

Dear Brothers and Sisters:

July 15th Feast of St. Bonaventure

For the last week, I have been traveling in the Canadian Rockies. As we drove through majestic mountains sculpted by glaciers, my heart was filled with gratitude to the Lord for this spectacular gift. The lakes and rivers are turquoise--as if they were filled with the most brilliant waters of the Caribbean. While walking to a summit at the tree line of a high mountain, we shared the path with towering pines and colorful wildflowers that can only flourish a few months of the year. These flowers have adapted so that they are able to "hibernate" when unrelenting snow storms blanket the summit each winter.

We were also reminded of how fragile this beauty is. Thousands of acres of Jasper National Park (and other Canadian national parks) are closed due to wildfires caused by recent drought conditions. As we were driving through endless pine forests, I prayed that God will protect the trees and the creatures who live there.

Pope Francis in Laudato Si has begged us to take care of the environment in the manner of our Seraphic Father:

"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."
(12 Laudato Si)

A trip like this one serves to remind us of the greatness of the Divine Artist and the marvels he has given us. St. Bonaventure, whose feast we celebrate as I write this, speaks of nature as the "vestiges" or footprints of the Lord.

"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. Saint Bonaventure teaches us that 'contemplation deepens the more we feel the working of God's grace within our hearts, and the better we learn to encounter God in creatures outside ourselves.'" (233 Laudato Si)

Let us look into our hearts with gratitude and great humility to be sure that we are caring properly for all the gifts of God's creation as we pray:

"Triune Lord, wondrous community of infinite love,
teach us to contemplate you
in the beauty of the universe,
for all things speak of you.
Awaken our praise and thankfulness
for every being that you have made.
Give us the grace to feel profoundly joined
to everything that is.

God of love, show us our place in this world as channels of your love for all the creatures of this earth, for not one of them is forgotten in your sight.

Enlighten those who possess power and money that they may avoid the sin of indifference, that they may love the common good, advance the weak, and care for this world in which we live."

(Portion of "A Christian prayer in union with creation" found at the end of Laudato Si)

May our Lord bless and keep each one of you,

Diane Menditto, OFS

http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si.html

This letter has also been submitted to the TAU National Newsletter.