages are occurring and how to plan one.

But pilgrimages could happen every day if we remembered the passage in Psalm 24:1: "The earth is the LORD's, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it." Scripture is filled with references to nature, as in Job 12: 7–8: "But ask the beasts, and they will teach you; the birds of the heavens, and they will tell you; or the bushes of the earth, and they will teach you; and the fish of the sea will declare to you."

There are places of spectacular natural beauty such as Niagara Falls and the Grand Canyon which must be visited in person to appreciate them fully. But daily, we can take time to truly listen to God's spectacular everyday Creation. Be quiet, listen to the sounds, smell the air, look at the colors, touch the leaves, put your finger in the dirt, immerse yourself attentively in this small place and time. Notice too and feel sorrow about the places of destruction, trash left behind, damaged landscapes. Feel yourself in the presence of God, the Creator. As you are outside, consider what in nature you complain about, the squirrel that ate the tomato you carefully cultivated, the mosquito that bit you. What are these living beings teaching you? Give thanks for how the natural world sustains you: the plants producing oxygen, the plants producing food, and the animals we eat. These too are God's creation. Pay attention to how the natural world struggles to live: the plant that grows in the cracks in the sidewalk; the ants that keep rebuilding their nests.

So go outside, silence your phone, empty your mind as much as possible and "ask the beasts, and they will teach you; the birds of the heavens, and they will tell you; or the bushes of the earth, and they will teach you; and the fish of the sea will declare to you." If you wish, journal. If you can, go on a pilgrimage with a group to gain hope and support from fellow pilgrims and share our hope and love for creation. Or take a friend to walk in silence with you. Afterwards, share your reflections. Or in nature alone with God's creation, be a pilgrim every day.