

Appended Resource 2:

Engage your local ecology through this Earth Examen:

An examen is a way of beholding an object or being in prayerful wonder. Through questions, you are invited to reflect on God's presence and the goodness of that which you behold. During this Season of Creation, consider contemplating a part of your local ecology. This is an exercise that you can choose to do alone, or with a group.

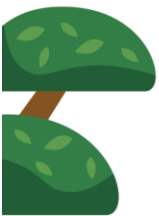
Pick a natural or agricultural place to contemplate. A forest. A river. A city street with a natural area. An urban park. A farmer's field. A hilltop. Find a comfortable place to rest in or near this place. Enter into prayer in whatever way is natural to you. Invite Holy Wisdom to open the eyes of your heart. When you are ready, reflect on the following questions:

1. Become aware of God's presence in a natural or agricultural place that you are contemplating.

How is God present in this place? How does all the life you see exist in God's spirit? How do you feel knowing that the Holy Spirit has filled this place for geological ages, with every plant, animal, organism and mineral that has called this place home in the deep past, makes its home here with you now, and will live here with creatures in this place in the future? How do you feel knowing that you, earthling, belong to this place, are made of the same carbon, breathe the same air, are nurtured by the same cycles and life processes, and are enlivened by the same Spirit of the Creator?

2. Reflect on the ecological cycles of this place with gratitude for all that it provides.

What nutrient cycles are supported by this place? Is this a watershed that filters water? Is this a rainforest (tropical or deciduous) that fixes nutrients? Is this a meadow or field that fixes nitrogen? Is this a green space that absorbs CO₂ and cleans the air? What plants, animals, microbes and minerals are sheltered here? How do they serve the whole earth in their being? For all that this place provides to nurture you and all that belong to this place, let a feeling of gratitude fill you.



3. Pay attention to what you feel as you contemplate the fragility, health of this site.

Is this ecosystem healthy? How is this ecosystem at risk of illness? What are the keys to sustaining the equilibrium and balance of this place? What niches and diversity must be protected to maintain the health of this habitat? What are the sources of stress that threaten the balance of this particular ecosystem? Do those stresses drive your co-creatures from their home in this place? How do you feel when you consider the fragility of life that depends on the health of this place? What is your effect on this balance?

4. Choose one feature of the site and pray for it, its rest and its renewal.

When you consider the ways that this place is under stress, what does it need for rest, restoration and renewal? What needs to be conserved for this site to heal itself? What features need to be reclaimed? What parts of creation need to be restored to their rightful home here? Pray for this site, and the wisdom to care for it.

5. Look toward your response. What can you do to ease demands or promote the rest of this ecological site?

Based on your examination, how do you identify with this place? What have you discerned is required to care for this place? What will be your act of compassion to promote rest for this common home?

