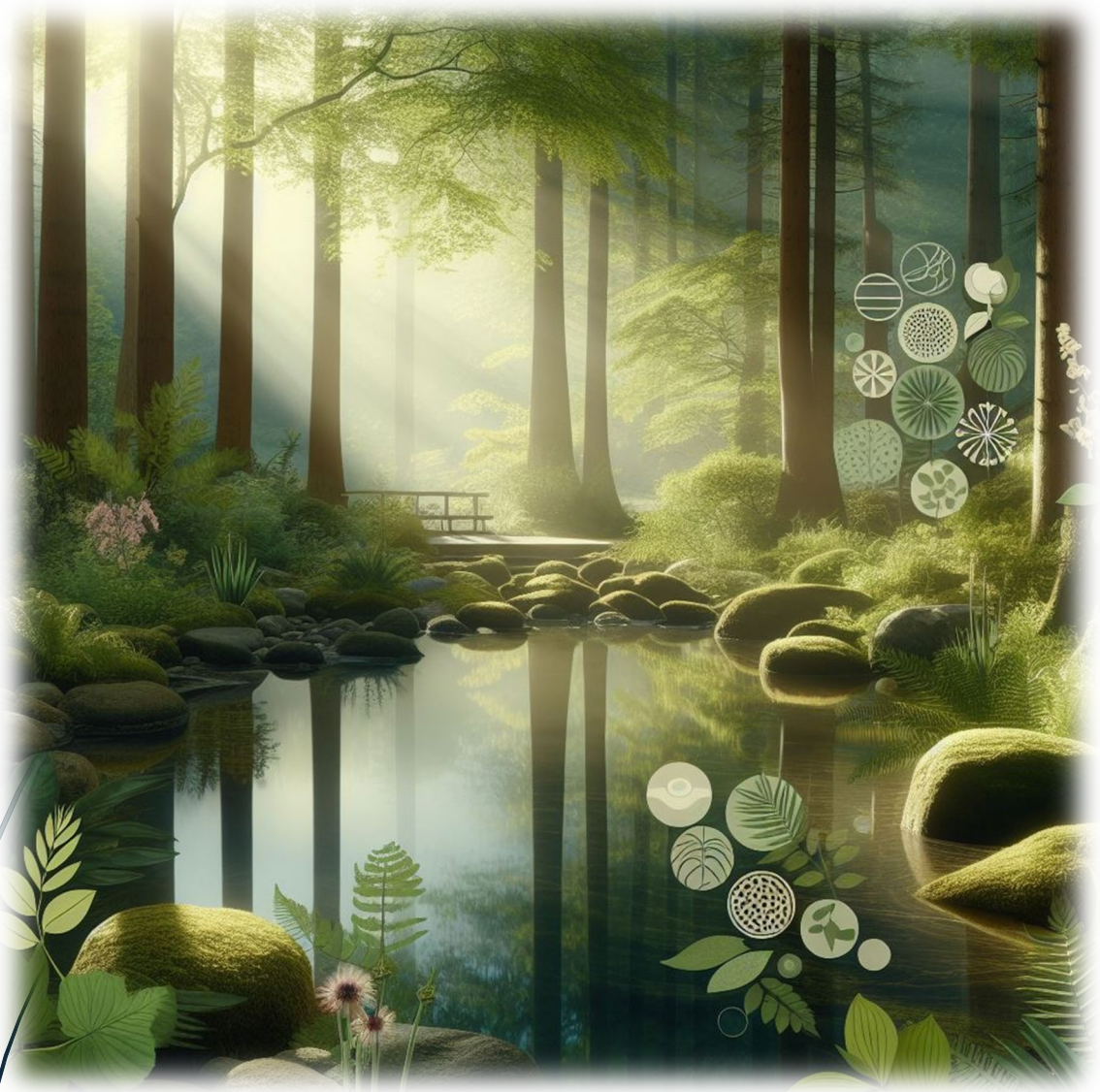


Nature's Nurture

Creation, Care and Contemplation



2024 Staff Retreat
ALL HALLOWS' SCHOOL

Celebrating the Eighth Work of Mercy

The **8th work of mercy** was introduced by Pope Francis in 2016 as an addition to the traditional seven corporal and seven spiritual works of mercy. This 8th work of mercy is a response to the modern challenges of environmental degradation and its impact on the poor and marginalised. It extends the concept of mercy to include the stewardship of the natural world, emphasising that our treatment of the environment directly affects human life and dignity. It complements the traditional works of mercy by highlighting the interconnectedness of all life and the responsibility to act with compassion not only towards each other but also towards the earth that sustains us.

“As a spiritual work of mercy, care for our common home calls for a ‘grateful contemplation of God’s world’. (Laudato Si’:214) As a corporal work of mercy, care for our common home requires ‘simple daily gestures which break with the logic of violence, exploitation and selfishness’ and ‘makes itself felt in every action that seeks to build a better world”. (Laudato Si’:230)

“At the end, we will find ourselves face to face with the infinite beauty of God (cf. 1 Corinthians 13:12) and be able to read with admiration and happiness the mystery of the universe.” (Laudato Si’ 243)

“*Dadirri* recognises the deep spring that is inside us. We call on it and it calls to us. This is the gift that Australia is thirsting for. It is something like what you call "contemplation".

When I experience *dadirri*, I am made whole again. I can sit on the riverbank or walk through the trees; ... I can find my peace in this silent awareness. There is no need of words. A big part of *dadirri* is listening.

The contemplative way of *dadirri* spreads over our whole life. It renews us and brings us peace. It makes us feel whole again...”

(*Dadirri Inner Deep Listening and Quiet Still Awareness A reflection by Miriam-Rose Ungunmerr*)

Program Outline

Time	Venue	Activity
8.15 – 9.00am	All Hallows' School	• Staff requiring transport board school bus for trip to Mt Coot-tha • Staff from school dropped off at the Mt Coot-tha Lookout. Buses drive down to the Botanic Gardens Car Park to collect other staff.
9:00 – 9:45am	Bus arrives at Mt Coot-tha Summit	• Staff arrive at the summit of Mt Coot-tha (bus drop-off available). • Acknowledgement of Country followed by an explanation of the spiritual importance of Country and sense of connection to the land by Marlon Riley. • Staff who do not elect to walk the bush track to be driven to the Brisbane Gardens – accessible by school bus.
9:45 – 11:00am	Mt Coot-tha / Mt Coot-tha Botanic Gardens	• Small groups sequentially depart the summit along the Spotted Gum Trail (2.4kms). BCC note: 'Hard: track may be steep, uneven and have obstacles in sections.' Finish at the shores of the Melaleuca Lake.
9:45 – 11:00am	Mt Coot-tha / Mt Coot-tha Botanic Gardens	• Staff not walking the trail to collect their beverage from the Botanic Gardens Café and engage with professional reading as a form of meditative reflection. You may choose to wander to an open space to do the same.
11:00 – 11:30am Morning Tea	Mt Coot-tha Botanic Gardens – Melaleuca Lake	• Staff conclude their walk at Melaleuca Lake in the Brisbane Gardens and enjoy morning tea provided.
11:30 – 1:00pm	Mt Coot-tha Botanic Gardens	• Small group spiritual walk. Guided (and varied) tour along different 'stations' throughout the gardens. Each station offers spiritual reflections and exercises reflecting the day's theme.
1:00 – 1:45pm Lunch	Mt Coot-tha Botanic Gardens Amphitheatre	• Small groups collect lunch packs from the café according to collection schedule • Groups may choose a special place to gather for lunch or head to the Amphitheatre alongside the main lake to enjoy a communal lunch.
1:45 – 2.30pm	Mt Coot-tha Botanic Gardens Amphitheatre	• Whole staff liturgy at the Amphitheatre • Groups to present their contribution in the liturgy
2:30 – 2.45pm	Bus to All Hallows' or staff independent departure	• Staff move to main carpark and bus pick-up area (alongside auditorium) for loading. • Return to All Hallows' or make own way home.

How to Use This Booklet

This booklet is designed to assist you in making this 'spiritual orienteering' activity one which provides opportunities for contemplation, reflection on the gifts we have and some time to appreciate the beauty that surrounds us.

This booklet is a guide only – groups may choose to engage in as many reflective activities as necessary to make this a truly restful and spiritually enriching day for you.

Each page contains a suggested place to stop and take in the beauty that surrounds you. Meditation or prayer experiences are offered as focal points.

At each stage of the booklet you will find activity suggestions or prompts for reflection.

Some advice: while this activity might, at times, seem beyond your area of comfort, give it a go. Take the time to stop and just BE! Writing or drawing might not be your 'thing' normally but don't let that stop you from exploring in written or visual form, what you are feeling. Be courageous.



Figure 1 : Site Map of Mt Coot-tha Botanic Gardens

1. Melaleuca Lake: gathering place for morning tea at 11.00am
2. Botanic Gardens Café: collect lunch and a beverage from here at either 12.30pm or 1.00pm (depending on time assigned to your group)
3. Amphitheatre: meet here for the staff liturgy at 1.45pm

*Your small group can decide where to eat lunch or you can head over to the Amphitheatre to enjoy lunch there before the staff liturgy

Pre-Reading:

An Ecological Spirituality by Reverend Joseph A. Tetlow, SJ

What is spirituality? How is it connected with ecological concerns? Spirituality can be approached in various ways. Some approach it as the wholehearted living of Christian faith, creed, moral code, and worship. Some consider spirituality as humanity's innate reaching for self-transcendence and for ultimate meaning. Some insist that spirituality must include a God-centred struggle for justice. But for almost everyone, spirituality implies a direct relationship with God.

How We Belong to Creation

Spirituality goes beyond moral action and transmutes it. Ecological spirituality begins in the acknowledgment, grateful and joyful, that all creatures owe their existence to God. Humans are not somehow separate from the rest of creation. We share it intimately with other creatures. We acknowledge God as Creator of us all...

In ecological spirituality, as we absorb the reality of ongoing creation, we learn to perceive God the immanent One. God gives us good gifts, all that we are and have, and we begin in thanksgiving. This is sound spirituality. But we go on to remember that God remains present in the gifts. Indeed, God works busily in them as well as through them. In some brief histories of time, scientists put God at the very beginning of time and at its very end. In between, they must believe in an impersonal universe, one that runs like a clock. Such a universe, humanity found easy to ravage and despoil. Nothing personal it was, after all, just an object, a thing.

We remember now that we know God as our ongoing Creator, One infinitely removed from chance, or fate, or the force. In this ecological spirituality, we perceive God working busily in all creatures. Hence, we experience the universe as personal, charged with the divine presence.

When we turn again to find God in nature, we recognize that all that exists reflects the divinity and participates in the divinity. All that exists stands before God the way a mirror stands in a field, facing the sun and full of its light. Stand in front of such a mirror and its brilliance will blind you, the light blazing from the mirror's heart. And yet, that light is the sun's light, every lumen of it. In this spirituality, we return to recognize that if there is justice in the human heart, it is a share in God's justice; if there is love among us, it is a share in God's love.

Session 1: The Summit: Orientation, Acknowledgement of Country and Opening Prayer

Timeframe: 9.00am - 9.45am

Prayer of the Four Directions

Here in this place
we acknowledge the beauty, and sometimes the violence,
of the sea, the air, fire and earth.
We reflect on these elements in order to ground ourselves in this place.

We face the **east**,
to Moreton Bay and Moreton Island,
to the bounty of the Pacific waters
where we first see the light of the sun in the mornings.
We ask that we be open to the presence of the Divine
embedded in all that surrounds us.

ALL: Spirit of the East, open us to your presence, and to our ability to learn from you.

We now face the **south**,
towards the capital and beyond that to Antarctica.
We acknowledge that this is where we get the cooling breezes in summer.
We ask that we be open to the presence of divine Wisdom
which provides refreshing air, and oxygen for human life.

ALL: Spirit of the South, open us to your presence, and to our ability to learn from you.

We move to face the **west**,
towards the place of vibrant sunsets,
which remind us of the warmth and the heat of fire.
We feel the fierce westerlies that blow across the D'Aguiar Range.
We ask to be invigorated by the wind,
and strengthened to resist injustice against the whole earth community.

ALL: Spirit of the West, open us to your presence, and to our ability to learn from you.

We face the **north**,
towards the Glasshouse Mountains,
the northern beaches and the Barrier Reef.
We are mindful of the age of our land,
and acknowledge that we, humans, are relative newcomers.
We face towards the Asian continent from whence came the first indigenous peoples.
We ask that we become more conscious of all the connections
that make up the great web of life,
and that we be responsible members of that web.

ALL: Spirit of the North, open us to your presence, and to our ability to learn from you.

We return to face the East,
We acknowledge the Turrbal, Jagera and Quandamooka people of this area.
who cared for it for many thousands of years.
We ask them to continue to teach us how to live in a spirit of oneness with this land,
because this land is good and embodies the divine Spirit.

Wayfinding – Navigating Around the Botanic Garden

This wayfinding guide and supporting signage helps visitors to self-navigate around the botanic gardens with ease.

The botanic gardens is divided into five trails, each highlighted by a unique trail number and colour. A sixth trail guides visitors through the botanic gardens to access the Mt Coot-tha precinct (including the Mt Coot-tha Forest and Summit) and Chapel Hill.

Visitors can navigate by following trail headers and small round markers to complete a trail, or the more adventurous explorers can cut across a side path to connect to another trail or pathway, to discover something new.

1. **GARDENS EXPLORER TRAIL** - 30 mins

Take a trip around the world and visit some of the most popular features of the botanic gardens, such as the Tropical Display Dome, Japanese Garden and Exotic Rainforest.

2. **QUEENSLAND CONSERVATION TRAIL** - 15 mins

This trail travels the entire length of the Queensland Conservation Collection, which was developed with a focus on Queensland flora.

3. **BUNYA FOREST TRAIL** - 10 mins

Discover plants from Queensland's iconic Bunya Mountains.

Please be aware that the lower half of this trail closes seasonally. This is due to falling Bunya pine cones, which may weigh up to 10 kg. The upper half of this trail is open all year around.

4. **AUSTRALIAN PLANTS TRAIL** - 20 mins

Discover plants from the wet tropics of Far North Queensland, to the furthest reaches of our continent in Western Australia.

Plants in this location are arranged in natural communities, including rainforests, woodlands and wetlands.

5. **AUSTRALIAN RAINFOREST TRAIL** - 10 mins

While exploring this trail you will encounter subtropical and tropical species from Queensland, the Northern Territory and New South Wales.

6. **CITRIODORA TRAIL ACCESS** - 20 mins

This route leads to the boundary of the botanic gardens. Once there, you will encounter the Citriodora Trail and Mt Coot-tha Forest. The trail leads to Chapel Hill and the summit of Mt Coot-tha.

4 AUSTRALIAN PLANTS TRAIL (20 mins)

- Eucalypt Woodland
- Melaleuca Lake
- Subtropical Rainforest
- Tropical Rainforest
- Palm Grove
- Brigalow
- Freshwater Wetlands
- Warm Temperate Rainforest

3 BUNYA FOREST TRAIL (10 mins)

- Eucalypt and Acacia Forest
- Bunya Forest
- Anigozanthos, Grevilleas and Eremophilas
- Native Plants for Brisbane Gardens

1 GARDENS EXPLORER TRAIL (30 mins)

- Cacti and Bromeliad House
- Arid Region Plants
- Bamboo Grove
- Temperate Region Plants
- Waterlily Lakes
- Pacific Flora
- Knowledge Garden
- Tropical Display Dome
- Kitchen Garden
- Orchard
- Fern House
- Bamboo Collection
- Japanese Garden
- Bonsai House
- Bandstand
- Fig Tree Collection
- Exotic Rainforest
- Conifer Collection
- American Region Plants
- National Australia Remembers Freedom Wall
- Botanic Gardens Lookout
- Bougainvillea Collection
- African Region Plants
- Lychee Tree Lawn
- Fig Tree Lawn
- Palm Tree Lawn
- Hide 'n' Seek Children's Trail (start)
- Ornamental Plants
- Sensory Garden

5 AUSTRALIAN RAINFOREST TRAIL (10 mins)

- Australian Rainforest

6 CITRIODORA TRAIL (20 mins)

BOTANIC GARDENS FACILITIES

- Auditorium
- Administration
- Mt Coot-tha Library
- Queensland Herbarium
- Council bus stop
- Sir Thomas Brisbane Planetarium
- Mt Coot-tha Visitor Information Centre
- Richard Randall Art Studio
- Cafe/restaurant

2 QUEENSLAND CONSERVATION TRAIL (10 mins)

- Queensland Conservation Collection
- Ross McKinnon Lagoon
- Playground
- The Amphitheatre



This map is not to scale and should not be used as an indication of walking distances. See wayfinding signs for details on distances.

Session 2: Options for Small Group Eco-Ambling Experiences

Timeframe: 11.30am – 1.00pm

Option 1: Trail 4 – Australian Plants Trail

Stop at the Melaleuca Lake

Listen to the sounds of the water. Sit quietly for some time letting the waters of your body feel the movement of the water in the river. Become conscious of where water is in relation to you. In each direction invoke an aspect of water: the bounty of the rain, the power of the ocean, the interconnectedness of the tides of sea and moon, the stillness of the silent pool.

Reflect on times and places in your own life when you have been blessed by water. Think about the feelings that your favourite water places invoke in you. Imagine what the world would be like without water. Be aware that 40% of our planet is dry land.

From your water bottle, offer a prayer of thanks for the gift of fresh drinking water. Pour some water onto the earth with a prayer of blessing and thanks.

Make a commitment to some practical action related to water
eg. to clean up the waterways, to minimise your use of precious water.

Prayer Reflection: Say this prayer as a group or individually before spending time in this space.

Reflection

Water prayer

Loving Creator of water
on which all life depends,
we thank you for the showers
which water and soften the earth,
bringing forth springs, streams,
rivers, lakes and oceans
and all that comes to
life within and beside them.

We thank you for the running water in our
taps.

And we pray for our brothers and sisters
in countries where water is in short supply...
where women and young girls walk miles
seeking water
and the earth is unforgiving and barren.

Forgive us when we waste
the precious gift of water
and when we take it for granted.

We thank you for clean water.
And we pray for those whose water is
contaminated and brings sickness
and death. Forgive us for allowing this to
happen!

Thank you for the rain and for rainbows,
sign of hope, promise and love.

And we promise to speak and act for
the common good—
to reaffirm the human right to safe
drinking water and sanitation
and to safeguard our natural
resources... for our children
and for future generations.
Amen



Photo by Stefania Lucchesi, OP.

Option 2: Trail 3: Bunya Forest

Bunya Pine (*Araucaria bidwillii*) – Traditional Aboriginal food & beverage

Background Information:

Readily identifiable by its domed peak and particularly ancient looking fronds, the Bunya pine (*Araucaria bidwillii*) can grow to a height of 140 feet and is both majestic and dangerous when it reaches maturity. The danger that the Bunya tree presents is found in the form of its bowling ball sized pine cones, which have been known to kill when falling onto unsuspecting victims. The cones can weigh as much as 22lb (10kg). A tree will take approximately 15 years to grow to a sufficient age and height (30 ft) before it will produce mature pine cones.

Each mature Bunya cone consists of approximately 60 seeds attached to a core. The seeds are edible, having a flavour similar to chestnut. However they do have a tough, leathery texture when eaten raw. The nuts are considerably more palatable when they are roasted, boiled or are ground into a flour for making a sweet bread. Additionally an alcoholic drink was produced by fermenting the seeds by storing them for several months, buried in clay.

Bunya trees are indigenous to south eastern Queensland in the area encompassing the Blackall ranges. From late December through to March the seeds may be harvested, however Bunya cones will only develop a plentiful harvest once every 2-3 years. It was during these years of bumper harvest that Aboriginal people from all over south eastern Queensland and northern New South Wales would gather, having been invited by messengers to join the local people in the feast.

The family groups would camp nearby and take part in large inter-tribal ceremonies before returning to their own countries. The festival was an opportunity for people to come together in harmony and also for the important business of trade, to share knowledge, stories, song, tools, weapons and dance.

Upon venturing home many groups would plant some of the remaining seeds which they had brought with them for the return journey.

For Reflection and Discussion on Your Walk:

1. Think about family or community events that have food or harvest at the centre of the traditions. Share something of the ways in which your family or community use food as the centre of celebrations and rituals. What are some of your 'traditions' that you hope to pass on?
2. How might the tradition of gathering around the Bunya Pine for feasting and sharing among Aboriginal communities inspire our understanding of the Eucharist as a communal celebration and sharing of spiritual nourishment?

Option 3: Gardens Explorer Trail – Japanese Garden

In Shintoism, there is no doctrine, no scriptures, no specific commandments. The “essence of Shinto is to go to a place, pray, have a quiet moment and get inspiration” explains Rev Takeuchi. Shrines are crucial to this practice. Tekeuchi says, “By coming to a shrine and praying it gives us time to think about how we can live our lives.”



Ogata’s garden theme in the Japanese Garden is ‘tsuki-yama-chisen’, or ‘mountain-pond-stream’, and you will find all of these elements in this calming setting. Stone paths gracefully wind around the waterlily-filled pond, and a cascading waterfall feeds the stream, the sound filling the air with a beautiful distraction. There are two open air pavilions to sit in and enjoy some quiet contemplation, and you will often see numerous water dragons taking the time to chill out here as well. In fact, keep your eye out on the paths, on the grass, and on the rocks within the pond to catch a glimpse of the statuesque creatures sunning themselves in all their glory.

Reflection: (to be read by group leader)

Drawing from Buddhist, Shinto, and Taoist philosophies, Japanese garden design principles strive to inspire *peaceful contemplation*. They often combine the essential elements of plants, water, and rocks with simple, clean lines to create a tranquil retreat.

Pause

As we stand/sit here let’s consciously remain silent for 2 minutes in peaceful contemplation.

Notice the sounds, smells, and sensations from the air.

Pause

Pope John Paul II reminds us “... to contemplate creation is to hear a message, to listen to a paradoxical and silent voice”. cited in LS:85

Pause

Pope Francis reminds us: “Inner peace is closely related to care for ecology and for the common good because, lived out authentically, it is reflected in a balanced lifestyle together with a capacity for wonder which takes us to a deeper understanding of life.” LS:225

Pause

You are invited to wander around the Japanese Gardens in silent reverence in preparation for some contemplative writing outlined below.

TO DO: Write a Haiku Prayer

Here are some instructions for writing a haiku poem based on nature and its beauty:

1. **The Haiku:** A traditional Haiku consists of three lines. The first and third lines have 5 syllables each, and the second line has 7 syllables. This 5-7-5 structure is a common guideline, but not a strict rule.
2. **Choose a theme related to nature:** You are asked to write a prayer of thanks to God in haiku form. Observe nature and its beauty, think about elements of your surroundings that you find beautiful or inspiring. What do you see, hear, feel, smell...
3. **Capture a moment:** Haikus are often used to capture a fleeting moment in time. Try to convey a single, vivid image rather than trying to tell a story.
4. **Include a surprising last line:** A good Haiku often has a twist or an unexpected last line that ties the poem together, often providing a poignant commentary on the nature scene depicted.

Here are two examples of Haikus based on nature and its beauty:

Gentle morning light,
Kisses dew-kissed petals bright,
Nature's delight, pure and right.

Moonlight's silver glow,
On tranquil lake, it bestows,
Peace that softly flows.

Remember, the beauty of a Haiku lies in its simplicity and ability to convey profound feelings or observations in just a few lines. Happy writing!

Your group may be asked to contribute one haiku to the liturgy later this afternoon.

Write your Haiku Prayer Here:

Option 4: Gardens Explorer Trail – Waterlilies Lake



The lagoon, often covered in purple and pink water lilies, is home to birds, lizards, turtles and eels. Amongst the varied wildlife, you can see:

- Brisbane short-necked turtles
- saw-shelled turtles
- dusky moorhens
- egrets
- cormorants
- pacific black ducks, and
- many eastern water dragons.

TO DO:

Spend some time in creative contemplation. Art materials are available in this space for you to draw and colour something that you see. You can focus on the big picture or home in on something small and delicate.



Robyn Bauer - Artist in Residence Mt Coot-tha Botanic Gardens, Brisbane, 2019

Option 5: Gardens Explorer Trail – Hide’n’Seek Children’s Trail

Welcome to the enchanting Children's Trail at Mt Coot-tha Botanic Gardens.

A Reflection on Childhood:

“Childhood endures as that which is given and abiding, the time that has been accepted and lived through freely. Childhood does not constitute past time, time that has eroded away, but rather that which remains, that which is coming to meet us as an intrinsic element in the single and enduring completeness of the time of our existence considered as a unity,

that which we call the eternity of man (sic) as saved and redeemed. We do not lose childhood as that which recedes ever further into our past, that which remains behind as we advance forward in time, but rather we go towards it as that which has been achieved in time and redeemed forever in time. We only *become* the children whom we *were* because we gather up time – and in this our childhood too – into our eternity”.



Karl Rahner

Wander through this trail and contemplate your childhood that has been achieved in time and redeemed forever to be your eternity.



As you embark on this eco-spirituality walk, prepare to be transported into a world of wonder and joy, much like a child exploring nature for the first time. Here, every leaf whispers a story, every flower dances with delight, and every stone holds a secret. This trail is a testament to the boundless creativity and curiosity of children, their innate ability to find joy in the simplest of nature's offerings. May your journey through this trail rekindle your own sense of wonder and connection with the natural world. Enjoy the walk and the discussion!

In the heart of nature, children play,
Finding joy in each leaf, each sunray.
They marvel at the butterfly's flight,
And the twinkling stars at night.

Tiny hands touch the bark of a tree,
Eyes wide with wonder, hearts filled with glee.
They listen to the river's song,
In nature, they truly belong.

They look to the sky, so vast and wide,
Thanking God for the world outside.
For the blessings of creation, they pray,
Finding magic in each new day.
In nature's lap, they laugh and roam,
Thanking God, for this beautiful home.

TO DO:

As you walk through this garden area,
discuss with another person a place
in nature you most enjoyed as a child.
Share a special childhood story with
your walking buddy.

Option 6: Gardens Explorer Trail – Palm Tree Lawn

In his encyclical *Laudato Si'*, Pope Francis shows the grave consequences of our blindness to the sacred, living earth. He quotes with enthusiasm Francis of Assisi: “Praise be to you, my Lord, through our Sister, Mother Earth, who sustains and governs us, and who produces various fruits with coloured flowers and herbs” (*Canticle of Brother Earth and Sister Moon*).

Sally Neaves from the Rahamim Ecological Centre Bathurst reminds us that “in order for us humans to grasp the enormity and implications of the Universe Story, we need constant reminders for it all to sink in... rituals provide an opportunity for groups to express the sacred depths we encounter in the Earth community, to take up the challenges of our times in imaginative ways, and to deal with the grief we share that may otherwise leave us frozen.”

Yoga, as a practice, offers a unique opportunity to cultivate a sense of unity and oneness with the world around us. It enhances our inner peace, faith, compassion, and curiosity about life’s mysteries. From a Catholic perspective, spiritual well-being is deeply intertwined with our mental health. It’s about the ability to respond to the invitation to be in relationship with God.

Pope Francis' encyclical, *Laudato Si'*, emphasizes care for our common home. It critiques consumerism and irresponsible development, laments environmental degradation, and calls for swift and unified global action. Yoga, in the serene setting of the Mt Coot-tha Botanic Gardens, can be a practical embodiment of these teachings. It encourages mindfulness and respect for our environment, aligning with the Pope's call for responsible stewardship of our common home.

Incorporating yoga into a staff spirituality day can foster a deeper understanding of our spiritual nature, promote emotional well-being, and enhance energy and vitality. It can also help staff members connect more deeply with Catholic teachings on mental health and spiritual well-being, and the principles outlined in *Laudato Si'*. This integration of body, mind, and spirit in the heart of nature could be a powerful and transformative experience.

TO DO:

While in this space, take some time to just sit and contemplate your surroundings. You will also have the opportunity to participate in a brief breathing and meditation session using yoga poses to relax the body and the mind.

Option 7: Gardens Explorer Trail – Arid Region Plants



Be still for 2 minutes simply being present to these surroundings.

Tune into your sense of sight. Look around you with soft eyes and notice the beauty and potential before you. And yes, we know that gazing is different from staring!

Hold your gaze. Simply notice.

Read the following story of Jesus' time in the desert. (Matthew 4:1-11)

The Holy Spirit led Jesus into the desert. There the devil tempted him. After 40 days and 40 nights of going without eating, Jesus was hungry. The tempter came to him. He said, "If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread."

Jesus answered, "It is written, 'Man must not live only on bread. He must also live on every word that comes from the mouth of God.'"

Then the devil took Jesus to the holy city. He had him stand on the highest point of the temple. "If you are the Son of God," he said, "throw yourself down. It is written,

" 'The Lord will command his angels to take good care of you.
They will lift you up in their hands.
Then you won't trip over a stone.' "

Jesus answered him, "It is also written, 'Do not test the Lord your God.'"

Finally, the devil took Jesus to a very high mountain. He showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. ⁹ "If you bow down and worship me," he said, "I will give you all this."

Jesus said to him, "Get away from me, Satan! It is written, 'Worship the Lord your God. He is the only one you should serve.'"

Then the devil left Jesus. Angels came and took care of him.

For REFLECTION:

1. In the story of Jesus' temptation in the desert, he was alone and faced challenges. As you walk through this arid zone, what challenges do you feel you are currently facing in your life and how might you overcome them?
2. Jesus found strength and resilience during his time in the desert. As you observe the plants and animals thriving in this arid zone, what lessons can you draw about resilience in your own life?
3. Pope Francis reminds us that the entire material universe speaks of God's love, God's boundless affection for us. Soil, water, mountains: everything is, as it were, a caress of God. LS:84. Where do you experience God's love in your life?

Write your thoughts here:

Option 7: Gardens Explorer Trail – Tropical Zone



Intention to Notice - Some quiet time to walk through the Display Zone paying attention to our intention to notice.

As you enter the Tropical Zone, take a moment to set your intention. It could be as simple as “I am here to notice and appreciate the beauty of nature.”

It is important to remind yourself that you are part of this interconnected web of life, just like the plants around you. Pope Francis reminds us that we are part of nature, included in it, and thus in constant interaction with it. LS:139

Walking Meditation:

As you wander around pause from time to time and simply focus on one plant that captures your attention. Walk closer and closer. Observe its details – the leaves, flowers, and textures. Pause and rest in the knowledge that all in front of you in this place is your kin, your ancestor, as we share the same origins of the First Flaring Forth 13.8 billion years ago. How amazing. Yes, we are a communion of subjects, not a collection of objects.

Reflection and Gratitude Prompts:

Find a quiet spot near a plant. Consider the following reflective questions and express gratitude for the interconnectedness of life:

1. What emotions arise as you observe this plant?
2. Consider the growth process of this plant. How does it parallel your own journey?
3. What aspects of nature inspire awe in you?
4. How does this plant contribute to the ecosystem?
5. What can you learn from its resilience and adaptability?

Remember that you are part of this ecosystem. Appreciate the beauty around you – the rustling leaves, filtered sunlight, and gentle breeze. Feel the kinship—the communion of subjects.

As you leave the Tropical Zone, carry this sense of connection and gratitude with you. Thank the plants, soil, and air for sustaining life. You are an essential part of this shared existence.

Option 8: Gardens Explorer Trail – Fig Tree Lawn

Experiencing Lectio Terra

Contemplative spirituality embraces a process of sacred reading called Lectio Divina. This “sacred reading” is a way of sitting with scripture or other sacred texts as an anchor for communion with the Divine.

Let us translate Lectio Divina as a form of prayer onto the land as Lectio Terra, reading the land.

- Start your walk in the Fig Tree Lawn area by praying a version of the Our Father, the Hail Mary or any prayer that comes naturally as a mantra to you.
- First, draw attention to how you perceive the land with your senses. Scan and open your senses to the place as you walk (Lectio).
- Second, zoom in and zoom out. Ponder the larger whole and then crouch down and sit with the particular (Meditatio).
- Third, watch and wait for the prayers of gratitude and praise that come to your lips. Your longings, sorrows, joys; hopes and petitions. Offer up your wounds to the soil, the grass, the birds, the trees, the butterflies, and to the Divine presence that suffuses this land like a mist (Oratio).
- Lastly, as your muscles warm and the mind begins to quiet, find yourself passing into the awe and wonder of embodied silence (Contemplatio).

Meander back through each of these as they arise. See if this approach to experiencing the world bears fruit.

Find a Fig Tree as a focus for your Lectio Terra

Stimulus:

Trees have been involved in a number of religious and spiritual practices. Many mythologies around the globe have stories of a “world or cosmic” tree. The roots, trunk and branches of the tree represent the underworld, earth, and heavens respectively. Even biblical scriptures mention trees as in the “tree of life” and the “tree of knowledge of good and evil” in the book of Genesis. Trees have a long and rich history of sharing the spiritual path with humanity.

Adapted from: <https://www.thesoulmedic.com/the-spiritual-power-of-trees/>

In Psalm 1:3 we read:

(S)He will be like a tree firmly planted by streams of water,
Which yields its fruit in its season
And its leaf does not wither;
And in whatever (s)he does, (s)he prospers.

Consider the life of trees

Aside from the axe,
what trees acquire from humans
is inconsiderable.
What humans may acquire from trees
is immeasurable.
From their mute forms there flows a poise,
in silence;
a lovely sound and motion in response to wind.

What peace comes to those aware of the voice
and bearing of trees!
Trees do not scream for attention.
A tree, a rock, has no pretence,
only a real growth out of itself,
in close communion with the universal spirit.

A tree retains a deep serenity.
It establishes in the earth
not only its root system
but also those roots of its beauty
and its unknown consciousness
Sometimes one may sense a glisten
of that consciousness.
and with such perspective,
feel that humans are necessarily
the highest form of life.

Cedric Wright in Earth Prayers Ed. Elizabeth Roberts and Elias Amidon (adapted)

A Meditation: Nature Bathing

Find a large Fig Tree. Stand before this tall, beautiful tree. Look at its leaves – those on the ground at its base, and those you can see high up on the branches; feel the texture of its bark; touch the soil in which it is rooted.

If you can, sit next to the tree, with your back against it. Open yourself to the tree; invite the tree to open itself to you. Perhaps you will feel yourself being welcomed by the tree; realise that you have established an awareness that allows you to touch into the essence of its being.

Imagine yourself, feel yourself, rooted deep in the ground, deep into Mother Earth, like the tree, seeking nutrients and water, discovering in the darkness an intimacy with the soil. Listen and perhaps you will hear water flowing deep underground, feel the cool caressing touch of it.

Imagine you are traveling up now, to the trunk of the tree. Feel the potency, the power, the stability of the tree. Hidden within are secrets, secrets that will endure the life of the tree. Explore the life force here and gain strength from the knowledge found here.

Travel again now, further up the tree, to the swaying branches. Fresh air scented deliciously with eucalyptus. See the sunlight shining upon the leaves, giving power and energy, nurturing it. Feel the sun also nurturing you. Feel joy at the gentle wind playing amongst the leaves and twigs. Feel joy at the beauty around you.

Slowly travel back down the tree, to the point where you began. Feel the link between you and the tree slowly, lovingly dissipate. Bow and thank the tree, in a means that seems suitable to you.

Session 3: Staff Closing Liturgy

Opening Song: Meditative Music

Introduction:

Today we have spent time in nature, basking in the glory of God's creation and taking time away from the busyness of the school day to breathe.

As we gather to conclude our day with this sacred liturgy, let us centre our hearts on the profound connection between our faith and the stewardship of God's creation. Eco-spirituality invites us to recognise the divine presence in the natural world, fostering a deeper appreciation and respect for the environment. In our modern lives, where the pace of existence often disconnects us from the earth, moments like today call us back to a harmonious relationship with nature, echoing the teachings of Pope Francis in his encyclical *Laudato Si'*.

His writing reminds us that, *"We need to take time to recover a serene harmony with creation, reflecting on our lifestyle and our ideals"* (*Laudato Si'*, 225). This profound statement highlights the necessity of pausing to immerse ourselves in the beauty of the world around us, to reflect on our actions, and to align our lives with the values of simplicity and respect for all life. Such reflection is not merely an act of contemplation but a spiritual discipline that deepens our understanding of God's creation and our role within it.

We know that we cannot protect what we don't value and we can't value something we don't connect with. In this sacred moment, let us embrace the tranquillity of the afternoon, open our hearts to nature's nurture, and pledge to live more harmoniously with the world around us. May our prayer this afternoon strengthen our resolve to protect and cherish the environment, ensuring that we leave a thriving planet for future generations.

And so we pray.

Opening Prayer: In the Name of the Creator, Jesus and the Holy Spirit, Amen.

A prayer for our Earth

All-powerful God, you are present in the whole universe
and in the smallest of your creatures.
You embrace with your tenderness all that exists.
Pour out upon us the power of your love,
that we may protect life and beauty.
Fill us with peace, that we may live
as brothers and sisters, harming no one.
O God of the poor,
help us to rescue the abandoned and forgotten of this earth,
so precious in your eyes.
Bring healing to our lives,
that we may protect the world and not prey on it,
that we may sow beauty, not pollution and destruction.
Touch the hearts

of those who look only for gain
at the expense of the poor and the earth.
Teach us to discover the worth of each thing,
to be filled with awe and contemplation,
to recognise that we are profoundly united
with every creature
as we journey towards your infinite light.
We thank you for being with us each day.
Encourage us, we pray, in our struggle
for justice, love and peace.

Reading: Job 12:7-10

"But ask the animals, and they will teach you, or the birds of the air, and they will tell you; or speak to the earth, and it will teach you, or let the fish of the sea inform you. Which of all these does not know that the hand of God has done this? In God's hand is the life of every creature and the breath of all humankind."

The Word of the Lord.

All: Thanks be to God.

Group Offering

We invite staff to share a moment's reflection with our community.

Staff to gather and take turns speaking.

Read the Haiku/Share the Artwork/Using one of the 5 senses summarise the day.

Prayers of the Community:

Reader: Creator God, teach us to be stewards of Your creation. Guide our actions so that we may protect and preserve the earth for future generations. Grant us the wisdom to make sustainable choices and the courage to speak out for environmental justice. Creator God,

Response: Hear our prayer.

Reader: Merciful God, transform our hearts and minds. May we see the world through Your eyes, appreciating its beauty and diversity. Help us to live in harmony with nature and to promote the well-being of all living creatures. Merciful God.

Response: Hear our Prayer.

Reader: Loving God, you have entrusted us with the care of this earth, our common home. We pray for the protection of all that You have created. Loving God.

Response: Hear our Prayer.

Reader: Courageous God, inspire us to take bold actions in the fight against climate change and environmental degradation. May we work together as one family, united in our

commitment to safeguard the planet. Strengthen our resolve to be advocates for the earth and for those who suffer most from environmental harm. Courageous God.

Response: Hear our Prayer.

Reader: God of Justice, You hear the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor. We come together to pray for those who are disproportionately affected by environmental issues. God of Justice.

Response: Hear our Prayer.

Reader: Compassionate God, move our hearts to act in solidarity with the marginalised and vulnerable. Help us to address the root causes of environmental injustice and to work towards a world where all can thrive in a healthy environment. May our efforts contribute to the flourishing of both people and planet. Compassionate God.

Response: Hear our Prayer.

Reader: Generous God, we are filled with gratitude for the wonders of Your creation. In the vastness of the universe and the intricacies of life, we see Your hand at work. Generous God

Response: Hear our Prayer.

Closing Prayer: We say together:

The garden is rich with diversity;
With plants of a hundred families
In the space between the trees
With all the colours and fragrances.
Basil, mint and lavender,
Great Mystery keep my remembrance pure,
Raspberry, Apple, Rose,
Great Mystery fill my heart with love,
Dill, anise, tansy,
Holy winds blow in me.
Rhododendron, zinnia,
May my prayer be beautiful
May my remembrance O Great Mystery
Be as incense to thee
In the sacred grove of eternity

As I smell and remember

The ancient forests of earth.

- Chinook Psalter (from Environment and Sustainability Prayers, Xavier University)

Recessional Hymn: Brother Sun (Giving Glory)

A meditation on Cantic of the Sun – a modern reimagining of St Francis' hymn.

Brother sun, sister moon
Your light shines from the heavens
Giving glory, all the glory
To the Maker

Gentle wind, welcome home
You've been traveling with your song
Singing glory, all the glory
To the Maker

Hallelujah, hallelujah!
Singing glory
Hallelujah, hallelujah!
Singing glory to the Maker
Hallelujah!

Sweetest rain, serenade
Pouring down from the heavens
Bring all your blessings, every blessing
From the Maker

Hallelujah, hallelujah!
Singing glory
Hallelujah, hallelujah!
Singing glory to the Maker
Hallelujah!