

## Lenten Novena for Protectors of Mother Earth March 1-9, 2017

The Columban Center for Advocacy and Outreach and the Sisters of Mercy of the Americas' Institute Justice Team developed this novena to invite people of faith to join in solidarity with people, especially indigenous communities, who are courageously speaking out against the impacts of extractive industries. Too many of them have sacrificed their lives to protect water, land and sacred territory. Despite their experience of life-destroying and systemic oppression, they continue to bear witness to our world, claiming their fundamental rights, their essential and sacred dignity and their vision that we all share of water as a source of life.

Traditionally, Lent is a time of prayer, fasting and almsgiving. It is a journey of faith, preparing us for Holy Week and Easter. It lasts forty days, recalling Israel's forty years in the wilderness and Jesus' forty days in the desert. It is a time of conversion. Even more, it is a time to encounter God in those who are rendered poor, and to respond with justice, mercy and compassion. Lent awakens in us the grace of God, the Holy Spirit who sets our hearts and lives on fire and empowers us to be faithful witnesses.

These nine days begin with Ash Wednesday, and include the one-year anniversary of the murder of Honduran indigenous leader Berta Caceres, as well as International Women's Day. This time of prayer also leads into the Native Nations march in Washington, D.C. on March 10<sup>th</sup> organized by the Standing Rock Sioux, and an advocacy visit to Washington, D.C. of indigenous leaders from the Amazonian region of South America March 17-29. As we enter these nine days, we invite you to consider listening each day to some native flute music as background for your daily prayer and reflections. You may find some music [here](#) of R. Carlos Nakai, who is of Navajo-Ute heritage.



## Wednesday, March 1: Ash Wednesday – Lenten Novena

**Opening Prayer:** “Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful with justice and mercy, and kindle in us the fire of your love.”

**Our Father ...**

**Hail Mary ...**

**Glory Be ...**

### **Reading:**

Even now, says the LORD,  
return to me with your whole heart,  
with fasting, and weeping, and mourning;  
Rend your hearts, not your garments,  
and return to the LORD, your God.

- Joel 2:12-18

**Reflection:** “What kind of world do we want to leave to those who come after us, to children who are now growing up?” - *Laudato Si'* 160

As we start the season of Lent, we remember Pope Francis' challenge to us to keep in mind the needs of vulnerable communities and future generations, and to repent of the voracious greed for ever-expanding development that threatens their health, culture and territories. Indigenous people often take the lead in sounding the alarm, and the tearful words of native activist and environmentalist Casey Camp-Horenek on the [impacts of fracking](#) in her community in Oklahoma contain such a warning.

**Prayer:** “God of love, may we grow in our love for you, responding with justice and mercy to the cry of the poor and with reverence and care to the cry of the earth.”

### **Prayer for Our Earth:**

All powerful God, you are present in the  
whole universe  
And in the smallest of your creatures.  
You embrace with your tenderness all that  
exists.  
Pour out upon us the power of your love,  
That we may protect life and beauty.

Fill us with peace  
That we may live  
As brothers and sisters, harming no one.  
O God of the poor,  
Help us to rescue the abandoned and  
forgotten of this earth,  
So precious in your eyes.  
Bring healing to our lives,

That we may protect the world and not prey  
on it,

That we may sow beauty, not pollution and  
destruction.

Touch the hearts

Of those who look only for gain

At the expense of the poor and the earth.

Teach us to discover the worth of each thing,

To be filled with awe and contemplation,

To recognize that we are profoundly united

With every creature

As we journey towards your infinite light.

We thank you for being with us each day.

Encourage us, we pray, in our struggle

For justice, love and peace.

- *Concluding prayer of Laudato Si*

## Thursday, March 2 – Berta Cáceres: A Laudato Si’ Martyr



**Opening Prayer:** “Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful with justice and mercy, and kindle in us the fire of your love.”

**Our Father ...**

**Hail Mary ...**

**Glory Be ...**

### **Reading:**

I call heaven and earth today to witness against you:  
I have set before you, life and death,  
the blessing and the curse.  
Choose life, then,  
that you and your descendants may live.

- Deuteronomy 30:15-30

**Reflection:** “Sister Earth, along with all the abandoned of our world, is crying out, pleading that we take another course.” – *Laudato Si’* 53

Today we mark the one-year anniversary of the murder of [Berta Cáceres](#), a leader of the Lenca people in Honduras and a human rights defender who won the prestigious Goldman Environmental Prize. She is among more than 120 people who have been [killed in Honduras](#) since 2010 for taking a

stand against dams, mines, logging or agriculture on their land –murdered by state forces, security guards or hired assassins. Countless others have been threatened, attacked or imprisoned.

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- *Concluding prayer of Laudato Si*

## Friday, March 3 – Standing Rock and the Cry of Indigenous Peoples

**Opening Prayer:** “Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful with justice and mercy, and kindle in us the fire of your love.”

**Our Father ...**

**Hail Mary ...**

**Glory Be ...**

### **Reading:**

Is this not the fast I choose?  
Releasing those bound unjustly,  
untying the thongs of the yoke;  
Setting free the oppressed,  
breaking every yoke;  
Sharing your bread with the hungry,  
sheltering the oppressed and the homeless;  
Clothing the naked when you see them,  
and not turning your back on your own.

- Isaiah 58:1-9

**Reflection:** “Today, we have to realize that a true ecological approach always becomes a social approach; it must integrate questions of justice in debates on the environment, so as to hear both the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor.” – *Laudato Si'* 49

The Standing Rock Sioux and their allies, collectively known as the water protectors, were praying for months to change the minds and hearts of policymakers determined to build the [Dakota Access Pipeline](#) near the tribe's lands. Their pleas at the construction site against both the desecration of their land and the potential risk to the water supply for millions of people were greeted with violent repression by a militarized police force. While construction was temporarily halted in late 2016, a decision by the Trump administration has again given the project the green light. We join our prayers with the Standing Rock Sioux and other indigenous people who are experiencing yet another in a series of injustices over the past hundreds of years.

**Prayer:** “God of love, may we grow in our love for you, responding with justice and mercy to the cry of the poor and with reverence and care to the cry of the earth.”

### **Prayer for Our Earth:**

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To be filled with awe and contemplation,  
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- *Concluding prayer of Laudato Si*



## Saturday, March 4 – Standing Rock and the Cry of the Earth

**Opening Prayer:** “Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful with justice and mercy, and kindle in us the fire of your love.”

**Our Father ...**

**Hail Mary ...**

**Glory Be ...**

### **Reading:**

Then the LORD will guide you always  
and give you plenty even on the parched land.  
He will renew your strength,  
and you shall be like a watered garden,  
like a spring whose water never fails.  
The ancient ruins shall be rebuilt for your sake,  
and the foundations from ages past you shall raise up;  
"Repairer of the breach," they shall call you,  
"Restorer of ruined homesteads."

- Isaiah 58:9-14

**Reflection:** “Everything is related, and we human beings are united as brothers and sisters on a wonderful pilgrimage, woven together by the love God has for each of his creatures and which also unites us in fond affection with Brother Sun, Sister Moon, Brother River, and Mother Earth.”  
– *Laudato Si'* 92

The water protectors have caught the global imagination, with indigenous people and their allies traveling to North Dakota from around the world to join the Standing Rock in prayer for tribal rights and for creation. We join in song as [“the whole world is watching.”](#)

**Prayer:** “God of love, may we grow in our love for you, responding with justice and mercy to the cry of the poor and with reverence and care to the cry of the earth.”

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**Sunday, March 5 – Call to Repentance:**

**For Our Sins against the Earth & against Indigenous Peoples**



**Opening Prayer:** “Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful with justice and mercy, and kindle in us the fire of your love.”

**Our Father ...**

**Hail Mary ...**

**Glory Be ...**

**Reading:**

Have mercy on me, O God, in your goodness;  
in the greatness of your compassion wipe out  
my offense.

Thoroughly wash me from my guilt  
and of my sin cleanse me.

For I acknowledge my offense,  
and my sin is before me always:

"Against you only have I sinned,  
and done what is evil in your sight."

**R. Be merciful, O Lord, for we have  
sinned.**

A clean heart create for me, O God,

and a steadfast spirit renew within me.

Cast me not out from your presence,

and your Holy Spirit take not from me.

Give me back the joy of your salvation,  
and a willing spirit sustain in me.

O Lord, open my lips,

and my mouth shall proclaim your praise.

**R. Be merciful, O Lord, for we have  
sinned.**

- Psalm 51

**Reflection:** “The fact is that contemporary man has not been trained to use power well, because our immense technological development has not been accompanied by development in human responsibility, values and conscience.” *Laudato Si’* 105

The Internet, social media and a fast-paced modern lifestyle too often cause relationships – among people, with Earth and with God – to suffer. We repent of our neglect of our neighbors, of communities most impacted by extractive industries and of all of creation. Mercy Sister Edia Lopez, who ministers with the Ngäbe people of Panama protesting a hydro-electric dam that threatens to flood their cultural heritage, [calls us to change the nature of our relationships](#) in order to achieve a new type of development that benefits people and Earth.

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## Monday, March 6 – What Have We Done to Our Native Sisters and Brothers? What Have We Done to the Earth?

**Opening Prayer:** “Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful with justice and mercy, and kindle in us the fire of your love.”

**Our Father ...**

**Hail Mary ...**

**Glory Be ...**

### **Reading:**

“For I was hungry and you gave me food,  
I was thirsty and you gave me drink,  
a stranger and you welcomed me,  
naked and you clothed me,  
ill and you cared for me,  
in prison and you visited me.”  
Then the righteous will answer him and say,  
“Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you,  
or thirsty and give you drink?  
When did we see you a stranger and welcome you,  
or naked and clothe you?  
When did we see you ill or in prison, and visit you?”  
And the king will say to them in reply,  
“Amen, I say to you, whatever you did  
for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me.”

- Matthew 25: 42-46

**Reflection:** “What kind of world do we want to leave to those who come after us, to children who are now growing up? ... We need to see that what is at stake is our own dignity. Leaving an inhabitable planet to future generations is, first and foremost, up to us. The issue is one which dramatically affects us, for it has to do with the ultimate meaning of our earthly sojourn.” – *Laudato Si'* 160

[Residents of Flint, Michigan](#), have been dealing not only with contaminated water but with the psychological ramifications of knowing that authorities ignored a massive public health hazard for far too long. We pray with our native sisters and brothers that we heed this warning, hold our elected officials to greater account and take actions on our own when necessary to protect our land, water and communities.

**Prayer:** “God of love, may we grow in our love for you, responding with justice and mercy to the cry of the poor and with reverence and care to the cry of the earth.”

**Prayer for Our Earth:**

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## Tuesday, March 7 – We Are Called to Be Fertile, Fruitful and Faithful

**Opening Prayer:** “Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful with justice and mercy, and kindle in us the fire of your love.”

**Our Father ...**

**Hail Mary ...**

**Glory Be ...**

### **Reading:**

Thus says the LORD:  
Just as from the heavens  
the rain and snow come down  
And do not return there  
till they have watered the earth,  
making it fertile and fruitful,  
Giving seed to the one who sows  
and bread to the one who eats,  
So shall my word be  
that goes forth from my mouth;  
It shall not return to me void,  
but shall do my will,  
achieving the end for which I sent it.

- Isaiah 55:10-11

**Reflection:** “In calling to mind the figure of St. Francis of Assisi, we come to realize that a healthy relationship with Creation is one dimension of overall personal conversion, which entails the recognition of our errors, sins, faults and failures, and leads to heartfelt repentance and desire for change.” – *Laudato Si'* 218

Indigenous peoples around the world call us to [stand in solidarity with them](#) and with Earth out of love, not anger or hate. Will we hear their challenge to us to break our addiction to fossil fuels that is based on oppression of so many communities?

**Prayer:** “God of love, may we grow in our love for you, responding with justice and mercy to the cry of the poor and with reverence and care to the cry of the earth.”

**Prayer for Our Earth:**

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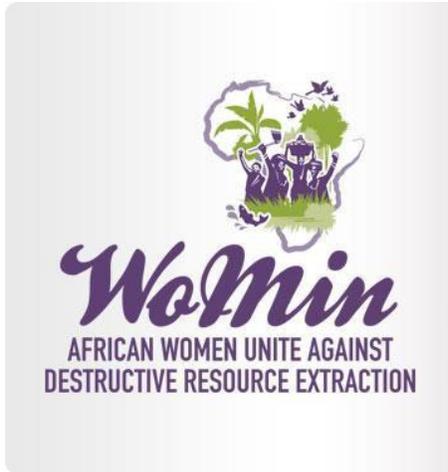
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- *Concluding prayer of Laudato Si*

**Wednesday, March 8 – International Women’s Day  
A Call to Wisdom, Compassion and Interdependence**



**Opening Prayer:** “Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful with justice and mercy, and kindle in us the fire of your love.”

**Our Father ...**

**Hail Mary ...**

**Glory Be ...**

**Reading:**

Jonah began his journey through the city,  
and had gone but a single day's walk announcing,  
"Forty days more and Nineveh shall be destroyed,"  
when the people of Nineveh believed God;  
they proclaimed a fast  
and all of them, great and small, put on sackcloth.  
When the news reached the king of Nineveh,  
he rose from his throne, laid aside his robe,  
covered himself with sackcloth, and sat in the ashes.

- Jonah 3:1-10

**Reflection:** “Interdependence obliges us to think of one world with a common plan ... A global consensus is essential for confronting the deeper problems, which cannot be resolved by unilateral actions on the part of individual countries.” – *Laudato Si'* 164

[Women in Africa](#) are courageously speaking out about their particular concerns in areas scarred by mining and are pointing the way to a future of smaller-scale extraction of natural resources that benefits local communities and minimizes impact on Earth. We pray that their voices be heard in discussions of implementing global goals for sustainable development.

**Prayer:** “God of love, may we grow in our love for you, responding with justice and mercy to the cry of the poor and with reverence and care to the cry of the earth.”

**Prayer for Our Earth:**

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- *Concluding prayer of Laudato Si*

## Thursday, March 9 - A Call to Solidarity with Native Peoples and the Earth

**Opening Prayer:** “Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful with justice and mercy, and kindle in us the fire of your love.”

**Our Father ...**

**Hail Mary ...**

**Glory Be ...**

### **Reading:**

Jesus said to his disciples:

"Ask and it will be given to you;

seek and you will find;

knock and the door will be opened to you.

For everyone who asks, receives; and the one who seeks, finds;

and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened.

- Matthew 7:7-12

**Reflection:** “A sense of deep communion with the rest of nature cannot be real if our hearts lack tenderness, compassion and concern for our fellow human beings.” – *Laudato Si’* 91

The Standing Rock Sioux, other indigenous people and their allies are now gathering in Washington, D.C. to speak with policy makers about their sacred duty to protect the water, the land, all of creation. We are invited to join them in [“standing up like a mountain”](#) with our own prayers, advocacy and public witness.

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As we conclude this novena, we invite you to continue to pray with and advocate with communities impacted by extractive industries. You may learn more about some of these communities, the impacts of extractive and fossil fuel industries and indigenous people's rights here:

Churches and Mining Network in Central and South America

<https://www.ncronline.org/blogs/eco-catholic/latin-american-coalition-mining-causing-damage-not-delivering-benefits>

<http://www.cidse.org/articles/business-and-human-rights/extractive-industries-in-latin-america/churches-and-mining-network-calls-for-building-alternatives-to-extractivism.html>

Church Network in the Amazon Region (REPAM):

<http://redamazonica.org/en/>

Human Rights Abuses in Extractive Industries:

<https://www.globalwitness.org/en/>

<http://earthjustice.org>

Exposing the True Costs of Fossil Fuels:

<http://priceofoil.org/about/>

Advancing the Rights of Indigenous Communities:

<https://www.culturalsurvival.org>

<http://www.iencarth.org/>