

WORSHIP RESOURCES FOR GULF OF MEXICO OIL SPILL

God's Solemn Reproaches for Our Carelessness of Creation

This prayer is based on the solemn reproaches of Good Friday. You may wish to find photos to project to go along with the prayers images to highlight the goodness of God's creation and our misuse of our stewardship of creation.

O my people, O my world,
What have I done to you,
or in what have I offended you?
Answer me, your Creator.
I spoke and my Spirit moved across the deep
Out of the chaos I called forth waters
That I pooled into oceans
Out of which I fashioned dry land.
But you have taken my creation for granted
And squandered my gift of goodness.
Lord, have mercy.

Under a gleaming dome of protection
I created a beautiful home for you
Teeming with flowers and vines and trees.
I set you in a lush garden to tend
With all you need to sustain life
But you have cut down rainforests
And polluted the earth with your waste
While toxic emissions pierce ozone protection.
Christ, have mercy.

I gave you majestic mountains
And golden sweeping plains,
Rivers sparkling across the land,
Minerals gleaming in glorious rocks.
And gas and oil oozing beneath it all.
But you rape the earth,
Overfarm the land,
And take more than your share of resources.
Lord, have mercy.

Into your keeping
I gave animals for earthly companions—
Giraffes lumbering across savannahs,
And lemurs leaping through trees,
Cattle lowing across fields of dusk,
Frogs singing in the night,
And dogs curled up with you on the couch.

But you decimate your fellow creatures
With domination that destroys.
Christ, have mercy.

I surrounded you with life-giving oceans
Filled with sea urchins, communities of coral,
And fish of every color.
Pelicans skim the waves
And sandpipers run from the tides
As dolphins dance in the light
Off shores of sugar sands.
But you are careless stewards
Whose oil spills disaster
To my way of life for all.
Lord, have mercy.

O my people, O my world,
What have I done to you,
or in what have I offended you?
Answer me, your Creator.
I made you the crown of creation
To care for all that I have made.
But look! just look at what your hands have wrought,
And what your silence has bought.
Lord, have mercy.
Christ, have mercy.
Lord, have mercy.

Teresa Lockhart Stricklen

God of Compassion,
You have moved those with a passion for your creation
To help clean up the mess we have made of things in the Gulf.
Empower us anew to minister to creation in your name.

Protect the fragility of your good earth
From our sin,
That populations of fish, shrimp, oysters, birds,
And sea creatures no one thinks about
May recover from this catastrophe.
Lord, in your mercy,
Hear our prayer.

Give your wisdom to those working
To contain the gushing oil
And to those instituting policies
To avoid all oil spills in the future.

Lord, in your mercy,
Hear our prayer.

Provide for those who will be hurt economically
By this ecological disaster,
Both immediately and long-term.
Help all affected by this tragedy
With hope in your Spirit
Who even now moves over the face of the deep
With words, ideas, and activities of re-creation.
Lord, in your mercy,
Hear our prayer.

Protect your people, O Lord,
From the toxicity of sin—
From the cancerous chemicals,
From those taking advantage of volunteers' goodness,
And from those wanting to escape responsibility
For others' welfare.
Lord, in your mercy,
Hear our prayer.

Convict and redeem those responsible for this disaster,
Including us, so dependent upon oil,
That generations to come may look upon the works of your hands
And sing your praise,
Joining their voices with all the saints
And all of creation—
The winds and the waves,
Cypress and oleander,
Sea gulls, pelicans, dolphins, turtles, and hermit crabs--
All singing to your glory shining through creation's beauty
Until such time as all of creation becomes redeemed and restored
Through Christ, who made all things. Amen.

Teresa Lockhart Stricklen

Prayers specifically for this oil spill: www.oilspillprayer.com

Other Prayers:

Great Spirit,
Give us hearts to understand;
Never to take
From creation's beauty more than we give,
Never to destroy wantonly for the furtherance of greed;
Never to deny to give our hands for the building of earth's beauty;

Never to take from her what we cannot use.
Give us hearts to understand that to destroy earth's music is to create confusion;
That to wreck her appearance is to blind us to beauty;
That to callously pollute her fragrance is to make a house of stench;
That as we care for her she will care for us. Amen.

--U.N. Environmental Sabbath Program

Hear our humble prayer, O God, for our friends the animals, especially for animals who are suffering; for any that are hunted or lost, or deserted or frightened or hungry; for all that must be put to death. We entreat for them all thy mercy and pity, and for those who deal with them, we ask a heart of compassion and gentle hands and kindly words. Make us, ourselves, to be true friends to animals and so to share the blessings of the merciful.

--Albert Schweitzer

Links to others' environmental liturgies:

<http://presbyterian.typepad.com/ecojourney/2010/05/oil-spill-prayers-and-resource.html>

<http://jmm.aaa.net.au/articles/1343.htm>

<http://www.stpeterschurch.uk.com/OurChurch/GreeningtheChurch/Anintercessionaryprayer/tabid/126/language/en-GB/Default.aspx>

<http://magdelene.wordpress.com/category/environmental/>

<http://www.educationforjustice.org/node/2860>

Some Scriptures Regarding Creation

[Genesis 1 and 2](#)

[Geneiss 9:9-10](#)

[Leviticus 25:18-19, 23](#)

[Deuteronomy 10:14](#)

[Joshua 2:11b](#)

[Nehemiah 9:6](#)

[Job 38-41](#)

[Psalm 19:1-4](#)

[Psalm 24:1](#)

[Psalm 98:7-9](#)

[Psalm 104:24-25](#)

[Isaiah 35:1-2,6](#)

[Isaiah 40:12, 26](#)

[Isaiah 43:20](#)

[Hosea 4:1-3](#)

[John 1:3](#)

[Colossians 1:15-16, 19-20](#)

[Revelation 4:11](#)

[Revelation 11:18](#)

Hymns related to creation in the *Presbyterian Hymnal* that may be helpful:

Creating God Your Fingers Trace 134
This is My Father's World 293
All Things Bright and Beautiful 267
God of the Sparrow 272
O God the Creator 273
Many and Great, O God Are Thy Things 271
Out of Deep, Unordered Water 494
O That I Had a Thousand Voices 475
We Know that Christ is Raised 495

A new hymn by Carolyn Gillette:

O God, the Great, Wide Seas are Yours

MELITA 8.8.8.8.8 (“Eternal Father, Strong to Save”)

O God, the great, wide seas are yours!
You carved the oceans' rugged floors.
You set the waters in their place
And made all sea life by your grace.
You also made humanity

To care for earth and sky and sea.

Forgive us when we disobey
And fail to care for what you've made.
Consuming more than what we should,
We harm the waters you call good.
Forgive us when we fail to be
Good stewards of your wondrous sea.

We pray for those who seek to care
For troubled waters everywhere—
For those who work to stop the spill
Of all that would destroy and kill,
For those who work with loving hands
To tend your marshes, shores and sands.

God, may we hear your call anew
To care for all these gifts from you.
May we protect the sea and shore
By using less, conserving more,
And humbly learning how to live
As stewards of this world you give.

Biblical references: Genesis 1-2:4

Tune: John B. Dykes, in Hymns Ancient and Modern, 1861.

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Hymn Background: The hymn-prayer was written in response to the ongoing oil spill from the Deepwater Horizon offshore drilling rig that started on April 20th. Churches are also using other creation hymns by Carolyn Winfrey Gillette, including her popular "[The Earth is the Lord's](#)." The first five hymns in her Songs of Grace: New Hymns for God and Neighbor (Upper Room Books, 2010) have creation themes. Carolyn Winfrey Gillette is co-author of "[A Journey to a Green Church](#)." A complete list of her 160 hymns can be found at: www.carolynshymns.com

Poetry in the Public Domain Related to God's Environment:

God's World

By Edna St. Vincent Millay

Thy mists that roll and rise!
Thy woods, this autumn day, that ache and sag
And all but cry with colour! That gaunt crag
To crush! To lift the lean of that black bluff!
World, World, I cannot get thee close enough!

Long have I known a glory in it all,
But never knew I this;
Here such a passion is
As stretcheth me apart. Lord, I do fear
Thou'st made the world too beautiful this year.
My soul is all but out of me,—let fall
No burning leaf; prithee, let no bird call.

The Sea and the Skylark

By Gerard Manley Hopkins

On ear and ear two noises too old to end
Trench - right, the tide that ramps against the shore;
With a flood or a fall, low lull-off or all roar,
Frequenting there while moon shall wear and wend.

Left hand, off land, I hear the lark ascend,
His rash-fresh re-winded new-skeinèd score
In crisps of curl off wild winch whirl, and pour
And pelt music, till none's to spill nor spend.

How these two shame this shallow and frail town!
How ring right out our sordid turbid time,
Being pure! We, life's pride and cared-for crown,

Have lost that cheer and charm of earth's past prime:
Our make and making break, are breaking, down
To man's last dust, drain fast towards man's first slime.

Pied Beauty

By Gerard Manley Hopkins

Glory be to God for dappled things -
For skies of couple-colour as a brindèd cow;

For rose-moles all in stipple upon trout that swim:
Fresh-firecoal chestnut-falls; finches' wings;
Landscape plotted and pieced - fold, fallow, and plough;
And àll trâdes, their gear and tackle and trim.

All things counter, original, spare, strange;
Whatever is fickle, freckled (who knows how?)
With swift, slow; sweet, sour; adazzle, dim;
He fathers-forth whose beauty is past change:
Praise him.

God's Grandeur

By Gerard Manley Hopkins

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.

The Windhover: To Christ our Lord

By Gerard Manley Hopkins

I caught this morning morning's minion, kingdom of daylight's dauphin,
dapple-dawn-drawn Fal-con, in his riding
Of the rolling level underneath him steady air, and striding
High there, how he rung upon the rein of a wimpling wing
In his ecstasy! then off, off forth on swing,
As a skate's heel sweeps smooth on a bow-bend: the hurl and gliding
Rebuffed the big wind. My heart in hiding
Stirred for a bird, - the achieve of, the mastery of the thing!

Brute beauty and valour and act, oh, air, pride, plume, here
Buckle! AND the fire that breaks from thee then, a billion
Times told lovelier, more dangerous, O my chevalier!

No wonder of it: shéer plód makes plough down sillion
Shine, and blue-bleak embers, ah my dear,
Fall, gall themselves, and gash gold-vermillion.

A Forest Hymn

by William Cullen Bryant

The groves were God's first temples. Ere man learned
To hew the shaft, and lay the architrave,
And spread the roof above them, ere he framed
The lofty vault, to gather and roll back
The sound of anthems; in the darkling wood,
Amidst the cool and silence, he knelt down,
And offered to the Mightiest solemn thanks
And supplication. For his simple heart
Might not resist the sacred influences
Which, from the stilly twilight of the place,
And from the gray old trunks that high in heaven
Mingled their mossy boughs, and from the sound
Of the invisible breath that swayed at once
All their green tops, stole over him, and bowed
His spirit with the thought of boundless power
And inaccessible majesty. Ah, why
Should we, in the world's riper years, neglect
God's ancient sanctuaries, and adore
Only among the crowd, and under roofs
That our frail hands have raised? Let me, at least,
Here, in the shadow of this aged wood,
Offer one hymn, thrice happy, if it find
Acceptance in His ear.

Father, thy hand
Hath reared these venerable columns, thou
Didst weave this verdant roof. Thou didst look down
Upon the naked earth, and, forthwith, rose
All these fair ranks of trees. They, in thy sun,

Budded, and shook their green leaves in thy breeze,
And shot towards heaven. The century-living crow,
Whose birth was in their tops, grew old and died
Among their branches, till, at last, they stood,
As now they stand, massy, and tall, and dark,
Fit shrine for humble worshipper to hold
Communion with his Maker. These dim vaults,
These winding aisles, of human pomp or pride
Report not. No fantasting carvings show
The boast of our vain race to change the form
Of thy fair works. But thou art here, thou fill'st
The solitude. Thou art in the soft winds
That run along the summit of these trees
In music; thou art in the cooler breath
That from the inmost darkness of the place
Comes, scarcely felt; the barky trunks, the ground,
The fresh moist ground, are all instinct with thee.
Here is continual worship; nature, here,
In the tranquillity that thou dost love,
Enjoys thy presence. Noiselessly, around,
From perch to perch, the solitary bird
Passes: and yon clear spring, that, midst its herbs,
Wells softly forth and visits the strong roots
Of half the mighty forest, tells no tale
Of all the good it does. Thou hast not left
Thyself without a witness, in these shades,
Of thy perfections. Grandeur, strength, and grace
Are here to speak of thee. This mighty oak,
By whose immovable stem I stand and seem
Almost annihilated, not a prince,
In all that proud old world beyond the deep,
Ere wore his crown as loftily as he
Wears the green coronal of leaves with which
Thy hand has graced him. Nestled at his root
Is beauty, such as blooms not in the glare
Of the broad sun. That delicate forest flower
With scented breath, and look so like a smile,
Seems, as it issues from the shapeless mould,
An emanation of the indwelling Life,
A visible token of the upholding Love,
That are the soul of this wide universe.

My heart is awed within me when I think
Of the great miracle that still goes on,
In silence, round me, the perpetual work
Of thy creation, finished, yet renewed
For ever. Written on thy works I read
The lesson of thy own eternity.
Lo! all grow old and die, but see again,
How on the faltering footsteps of decay
Youth presses, ever gay and beautiful youth
In all its beautiful forms. These lofty trees
Wave not less proudly that their ancestors
Moulder beneath them. Oh, there is not lost
One of earth's charms: upon her bosom yet,
After the flight of untold centuries,
The freshness of her far beginning lies
And yet shall lie. Life mocks the idle hate
Of his arch enemy Death, yea, seats himself
Upon the tyrant's throne, the sepulchre,
And of the triumphs of his ghastly foe
Makes his own nourishment. For he came forth
From thine own bosom, and shall have no end.

There have been holy men who hid themselves
Deep in the woody wilderness, and gave
Their lives to thought and prayer, till they outlived
The generation born with them, nor seemed
Less aged than the hoary trees and rocks
Around them; and there have been holy men
Who deemed it were not well to pass life thus.
But let me often to these solitudes
Retire, and in thy presence reassure
My feeble virtue. Here its enemies,
The passions, at thy plainer footsteps shrink
And tremble and are still. Oh, God! when thou
Dost scare the world with tempests, set on fire
The heavens with falling thunderbolts, or fill,
With all the waters of the firmament,
The swift dark whirlwind that uproots the woods
And drowns the villages; when, at thy call,
Uprises the great deep and throws himself
Upon the continent, and overwhelms
Its cities, who forgets not, at the sight

Of these tremendous tokens of thy power,
His pride, and lays his strifes and follies by?
Oh, from these sterner aspects of thy face
Spare me and mine, nor let us need the wrath
Of the mad unchained elements to teach
Who rules them. Be it ours to meditate
In these calm shades thy milder majesty,
And to the beautiful order of thy works
Learn to conform the order of our lives.

A Hymn Of The Sea.

By William Cullen Bryant

The sea is mighty, but a mightier sways
His restless billows. Thou, whose hands have scooped
His boundless gulfs and built his shore, thy breath,
That moved in the beginning o'er his face,
Moves o'er it evermore. The obedient waves
To its strong motion roll, and rise and fall.
Still from that realm of rain thy cloud goes up,
As at the first, to water the great earth,
And keep her valleys green. A hundred realms
Watch its broad shadow warping on the wind,
And in the dropping shower, with gladness hear
Thy promise of the harvest. I look forth
Over the boundless blue, where joyously
The bright crests of innumerable waves
Glance to the sun at once, as when the hands
Of a great multitude are upward flung
In acclamation. I behold the ships
Gliding from cape to cape, from isle to isle,
Or stemming toward far lands, or hastening home
From the old world. It is thy friendly breeze
That bears them, with the riches of the land,
And treasure of dear lives, till, in the port,
The shouting seaman climbs and furls the sail.

But who shall bide thy tempest, who shall face
The blast that wakes the fury of the sea?
Oh God! thy justice makes the world turn pale,
When on the armed fleet, that royally

Bears down the surges, carrying war, to smite
Some city, or invade some thoughtless realm,
Descends the fierce tornado. The vast hulks
Are whirled like chaff upon the waves; the sails
Fly, rent like webs of gossamer; the masts
Are snapped asunder; downward from the decks,
Downward are slung, into the fathomless gulf,
Their cruel engines; and their hosts, arrayed
In trappings of the battle-field, are whelmed
By whirlpools, or dashed dead upon the rocks.
Then stand the nations still with awe, and pause,
A moment, from the bloody work of war.

These restless surges eat away the shores
Of earth's old continents; the fertile plain
Welters in shallows, headlands crumble down,
And the tide drifts the sea-sand in the streets
Of the drowned city. Thou, meanwhile, afar
In the green chambers of the middle sea,
Where broadest spread the waters and the line
Sinks deepest, while no eye beholds thy work,
Creator! thou dost teach the coral worm
To lay his mighty reefs. From age to age,
He builds beneath the waters, till, at last,
His bulwarks overtop the brine, and check
The long wave rolling from the southern pole
To break upon Japan. Thou bid'st the fires,
That smoulder under ocean, heave on high
The new-made mountains, and uplift their peaks,
A place of refuge for the storm-driven bird.
The birds and wafting billows plant the rifts
With herb and tree; sweet fountains gush; sweet airs
Ripple the living lakes that, fringed with flowers,
Are gathered in the hollows. Thou dost look
On thy creation and pronounce it good.
Its valleys, glorious with their summer green,
Praise thee in silent beauty, and its woods,
Swept by the murmuring winds of ocean, join
The murmuring shores in a perpetual hymn.

Midsummer. - A Sonnet.

By William Cullen Bryant

A power is on the earth and in the air,
From which the vital spirit shrinks afraid,
And shelters him, in nooks of deepest shade,
From the hot steam and from the fiery glare.
Look forth upon the earth, her thousand plants
Are smitten; even the dark sun-loving maize
Faints in the field beneath the torrid blaze;
The herd beside the shaded fountain pants;
For life is driven from all the landscape brown;
The bird has sought his tree, the snake his den,
The trout floats dead in the hot stream, and men
Drop by the sun-stroke in the populous town:
As if the Day of Fire had dawned, and sent
Its deadly breath into the firmament.

To A Waterfowl

By William Cullen Bryant

Whither, midst falling dew,
While glow the heavens with the last steps of day,
Far, through their rosy depths, dost thou pursue
Thy solitary way?

Vainly the fowler's eye
Might mark thy distant flight to do thee wrong,
As, darkly painted on the crimson sky,
Thy figure floats along.

Seek'st thou the plashy brink
Of weedy lake, or marge of river wide,
Or where the rocking billows rise and sink
On the chafed ocean side?

There is a Power whose care
Teaches thy way along that pathless coast,
The desert and illimitable air,

Lone wandering, but not lost.

All day thy wings have fanned,
At that far height, the cold, thin atmosphere,
Yet stoop not, weary, to the welcome land,
Though the dark night is near.

And soon that toil shall end;
Soon shalt thou find a summer home, and rest,
And scream among thy fellows; reeds shall bend,
Soon, o'er thy sheltered nest.

Thou'rt gone, the abyss of heaven
Hath swallowed up thy form; yet, on my heart
Deeply hath sunk the lesson thou hast given,
And shall not soon depart.

He who, from zone to zone,
Guides through the boundless sky thy certain flight,
In the long way that I must tread alone,
Will lead my steps aright.

Wendell Berry is a contemporary poet whose poetry sings praise for creation and critique for those who do not take it into consideration. See especially [“The Peace of Wild Things”](#) and “A Timbered Choir” in his book *A Timbered Choir*.