

## Stations of Creation

The original format of The Stations of Creation was devised by Br Colin Wilfred SSF for a conference at Compton Durville. The reflections and prayers of that version were, I believe, based on a book "Earthsongs" by Wayne Simsic. I have replaced them with reflections and prayers that attempt to follow Franciscan theology more closely, including quotations from St Francis and Bonaventure, and also taking into account the modern day Franciscan theology of Evolution.

I have also altered two of the Stations as the original version confused "Earth", the planet as we think of it, with "Earth" the element. St Francis's Canticle is completely inclusive. He includes the Sun, Moon and Stars, which were understood as heavenly signs, and the four elements, Earth, Air, Fire and Water, from which everything in the material world (or sublunary) world was thought to be made. In other words, Francis could not have thought of "the Earth" as a planet amongst others. "Earth" was the entire material world, or universe, just as it has to be understood in the Lord's Prayer.

So, the Canticle must be about our relationship, and praise, with everything that is, including death.

The Stations can be used outdoors, looking for things which reflect the various ideas, or they could be illustrated with pictures, ideally drawing or photographs by people on a retreat and of the world immediately at hand, rather than commercial pictures. It's all about our own experience and the "wonder of reality."

The text of St Francis's Canticle and other quotations from St Francis are taken from "Francis and Clare, the complete works, Paulist Press, 1982.

The biblical extracts are from the New Revised Standard Version, Anglicised.

Sources of other quotations are given for each station.

### Station 1

***Most High, all-powerful, good Lord,***

***Yours are the praises, the glory, the honour, and all blessing.***

***To you alone, Most High, do they belong,***

***and no-one is worthy to mention Your name.***

*Psalm 36.5-10*

<sup>5</sup> *Your steadfast love, O LORD, extends to the heavens,  
your faithfulness to the clouds.*

<sup>6</sup> *Your righteousness is like the mighty mountains,  
your judgements are like the great deep;  
you save humans and animals alike, O LORD.*

<sup>7</sup> *How precious is your steadfast love, O God!  
All people may take refuge in the shadow of your wings.*

<sup>8</sup> *They feast on the abundance of your house,  
and you give them drink from the river of your delights.*

<sup>9</sup> *For with you is the fountain of life;  
in your light we see light.*

<sup>10</sup> *O continue your steadfast love to those who know you,  
and your salvation to the upright of heart!*

### **Reflection:**

The Lord is the Source of all Being, beyond all that we can imagine of the universe, and yet present as the Word in everything. Everything, from the vastness of the galaxies to the smallest creature, is a mirror of God.

We “acknowledge that every good is His, and thank Him for everything, from Whom all good things come.

“And may He, the Highest and Supreme, Who alone is God, have and be given and receive every honour and reverence, every praise and glory, for every good is His, He Who alone is good.”

*(St Francis: The Earlier Rule.)*

### **Silence**

### **Prayer:**

Lord, help us to see Creation in Humility, Love, and Joy,

so that we can know that “every leaf, cloud, fruit, animal and person is an outward expression of the Word of God in love...”

that “the sun, moon, trees, animals, stories, all have life only in Christ...for Christ is the Word through whom all things are made\*.”

Amen

*(\*Ilia Delio, a Franciscan View of Creation, Franciscan Institute, 2003)*

## **Station 2**

***Praised be you, my Lord, with all your creatures, especially Sir Brother Sun,***

***Who is the day and through whom You give us light.***

***And he is beautiful and radiant with great splendour, and bears a likeness to You, Most High One.***

*Ecclesiasticus 43.2-5*

<sup>2</sup> *The sun, when it appears, proclaims as it rises  
what a marvellous instrument it is, the work of the Most High.*

<sup>3</sup> *At noon it parches the land,  
and who can withstand its burning heat?*

<sup>4</sup> *A man tending<sup>[a]</sup> a furnace works in burning heat,  
but three times as hot is the sun scorching the mountains;  
it breathes out fiery vapours,  
and its bright rays blind the eyes.*

<sup>5</sup> *Great is the Lord who made it;  
at his orders it hurries on its course.*

### **Reflection:**

For our world, this small and precious planet, the Sun is the source of light and life. Like Francis, we can see that the Sun has a resemblance to the Source of All Being. But the Sun is also our Brother, and even our Brother Sun is just one of millions of stars. We are sustained by the light and heat of the Sun, but all that exists is sustained by the love of God.

### **Silence**

### **Prayer:**

Lord, help us to value everything that depends on the Sun's heat and light for its physical life. Help us to love all creatures as our family, and to treasure this small world as our home, in the love that we know through Jesus Christ, the living Word, Amen.

## **Station 3**

***Praised be you, my Lord, through Sister Moon...***

*Ecclesiasticus 43.6 -8*

<sup>6</sup> *It is the moon that marks the changing seasons,  
governing the times, their everlasting sign.*

<sup>7</sup> *From the moon comes the sign for festal days,  
a light that wanes when it completes its course.*

<sup>8</sup> *The new moon, as its name suggests, renews itself;  
how marvellous it is in this change,*

*a beacon to the hosts on high,  
shining in the vault of the heavens!*

**Reflection:**

For thousands of years the Moon has been a sign of change. The moon reflects the light of the Sun, as all things reflect the light of God, but Sister Moon changes her appearance, and causes change in the tides. In our material world everything is change, everything is a dance. Everything evolves, all creatures move like the moon, changing in themselves, and forming new Works of God as they join or divide, and share the common light in ever new ways.

**Silence**

**Prayer:**

Lord, Source of all Light and Life, help us to dance and be changeable, with pure humility. We thank you for the freedom to grow and change, the freedom to become a unique image of the Word. Give us the love to draw us through the joys, pains and mysteries of change. In the name of Jesus Christ, who knew the joys and pains of birth and death, Amen.

**Station 4**

*...and the stars, in heaven You formed them clear and precious and beautiful.*

*Psalm 19 1-4*

*The heavens are telling the glory of God;  
and the firmament<sup>[a]</sup> proclaims his handiwork.*

*<sup>2</sup> Day to day pours forth speech,  
and night to night declares knowledge.*

*<sup>3</sup> There is no speech, nor are there words;  
their voice is not heard;*

*<sup>4</sup> yet their voice<sup>[b]</sup> goes out through all the earth,  
and their words to the end of the world.*

**Reflection:**

In this world of change we can know the Harmony that sings out in the whole of creation, in the laws that guide nature and the music which sounds in our souls.

**Silence**

**Prayer:**

Lord of all Music and dance, let your love help us be in tune with the universe both in the darkness and in the light of our human and earthly lives.

May our ears be open to your voice in Creation and may the noises and distractions of our own thoughts be still so that we can listen to the New Song in all Creation, in Jesus Christ, Amen.

**Station 5**

**Praised be you, my Lord, through Brother Wind, and through the air, cloudy and serene, and every kind of weather**

**through whom you give sustenance to Your creatures.**

*Ecclesiastes 11.4-5*

<sup>4</sup> *Whoever observes the wind will not sow;  
and whoever regards the clouds will not reap.*

<sup>5</sup> *Just as you do not know how the breath comes to the bones in the mother's womb, so you do not know the work of God, who makes everything.*

**Reflection:**

The air can be the breath that we depend on to live, the calm breeze rippling through long grass, or the violent storm that tears down trees or houses. All these are Brother Wind. Francis sang his praises with the four elements which, in his time, were seen to make the natural world. He sang with them in every aspect, calm or violent, nurturing or destructive. The wind is our Brother as breath or hurricane.

**Silence****Prayer:**

Lord, as the wind brings changing weather, to nurture growth, or cause destruction with its power, send us your Holy Spirit to guide us in our lives, through the gentle but also the painful. Let the wind of the Spirit draw us in Love to become what we can be, a face of Christ amongst ten thousand faces, Amen.

## Station 6

**Praised be you, my Lord, through Sister Water, who is very useful and humble and precious and chaste.**

*John 4. 7-14*

<sup>7</sup> A Samaritan woman came to draw water, and Jesus said to her, 'Give me a drink'. <sup>8</sup> (His disciples had gone to the city to buy food.) <sup>9</sup> The Samaritan woman said to him, 'How is it that you, a Jew, ask a drink of me, a woman of Samaria?' (Jews do not share things in common with Samaritans.)<sup>[b]</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Jesus answered her, 'If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that is saying to you, "Give me a drink", you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water.' <sup>11</sup> The woman said to him, 'Sir, you have no bucket, and the well is deep. Where do you get that living water?' <sup>12</sup> Are you greater than our ancestor Jacob, who gave us the well, and with his sons and his flocks drank from it?'

<sup>13</sup> Jesus said to her, 'Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, <sup>14</sup> but those who drink of the water that I will give them will never be thirsty. The water that I will give will become in them a spring of water gushing up to eternal life.'

### Reflection:

Water is the raging sea and the pure Spring. Water is "useful and humble" but it is also precious. Water is our Sister, not a thing to be used or exploited, but something with which we share the gift of Being, and something we share with each other. Even Christ asked to share water with the Samaritan woman. In our world, with water increasingly precious and valuable, can we sing praises with Sister Water as Francis did?

### Silence

### Prayer:

Lord of All Creation, help us to value Sister Water in love and humility. We pray that, in love, we may receive the gift of water of eternal life. Amen.

## Station 7

**Praised be you, my Lord, through Brother Fire, through whom you light up the night, and he is beautiful and playful and robust and strong.**

*I Corinthians 3.13, 15*

*<sup>13</sup> the work of each builder will become visible, for the Day will disclose it, because it will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test what sort of work each has done.... <sup>15</sup> If the work is burned, the builder will suffer loss; the builder will be saved, but only as through fire.*

### **Reflection:**

Fire can be the candle or electric light that we use to lighten our houses, or the lamp to lighten the road in front of us. Fire can be a comforting brother giving warmth. Fire can be playful, but in his strength he can be the forest fire or conflagration. All these are faces of Brother Fire. Fire can be beautiful but fire can also test us, purify like the refiner's fire – or clear the world for new growth.

### **Silence**

### **Prayer:**

Creator God, we thank you for the fire and energy which sets this world turning, which gives us comfort and also brings destruction and fear. Send us the fire of your Holy Spirit, the energy to be transformed, and the hope in new life to support us, through your Son, Jesus Christ. Amen.

## Station 8

**Praised be you, my Lord, through our Sister Mother Earth, who sustains and governs us,**

**and who produces various fruits with coloured flowers and herbs**

*Deuteronomy 8.7-10*

*<sup>7</sup> For the LORD your God is bringing you into a good land, a land with flowing streams, with springs and underground waters welling up in valleys and hills, <sup>8</sup> a land of wheat and barley, of vines and fig trees and pomegranates, a land of olive trees and honey, <sup>9</sup> a land where you may eat bread without scarcity, where you will lack nothing, a land whose stones are iron*

*and from whose hills you may mine copper. <sup>10</sup> You shall eat your fill and bless the LORD your God for the good land that he has given you.*

**Reflection:**

The Israelites travelled to a promised land of richness and variety. We can bless the Lord for the good land he has given us wherever we are. We may live in a place that is as rich and alive as that promised land, or we may live in a place where life is a struggle, for the green things, the animals and the people. If we can live in humility we can treat Earth as our Sister and Mother. We can be sister, brother, son or daughter, and not ruler or controller. We can share the gifts that come from the earth when they are plenteous, and give what we can to protect and nurture the earth when there is drought or natural disaster.

**Silence**

**Prayer:**

Blessed are you, God of this world, where Air, Water, Fire and Earth dance together in the infinitely fruitful creation. We thank you that we can know all creatures as our sisters and brothers. Help us to share all gifts, and to care for all creatures in the love the Holy Spirit gives us. Amen.

**Station 9**

**Praised be you, my Lord, through those who give pardon for Your love, and bear infirmity and tribulation.**

**Blessed are those who endure in peace**

**for by you, Most High, shall they be crowned.**

*Psalm 103. 1,3,12,13,17*

<sup>1</sup> *Bless the LORD, O my soul,  
and all that is within me,  
bless his holy name.*  
....

<sup>3</sup> *who forgives all your iniquity,  
who heals all your diseases,*  
.....

<sup>12</sup> *as far as the east is from the west,  
so far he removes our transgressions from us.*

<sup>13</sup> *As a father has compassion for his children,  
so the LORD has compassion for those who fear him.*

<sup>17</sup> *But the steadfast love of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting  
on those who fear him,  
and his righteousness to children's children.*

**Reflection:**

We pray every day that we might be forgiven as we forgive others. Forgiveness is a part of the working of Love which draws the Creation together. We know that we need God's forgiveness for our misguided loves and our desire to possess the riches of Creation rather than to share them. We know that God does forgive – but it can be a challenge for us to live in the world in humility.

**Silence**

**Prayer:**

Lord of all Life, we ask for the strength to live in this world in humility, love and joy. Help us to forgive ourselves, as well as others, for the desire to possess and exploit the riches of Creation. Fill us with love so that we can live in peace when the world turns away from love, in the love of Christ, Amen.

**Station 10**

**Praised be you, my Lord, through our Sister Bodily Death, from whom no one living can escape.**

**Woe to those who die in mortal sin.**

*Ecclesiasticus 41.1-4*

*O death, how bitter is the thought of you  
to one at peace among possessions,  
who has nothing to worry about and is prosperous in everything,  
and still is vigorous enough to enjoy food!*

<sup>2</sup> *O death, how welcome is your sentence  
to one who is needy and failing in strength,  
worn down by age and anxious about everything;  
to one who is contrary, and has lost all patience!*

<sup>3</sup> *Do not fear death's decree for you;  
remember those who went before you and those who will come after.*

<sup>4</sup> *This is the Lord's decree for all flesh;  
why then should you reject the will of the Most High?*

*Whether life lasts for ten years or a hundred or a thousand,  
there are no questions asked in Hades.*

**Reflection:**

There is nothing more inclusive than this Canticle. In Francis's world the Sun, Moon and Stars and the elements of Air, Fire, Earth and Water, represented everything that existed in Creation. Even death is our sister. This is the wonder of reality – that there is change for everything, there is both pain and joy. Everything that lives will also die, and this gives us a life, a story, a purpose. The true joy that Francis knew came from a clear knowledge of reality. Joy in Creation as it is leads to Joy in the Eternal God,

**Silence**

**Prayer:**

Lord God, we thank you for the life we have. We thank you that our lives share change, joy, pain, beauty and death with all living Creatures. Help us remember that we are part of Creation and to live with our Brothers and Sisters, even Sister Death, in love and humility. We ask this through Jesus Christ, Amen.

**Station 11**

**Blessed are those whom death will find in Your most holy will, for the second death shall do them no harm.**

*Psalm 25.4,5,10*

*Make me to know your ways, O LORD;  
teach me your paths.*

<sup>5</sup>*Lead me in your truth, and teach me,  
for you are the God of my salvation;  
for you I wait all day long.*

.....

<sup>10</sup>*All the paths of the LORD are steadfast love and faithfulness,  
for those who keep his covenant and his decrees.*

**Reflection:**

God “has found us out and known us” and yet we have the freedom to be the infinitely varied faces of Christ. We may take different paths, but these can all be God’s ways if we follow his truth, if we try to be Christ-like, as Francis did, in whatever way we can. This is God’s way, and His most holy will. As Bonaventure wrote: “As all things are produced through the Word eternally spoken, so all things are restored, advanced and completed through the Word united to flesh.\* ”

(*\* Bonaventure, The Tree of Life, Paulist Press, 1978*)

## **Silence**

### **Prayer:**

Lord, lead us in your truth in love and faithfulness, and forgive us the times when we are distracted by other ways or when we trip or fall through our own weakness. May we be “inwardly cleansed, interiorly enlightened, and inflamed by the power of the Holy Spirit” so that we may “be able to follow in the footprints of your beloved son\*” as Francis did in his life and death. In the name of Jesus Christ, Word made flesh, Amen.

(*\*St Francis: A Letter to the Entire Order.*)

## **Station 12**

**Praise and bless my Lord and give Him thanks**

**and serve Him with great humility.**

*Jude 24, 25*

*<sup>24</sup> Now to him who is able to keep you from falling, and to make you stand without blemish in the presence of his glory with rejoicing, <sup>25</sup> to the only God our Saviour, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, power, and authority, before all time and now and for ever. Amen.*

### **Reflection:**

“O admirable heights and sublime lowliness!

O sublime humility!

O humble sublimity!

That the Lord of the universe,

God and the Son of God,

So humbles Himself

That for our salvation  
He hides himself under the little form of bread!  
Look, brothers and sisters, at the humility of God  
And pour out your hearts before him.  
Therefore  
Hold back nothing of yourselves for yourselves  
So that  
He Who gives himself totally to you  
May receive you totally.”\*  
(\*St Francis: A Letter to the Entire Order.)

### ***Silence***

### **Prayer:**

Lord, in the miracle of humility we meet You, the Source of all Being, in “the little form of bread.” Strengthen our humility so that every time we are sent out from the altar we go to live and work and share, in humility, love and joy with our Sisters and Brothers in all Creation.  
In the name of God, the Source of all Being, Eternal Word and Holy Spirit, Amen!  
Alleluia! (In Easter season.)

ANDREW BAKER

Feast of St Chad 2018