



Fran, the author's cat, pauses to delight in the breeze near a window. (Brenna Davis)



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PAUSE

This week's reflections focus on air.

READ

All praise be Yours, my God, through Brothers Wind and Air,

And fair and stormy, all the weather's moods,

By which You cherish all that You have made.

— St. Francis of Assisi, "Canticle of the Sun"

*Then the Lord God formed a man from the dust of the ground and
breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living
being.*

— Genesis 2:7

*Another world is not only possible, she is on her way. On a quiet day, I can
hear her breathing.*

— Arundhati Roy, author

REFLECT

God is as close as our next breath, and the intimate scene of God's *breath of life* becoming our own in Genesis reminds us of the sacredness of air.

The average person breathes about 20,000 times a day; thankfully, we do this mostly unconsciously. Because breathing is so natural to us, however, we can easily disregard or forget the holiness of the air around us.

The air that you are breathing right now possibly contains some of the same atoms that passed through the lungs of Jesus and the disciples. These same molecules have passed through the Earth's lungs, the trees and plants, who have turned the carbon dioxide we exhale into oxygen for our next breath. We are connected to past and future generations of people and nature through the air and the breath of life.

The air and wind are also a part of an intricate system that makes weather possible and that brings water to sustain life.

Jesuit theologian Pierre Teilhard de Chardin uses the phrase "the breathing together of all things" to convey the interconnected nature of all of creation and to remind us of the truth that we flourish and suffer together. The health of our planet and of the air are inextricably tied with our own health, and we know that the air is a sacred gift that we must protect.

For me, the air right before a storm, as the cool wind picks up and the temperature drops, always makes me pause to give thanks for this gift of the breath of life. And even indoors, whenever a breeze blows through a window and my cat lifts her head to sniff the air, I am struck by an unexpected feeling of thanksgiving as she notices and delights in what I often ignore.

Pause and take a few deep breaths. Take a moment to express gratitude for this interconnected system that God created to sustain life. Then reflect on the following questions:

- When are you most aware of the sacredness of air?
- How will you use the gift of the *breath of life* to build God's dream of justice and love for the earth?
- Sit in silence for a few moments, aware of your breath. What new world can you hear breathing?

ACT

- Bring to mind anyone who is affected by air pollution, poor air quality due to wildfires or an increase in air temperatures and humidity, and say a prayer for them. Include specific members of your own community if you're currently affected by any of these issues.

- Pause and intentionally take a deep breath a few times throughout the day today to reconnect with the breath of life. Let the gift of air be a reminder that God is with you and as close as each next breath.
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