



oikos

the house we live in

Opening Prayer

*Bless to me, O God, Each thing
my eye sees; Bless to me, O
God, Each sound my ear hears;
Bless to me, O God, Each odour
that goes to my nostrils; Bless to
me, O God,*

*Each taste that goes to my lips;
Each note that goes to my song,
Each ray that guides my way,
Each thing that I pursue.*

Reflection by Rowan Williams, Archbishop of Canterbury

“The two words, ecology and economy, relate to the same central concept. An oikos is a house, a dwelling-place: ecology is the science of what makes up a dwelling place, an environment, the way it works and holds together, the ‘logic’ of a material setting; and economy is the law that regulates behaviour in an environment, the active ‘housekeeping’ that manages what is at hand.

We cannot continue to pretend to ‘keep house’ for the human race if we refuse to pay any attention to where in the house the gas pipes and electricity wires are laid, which walls are supporting walls, or where the water is carried off by the guttering.

We shall not be able adequately to deal with our crisis of ‘housekeeping’ without the sense of being a guest in the oikos of our world, the sense that ought to keep together the logic (governing principles) of the household, and the discipline of the household, ecology and economy.”





Going deeper

1. How does it feel returning to the special place you regard as “home”?

How protective of that place are you?

Can you relate to the whole planet in the same way?

2. In your own oikos economy (e.g. buying food, clothes, petrol, using electricity) do you make connections with the wider ‘inhabited world’?

What resources have gone into the items, their transport and packaging, and what dangerous ‘extras’ have been released into the environment?

3. Homes require a lot of effort and maintenance to keep them working. How well do you think humanity understands the processes that keep the Earth functioning?

What could happen if we continue to ignore the critical importance of allowing the natural world to function normally?



Readings and Discussion

Read Genesis 1:26-28

1. What does it mean to say that humankind is created in the image of God?
2. If we are created in the image of God, what does it mean to say we have “dominion” over God’s creatures?
3. What, then, is meant by the command to “fill the earth and subdue it”?

Read Psalm 104:1-25

1. Imagining the natural world as a house/tent-home is clearly not a new idea. Describe how the psalmist sees God’s relationship with the Earth.
2. A number of ecological concepts are described and explored. Where in the psalm can you see things like biodiversity, habitat, food chains, the water cycle, ecological niches? What else?
3. How does the psalmist see people fitting into the natural order and God’s relationship with humanity? Compare with your thoughts on Genesis.

Prayer

Merciful God,

*We have sinned in what we have
thought and said,*

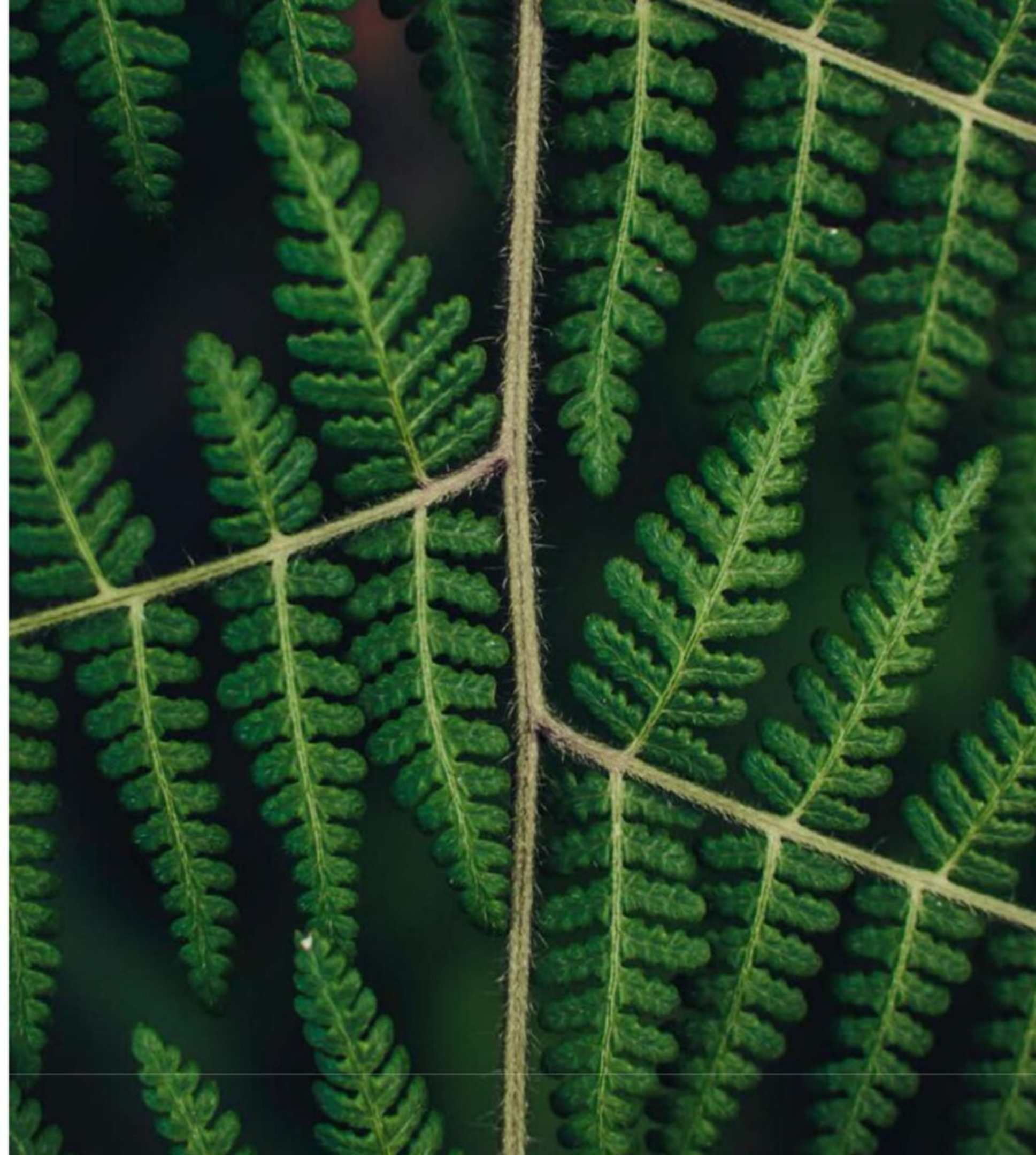
*in the wrong we have done,
and in the good we have not done.*

*We have sinned in ignorance; we
have sinned in weakness; we have
sinned through our own deliberate
fault.*

*We are truly sorry. We repent and turn
to you.*

*Forgive us, for our Saviour Christ's
sake, and renew our lives to the glory
of your name. Amen*

ANZPB P.407





Making it Happen

1. What changes might you make individually and collectively to reduce your impact on the ecosystem?

Try to begin one of those between now and when you meet again.

2. What can you ask local or central government to do to reduce our society's impact on the ecosystem?

3. How can you engage your local community in conversations around what you have been learning today?

Closing Prayer

*O God,
grant us a deeper sense of fellowship with
all living things,
our brothers and sisters to whom in
common with us
you have given this earth as home.*

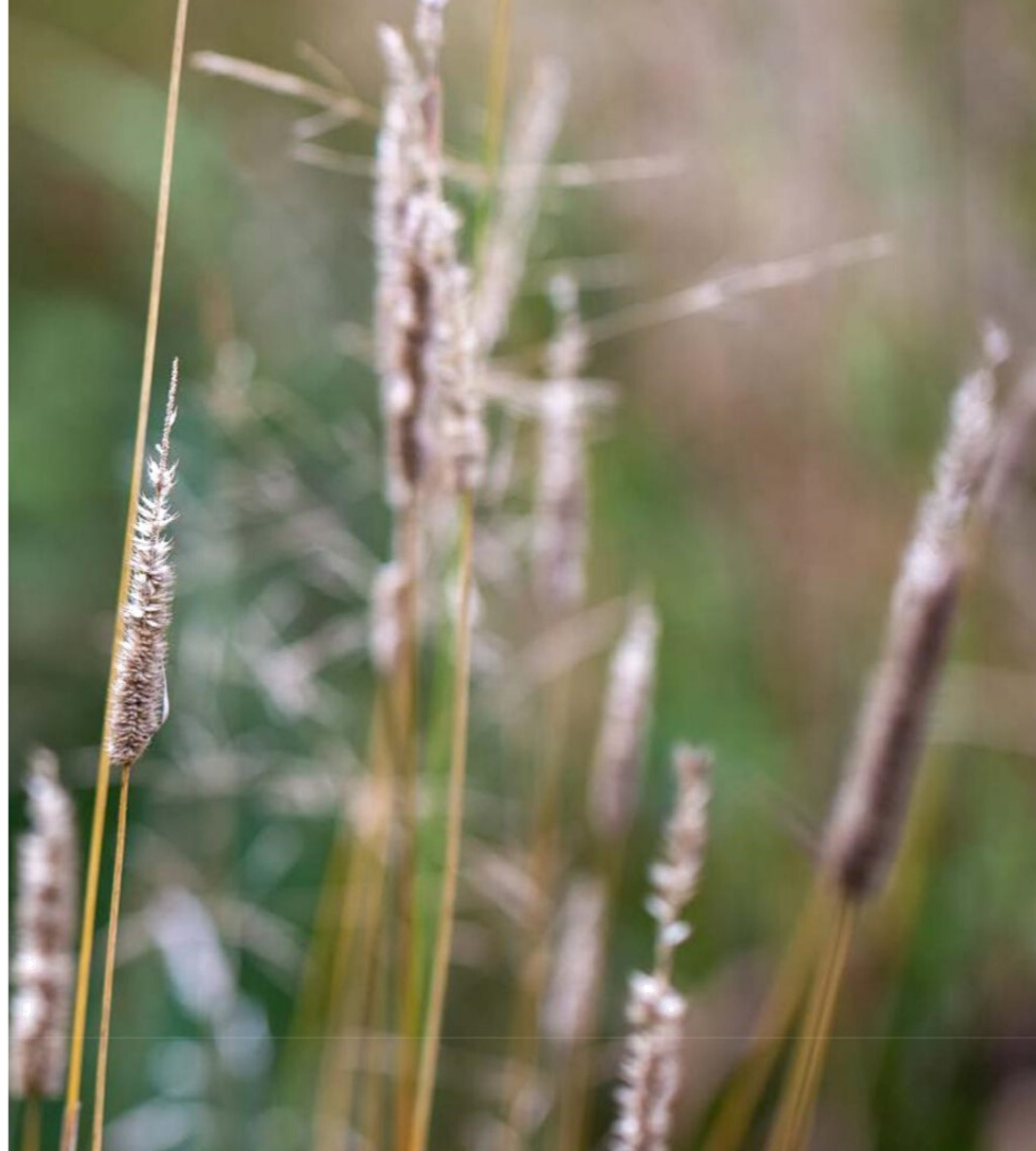
*We recall with regret
that in the past we have acted high-handedly
and cruelly in exercising our dominion
over them*

*Thus, the voice of the earth
which should have risen to you in song
has turned into a groan of travail.*

*May we realise that all these creatures
also live for themselves and for you, not for
us alone.*

*They too love the goodness of life as we
do and serve you better in their way than
we do in ours living it.*

Saint Basil of Ceasarea





Journal entry

Write about how you see God, Creator, Christ and Holy Spirit, in relation to the natural world. This could also be a poem, a prayer or an image.