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Introduction:

In *Laudato Si*, Pope Francis calls us to hear the cry of Mother Earth, “*this sister who now cries out to us because of the harm we have inflicted.*” This echoes the words of Thich Nhat Hanh who suggested that in order to save the world that “*What we most need to do is to hear within us the sound of the earth crying*”.

In an article on Inner Climate change, Pico Iyer suggests “*Our outer environment can only begin to be healed by our inner, and I’m not sure we can ever truly tend to our polluted waters, our shrinking forests, the madness we’ve loosed on the air until we begin to try to clean up the inner waters, and attend to the embattled wild spaces within us.*” He further suggests that a commitment to the environment based only on what is outside of us forgets that the source of our problems – and solutions – is invisible and that “*nature is a word we apply to what is within as well as without*”.

Eckhart Tolle suggested something similar when he wrote “*The pollution of the planet is only an outward reflection of an inner psychic pollution; millions of unconscious individuals not taking responsibility for their inner space*”.

The rituals we offer in this booklet are a way of listening to the cry of the earth, of taking a contemplative pause so that we can take responsibility for our inner space and become more conscious.

We also offer these rituals as a form of subtle activism. Subtle activism is any form of ritual, prayer or meditation that is intended to support collective healing and social change

Please feel free to adjust these rituals to suit your own needs. The songs we have used have been written by Joyce Johnson Rouse of Earth Mama, www.earthmama.org As the rituals flow from the lyrics of these songs, they can be read if the music is not available.

HEALING THE AIR RITUAL

Materials needed:

Words of song
Pieces of paper
Pens

Leader: In *Coming Back to Life*, Joanna Macy reminds us: “*The dance of the air cycle, breathing the universe in and out again, is what you are, is what I am*”. Our opening song reminds us to take care of this air that has been breathed by so many before us.

THE SAME AIR by Joyce Johnson Rouse (Words can be spoken if music not available.)

This is the same air, the very, very, very same air
That Joan of Arc was breathing when
She led to battle all those men
So let's take care of the very same air

This is the same air, the very, very, very same air
Surrounding Newton's apple tree
When he discovered gravity
So let's take care of the very same air

This is the same air, the very, very, very same air
That filled the lungs of Daniel Boone
As he crossed the mountains whistling a tune
So let's take care of the very same air

This is the same air, the very, very, very same air
That Tubman and the slaves all breathed
As she led them north to set them free
So let's take care of the very same air

This is the same air, the very, very, very same air
That blew by Cleopatra's smile
As her barge was drifting down the Nile
So let's take care of the very same air

This is the same air, the very, very, very same air
Surrounding plants that Carver grew
As he added much to all we knew
So let's take care of the very same air

This is the same air, the very, very, very same air
That Miriam and Moses breathed
As they were crossing the red sea
So let's take care of the very same air

Leader: Let us pause for a few moments to come into awareness of that air that we need to take care of, the air that has been breathed in and out of so many before us.

Awareness of the air around us and in us.

Leader:

Become aware of the air around you.
Feel its presence
Gently fan the air around you with your hands.
Feel the gentleness of its touch on your face.

Become aware of the air inside you
Of the air in your lungs
Of the oxygen in your blood stream.

Hold your breath for as long as you are able.
Feel your lungs expanding.
Feel the air circulating in your whole body.

Breathe out.

Slowly breathe in and hold
Feel life flowing through you
Feel energy flowing through you
Feel the power of your breath within you.

Repeat four/five times.

See the energy of the air nourishing all the people in the room.
See how the air connects us to all life - the fish, the birds, the animals, the trees, the plants, the grasses.
We are intimately connected to the web of life through the air we breathe.

IMAGINING A FUTURE OF PURE CLEAN AIR

Leader: Our opening song called us to take care of the air but our air has become compromised because of our actions. Despite this, Johanna Macy offers hope that a new way of being in the world is becoming a possibility:

“The most remarkable feature of this historical moment on Earth is not that we are on the way to destroying our world – we’ve actually been on the way for quite a while. It is that we are beginning to wake up, as from a millennia-long sleep, to a whole new relationship to our world, to ourselves and each other.”

Let us take a few moments to imagine a time when:

The air our children breathe is pure and fresh and healthy

Our cities are smog and smoke free

Our energy systems are eco-friendly and green

Our transport systems are kind to the environment

Our forests flourish in peace

There is an end to the use of harmful chemicals and toxins

We all realise that each one of us makes a big difference

For a few moments think of one thing you can do to usher in this new time
Write this one thing on a piece of paper

Pause to allow time for reflection and writing.

Time for sharing

Leader:

I invite you to hold the piece of paper in your hands and breathe your blessing on it. As you inhale, invite the air to reveal to you what it needs at this time.

Pause

Leader: Eckhart Tolle suggests that

“The pollution of the planet is only an outward reflection of an inner psychic pollution; millions of unconscious individuals not taking responsibility for their inner space.” The madness we have loosed on the air is mirrored within. As we address the crisis brewing within we can also heal the atmosphere that has been compromised.

Meditation /contemplative pause.

Leader: I invite you to close your eyes....become aware of the breath of the universe being breathed in you and through you. As you breathe deeply and slowlyimagine all tension is draining from your body and mind....feel yourself relax more and more deeply....As your breath takes you to a still deep place within, fill your heart with light and grace recognising the goodness and beauty of who you truly are. From that place set your intention for the healing of the atmosphere in whatever way feels right for you. (Pause for 1 minute.)

I invite you to bring your awareness to your throat (you may wish to place your hands there) Imagine you can breathe in and out of your throat as you ask yourself “What am I giving voice to with my breath? What am I putting out into the airwaves? If there is anything you have given voice to that is toxic. Imagine it being healed with each breath. (Pause for 1 minute)

I invite you now to bring your awareness to your ears. Imagine you can breathe in and out of your ears as you ask yourself ‘What am I choosing to listen to on the airwaves? Where am I absorbing misinformation? Where am I closing my ears to the cry of the air? Imagine you can cleanse these toxins with each breath. (Pause for 1 minute)

I invite you to place both hands on your heart, one on top of the other. Indigenous wisdom suggests that our hearts should be full, strong, open and clear. As you hold your heart ask yourself: Where is my inner atmosphere contaminated by being half hearted, weak hearted, closed or confused. Imagine now that you can breathe healing into any area of your body that is sore or tight or tense or containing toxins. Feel the cleansing of your own inner atmosphere, the cleansing of inner pollution. Feel yourself coming home to your inner environment, allowing it to be healed, your inner atmosphere regulating itself.(Pause for 1 minute.)

As you sense your inner environment being healed move your hands out in front of your heart and imagine that you are holding the earth in your hands, in whatever position feels right for you. Imagine that as you breathe in you can clear your inner atmosphere and as you breathe out you clear the outer atmosphere. See your healing breath being blown to all whose respiratory health has been compromised by smog, pollution, and other toxins.(Pause for 1 minute)

Now imagine that other hands are joining yours in holding the earth with the collective intention of healing the atmosphere. Feel the power of being connected to other compassionate hearts who are also breathing healing to the earth. Feel the power of this collective healing breath as it begins to heal our compromised atmosphere. (Pause for 1 minute)

I invite you to bring your hands back to your lap and to gently, in your own time, bring your awareness back to this room, knowing that the earth is better for your meditation and so are you.

Final Blessing:

Divine Spirit, Nameless mystery, Mother, Father God we are called to love the air of the world, the air that holds us in its invisible embrace , that gifts us with the oxygen we need to breathe. As we feel our responsibility for the way it has been compromised, may we have the courage to let go of old patterns of behaviour. As we clear ourselves and the air, may we help the air to regenerate in ways we cannot dream of or imagine.

HEALING OF FIRE RITUAL

Materials needed:

Words of songs/chants

Large candle and selection of tea lights

Leader: As we gather to celebrate and heal the element of fire let us acknowledge, in song, the Fireball out of which all has emerged.

FIREBALL by Joyce Johnson Rouse (to be read if music not available)

Fourteen billion years ago a primal flaring-forth occurred
From primordial universe a billion galaxies emerged
Then Hydrogen and Helium, the elements of dawn
Finally Carbon and heavier elements began to form

CHORUS:

I come from a fireball, grandest fireworks of all
Every element in me is stardust in the Galaxy
I come from a fireball
I come from a fireball started from a part so small
Just a singularity, the rest, they say, is history
I come from a fire ball

Fourteen billion years of light and still we stumble in the dark
From the quantum vacuum into roses and a human heart
Cosmic history unfolds, round and round and round it goes
Expanding wider, wider still and where it stops, nobody knows . *CHORUS.*

Only five billion years ago our sun was born
Only billions more till it burns down and out!

Fourteen billion years of wonder, still we marvel at the show
Through our history we wander, thinking there's no place else to go
Tiamat, Prospero, Kronos, Argos, Capaneum
No one has seen it all before, we are the first generation! *CHORUS*

Leader: While fire has been around for millions of years, scientists believe that the first spark of fire was discovered by an ancient human ancestor known as Homo erectus during the Early Stone Age, over a million years ago.

Litany in thanksgiving for the gift of fire discovered by our ancestors.

Leader: We light our large candle as we remember the first peoples who used fire for cooking. (Lighting of candle)

We now express our gratitude for all that fire offers us.

The response to our litany is: ***Fire we thank you.***

A tea light will be lit after each response.

Response: ***Fire we thank you.***

For keeping us warm. Resp.

For allowing us to cook the foods we love to eat. Resp.

For transforming solids into liquids to gases and back again. Resp.

For transforming food into energy. Resp.

For warmth, brightness and sparkle. Resp.

For transforming darkness into light. Resp.

For the inner fire that fuels laughter and joy. Resp.

For the inner fire that initiates change through passion and desire. Resp.

For the inner fire that enlivens every cell of our body and consciousness. Resp.

For the inner fire that feeds our heart and manifests our dreams. Resp.

For the inner fire that brings illumination, enlightenment, brilliance. Resp.

For the inner fire that burns away ignorance and allows truth to shine. Resp.

Leave time for participants to add their own thanks.

Leader:

Our discovery of fire has now brought us to a moment in time when our burning of fossil fuels is leading to an overheating of our planet. Fires are burning out of control in different parts of the world. In some parts of the world people are dying because there is too much heat and in other parts because there is not enough.

The fires of war, hatred and terrorism seem out of control. This is reflected in our internal states of chaos, resulting in heart burn, rising blood pressures, burn out and failing of our digestive fires.

There is a saying attributed to Harry S. Truman; *"If you can't stand the heat, get out of the kitchen."* Our planet is heating up and when we cannot stand the heat, we won't be able to get out of the kitchen – there will be no place to go. As we begin to recognise that we are all in this 'kitchen' together, perhaps we will begin to take the next evolutionary step, foretold by Teilhard de Chardin. as

the moment when “*for a second time in history of the world, humanity will have discovered fire.*” The fire de Chardin speaks of is the fire that can burn through the illusion of our separateness, the fire that can fuel our passion to work towards a world where all creatures can flourish.

Meditation to heal an unbalanced fire element, within and without.

I invite you to close your eyesto become aware of the breath of the universe being breathed in you and through you. As you breathe deeply and slowlyimagine all tension is draining from your body and mind....feel yourself relax more and more deeply .

Now place your left hand on your solar plexus, and your right hand over your left hand. Imagine you can breathe into your solar plexus. As you breathe in and out become aware of this centre, the fire centre of your body. This is your body’s powerhouse that generates energy in the form of heat, power and enthusiasm. Imagine you can breathe in healing to places where you are overheating or where your fire energy has been dampened. Imagine you can breathe healing into any place within where you are experiencing an imbalance of fire, where you are either overpowering or feeling powerless. Sense your fire energy coming into balance, allowing your digestive flame to burn brightly

I invite you now to bring your right hand to your heart centre.... Imagine you can connect your fire centre and your heart centre, placing your fire energy at the service of your heart, at the service of compassion (Pause for 1 minute)

I now invite you to place both hands on your heart as you connect with the fire of compassion within yourself. . Let that compassion flow through your own heart, healing any place that is experiencing the effect of burn out or harshness. Feel the kindling of the fire of love within. (Pause for 1 minute)

Now imagine compassion flowing to any part of your body that is sore, tight, tense. Feel it flow to where you are holding the pain of the world’s global warming. And as your own being softens with compassion, move your hands out in front of your heart and imagine you are holding the earth in your hands, in whatever position feels right for you. Imagine you are like a golden sun, radiating the loving energy of compassion to the earth, with its billions of beings, humans, insects, reptiles. (Pause for 1 minute)

Imagine you are radiating compassion to all beings that are suffering because of the imbalance of fire, those suffering because of raging fires, droughts, wars, terror, aggression. Allow compassion to flow to an earth that is burning up. (Pause for 1 minute)

Now imagine that other hands are joining yours in holding the earth in loving compassionate awareness. Feel the power of being connected to compassionate hearts all around the world who are also radiating loving energy to the earth with the collective intention of healing our fire element. Feel the power of all that compassion flowing from so many hearts, through many hands to the earth, flowing to all that needs healing. (Pause for 1 minute)

Gently, in your own time bring your awareness back to this room, knowing that the earth is better for your meditation and so are you.

Fire blessing

May the fire of blessing glow in our hearts.

May the fire of creativity ignite our imagination to co-create a world that works for all.

May the fire of passion enkindle in all a great enthusiasm to bring about a new way of being.

May the fire of God's passionate, eternal light encircle all. Amen.