

EARTHY PRAYER STORY

'The Three Hermits' story by Leo Tolstoy provides helpful wisdom and deep insight into revealing the heart of authentic prayer, 'how to pray as you can and not try to pray as you can't'.

Three Russian hermit monks lived on a faraway island. Nobody ever went there, but one day their bishop decided to make a pastoral visit. When he arrived, he discovered that the hermit monks didn't even know the Lord's Prayer. So he spent all his time and energy teaching them the "Our Father" and then left, satisfied with his pastoral work.

When his ship had left the island and was back in the open sea, he suddenly noticed the three hermits running on the water after the ship ! When they reached it, they cried, "Dear Father, we have forgotten the prayer you taught us." ! The bishop overwhelmed by what he was seeing and hearing, said, "But, dear brothers, how then do you pray?" They answered, "Well, we just say, 'Dear God, there are three of us and there are three of you, have mercy on us!'" The bishop, awestruck by their sanctity and simplicity, said, "Go back to your land and be at peace."

The story demonstrates a truth. There is a difference between learning prayers and prayerfulness, prayer does not depend on our ability to learn and recite facts, even facts about God !

In Tolstoy's story, it is the monks who live and pray from the heart, and the bishop who recognises their sanctity and prayerfulness, despite their ignorance of the Lord's Prayer. It is about the authenticity of the heart, to be who you are, and be authentic and 'pray as we can not as we can't.'

We live with this earth in mystery, prayer is a mystery. We mustn't presume to know too much. What we do know is that there are different experiences of prayer just like there are different experiences of walking a labyrinth and they are as unique as the individuals who pray and walk them.

*Look deep into nature, and then
you will understand everything better.*

Albert Einstein

*The earth has music
for those who listen.*

William Shakespeare

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EARTH LABYRINTH PRAYER SPHERE

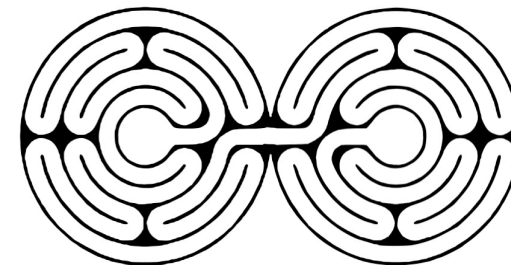
With the earth labyrinth prayer sphere, your prayer can literally be, "all fingers and thumbs", in a good way ! Intentionally following the labyrinth's prayer path. You are embodying prayer. There is no wrong or right way to hold and pray with the earth prayer globe. Go with what feels right for you. Praying, pausing and waiting as you trace the prayer path around the world labyrinth.



You may want to close your eyes & trace the path by touch alone, pausing where you feel prompted to stop. Trust your own intuition. You may even like to make a note of where you stopped on the path and see if it is on land that is being put into your heart to pray for.

All of earth is
crammed with heaven
and every bush
afame with God
but only those who see
take off their shoes.
Elizabeth Barrett Browning

The earth labyrinth prayer sphere has a top and bottom to represent the Northern and Southern hemispheres, enabling you to pray around the world



If you find you've stopped in the middle of the Atlantic ocean, maybe you are being prompted to pray for the seas and all its life forms. Praying for ecological renewal and asking forgiveness for the damage being done to our world's waters. Be open to using your imagination and intuition alongside your rational and logical perception.

If you have stopped on or near a land mass you may want to pray for climate change in that area of the world.

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HOW TO PRAY WITH THE EARTH LABYRINTH PRAYER SPHERE

Find a quiet space where you can't be disturbed. Turn off/ mute your phone. Take a few moments to notice how your body is feeling.

Take a few deep slow breaths in and out, try to be still.

Hold the Earth labyrinth in your hands, or better still go for a walk with the labyrinth sphere your pocket. Sit in a position where you can be comfortable but attentive. Touch the surface of the labyrinth, feel the groove of the path, close your eyes and feel its texture as you immerse yourself in a prayer of the present moment. Use the earth prayer meditations. You may find a phrase or word that resonates with something in you at this moment, give that phrase or word your attention and hold space for it in prayer.

When you are ready slowly begin to trace the labyrinth path, use a finger of your non-dominant hand, the hand you do not write with. Slowly trace the path of the earth labyrinth. There is only one way to the centre both in and out. Take your time, go gradually, unhurriedly.

RELEASE any tense feelings & thoughts that come to mind, make a note of them, you don't have to engage with them now, you can come back to them later. Remember you are loved & unique, breathe slowly and follow the path to the centre. Treat everything you experience and feel as a metaphor.

When you reach the centre, stop. **REST & RECEIVE**. Give yourself permission to be in this moment totally, linger here awhile. Offer your concerns, prayers and decisions to God. You are loved as you are, wherever you are on your unique path.

When you feel ready, **RETURN** back to the beginning, still breathing slowly, trace the path out again, taking any impressions or insights you have received. When you find yourself back at the beginning, take some time to **REFLECT** and give thanks. You may be more focused, and/or lighter, stronger

It's beneficial to journal your experience. So write down your thoughts & observations. How did you feel? What did you think as you took this time to pray with the Earth labyrinth prayer sphere?

It is only when we are aware of the earth, and of the earth as poetry,
that we truly live. *Henry Beston, Herbs and the Earth*

EARTH LABYRINTH PRAYER SPHERE MEDITATIONS AND REFLECTIONS

LISTEN TO THE EARTH.

You are part of the earth and the earth is part of you. You owe your physical existence to the earth. Your body is composed of minerals and elements that come from the earth. When you no longer need your body, it will return to the earth. You are also energetically connected to the earth. The earth is a living being and just as it nourishes you by providing water and food, you also nourish the earth by your presence, thoughts and good intentions for the planet that you now live on.

Becoming more aware and at one with the earth brings you into a greater state of awareness and oneness with yourself. See and feel your connection with the ground you walk on, the soil in which plants grow. The materials that make up our buildings, and vehicles we travel in. Everything around you comes from the earth.

From ancient times we have received two books of divine revelation: the book of scripture and the book of earth, the natural world, creation. It is a sacred communication of God's presence with us.

The founder of monasticism, Antony, of Egypt, when he was asked what he would do if one day he could no longer read scripture simply replied "my book, is the nature of created things, and it is always on hand when I wish to read it."

When we recognise ourselves as a part of the community of Earth, we begin to see mystery at work in the depths of our own souls as the same sacred mystery at work in the gifts of creation. Embodying this spiritual practice helps give insight for our own spiritual paths.

If we think of ourselves as coming out of the earth, rather than having been thrown in here from somewhere else, we see that we are the earth;
we are the consciousness of the earth.

These are the eyes of the earth. and this is the voice of the earth.

Joseph Campbell

Deep peace of the quiet earth to you, who, herself unmoving, harbours the movements and facilitates the life of the ten thousand creatures, while resting contented, stable, tranquil. Deep peace of the quiet earth to you.

Celtic Prayer

THE SUMMER DAY

Who made the world ?

Who made the swan, and the black bear?

Who made the grasshopper ?

This grasshopper, I mean the one who has flung herself out of the grass,

the one who is eating sugar out of my hand,

who is moving her jaws back and forth instead of up and down

who is gazing around with her enormous and complicated eyes ?

Now she lifts her pale forearms and thoroughly washes her face.

Now she snaps her wings open and floats away.

I don't know exactly what a prayer is.

I do know how to pay attention, how to fall down

into the grass, how to kneel down in the grass,

how to be idle and blessed, how to stroll through the fields,

which is what I have been doing all day.

Tell me. what else should I have done ?

Doesn't everything die at last, and too soon ?

Tell me, what is it you plan to do

with your one wild and precious life ?

Mary Oliver

TIME FOR SERENITY, ANYONE?

I like to live in the sound of water, in the feel of mountain air.

A sharp reminder hits me: this world still is alive;

it stretches out there shivering toward its own

creation, and I'm part of it. Even my breathing

enters into the elaborate give-and-take,

this bowing to sun and moon, day or night,

winter, summer, storm, still-this tranquil

chaos that seems to be going somewhere.

This wilderness with a great peacefulness in it.

This motionless turmoil, this everything dance.

William Stafford

Every blade of grass has its angel that bends over it and whispers,

“grow, grow“.

The Talmud

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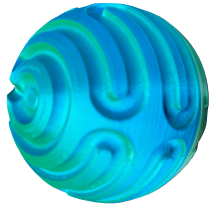
EARTH LABYRINTH PRAYER SPHERE MEDITATIONS AND REFLECTIONS



A cornucopia of readings for prayer, meditation & reflection with the earth sphere. Use the ones that seem to connect with you at this time.

WE LIVE ON A BLUE PLANET

We live on a blue planet that circles around a ball of fire next to a moon that moves the sea, and you don't believe in miracles?



The earth is full of the good unfailing loving kindness of God

Psalm 33:5

This earth we are riding keeps trying to tell us something with its continuous scripture of leaves.

William Stafford

HOPE FOR EARTH

Our mission is to plant ourselves at the gates of hope-not the prudent gates of Optimism, which are somewhat narrower; nor the stalwart, boring gates of Common Sense; nor the strident gates of self-righteousness, which creak on shrill and angry hinges; nor the cheerful, flimsy garden gate of "Everything is gonna be all right," but a very different, sometimes very lonely place, the place of truth-telling, about your own soul first of all and its condition, the place of resistance and defiance, the piece of ground from which you see the world both as it is and as it could be, as it might be, as it will be; the place from which you glimpse not only struggle but joy in the struggle and we stand there, beckoning and calling, telling people what we are seeing, asking people what they see.

Victoria Safford

Now I see the secret of making the best person: it is to grow in the open air and to eat and sleep with the earth.

Walt Whitman

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WHAT CAN I SAY

What can I say that I have not said before ? So I'll say it again.

The leaf has a song in it. Stone is the face of patience.

Inside the river, there is an unfinishable story and you are somewhere in it
and it will never end until all ends.

Take your busy heart to the art museum and the chamber of commerce
but take it also to the forest.

The song you heard singing in the leaf when you were a child is singing still.

I am of years lived, so far, seventy-four, and the leaf is singing still

Mary Oliver

BURNING THE WORLD AS WE GO

How perfect to be aboard a ship with
maybe a hundred years still in my pocket.

But it's late, for all of us, and in truth, the only ship there is
the ship we are all on burning the world as we go

Mary Oliver

THE GOD OF DIRT

The god of dirt came up to me many times and said
so many wise and delectable things, I lay on the grass listening
to his dog voice, crow voice,

frog voice; now, he said, and now,
and never once mentioned forever

Mary Oliver

OUR PURPOSE HERE ON EARTH

Our purpose here on earth:

Is to manifest the very nature of
our spirit,

which is touched by the spirit of
God.

Rumi

PLAY WITH YOUR HAIR

Forget not

that the earth delights

to feel your bare feet

and the wind longs

to play with your hair.

Khalil Gibran

EARTH LABYRINTH PRAYER SPHERE MEDITATIONS AND REFLECTIONS

BUT THE GIANT IS THERE

I thought how utterly we have forsaken the Earth, in the sense of excluding it from our thoughts. There are but few who consider its physical hugeness, it's rough enormity. It is still a disparate monstrosity, full of solitudes, barrens, and wilds. It still dwarfs, terrifies, and crushes.

The rivers still roar, the mountains still crash, and the winds still shatter.

Man is an affair of cities. His gardens, orchards and fields are mere scrapings. Somehow, however, he has managed to shut out the face of the giant from his windows. But the giant is there, nevertheless.

Wallace Stevens

THE SOIL

The word humility (also human) is derived from the Latin humus, meaning "the soil." Perhaps this is not simply because it entails stooping and returning to earthly origins, but also because, as we are rooted in this earth of everyday life, we find in it all the vitality and fertility unnoticed by people who merely tramp on across the surface, drawn by distant landscapes.

Piero Ferrucci, Inevitable Grace

IN THIS EARTH

In this earth, in this immaculate field, we shall not plant any seeds
except for compassion, except for love.

Rumi

THE REAL MIRACLE

People say walking on water is a miracle, but to me walking peacefully on
earth is the real miracle.

Thich Nhat Hanh

ON THIS PLANET

I consider how God toils and labours for me in all created things on this
planet, in the heavens, the elements, plants, fruits, flocks, and all else. He
gives existence, preserves, and makes grow.

St Ignatius of Loyola

LOVE THE EARTH - Robin Wall Kimmerer,

The land knows you, even when you are lost. Knowing that you love the earth changes you and activates you to defend, protect, and celebrate. But when you feel that the earth loves you in return, that feeling transforms the relationship from a one-way street into a sacred bond. The land is the real teacher and all we need is its students of mindfulness.

We need acts of restoration, not only for polluted waters and degraded lands but also for our relationship with the world. We need to restore honour to how we live so that when we walk through the world we don't have to avert our eyes with shame so that we can hold our heads up high and receive the respectful acknowledgement of the rest of the earth's beings.

Sometimes I wish I could photosynthesise so that just by being, just by shimmering at the meadow's edge or floating lazily on a pond, I could be doing the work of the world while standing silent in the sun.

The trees act not as individuals, but somehow as a collective. Exactly how they do this, we don't yet know. But what we see is the power of unity. What happens to one happens to us all. We can starve together or feast together.

It's not just land that is broken, but more importantly, our relationship with the land. The word ecology is derived from the Greek oikos, the word for home

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IN EVERY WALK WITH NATURE, ONE RECEIVES FAR MORE THAN THEY SEEK - John Muir

When we contemplate the whole globe as one great dewdrop, striped and dotted with continents and islands, flying through space with other stars all singing and shining together as one, the whole universe appears as an infinite storm of beauty.

Rocks and waters, etc., are words of God, and so are men. We all flow from one fountain Soul. All are expressions of one Love.

Every natural object is a conductor of divinity and only by coming into contact with them... may we be filled with the Holy Ghost.

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The fulness of the Godhead dwelt in every blade of grass.

Elias Flickr

EARTH LABYRINTH PRAYER SPHERE MEDITATIONS AND REFLECTIONS

All praise be Yours, my God, through Sister Earth, our mother, who feeds us in her sovereignty and produces various fruits and coloured flowers and herbs.

St. Francis of Assisi

Everything in the heavens, on earth, and under the earth is penetrated with connectedness and relatedness.

Hildegard of Bingen

Our task must be to free ourselves - by widening our circles of compassion to embrace all living creatures and the whole of nature in its beauty.

Albert Einstein

God said, "Come no closer! Remove the sandals from your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground."

Exodus 3:5

LOVE ALL GOD'S CREATION

Love all God's creation, the whole and every grain of sand in it. Love every leaf, every ray of God's light. Love the animals, love the plants, love everything. If you love everything, you will perceive the divine mystery in things. When you are left alone, pray. Love to throw yourself on the earth and kiss it. Kiss the earth and love it with an unceasing, consuming love.

Fyodor Dostoevsky

HOW NECESSARY ,THE SAME SILENT LANGUAGE

How necessary it is for us for monks to work in the fields, in the rain, in the sun, in the mud, in the clay, in the wind: these are our spiritual directors and our novice- masters. They form our contemplation. They instil us with virtue. They make us as stable as the land we live in.

Forest and field, sun and wind and sky, earth and water, all speak the same silent language, reminding monks and us that we are here to develop like the things that grow all around him.

Thomas Merton

I arise today, through the strength of heaven; light of the sun, splendour of fire, speed of lightning, swiftness of the wind, depth of the sea, stability of the earth, firmness of the rock.

St.Patrick

OBSERVE IN THE FATE OF THE EARTH

Each of the great forms that Earth takes mountains and hills and plains and valleys and meadows and steppes and swamps and marshes and deserts and forests and jungles and savannahs and beaches and islands- each of these geographies we transmute to geographical biographies of our own personal journey across time and circumstance. We too rise up, we ascend, we fall, only to rise and fall over and over, until we are levelled and become one again with the single mantle that is the resting ground and birthing ground of it all. The meanings we ascribe to the trajectory of our lives are the same ones we observe in the fate of the earth. The finite summit of the mountain's peak, the river's final arrival to the sea, the clearing in the depths of the woods, serve as exemplars and as metaphors for the often steep and uncertain and perilous journey that is our life.

Peter London, Drawing Closer to Nature

MOVING PARTICLES OF THE EARTH

We come from the earth and return to it, and so we live in agriculture as we live in flesh. While we live our bodies are moving particles of the earth, joined inextricably both to the soil and to the bodies of other living creatures.

Wendell Berry

TO BE OF THE EARTH

To be of the Earth is to know the restlessness of being a seed
the darkness of being planted the struggle toward the light
the pain of growth into the light the joy of bursting and bearing fruit
the love of being food for someone the scattering of your seeds
the decay of the seasons the mystery of death
and the miracle of birth.

John Soos

SO FULL OF GOD IS EVERY CREATURE

Apprehend God in all things, for God is in all things. Every single creature is full of God and is a book about God. Every creature is a word of God. If I spend enough time with the tiniest creature, even a caterpillar, I would never have to prepare a sermon. So full of God is every creature.

Meister Eckhart

A SACRED EMBLEM

All things with which we deal preach to us. What is a farm but a mute gospel? The chaff and the wheat, weeds and plants, blight, rain, insects, sun- it is a sacred emblem from the first furrow of spring to the last stack which the snow of winter overtakes in the fields.

Ralph Waldo Emerson

ALL CREATION

God created the world out of its elements to the glory of the divine name. God strengthened it with the wind, connected it to the stars and enlightened it by them, and filled it with all manner of creatures. God then surrounded and fulfilled humankind in the world with all things and gave them a tremendous power, so that all creation would support them in all things. The whole nature should serve them, so that they can live with it, because humankind cannot live or survive without nature.

Hildegard of Bingen

CARE FOR THE EARTH

It is what we are made of and what we live from, and we cannot damage it without damaging those with whom we share it. There is an uncanny resemblance between our behaviour toward each other and our behaviour toward the earth. By some connection, we do not recognise, the willingness to exploit one becomes the willingness to exploit the other. It is impossible to care for each other more or differently than we care for the earth.

Wendell Berry

LOVE THE EARTH

This is what you shall do: Love the earth and sun and the animals, despise riches, give alms to everyone that asks, stand up for the stupid and crazy, devote your income and labour to others, hate tyrants argue not concerning God, have patience and indulgence toward the people, take off your hat to nothing known or unknown, or to any man or number of men-go freely with powerful uneducated persons, and with the young, and with the mothers of families-re-examine all you have been told in school or church or in any book, and dismiss whatever insults your own soul; and your very flesh shall be a great poem and have the richest fluency, not only in its words but in the silent lines of its lips and face, and between the lashes of your eyes, and in every motion and joint of your body.

Walt Whitman

