

I've taken to praying outdoors. I go outside, feel the good earth beneath my feet and the wind on my face, and I sing to the trees—to oak and beech, hemlock and pines. Making up the words and music as I go along, I sing my grief to the trees that are going down, and my grief for so much more—for what we have lost and are losing, and for what we are likely to lose. I sing my outrage about these beautiful old trees being cut to the roots, their bodies chipped to bits and hauled away to sell. I sing my fury about the predicament we're in as a species. I sing my protest of the political and corporate powers-that-be that drive forward relentlessly with business as usual, razing forests, drilling for more oil and fracked gas, digging for more coal, expanding pipeline construction, and opening up public lands and waters to endless exploitation, as if Earth were their private business and they were conducting a liquidation sale. I sing out my shame to the trees, my repentance and apology for the part I have played in Earth's destruction and for the part my ancestors played when they stole land and chopped down the original forests of the Native peoples who lived here. I sing my praise for the beauty of trees and my resolve not to let a day go by that I don't celebrate the precious living world of which we are so blessedly a part. I'm not finished until I sing my determination to renew action for trees and for all of God's Creation. . . .

So our prayer may be noisy and expressive, or it may be very quiet. It may be the kind of prayer that depends on listening in stillness and silence with complete attention: listening to the crickets as they pulse at night, listening to the rain as it falls, listening to our breath as we breathe God in and breathe God out, listening to the inner voice of love that is always sounding in our heart. A discipline of contemplative prayer or meditation can set us free from the frantic churn of thoughts and feelings and enable our spirit to rest and roam in a vaster, wilder space.