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## Our True Nature

Darkness. All around us, there is nothing to be seen or felt other than the cold, black, empty, space of darkness. Off in the distance, we notice something, a small change in the darkness that surrounds us. We see a ray of light poke up over the horizon. As we turn to focus our gaze on that tiny ray, we notice more of them, changing the darkness slowly. There are hues of pink and orange. The coldness we feel in our bodies begins to melt away. Soon, the entire sky is changed, from bleak darkness to revealing light, the warmth of the Sun's rays warming our body, the earth around us, and offering its light to the sky. In these moments, we are the witnesses of something beautiful, a sunrise, the birth of a new day. Yet, that is only half of what we are witnessing. In these moments, we are also the witnesses of something equally as beautiful, the beginning of death. As the Sun crawls across the sky, we notice its progression, how each movement is an act of living and dying.

The Sun begins to set. The rays of warm light we have experienced begin to fade away; the bright colors they brought with it dissipate in the sky. The Sun disappears behind the horizon and the day is gone. Death has finished it. Yet, in that very moment, we notice new light rising and appearing in the sky. We notice the rise of the Moon peaking over the horizon. Millions of stars begin to appear in the night sky. Though the air carries a chill, it is filled with its own warmth and radiance. In this moment, we are the witnesses of something beautiful, a moonrise, the birth of a new night. In these moments, we are also the witnesses of something equally as beautiful, the beginning of death.

This morning, we have gathered to celebrate Earth Day, a time when we as a society pause in our work to recognize and celebrate the world in which we are a part of. Not only do we celebrate its existence, we set aside this day to contemplate and learn how we might best care for this amazing gift! Yet, how can we best care for creation if we do not stop to recognize and accept the nature of what creation truly is and means? For most of us, we have only seen what is at the surface of creation: the existence of earth and water, air and fire, birds and animals,

fish and microorganisms, trees and flowers, and humanity. We only see part of the story, the part that screams LIFE! Yet, that is only half of what creation's nature is. We tend to forget that where there is life, there is also DEATH! In each and every moment, creation is both living and dying. When we witness a sunrise, not only are we witnessing its birth, we are witnessing its death as well. When we witness the life, majesty, and beauty of the great mountain ranges, we are also witnessing their majesty and beauty in death. Here, in this very moment, we are witnesses to our own birth and death. We are witnesses to each other's beginning and ending. Right now, millions of cells are being created and born in our bodies. We grow older, wiser, fully living into our existence. Yet, at the same time, millions of cells are destroyed and die in our bodies. We are dying in the exact same moment that we are living. Embodied in us, we can witness the very nature of creation, a universe that is constantly in the process of living and dying. What then does this mean for us, the stewards that God placed over creation and why, out of all creation, are we commissioned with such responsibility?

When God spoke and brought about the existence of the universe and all that is in it, God made it in God's own image. God made us in the likeness and in the nature of Itself. What does this tell us about the nature of God? If the nature of God's creation centers in every moment of living and dying, then we must assume that the nature of God is also centered in these moments! A constant state of living and dying, that is what God's nature is, that is what creation's nature is, that is what our nature is. And, just in case we didn't see it clearly enough in every other moment of our lives, just in case we were too blind and ignorant to get it, God embodies this nature once again in the death and resurrection of Christ! Through the crucifixion, God throws this nature in our face, screaming, "Wake up! Open your eyes and see! See the world for what it is. See yourself for what you truly are. See who I truly am!" When we finally begin to take in this understanding, when we finally get it, we, the stewards of this creation see that when we care for creation, we are also caring for ourselves, each other, and God! Why? Because we all share the same nature, we are all cut from the same cloth; we are just as much a part of God as God is a part of us.

But again, why us? Why out of the entire universe does God commission us to care for creation? Why not the birds or the fish? Why can't the trees or the sky hold this responsibility? Because, out of the entirety of creation, we are the only beings that we know of that God gave the ability to truly see, contemplate, and understand the nature of creation, the nature of ourselves, and begin to understand the nature of God! Because we have free will, because we can dream, because we are not ruled by our instincts, but by our coconsciousness, that is why we are named the stewards of God's great masterpiece. Powerful stuff, right? Within our being, our nature, God made it so that we don't just live out our nature, but gives us the minds that we need to understand it. That is why we are commissioned with such great responsibility. And boy, have we really screwed things up!

With this great knowledge and power, what have we done with it? Rather than care for creation, as is our responsibility, we have used it for our own gain, subjugating the world and all its creatures to our own whims and fancies, rather than living up to the great trust God places in us. We have basically given God the middle finger and said, "Piss off

God, this is our world now.” What has it gotten us? Centuries of war and violence, the extinction of hundreds of species of God’s creatures, the devastation of our ecosystem’s rainforests and biodiversity, the depletion and unequal distribution of our world’s natural resources, the destruction of the very atmosphere that keeps us alive! Even amongst ourselves, we have demonized, beaten, and killed millions of our fellow siblings, all because our skin is a different color, because some of us have different body parts than others, because some of us express our love in different ways, because some of us connect with God in ways different than others. Instead of caring for God’s creation, we have spend centuries using our knowledge of creation’s living and dying nature to subjugate it and make ourselves gods over it. But we are finally starting to wake up and see how wrong we truly were.

Today, we celebrate Earth Day. Today, we see that God still has faith in us, has faith that we can still be faithful and responsible stewards of creation. Today, we can step off of the path we have been on for so long and forge a new one, one where we take seriously the responsibility that God has given to us. Today, we can leave this building and show the

world just how seriously Holy Comforter takes its role as a steward of creation. Today, we can help our neighbors realize their true nature, their true responsibility, and help guide them. Today, we can reach out a hand and begin to heal all the brokenness we have brought into the world.

Together, we can heal our city, heal our state, heal our nation, heal our planet, and heal all of God's creation. Together, we can set aside our pride and vanity, and begin to live again into our true nature. Let us go forth into the world as faithful and dutiful stewards to our island home.

In the name of our Blessed Lord, who is revealed to us through Creation.

Amen.