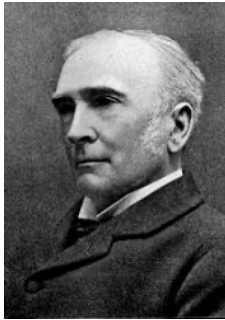


'All creatures of Our God and King'

OFS Monthly Formation

October 2023



Christian history:

Based on Saint Francis's 'Canticle of the Creatures', William Henry Draper, an Englishman, composed the beautiful hymn entitled 'All creatures of Our God and King', just over a century ago. St. Francis's Canticle is based on Psalm 148.

William Henry Draper
Source: hymntime.com/tch

The Canticle was sung by the friars as St. Francis prepared for his Transitus and then he intoned the last passage, on Sister Death. In view of the honour given to him by the creatures, the larks, at the time of his meeting with Sister Death, it seems timely to consider his love for, God the Creator and God's creatures, especially the birds of the air.

The Transitus



St. Francis and the Creatures:

How St. Francis tamed the wild turtle-doves

"ONE day, a youth had taken many turtle-doves, and as he was carrying them to sell them, St. Francis, who ever had singular compassion for gentle creatures, chanced to meet him, and looking upon those turtle-doves with compassionate eye, said to



the youth: 'Good youth, I pray thee give them to me, that birds so gentle, which in the Scriptures are likened unto chaste and humble and faithful souls, come not into the hands of cruel men who would slay them'.

Whereupon, inspired of God, he forthwith gave them all to St. Francis; and he receiving them in his bosom, began to speak to them sweetly: 'O my sisters, simple, innocent, chaste turtle-doves, why do you let yourselves be taken? Now I desire to save you from death and to make nests for you, so that ye may bring forth fruit and multiply, according to the commandments of our Creator.' And St. Francis went and made nests for them all, and they resorted thereunto, and began to lay eggs and to hatch forth their young, in the presence of the friars; and so tame were they and so familiar with St. Francis and with the

other friars that they might have been domestic fowls which had always been fed by them; and never did they depart until St. Francis with his blessing gave them leave to do so. And to the young man, which had given them unto him, St. Francis said: 'Son, thou wilt yet be a friar in this Order, and thou wilt serve Jesus Christ with all thy heart'; and so it came to pass, for the said youth became a friar and lived in the Order in great sanctity" (The Little Flowers of St. Francis, Chapter XXII).

Reflecting upon scripture - Galatians 6:8-10:

“Whoever sows to please their flesh, from the flesh will reap destruction; whoever sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life. Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up. Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers”.



Source: renewalchristiancentre.org

This passage of scripture could be applied to God's creatures, for as St. Francis helped the little doves and rescued them from death, at his time of death, the larks came to chorus his passing, assisting his transition to eternal life. Another example could be, that whilst Saint Clare at San Damiano sowed loving care for St. Francis during his severe illness and blindness, nurturing his spirit, thus he was able to compose most of his Canticle, which has nurtured many a Franciscan spirit over the centuries, including the Poor Clares.

Pope Francis, 24 May, 2015 – *Laudato si'*, paras. 12, 66:

“Saint Francis, faithful to Scripture, invites us to see nature as a magnificent book in which God speaks to us and grants us a glimpse of his infinite beauty and goodness. ‘Through the greatness and the beauty of creatures one comes to know by analogy their maker’ (*Wis* 13:5); indeed, ‘his eternal power and divinity have been made known through his works since the creation of the world’ (*Rom* 1:20). For this reason, Francis asked that part of the friary garden always be left untouched, so that wild flowers and herbs could grow there, and those who saw them could raise their minds to God, the Creator of such beauty”.

“The harmony between the Creator, humanity and creation as a whole was disrupted by our presuming to take the place of God and refusing to acknowledge our creaturely limitations. This in turn distorted our mandate to ‘have dominion’ over the earth (cf. *Gen* 1:28), to ‘till it and keep it’ (*Gen* 2:15). As a result, the originally harmonious relationship between human beings and nature became conflictual (cf. *Gen* 3:17-19). It is significant that the harmony which Saint Francis of Assisi experienced with all creatures was seen as a healing of that rupture. Saint Bonaventure held that, through universal reconciliation with every creature, Saint Francis in some way returned to the state of original innocence. This is a far cry from our situation today, where sin is manifest in all its destructive power in wars, the various forms of violence and abuse, the abandonment of the most vulnerable, and attacks on nature”.

OFS Rule 18: “Moreover they should respect all creatures, animate and inanimate, which ‘bear the imprint of the Most High’, and they should strive to move from the temptation of exploiting creation to the Franciscan concept of universal kinship”.

Consider the tenderness with which St. Francis cared for the little doves and considered their needs and their right to life and care.

So now: Let all things their Creator bless. And worship Him in humbleness. O praise Him! Alleluia! Amen.