

SCRIPTURE STUDY, SERMON & WEEKLY DEVOTIONS



FRANCIS OF ASSISI

World Animal Day

4th October, 2026

Dennis Webster

Revised Common Lectionary Related

Francis

Job 12:7–10

Psalm 148

Galatians 6:14–18

Luke 12:22–34



Tatungalung Totem

This is produced on
GunaiKurnai Country and
our respects are paid to the
First Nations people
everywhere.

O God, which dost ever delight to reveal thyself
unto such as be childlike and lowly of heart:
Grant, we beseech thee, that after the
example of blessed Francis,
we may so count the wisdom of this world but as
foolishness,
and know nothing, save only Jesus Christ, and him
crucified:
who with thee and the same Holy Ghost
liveth and reigneth, one God, world without end.
Amen.



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i thank You God for most this amazing
day: for the leaping greenly spirits of trees
and a blue true dream of sky; and for everything
which is natural which is infinite which is yes
(i who have died am alive again today,
and this is the sun's birthday; this is the birth
day of life and of love and wings:and of the gay
great happening illimitably earth)
how should tasting touching hearing seeing
breathing any—lifted from the no
of all nothing—human merely being
doubt unimaginable You?
(now the ears of my ears awake and
now the eyes of my eyes are opened)

e. e. cummings



IMMERSION IN LIVING WATER

Ezekiel 47:9, 12

The Kinfolk of Francis

Awake. Rise. Observe. Consider. Recognise.

Or, if you want that in ecclesiastical jargon:

Awakening. Resurrection. Attention. Meditation. Mission.

Sometimes getting to and from bed is the day's biggest chore. "I don't want to go to bed yet" is replaced by "I don't want to get out of bed yet." But if nothing is done, nothing can happen. A movement works well forwards and backwards. If all we do in the day is our mission, our quest or vocation, then at the end there might even be a steady path leading back to slumber. Meditation. Attention. Lying down. Re-awakening.

A wise correspondent asked me recently if I plan to preach soon. I do a couple of weekday addresses, but our Parish's talented preachers made the Season of Creation a good time to hear from them. I write an article or sermon every week, and their thoughts help me think about our role as Stewards of Creation. One sings, another uses poetry, one draws on extensive study and another shares the wisdom of a retired priest. In each we learn about God and the value of thinking about and considering the world around us.

This week, the Abbey Director preaches on St. Francis Day, the end of the Season of Creation. Dr Cath Connelly brings the poetry of e.e. cummings to the fore. One of my parishioners noticed this and said immediately, "Oh, him of non-conforming type fonts." In fact, she did so well, though probably not really knowing it, about Cummings. Non-conforming typography and using text as a vehicle for visual representation in poetry make sense. It also supports the poem's oral delivery. The Book of Common Prayer itself comes from a typographical world where capitals, type and layout could help shape the spoken text. Cummings loved traditional grammar, at least on a personal level!

When we awake, we are instantly drawn back into the ongoing concert of God's praise from all creation. You God's thanksgiving is as powerful as Psalm 148 for the day. We receive the world with thankfulness, and we add our voices to the deep orchestra of praise already. We're awakened and rising; we're drawn into the leaping green spirits of trees and the blue, true dream of the sky.

Sitting with that progression, we have become awake, risen, and now observe all that is happening around us. The natural world has no end. Cummings uses the word infinite, and his awakening to a new day is seen as resurrection and an illimitable earth. If adding our own voices from the cadences of the Prayer Book: 'world without end. Amen

And in the new creation, Cummings speaks of how we are connected to Paul's understanding in Galatians. The new day is a chance to look at things differently. We are challenged to observe, to pay attention. To be aware of the challenges of creation and our role in stewardship, we are also called to be born anew, not again but anew, as we enter into the vast cosmic consciousness of the world in which we live. It is a new birth, a birthday declared in light and warmth. The challenge to us: are we seeing all this?

But do we listen and observe? Scripture repeatedly warns that we may have eyes that still fail to see, ears that still fail to hear. It is easy to remain in spiritual deafness and blindness, not engaging with what, to our fractured creation, is always a plea for respect.

Cummings expresses this recognition of his meditation with the words, "the eyes of my eyes are opened." He is not only observing, but he is seeing with a new perspective. And what he now sees and hears with his open ears invites him to examine his mission, his call to engagement in bringing attention to an already vexed and challenged world.

Observe. Pay attention. Think about what God is calling us to do. First responders don't just rush into an emergency. They stop, look, assess, and only then act. An unseen live wire, an unstable structure unnoticed, a fire risk unrecognised—and the rescuer can become another casualty. Stop. Look. Observe. Listen. Attention is not inactivity. It begins with wise action. That simple progression leads to wise and prudent choices. Jesus told his followers, who would suffer persecution and hardship, to take a look around. And he reminds them not to seek power or use it for personal gain, but to see the world around them.

Living in such a beautiful part of Australia, on the edge of the Gippsland Lakes and in the foothills of the Snowy basin, it is not a chore to take a moment to look around, but a key part of my experience. In the age of modern technology, I don't need to reach for my tattered NRSV leather-bound Bible to pray, reflect, and wonder. I was always very fond of the 7- to 11-year-old class groups when I was teaching. I've watched them develop through their education and become more comfortable in a world they know from what they've learned in daily life.

Take a child to somewhere special, and ask them to tell me what they see, hear and reason. And together our eyes open, our ears awaken, and we see God's presence in creation and how it reflects ourselves.

Francis of Assisi, whose feast falls rather conveniently on the United Nations "World Animal Day" (satire intended), referred to elements of the community and creation as his brother, sister, mother and father. A reading of the second account of creation in Genesis 2 and 3 would certainly affirm that, as we are all made of the dust of the earth and to the dust of the earth we will return, everything is integrated. We are all part of God's creation and are called to be the living water that nourishes and enables growth. We flourish from conception to death. The grass green today is also consigned to be burned tomorrow.

Francis saw as Jesus teaches us to see. Look at the raven. Look at the lily. Wake up, rise, pay attention, wonder, and recognise what surrounds us. These are the gifts God gives us, and we are called, in the first account of creation, in the Spirit of Christ, the firstborn of creation, to love, cherish, nurture, and protect. Francis didn't see creation as something entrusted to human care. He recognised kinship. Brother Sun, Sister Moon, Sister Water, Mother Earth: not merely resources gathered around the human creature, but creatures we share with, and in whose presence we love and commit our lives in God.

Francis' call to us is the same as Cummings'. Trees are more than resources. Animals are more than commodities, and landscape is not simply property to acquire. But we are forced to rise from the nothingness to view the world anew. We move, at least, from anxiety to appreciation of God's gift to creation.

Creation is God's Yes against nothingness. Cummings' "everything / which is natural which is infinite which is yes" corresponds to Paul's idea of new creation. Perhaps the conversion to which we are continually called is not to repeat the words of faith handed down to us, but to open our eyes and awaken our ears. Tradition doesn't have to hold us to the world; at its best, it can teach us how to view the world anew.

Awake. Rise. Observe. Consider. Recognise. And having come to see again, maybe we discover that we have travelled not in a straight line but in a great circle of grace. And with eyes open, ears awake and creation seen again as gift and kin, we are in what every Christian journey starts and ends: **at resurrection.**

Discussion

Awakening to God's Creation

Where, in the rhythm of your day, do you notice the quiet music of God's praise in the world around you?

How might the simple acts of waking, rising, and looking become a doorway from worry into gratitude?

Pause, and let the world's song reach your ears as prayer.

Seeing with New Eyes

Why do our eyes so often close to the needs of our world, and our ears grow quiet to its cries?

What might happen if, this week, you let yourself listen and look with new attention?

Notice how a posture of gentle watching can shape the way you move through each day.

Embracing Kinship with Creation

How is your life changed when you see trees, animals, and the land not as things to use, but as kin, as St. Francis saw them?

What does it mean to remember that we share our beginning in the dust of the earth?

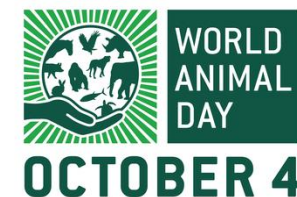
Where might you be called to move from using creation to cherishing it as gift?

Moving from Meditation to Wise Action

What might we learn from the first responder who pauses, attentive and watchful, before stepping into need?

Why must we begin with careful seeing and listening before we act in love?

How can quiet attention and gentle presence shape the way we serve those around us?



5 Day Devotional

This five-day journey traces the article's gentle arc: awake, rise, observe, consider, recognise. Each day is an invitation to resurrection attention, to see creation not as a mere resource but as a gift and kin. As your gaze softens and widens, stewardship becomes less a duty and more a way of living wisely, gently, and with joy.

Day 1 Psalm 148:1-2

Awakening begins with praise, not as obligation, but as a return to what is most real. Before your day unfolds, creation is already at work: declaring God's glory. Psalm 148 paints a universe not silent, but singing. Your first act of faith may simply be to notice that you are stepping into a song already in progress.

Gratitude is the hinge that swings open the door from spiritual sleep to wakefulness. To receive the world as a gift—light, air, birdsong, a cup of water—is not to escape sorrow, but to refuse to let weariness and anxiety speak the final word. Praise gathers you again at the centre, so your life begins from God's yes, not from emptiness or lack.

- Before you reach for your phone, pause. Notice three created things near you. Let your thanks rise quietly for each one.
- Where do you feel spiritually "asleep" lately—dulled by routine, stress, or distraction? Name it honestly.
- What is one small practice that helps you wake up to God's presence (a short prayer, a walk, a psalm, silence)? Choose one for today.
- How does starting with praise change the tone of your day compared to starting with tasks or worries?
- Write a one-sentence "morning doxology" you can repeat this week (simple, personal, and grateful).

Day 2 Colossians 1:15-17

To rise is to remember what is most true: Christ is not merely part of your life; he is the One in whom "all things consist." This is a resurrection-shaped perspective—seeing creation held together by Jesus, not by human control or constant striving. When you rise with that awareness, you step into the day less frantic and more grounded.



This changes how you see stewardship. If all things belong to Christ and are sustained by Christ, then creation is not disposable, and neither are you. To rise with Christ is to loosen your anxious grip and receive the world as sacredly held—trees, water, animals, landscapes, your own body.

- What does it change in you to consider that Christ holds your life and your environment together today?
- Name one place where you have been trying to "hold it all together" by sheer effort. Offer that place to Christ in prayer.
- Choose one ordinary created thing you'll treat with extra care today (water use, waste, a plant, an animal, your own rest).
- How might resurrection life show up in your schedule—what would you stop doing, start doing, or do more gently?
- If creation belongs to Christ, what attitude do you need to repent of: entitlement, impatience, indifference, or despair?

Day 3 Job 12:7-10

Observation is not passive; it is humility in practice. Job invites you to learn from creatures, not as props for your lessons, but as teachers in their own right. When you slow down to watch and listen, you begin to sense the invitation: creation is not mere backdrop, but a neighbour bearing witness to God's sustaining hand.

This kind of attention is a spiritual correction. It is easy to move through life with eyes that do not see, ears that do not hear, especially when tired or anxious. But deliberate noticing can open the eyes of your eyes, helping you recognise both beauty and brokenness, and preparing you to respond with wisdom rather than reaction.

- Spend 10 minutes outside (or by a window) observing one small part of creation. What do you notice that you usually miss?
- What is one sign of beauty you saw today, and what is one sign of groaning or harm you noticed in your environment?
- How does observing creation challenge the idea that humans are the centre and everything else is "for us"?
- Where might God be inviting you to listen before acting in your relationships, work, or ministry?
- Write down one thing creation "taught" you today (patience, dependence, resilience, generosity, limits)

Day 4

Luke 12:27-28

Considering goes deeper than noticing; it lets what you see reshape what you believe. Jesus calls his followers to consider the lilies, not to ignore hardship, but to be set free from anxious striving. When you see how God clothes the grass, here today and gone tomorrow, you learn your life is not held together by worry, but by God's faithful care.

Here the article's arc turns practical: attention becomes wise action. Like one who pauses before stepping forward, you stop to discern what is stirring in your heart and in the world around you. Considering helps you choose stewardship that is not frantic or for show, but rooted in trust, gratitude, and truth.

- What anxiety feels most loud in you right now (provision, future, health, reputation, control)? Name it plainly.
- How might "considering the lilies" challenge the story you tell yourself about what you must secure to be okay?
- Identify one decision you're facing; before acting, list what you need to observe and understand more clearly.
- Choose one practice of simplicity today that resists anxiety (buy less, waste less, pause before purchasing, rest).
- Who could you talk with this week to help you choose wise action over rushed reaction?

Day 5

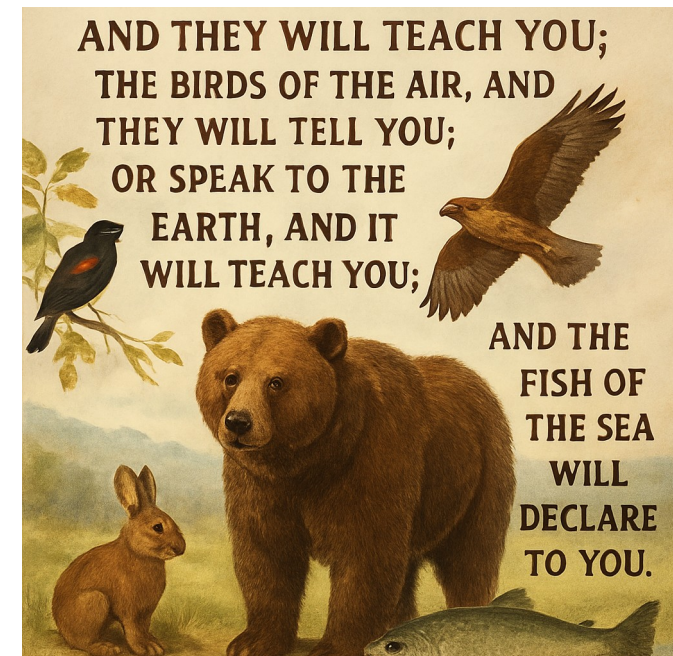
Galatians 6:15

Recognition is the turning point where sight becomes calling. Paul's words about a new creation are not only about personal spirituality, but about a new way of being in the world, seeing with resurrected eyes. When you recognise creation as gift and kin, you move from using to loving, from consuming to cherishing and protecting in Christ.

- From this From here, stewardship becomes worship. You act not to prove yourself, but because grace has awakened you to gratitude and turned you again. The Sermon's great circle of grace comes into view: you awake to praise, rise into Christ's embrace, observe with humility, consider with trust, and recognise your calling to live gently and faithfully in God's beloved world.
- Have specific ways you treated creation as a resource rather than as a gift and kin? Confess one example honestly.
- What is one concrete act of stewardship you can take this week (at home, Church, or community) that fits your real life?
- Who in your life needs to see this "new creation" perspective

embodied—what could you invite them into (a walk, a shared practice, a conversation)?

- How can your faith community's worship and daily habits better reflect kinship with creation rather than consumption?
- Write a brief personal commitment statement (1–3 sentences) describing how you want to live resurrection-minded stewardship in the future.



End notes and further reading

Harrington, Daniel J Sacra Pagina: The Gospel of Matthew

Moloney, Francis J, SBD, Sacra Pagina: The Gospel of John

Johnson, Luke Timothy: Sacra Pagina: The Gospel on Luke

Collins, Raymond F., Sacra Pagina: First Corinthians

Andrew McGowan substack.com/@abmcg

N.T. Wright, Twelve months of Sundays Year A

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Let your faith and relationships
be shaped by love and patience
for God's love is
revealed in lives, not letters.



Prepared by Rev'd Dennis Webster, Rector of the Anglican Parish of Paynesville, Diocese of Gippsland for personal or small group use.

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