



Season of Creation 2021

Prayer-Reflection Guide 1

September 1 to October 4 is the Season of Creation. This year, we are invited to unite around the theme:

“A home for all? Renewing the OIKOS of God”.

Oikos is the Greek word for “house.” In these next six weeks, as we renew our understanding of Earth our Common Home, as *Oikos* of God, we hope to grow in awareness of the integral web of relationships that sustain the well-being of Earth, of humanity, and all of creation.

During this first week of the Season of Creation, we draw insight from the prophet Ezekiel’s account of the “the dry bones” (**Ezekiel 37:1-14**), as it can provide a framework for our prayer, reflection, and action at this time of global pandemic.

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With the prophet Ezekiel let us look at our pandemic-stricken world: *“The hand of Yahweh was on me; he carried me away by the spirit of Yahweh and set me down in the middle of the valley, a valley full of bones. He made me walk up and down and all around them. There were vast quantities of these bones on the floor of the valley; and they were completely dry.”* (vv. 1-2)

COVID-19 continues to ravage our world and leave “dry bones” in its path. The World Health Organization (WHO) reports that as of 1st August 2021, there are 197,865,160 confirmed cases of COVID-19 and 4,219,816 deaths all over the world. (Weekly Operational Update on Covid-19, Issue #66.)

The WHO Director-General, in his opening remarks at the media briefing on 30 July 2021, presents these stark details:

- On average, in five of WHO’s six regions, infections have increased by 80%, or nearly doubled, over the past four weeks. In Africa, deaths have increased by 80% over the same period. Much of this increase is being driven by the highly-transmissible Delta variant, which has now been detected in at least 132 countries.
- WHO has warned that the COVID-19 virus has been changing since it was first reported, and it continues to change. So far, four variants of concern have emerged, and there will be more as long as the virus continues to spread. The rise is also driven by increased social mixing and mobility, the inconsistent use of public health and social measures, and inequitable vaccine use.
- The increased number of infections is creating a shortage of treatments such as life-saving oxygen. Twenty-nine countries have high and rising oxygen needs, and many countries have inadequate supplies of basic equipment to protect frontline health workers.
- WHO’s goal remains to support every country to vaccinate at least 10% of its population by the end of September, at least 40% by the end of this year, and 70% by the middle of next year.... So far, just over half of countries have fully vaccinated 10% of their population, less than a quarter of countries have vaccinated 40%, and only 3 countries have vaccinated 70%.

- Almost a year ago, WHO began to express concern about the threat of ‘vaccine nationalism’. In a press conference in November, we warned of the risk that the world’s poor would be “trampled in the stampede for vaccines.” And at WHO’s Executive Board meeting in January this year, we said the world was on the verge of a “catastrophic moral failure.” And yet the global distribution of vaccines remains unjust.

Source: <https://www.who.int/director-general/speeches/detail/who-director-general-s-opening-remarks-at-the-media-briefing-on-covid-19-30-july-2021>

How does this “valley of dry bones” touch me? my community or family? my country or region? As I look further and deeper into our world, what other “dry bones” do I see?

It is before these valley of dry bones that Yahweh makes the promise: *“Dry bones, hear the word of Yahweh. The Lord Yahweh says this to these bones: I am now going to make breath enter you, and you will live. I shall put sinews on you, I shall make flesh grow on you, I shall cover you with skin and give you breath, and you will live; and you will know that I am Yahweh....”* (vv. 4^b-6)



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In different ways, members of the Family of the Sacred Heart try to respond to the challenges posed by this pandemic. Read about these on our different websites and social media platforms, newsletters and updates, and news and emails exchanged among us. Reach out to the persons/groups behind these efforts. Pray for them. Let them know that you are aware of what they are doing. Support them in whatever way possible.

What signs of the “promise” do I see? In what way do I perceive the “breath enter the dry bones”? How do I, my community, province, region participate in efforts to breathe new life into these “dry bones”?

The crisis wrought by the pandemic is but one of the wounds of our suffering Earth. Just like in Ezekiel’s time, people are overwhelmed and they cry out: *“Our bones are dry, our hope has gone; we are done for.”* (v. 11^b) But, through the prophet, the Lord Yahweh proclaims: *“I am now going to open your graves; I shall raise you from your graves, my people.... And you will know that I am Yahweh when I open your graves... and put my spirit in you, and you revive, and I resettle you on your own soil”* (vv. 12-13^c). We, too, are called to prophesy...

Despite the limits imposed by the pandemic, how do I “prophesy” and communicate God’s promise to our people? How do I concretely collaborate with others in caring for our Common Home and renewing the Oikos of God?

In addition to opportunities available in your province/region, you may also want to explore the possibilities for advocacy and action that are offered by these networks:

[Laudato Si' Movement](#) (formerly GCCM)

[JPIC Roma](#)

[Season of Creation](#)

[Laudato Si' Action Platform](#)

[United Nations: Climate Action](#)

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