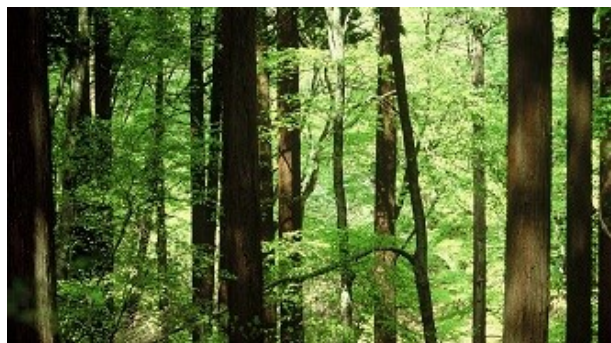


Ecospiritual walk in nature
Inspired by The Work that reconnects (Joanna Macy)
And Laudato Si' Letter (Pope Francis)



Offered by Christine Kristof and ONG [AnimaTerra](#)

This sensitive and contemplative walk in nature is based on excerpts from Laudato Si' (from Pope Francis) and the dynamics of "Work that reconnects", a global approach and a methodology of transformation developed by Joanna Macy (philosopher and ecopsychologist) to accompany us in a reconciliation with the Earth and the Living.

The proposed route follows a natural **spiral in four stages**:

- 1- Grounding ourselves in gratitude for life and developing our sense of wonder,
- 2- Recognize and honor our pain for the world and experience our interdependence with it.
- 3- Change vision and look at the world with new eyes,
- 4- Regain our power to act and engage in right action.

This journey allows us to experience our connection of interdependence with the world, being in wonder and compassion state of mind, and to contact the precious resources inside ourselves to set us in motion. This walk solicits all the dimensions of our being connected to Nature and to God. It can be a powerful lever for reconnection, conversion and action towards **a world that chooses to support life rather than destroy it**. **Allow an hour and a half (at least) to experience this workshop*

Grounding oneself in gratitude for life

Greeting and Consecrating — At the edge of the natural space where we wish to take our walk (whether forest, garden, park, seaside, or riverbank), let us take **a moment to pause** and focus our attention on this **"threshold" between "ordinary" space and "consecrated" space**. We may also — if we feel so moved — **greet the "inhabitants" of the place** (trees, plants, animals, and visible or invisible elements alike) by introducing ourselves, explaining the reason for our presence, and sharing our intention for the moment before going further.

"God has written a beautiful book "whose letters are represented by the multitude of creatures present in the universe"... "From the widest panoramic views to the tiniest form of life, nature is a constant source of wonder and awe. It is, moreover, a continuous revelation of the divine" - LS §85

We choose to embrace a silence conducive to listening and contemplation. In this state of availability and respect, we can open ourselves to the diversity and beauty of our surroundings.

Mindful meditation: Being in a circle with our eyes closed, we tune in to our breathing — inhaling, exhaling... We become aware that **we share this breath with the trees**, the plants, and all living beings on our planet. **Our breathing marks our interdependence with all the inhabitants** of our Common Home. In this state of openness, **we can listen to the birds**, the sounds, and everything vibrating around us, from the most distant to the nearest. **We feel the relaxation** spreading through our bodies.

Contemplative walk – Then, we go on walking. As we move through the natural setting — exploring it “tip-toe” gently, — we can take the time to **gaze on each element** we encounter **for at least ten seconds** (or longer). We can then go deeper by **contemplating the details** of a flower, a tree, a leaf, or an insect — as if our eye were **a microscope** (taking in, for instance, its unique color, shape, texture, or scent)— and let ourselves be inspired by this quote: *"When we become aware of the reflection of God in all that exists, the heart experiences the desire to worship the Lord for all his creatures"* LS 87).

We can also **begin to touch** the element gently with our hand, caressing it... feeling its contours, its rough textures, its density, and its warmth... *"The entire material universe speaks of God's love, of his boundless affection for us. Soil, water, mountains: everything is, as it were, a caress of God"* (§84).

→ This step allows us **to relax our mind, to enter a dimension of listening and receptivity** conducive to the outpouring of gratitude for life, to wonder for so much beauty and the understanding that everything is a precious gift from God, as Pope Francis says : *"Creation can only be understood as a gift that arises from the open hand of the Father of all..."* §76

Recognize our interdependence and honor our pain for the world

In a finer awareness of our perceptions, we are better able to welcome what comes, and enter into **empathic resonance with the Living around us, but also within us**.

SIT SPOT – Then, in that same spirit of openness, we can let ourselves be drawn to a **particular place** —a clearing, a carpet of moss, a tree stump, a hilltop — and choose to sit there for a few minutes of quiet reflection. In this space, we can imagine that we are not alone —not only with the people who accompanied us on the walk, of course, but also with the presences that we can only see with the heart; we might even sense the presence of Christ beside us, sitting on a stump or a tree trunk. We can open ourselves to **God's signs and "words" in nature** — the sounds, movements, and scents that come to us— and feel ourselves to be part of this great family.

Created by the same Father, we and all beings in the universe are united by invisible bonds, and form a kind of universal family, a sublime communion that drives us to a sacred, tender and humble respect... Everything is linked, and, as human beings, we are all united as brothers and sisters in a wonderful pilgrimage, intertwined by the love that God has for each of his creatures and which also unites us, with tender affection, to brother sun, sister moon, sister river and mother earth". LS §89

Open-ended sentences – We return to the large group for a time of sharing in pairs. We are invited to complete the following sentence: **"Today, what worries me most about the world is..."** taking the time to answer sincerely for 2 or 3 minutes. Then, do the same by completing this sentence: **"When I think about the planet we are leaving to future generations, I feel..."** (Allowing emotions to surface sincerely without trying to suppress them). Then, switch roles.

The interdependence of creatures is willed by God. The sun and the moon, the cedar and the little flower, the eagle and the sparrow: the spectacle of their innumerable diversities and inequalities means that none of the creatures is self-sufficient. They exist only in dependence on each other, to complement each other, in service to each other" - LS 86.

➔ This type of practice allows us to **open our eyes to the state of the world** while allowing us to **contact our deep emotions without fear of judgment**. It opens doors of compassion and allows us to be deeply touched while developing an **understanding of our interdependence** with all beings and **our desire to act for them**. Moving from guilt to responsibility.

As Pope Francis says :*"The objective is not to gather information or to satisfy our curiosity, but to become painfully aware, to dare to transform what is happening in the world into personal suffering, and thus to recognize the contribution that each can bring "*. LS19

Change vision and look at the world with new eyes

A reflective walk—in this natural setting that welcomes and restores us, we can continue our journey by walking slowly and **widening our field of vision like an owl**, allowing us to see things we might otherwise have missed.

- We can use this time to reflect on the **root causes of the destruction of nature** and our **own "resistance" to an eco-spiritual conversion**.
- We can also ask ourselves **what inner attitudes** would help us build this "new universal solidarity" and **to walk in unity with Christ**.

:"We need a conversion that unites us all, because the environmental challenge that we live, and its human roots, concern and affect us all... The attitudes that obstruct the paths of solutions, even among believers, range from denial of the problem to indifference, easy resignation, or blind trust in technical solutions. We need a new universal solidarity". LS14.

Encountering another being — With a heightened awareness of belonging to this great cosmic family, we can **choose to connect with a specific creature** we encounter — one that "calls out" to us, be it a flower, a tree, a bird, or a bee — and simply be present with it. We can then initiate **a genuine dialogue, being to being** (setting aside our own resistance or concerns about what others might think): *"How do you live in this place? What are your needs? What threats do you face? What could we, as humans, contribute?"*—or any other question inspired by benevolence and a desire to hear the "silent" world.

REPENTANCE and FORGIVENESS – Subsequently, after having "listened" to the invisible answers, we can take a moment for sincere repentance regarding all actions — whether intentional or unintentional— that have **caused injury and a rift** with God and the Earth, and allow ourselves to be inspired by this beautiful quote from Dostoevsky's **The Brothers Karamazov**.

"My brother asked forgiveness from the birds; it seems absurd, but it is right, because everything is like the ocean, where everything flows and communicates, we touch a place and it reverberates on the other side of the world. Granted it's madness to ask birds for forgiveness, but birds, children, and every animal around you would feel more comfortable if you yourself were more worthy than you are now, however little that was. »

→By enabling us to shift away from our **habitual posture** — characterized by domination, dualism, anthropocentrism, judgment and fear — and to adopt a more **humble and adjusted perspective**, this step allows us to break free from the ruts of our culture and habits. In agreeing to ask for forgiveness and rediscovering true humility through a **renewed sense of kinship with Creation, we also draw closer to the Creator**. In this sense, forgiveness can lead us to view the world with fresh eyes — those of a child or a sage —and, as Saint Bonaventure puts it, to regain a state of innocence in the image of Saint Francis.

Regain our power to act and engage in right action

We return to our walk in nature, our senses open to everything that presents itself, aware of our breathing, of **the steps we take as gestures of peace on Earth** and of the fraternal closeness with all creatures. Connected to our body (by walking and breathing), to our heart (through the recognition and acceptance of our emotions) and to our mind (by the awareness of our connection to the Divine), we can find in this alliance renewed, **the strength to love and to act**.

"This contemplation of creation allows us to discover through each thing a teaching that God wants to transmit to us, because "for the believer to contemplate creation is also to listen to a message, to hear a paradoxical and silent voice" LS 85.

The Steps of Conversion – In this new frame of mind, we can joyfully envision ourselves **becoming active participants in this eco-spiritual conversion**. The invitation here is to pause — standing tall— and allow ourselves to be inspired and **guided by greater than ourselves** (Christ, our patron saint, the Divine within us...). Breath...

- 1- Guided by our greater Guide, we take **a first step forward** (without letting the rational mind interfere) and connect with our deep **desire for conversion and the ecological "cause"** that resonates with us most deeply and spontaneously.
- 2- Then, remaining connected to our Guide, we take another step forward by answering the question: *"What act can I perform as a symbolic first step to support this cause — upon returning from my walk, then during the following week, and finally in the month after the walk?"*
- 3- We take **a final step** on this symbolic journey by allowing the answer to this question to emerge: **"How, and with what resources, is God calling me to enter 'His service' to defend Life?"**

→This crucial step allows us to combine effort and grace, to put ourselves at the service of Life, not with our little self, but accompanied by the strength of the Holy Spirit. **God needs us to act and be guardians of His Creation**. Nourished by the words of God present in nature, the strength of our desire, lucidity in the face of the state of the planet and hope anchored in faith, we can regain our power to act in a lasting, fruitful and light **to build a world that supports Life, beauty, brotherhood and love**.