

PRAISE FOR THE FOUR ELEMENTS

(light a candle)

God, we thank you and give you praise for brother Fire.

We walk by Fire's light.
Even through darkened times and places,
Fire illuminates each step along the path,
Even when the distant view is unclear and in shadow.

Fire purifies us, burning away the cluttered underbrush
And making way for new growth to sprout forth from the ashes.

Fire warms and comforts us,
Dances for us and energizes us.

God, we thank you and give you praise for brother Fire. *(brief pause)*

(pass around a bowl of water, each person touching the water)

God, we thank you and give you praise for sister Water.

We witness Water's power to shape earth's canyons and coastlines.
Water surrounds us with warmth and safety in our mother's womb.
Water blesses the earth with rain and sustains our life.
She cleanses and refreshes us, washing over us in gentle streams.

Water awes us with her beauty
As waves crash against rocks or gently roll onto the shore,
As she cascades down a waterfall
Or blankets a mountain with a soft white cloak,
As she reflects the beauty of the sky and trees in her clear lakes
Or shrouds a valley in an early morning mist.

God, we thank you and give you praise for sister Water. *(brief pause)*

(close your eyes and concentrate on breathing in and out)

God, we thank you and give you praise for father Air.

We are in awe of Air's power to create change—
In the roar of a tornado or in a whisper heard only within our hearts.

Air serenades us as it blows through the trees and canyons
Or simply rustles through the fallen autumn leaves.
Air cools us on a hot summer night,
Brings bitter chill in winter
And carries the sweet scents of summer.
Air stirs us to action in song and symphony.

God, we thank you and give you praise for father Air. *(brief pause)*

(with eyes closed stand upon mother Earth and feel the connection)

God, we thank you and give you praise for mother Earth.

Our feet tread an almost imperceptible path
Across Earth's valleys, mountains, pastures, deserts and woodlands.

Earth sustains our life with the abundance of her harvests.
She shapes us and forms us from the very elements of herself.

Earth knows her great power,
From deep within her molten core,
Reshaping, reforming and renewing herself.

Earth cradles us on our journey
And enfolds us when the journey is complete.

God, we thank you and give you praise for mother Earth. *(brief pause)*

(Moments of silent reflection)

Closing Prayer: *(together)*

God, we praise you for the wonders of your creation—sun and moon, stars and sky, earth and air, fire and water, north and south, east and west. We know your love through loving relationships with you and each other. We know that we are called to right relationships, contemplation and action, prayer and service. We work to provide care for the sick, welcome for the stranger, shelter for those in need, and to promote wholeness of body, mind and spirit. We believe that you call us to work within structures while we extend the boundaries of possibility. Mother/Father God, grant us your creativity, the courage of Jesus and the wisdom of your Spirit as we serve your people and work to promote healing, health, wholeness and hope in our world. Amen.

By Beatrice Hernandez, OSF
Wheaton Franciscans—2010

(This prayer is written in the Native American tradition and in the tradition of St Francis' Canticle of Creation.)