

Evolving our Spirituality through Land Legacy

DISCUSSION GUIDE #3
FOR LAND JUSTICE FUTURES, SESSION 3:

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Opening Prayer

Let us take a moment to give gratitude to the land on which we sit, and to all those who have tended this land: the Indigenous stewards who have lived in relationship with this land since time immemorial, and those who have immigrated here since, whether through force or by choice. Pause. Let us now name aloud the Native Nation(s) on whose land each of us now sit.

After a few moments of quiet reflection, say together:

God of all Creation and God of the oppressed, enliven our hearts this Lenten Season with a true desire for repentance and renewal. Guide our discussion today, that we might be open to seeing new ways of restoring our relationships with Earth and with her past, present, and future stewards. We ask this through Jesus, who heals and restores and renews.

*Feel free to follow this discussion guide as written or to use these suggestions in whatever manner is helpful to facilitating reflection and dialogue in your group.



Review of Session

As we discern our land legacies and embrace land justice, we find wisdom in our Catholic tradition, which has a wealth of spiritual resources that can support us in our work toward ecological restoration and racial healing.

Such resources include the New Cosmology, which places us within an evolving universe in which all of Creation is interrelated. While the way we in the western world have (mis)understood our story has led to the ecological and racial challenges we face today, our “Cosmic Creation Story” expands our understanding of consciousness and our way of being in the world.

In his revolutionary 2015 encyclical *Laudato Si': On Care for Our Common Home*, Pope Francis insists that “everything is connected.” He understands that the fate of the Earth and those most oppressed by unjust economic systems are intertwined. Our sacred scripture, too, calls us to bold acts of reparation and right relationship.

During “this crucial moment,” drawing from our deep and rich spiritual tradition can embolden us to embrace creative and collaborative land transitions that lead to restoration and healing.

“What we see emerging is the growing shift in consciousness of who we are and what choices we must make, and that what we do together can open up opportunities we never imagined possible.”



Reflection (15 minutes)

Consider quietly journaling for 5 minutes with the following prompts, then sharing with a partner or the whole group for another 10 minutes.

- What emotions/feelings did this workshop bring up in me? Hope? Excitement? Fear? Challenge? Sense of expansion? Other feelings?
- Where and how in my body do these emotions present themselves?
- What from these presentations most excited me?
- Where am I being called to go deeper?

Discussion Prompts (30 minutes)

- What new wisdom and insights did you glean from this session?
- How do you understand the intersections between the insights in the New Cosmology / Cosmic Story and the future of your community's land?
- Rick Ufford-Chase described reparations and ecological restoration as the central call of Christian today, and shared how Stony Point Presbytery transferred their deed to an Indigenous cultural center. Did this generate any ideas of how your community might respond to the call of "land justice"?
- Are there passages in *Laudato Si'* (whether mentioned by Sr. Christin or not) that help you hold this discernment differently?
- What other spiritual resources do you draw upon as you consider ways to work towards racial repair and ecological justice?
- What questions are you still sitting with from these three sessions? Did Session 3 spark any new questions?

*"When we talk about **land justice**, we are talking about ways to protect land and restore ecosystems, while securing affordable access, tenure, and equity to regenerative stewards – especially those from whom land has been stolen, denied, or compromised."*



Closing Reflection

(5 minutes)

Read Sharon Zayac's excerpted closing words from her presentation, twice slowly and aloud. What words or phrases speak to you in this moment?

"Our lives are the legacy of those who came before us. Who do we invite to hold the legacy that we leave, the work we have done, the passion that is ours, the commitment to right relationship? And as we make decisions about the lands we hold in trust, as we acknowledge our long-standing relationship with these lands, we are beginning to understand the power they hold. These lands are not ours to own. They are not our property. Just as they are not resources.

Property is a human construct, connoting ownership, granting a legal right to land on paper. But we do not own the land. No one does. They are part of the commons necessary to sustain the entire community of life, those who inhabit them now and all the future generations, human and other-than-human who will depend upon them. Earth is not an object. She is a subject, one with whom we are in embodied relationship. Earth's gifts of air, and water, and minerals, and soil, and beauty are not resources, a word which objectifies them so it becomes easy to think of them as things, for our sole use, available for sale to others who may or may not honor their inherent value and integrity...

Two of the most hopeful implications of our Cosmic Story are the knowledge that nothing remains as it was, it is always becoming something more, something new, and that it is only out of breakdown, and letting go, that the new emerges. What we see emerging is the growing shift in consciousness of who we are and what choices we must make, and that what we do together can open up opportunities we never imagined possible."

Recommended Resources for Further Study

- *Earth Spirituality: In the Catholic and Dominican Traditions* by Sharon Zayac
- *Race and the Cosmos* by Barabara Holmes
- "Sweetwater Cultural Center: The First Steps to Repentance & Reconciliation"
- Imagining Land Justice Guidebooks: www.nunsandnones.org/imagine

To learn more about this work, please visit www.nunsandnones.org/land or contact land@nunsandnones.org.