

Humanity Sunday

(Australian Version 1)

Introduction

Humanity refers to human beings as an integral part of creation. All human beings are included, regardless of ethnic origin or visual appearance. Human beings, as part of creation, are kin with all other living creatures.

Setting

Artists are invited to create a sanctuary scene which celebrates both the diversity of all human beings and their kinship with creation. A special symbol of our kinship is a large whale whose tail rises up before or behind the sanctuary. The whale is a special symbol of what humans have tried to dominate, but which with human concern is coming home to be with humans. Visuals of large whales first killed and now cavorting could be included on a screen. (Thousands of whales are still killed every year, especially by Japanese fleets).

Special Focus

This service has several sections in dramatised form. The more these sections can be experienced as a drama the greater impact they may have. The first section is a dramatisation based on three readings for the day, with a conflict emerging from the first two and a resolution arising from the third. A second dramatic dialogue takes place as part of the confession as we listen to the voices of whales past and whales present. The voices of the whales return with the commission at the end of the service.

Themes

In our call to worship we invite all peoples of all lands to worship with us, including our Indigenous brothers and sisters. The way we have related to whales in the past and our current concern are typical of how humanity has related to the rest of creation. The dramatised readings highlight that we have, in the past, chosen the mandate to dominate (in Gen. 1.26-28) over the commission to serve (in Gen. 2.15). The message of Mark 10.42-45 offers a Gospel answer. The return of the whales is a sign of hope. The risen Christ is the source of our hope.

Optional Liturgies

Another liturgy which comes to terms with the force of Gen. 1.26-28 is *Song of Healing* in *Seven Songs of Creation*, published by Pilgrim Press (2004). Especially powerful is the dramatic dialogue between humanity and Jeremiah, who speaks for Earth.

Songs

A song/hymn based on the image of waters flowing from down from the heights of Eden (Gen. 2) and the throne of God (Rev. 22.1-2) to bring healing to all humanity, all nations on Earth, is located in *Habel Hymns Volume One*. The melody is the well-known hymn *Morning has Broken*. The words follow.

SONG OF HEALING

1. Healing is flowing, deep in the waters,
Flowing from Eden, flowing from old.
All through creation, God sends forth waters,
Oceans of healing, for all the world.
2. Healing is rising, fresh with the morning,
Healing is rising, bursting with grace.
Christ, our rich healing, deep in creation,
Heal Earth's deep wounds and rise in this place.
3. Healing is offered, leaves from the life tree,
Healing is offered nations at war.
Come, wounded Healer, torn by the violence,
Rise from the grave, bring peace to our shore.
4. Healing is given, flows from forgiveness,
Healing is given, flows from our faith.
Christ, give us heart to love your deep healing,
Living forgiveness, even in death.
5. Healing is rising, free in Christ's body,
Healing is flowing, free with Christ's blood.
May this deep healing pulse through our bodies,
Heal the world's wounds still bleeding and red.

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*Second Sunday in the Season of Creation
(Australian Version 1)*

Humanity Sunday

We worship with all humanity and all creation



“Hear this all you peoples, give ear all inhabitants of the world, both high and low, rich and poor. Ps. 49.1-2

HUMANITY SUNDAY

Welcome!

We worship this Sunday with all humanity, peoples of all ethnic origins. We celebrate the kinship between humanity and the rest of creation. We rejoice that humans who bear the image of God now understand their role as servants who follow Christ, the true image of God.

Gathering

Leader In the name of God, who creates all peoples,
the name of Jesus Christ, who gives new life to all peoples,
and the name of the Spirit, the same breath in all peoples. Amen.

People **All peoples of our planet!**
Praise the Lord. Praise the Lord!

Call to Worship

L1 Peoples from every corner of creation,

P Celebrate with all creatures on Earth!

L2 Young and old across the planet,

P Rejoice in the day that God has made!

L3 Indigenous peoples of every land,

P Help us sense the spirit deep in each land!

L1 Black and white and brown and grey,

P Celebrate with us the colours of creation!

L2 All humanity on Planet Earth,

P Praise God for our planet home.

L3 Sing, peoples, sing!

P Sing, creation, sing!

Dramatised Readings for Humanity Sunday

(As these texts are read, worshippers are invited to discern the difference in orientation reflected in these readings.)

Reading 1: Genesis 1.26-28

Reader 1:

Then God said, 'Let us make humanity in our image, according to our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air and over the cattle and over all the wild animals of Earth and over every creeping things that creeps on Earth.

So God created humanity in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.

God blessed them and God said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply, and fill Earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon Earth.

Reading 2: Genesis 2.7-8, 15, 19

Reader 2:

Then the Lord God formed a human being from the dust of the ground and breathed into the nostrils the breath of life. And the human being became a living creature.

And the Lord God planted a garden in Eden, in the East. Then the Lord God took the human being and put the human being in the garden of Eden to serve and preserve it.

Then out of the ground the Lord God formed every animal in the field and every bird of the air and brought them to the human being.

Voice 1 I am the first human being, the voice of the human being in Reading One. I am Adam and Eve. I am humanity!

Voice 2 I am the first human being, the voice of the human being in Reading Two. I am Adam and Eve. I am humanity!

Voice 1 God made me in a special way. The word of God in Genesis One says so!

Voice 2 And God made me in a special way. The word of God in Genesis Two says so!

Voice 1 I am created in the image of God. Do you understand? The very image of God!

Voice 2 I have been made personally by God. Do you understand? By God's own hands!

Voice 1 I am like God, created in God's own likeness.

Voice 2 I am liked by God. I even live in a garden where God likes to walk and talk!

Voice 1 I have human reason. That makes me superior to all other living creatures! Superior! Get it!

Voice 2 I am flesh taken from Earth itself and breath that comes from God. So I am kin with all other creatures. We are family! Do you understand family?

Voice 1 Family? Fiddlesticks! I have dominion over all creatures. I dominate! I tame! I rule all other creatures. Your family!

Voice 2 I have a partnership with all other creatures. We are friends. We are partners.

Voice 1 I am authorised by God to subdue Earth, to harness nature, to put creation under my feet. Yes, to control your friends!

Voice 2 I have been given the responsibility by God to serve Earth and preserve it, to care for Earth as God's garden.

Voice 1 I can conquer creation. I rule! I rule!

Voice 2 I groan with creation. When you rule, I suffer. I suffer!

Voice 1 I am the king of Earth. I bear the image of God! I am king over creation! I rule!

Voice 2 I am a servant on Earth, caring for creation.

Voice 1 I am king! God said so! God said so!

Voice 2 I am a servant, God said so!

Voice 3 Wait just a minute! Stop your arguing!

Voices 1 & 2 I have God's word on my side!

Voice 3 Sure you have! But do you have the final word? Do you have Jesus' word? Do you? (*Silence*)

Voice 3 Who is the one who reflects the true image of God on Earth? Come on! Who?

Voice 1 & 2 Jesus Christ!

Voice 3 Who is the true servant of God? Come on. Who?

Voice 1 & 2 Jesus Christ!

Voice 3 And how does Jesus invite us to live? To rule like the Romans and dominate like their Caesars?! Or to follow the way of the cross and serve as Christ came to serve? Listen to his word from the Gospel for today!

Reading 3: Mark 10.42-45

So Jesus called the disciples and said to them, 'You know that among the Gentiles those whom they recognise as their rulers lord it over them and their great ones are tyrants over them.

But it is not to be so among you; but whoever wishes to be great among you must be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you must be slave of all. For the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve and give his life a ransom for many.

Voice 1, 2 & 3 This is the Gospel of our Lord, the answer of Christ. We are to serve as Christ served.

People Lord teach us to serve.

Procession and Song

We join in song with the children as they enter the church dressed in the attire of different nationalities. They come forward and dance around the huge whale or whale tail, perhaps placing long ribbons over the tail.

Children's Address: 'Why did God make Whales?'

Song with Children:

God made the whales!
God made the whales!
God made the whales to swim and play!
So when you go watching the whales swim
Watch for God who made the whales.
(Melody: *For all the saints*)

Confession with 'The Voices of the Whale'

Speakers stand on either side of the whale tail. Images of whales and other relevant scenes may be shown overhead. A musician may play sounds with a double base, recorder or some other instrument that gives a sense of the mysterious sounds of the deep as background or at points between the words of the speakers.

Voice 1 I am the voice of whales long ago. Ancient whales, humpback whales and the whale that swallowed Jonah. I am a whale.
(*Applause*)

Voice 2 I am the voice of whales today, whales that circle your continent and dance with delight near your shores. I am a whale. (*Applause*)

People Welcome, whales, welcome to our worship. (*Music*)

Voice 1 I am a large creature but I'm not a monster. I am sensitive to the sounds deep in the ocean below and the cries of my calf in a storm. I am something like the soul that feels the mood of the sea.

Voice 2 I am a special species and not for sport. I have an amazing radar, a compass that guides me across thousands of miles through rough waters back to my home base to give birth.

People Welcome, whales, welcome to our shores. (*Music*)

Voice 1 Not so long ago, humans hunted us whales and slaughtered us by the thousands. They came in ships and cried aloud:

Voices 1 & 2 'We rule the waves! We rule the whales'

Voice 1 Humans thought they ruled everything. They did not care. They left blood all over the ocean, along the shores and deep in our memories. And they cried aloud:

Voices 1 & 2 'We rule the waves! We rule the whales'!

People We are sorry, whales, we are sorry! (*Music*)

Voice 2 In recent years something has happened. Humans have become more sensitive, more ready to celebrate life with us along the shore, more ready to save our species. I hear them cry:

Voices 1 & 2 'Whales help us wonder! Worship and wonder!'

Voice 2 In recent years the tide had turned. But many creatures of the sea are still slaughtered senselessly. Thousands and thousands of baby harp seals are clubbed or shot to death in the Arctic North. Some are even skinned alive. Blood stains the snow, the ice and the memories of their kin. Now I hear some humans cry:

People 'Whales help us wonder! Confess and wonder! (*Music*)'

Voices 1 & 2 Will you join with us as we remember the past and promise to care for the wonders of creations.

P **We are sorry.**
As humans, we have slaughtered species without concern.
As humans, we have sought to dominate nature.
As humans, we have been cruel to our kin.
We are sorry. We are sorry.

L We are sorry.

P **We are sorry. We are sorry.**

Absolution

Leader I speak for Christ:
I forgive your sins of destructive domination.
I forgive your lack of concern for creation.

I invite you now to celebrate your humanity
both as servants of Christ and servants of Earth.

P Shalom! Shalom!
Let the whales come home!

Passing of the Peace

L Let us share the peace of the Lord with one another,
including people of every nationality.

P The peace of the Lord be with you

Song

Sermon or Reflection

Song

Offering Prayer

L God, our Creator, through your love you have given us these
gifts to share. Accept our offerings as an expression of our deep thanks
and our concern for those in need, including our fellow creatures on
planet Earth.

P. With all creation, we bless our Creator.

Prayers of the People

<i>We thank God for all humanity. We celebrate with all our kin. We pray for all those in need. We name them now. We close with the following prayer.</i>

**P God, our Creator, as we reflect on the ways that humans have
sought to dominate creation help us to hear the cries of creatures
such as the whale. Fill us with your risen power. Help us to serve
and preserve our planet home and to celebrate life with people
from all lands and nations. In the name of Christ, the Risen
Servant, who is the true image of God among us. Amen.**

Lord's Prayer

Sending Out

- Voice 1** What about the whales? Let's not forget the whales!
Voice 2 And all the other creatures that humans have exploited.
- Voice 1** We should help save the whales and other endangered species.
Voice 2 And we should celebrate the whales. They're coming back to life--like Jesus Christ did!
- Voice 1** What do you mean? What on Earth is the connection between Jesus Christ and whales or any other creatures?
Voice 2 Well, you recall Jesus saying that just as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the whale, so he would be 3 days and 3 nights in the depths of Earth, in the heart of creation, and would rise again.
- Voice 1** That's right! He did rise again. He was part of Earth, buried deep in Earth and rose to bring life to all peoples on Earth
Voice 2 And...And to bring life to all creation, including the revival of whales. Our Lord is the cosmic Christ whose risen presence fills all creation and gives life to all creatures.
- Voice 1** So serving Christ also means serving creation!
Voice 2 And working with Christ to keep life alive on Earth!

L Christ calls you to be his disciples,
to serve him with love and compassion,
to serve Earth and the peoples of Earth.

Will you care for creation?

P **With Christ, we will care for creation!**
With Christ, we will keep our planet green!
With Christ, we will celebrate life!

Blessing

L May the Risen Christ, who brings restores life to all in our planet,
fill you with the his living presence
to praise the Creator and help revive creation.

Go in peace!
Serving Christ and loving Earth!

P **We go in peace,**
serving the Risen Christ

and celebrating all creatures--including whales!

Recession and Song

We join the children in song as they cavort like whales and portray the peoples of Earth.