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The Diocese gives us a list of approved alternate readings for the season of Crearion. Many of them contain the discouraging theme, “Oh, you stupid, stupid humans. What have you done?”

It reminds me of the evil headmistress from the movie “Matilda”, Miss Trunchbull. Miss Trunchbull is the size of a commercial refrigerator and dressed like a prison guard all in dark army green and chains clink when she moves. She never speaks without spitting insults at children. “What a bunch of nauseating little warts you are.” That can often be the message we receive about the state of our earth, when we are reminded we have failed to steward it well.

I won't give a Miss Trunchbull sermon. Most of you aren't oil tycoons, or shipping magnates, or owners of lumber companies clear-cutting forests. At least one of you is actively working to keep oceans healthy. I know some of you who take environmental stewardship very seriously.

Most of us are trying to increase our awareness, are trying to do better to live simply, to reduce our carbon footprint and care for the earth. Others of us might be annoyed that we disrupt the Church's liturgical year to focus on Creation at all. Well, it is the sacred duty of the preacher to comfort the afflicted and afflict the comfortable.

If you are indifferent to climate change, mass extinctions, dirty air and poisoned oceans and increased forest fires and hurricanes, may this sermon afflict you.

If you are already afflicted by the state of the world, may this sermon give you hope and comfort.

Today's reading from Wendell Berry, an agrarian, pacifist and Christian, strikes an apt note. "*We must abandon arrogance and stand in awe.*" I'd like to offer some scripture which inspires awe:

From Genesis: "*When God began to create the heavens and the earth, the earth was complete chaos, and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters.*" (Gen 1:1-2)

*From Psalm 24: The earth is the LORD's and all that is in it,
the world, and those who live in it
for he has founded it on the seas
and established it on the rivers.*

From Job: "*See the highest stars, how lofty they are!*" (Job 22:12)

Berry writes, "*We must abandon arrogance and stand in awe. We must recover the sense of the majesty of creation, and the ability to be worshipful in its presence.*"

Awe, amazement, wonder, reverence. We can only worship God and revere God's Creation if we have the capacity for awe. Arrogance suffocates that capacity. So how do we, as Berry suggests, abandon arrogance?

There is a difficult, difficult prayer called "The Litany of Humility". Its essence is counter to every message society gives us today. It's about 30 lines long, so I won't read all of it now lest we all become so humble we straight away float to heaven on little clouds.

If you'd like to pray it responsively, you can answer, "Deliver me, O Jesus." to the first section, and "Jesus, grant me the grace to desire it" to the second. Ready? This might hurt.

O Jesus! meek and humble of heart, Hear me.

From the desire of being esteemed, *Deliver me, O Jesus.*

From the desire of being loved, *Deliver me, O Jesus.*
 From the desire of being extolled, *Deliver me, O Jesus.*
 From the desire of being honored, *Deliver me, O Jesus.*
 From the desire of being praised, *Deliver me, O Jesus.*
 From the desire of being preferred to others, *Deliver me, Jesus.*
 From the desire of being consulted, *Deliver me, O Jesus.*
 From the desire of being approved, *Deliver me, O Jesus.*
 From the fear of being humiliated, *Deliver me, O Jesus.*
 From the fear of being despised, *Deliver me, O Jesus.*
 From the fear of suffering rebukes, *Deliver me, O Jesus.*
 From the fear of being calumniated, *Deliver me, O Jesus.*
 From the fear of being forgotten, *Deliver me, O Jesus.*
 From the fear of being ridiculed, *Deliver me, O Jesus.*
 From the fear of being wronged, *Deliver me, O Jesus.*
 From the fear of being suspected, *Deliver me, O Jesus.*

That others may be loved more than I, *Jesus, grant me the grace to desire it.*
 That others may be esteemed more than I, *Jesus, grant me the grace to desire it.*
 That, in the opinion of the world, others may increase and I may decrease, *Jesus, grant me the grace to desire it.*
 That others may be chosen and I set aside, *Jesus, grant me the grace to desire it.*
 That others may be praised and I unnoticed, *Jesus, grant me the grace to desire it.*
 That others may be preferred to me in everything, *Jesus, grant me the grace to desire it.*
 That others may become holier than I, provided that I may become as holy as I should, *Jesus, grant me the grace to desire it.*

This prayer chafes because of our natural human desire to be acknowledged and preferred and appreciated.

I once worked for a handsome young priest who lacked any flicker of self doubt. When frustrated with him, the Senior Warden liked to say, "His mother loved him too much." Senior Wardens are good for a priest's humility.

Maybe “The Litany of Humility” chafes because our mothers loved us too much or not enough. It chafes because we live in a world that compels us to push harder, be noticed, be appreciated, assert our value, strive and strive and strive to accumulate and achieve, even at the expense of others, even at cost the environment, even to the destruction of the earth which sustains us.

So what? So why humility? Isn't this litany a bit old fashioned? Isn't the virtue of humility a bit quaint for enlightened Christians like us? This Thursday's Gospel at Morning Prayer tells us why?

“They shouted all the more, ‘Crucify him!’: So Pilate, wishing to satisfy the crowd, released Barabbas for them, and after flogging Jesus he handed him over to be crucified.

Then the soldiers led him into the courtyard of the palace (that is, the governor's headquarters), and they called together the whole cohort. And they clothed him in a purple cloak, and after twisting some thorns into a crown they put it on him.

And they began saluting him, ‘Hail, King of the Jews!’ They struck his head with a reed, spat upon him, and knelt down in homage to him. After mocking him, they stripped him of the purple cloak and put his own clothes on him. Then they led him out to crucify him. (Mark 15:14:20)

Our God suffered every rebuke and indignity, rejected, beaten, spat upon, dying naked in a public execution. The God of the universe embodied humility, showing us it is the lynchpin holding together love and redemption.

Berry writes, *We must abandon arrogance and stand in awe...what is good for the world will be good for us.* Humility is good for the world, will redeem the world. *Jesus, grant us the grace to desire it.*