

## Don't talk about the river, talk to the river

The 4th of October is the feast day of St Francis of Assisi, but like significant birthdays, the day resonates for longer than just that day. There is too much of St Francis to contain within one day all the love and celebration of him owed and given by all humans, by all beings, by all created.

Have you ever looked up at the stars and been overcome by the beauty and the enormity of it? Something in your heart leaps in joy and recognition. It marvels at something that isn't you but knows you and shares something with you.

Francis gave us the chance to see that we humans are not on our own, singular and the focus of all life. We are surrounded by family and other nations (and by that I don't mean other human nations). God is within us all and gives life and heart to us all. When we try to go it alone, without consulting or including other life and forgetting that service needs to be reciprocated, we damage those lives and also our own lives; love could try to leave us.

"Don't talk about the river, talk to the river", as Sr Makareta Tawaroa's Aunty Julie would say to her. In this month of St Francis, invite the weka to share your lunch; sing to the Moon; tell the next dog you come across "You're the most beautiful thing I've seen today". Sit with the oystercatchers and the seagulls and marvel together at the sea (the sea can't get enough of that!).

And God will meet you there.



### Making the house ready for the lord,

*Dear Lord, I have swept and I have washed but still nothing is as shining as it should be for you. Under the sink, for example, is an uproar of mice — it is the season of their many children. What shall I do? And under the eaves and through the walls the squirrels have gnawed their ragged entrances — but it is the season when they need shelter, so what shall I do? And the raccoon limps into the kitchen and opens the cupboard while the dog snores, the cat hugs the pillow; what shall I do? Beautiful is the new snow falling in the yard and the fox who is staring boldly up the path, to the door. And still I believe you will come, Lord: you will, when I speak to the fox, the sparrow, the lost dog, the shivering sea-goose, know that really I am speaking to you whenever I say, as I do all morning and afternoon: Come in, Come in.*

— Mary Oliver

"We need another and a wiser and perhaps a more mystical concept of animals. Remote from universal nature and living by complicated artifice, man in civilization surveys the creature through the glass of his knowledge and sees thereby a feather magnified and the whole image in distortion. We patronize them for their incompleteness, for their tragic fate for having taken form so far below ourselves. And therein do we err. For the animal shall not be measured by man. In a world older and more complete than ours, they move finished and complete, gifted with the extension of the senses we have lost or never attained, living by voices we shall never hear. They are not brethren, they are not underlings: they are other nations, caught with ourselves in the net of life and time, fellow prisoners of the splendour and travail of the earth."

— Henry Beston from *The Outermost House: A Year of Life On The Great Beach of Cape Cod*

## A Christian prayer in union with creation

Father, we praise you with all your creatures.

They came forth from your all-powerful hand;

they are yours, filled with your presence and your tender love. Praise be to you!

Son of God, Jesus,

through you all things were made.

You were formed in the womb of Mary our Mother, you became part of this earth,

and you gazed upon this world with human eyes. Today you are alive in every creature

in your risen glory.

Praise be to you!

Holy Spirit, by your light

you guide this world towards the Father's love and accompany creation as it groans in travail.

You also dwell in our hearts

and you inspire us to do what is good.

Praise be to you!

Triune Lord, wondrous community of infinite love, teach us to contemplate you

in the beauty of the universe,

for all things speak of you.

Awaken our praise and thankfulness

for every being that you have made.

Give us the grace to feel profoundly joined to everything that is.

God of love, show us our place in this world

as channels of your love

for all the creatures of this earth,

for not one of them is forgotten in your sight.

Enlighten those who possess power and money

that they may avoid the sin of indifference,

that they may love the common good, advance the weak, and care for this world in which we live.

The poor and the earth are crying out.

O Lord, seize us with your power and light, help us to protect all life,

to prepare for a better future,

for the coming of your Kingdom

of justice, peace, love and beauty.

Praise be to you!

Amen.

— Pope Francis *Laudato Si'*

