



Current Issues in Prayer

February 2016

Welcome! The Pope invites people of different faiths to come together and pray:

That we may take good care of creation—a gift freely given—cultivating and protecting it for future generations.



Getting started:

I close my eyes and imagine myself in the countryside among the trees and flowers, birds chirping, leaves moving with the breeze. Let me become aware of the calm that such a scene brings about in me. I may thank God for the great gift that nature is.



Short story:

Allison's tiny family and all their ancestors, going back thousands of years, have been living with the caribou in Alaska. The caribou live in the coldest regions of the world and move about in great herds. Every day, generation after generation, the families of Allison's community have fed on caribou meat. They use the hides of the caribou to make clothing and other parts of the animals to fashion implements.



In spring, the caribou leave the winter grazing grounds and move westwards towards a vast plain on the coast. There they give birth. The ground being very level for miles around, the mothers may see well into the distance and catch out any bears that might threaten to pounce on their offspring. Moreover, since the land is so flat, there is always a strong breeze blowing that keeps the mosquitoes from the baby caribou. There on the plain, the caribou find the vegetation they require to be strong and healthy. As soon as their calves are big enough, they move south. Here they spend the winter months.

During spring and autumn, the caribou are on the move close to the settlement where Allison lives. Allison and all the villagers move out to meet the herds. Some villagers go out for the hunt. Others prepare meals. Still others watch over the camp. It is vital that on returning home, all would take sufficient supplies of meat to last the family for a whole year.

Lately, this whole cycle was disrupted. Petroleum companies have drilled up and down the whole coast of Alaska. Now they have moved onto the plain where the caribou give birth to their offspring. The villagers where Allison lives would never go hunting on the plain, even if in dire need. But the petroleum companies only care about having more drilling sites.

Along with all the villagers, Allison is deeply worried about the damage that is going to be done to the caribou. If the caribou will be forced to give birth somewhere else, they would no longer be able to protect their young from the bears. Once the number of caribou begins to dwindle, what are the villagers and Allison to eat? They are not able to imagine how to survive without their caribou!



Time to reflect:

How does this story strike me? What do I learn from it?

How willing am I to get involved so as to keep the environment from being damaged? Do I realize that such an involvement will benefit our children and grandchildren?



Let us pray:

Enlighten our minds Lord that we may take care of creation – a gift you have given to all of us. Give us the wisdom to understand that whenever we disrupt the cycles of nature we end up harming our fellow men and cause great poverty.



Inspiration:

“Praise be to you, my Lord, through our Sister, Mother Earth, who sustains and governs us, and who produces various fruit with coloured flowers and herbs”. (St Francis of Assisi)



Hands on:

Sometime this month, I will go to the countryside so as to enjoy, with great respect, the beauty of nature. While in that place, I will reflect on how such environments give strength to all.