

Season of Creation 2022 *“Listening to the Voice of Creation”*

## **May We Humbly and Heartfully Hear**

We will soon celebrate the **2022 Season of Creation** (September 1 – October 4). The theme for this year is ***“Listening to the Voice of Creation”***. True listening requires an open heart as to what might be heard.

My spiritual home for decades was a wonderful place with a unique name: *“Lebh Shomea House of Prayer”*. Lebh Shomea is Hebrew for ***“listening heart”***. This is from the story of young Solomon and his response to God after the offer from God for Solomon to ask for anything. Here is Solomon’s response in the first book of Kings (1 Kings 7-9):

*“Now, LORD, my God, you have made me, your servant, king to succeed David my father; but I am a mere youth, not knowing at all how to act— I, your servant, among the people you have chosen, a people so vast that it cannot be numbered or counted. Give your servant, therefore, a **listening heart...**”*

In comparison to the age of the Universe or even to the age of planet Earth, we contemporary humans are mere youths. Would that we, in our youthfulness as a species, have the humility to implore God for wisdom, for understanding, for a **listening heart!**

***“Listening to the Voice of Creation”***. This very theme challenges our Western mindset, which does not accord a voice to Creation. Our dominant perspective gives no *inherent* value to Creation, Creation’s only value is economic. A healthy forest, for example, is not *numinous*, a forest is not *revelatory*. A forest does not have any spiritual value...nor does the ecological fact that the forest is habitat for countless species even matter. A forest’s principal value, according to our Western vision, is economic: *how many board feet of lumber are there in that forest waiting to be extracted.*

For us to engage in “listening to the voice of Creation” requires that we step outside of a dominant and damaging perspective in which we have all been formed and (at least somewhat) subscribe to.

Inherent in religious life are religious vows, one of which is obedience. My understanding of obedience is that it means *“to listen to”*. What would it mean therefore to be obedient (*to listen to*) the “voice of Creation”? Once we truly are obedient to (listen to) this voice, how might we be accountable?

I reflect upon the Pope’s listening to Indigenous Peoples and their suffering. Once one listens, and takes to heart what is heard, then there is accountability. Perhaps that is why we Western people have been such poor listeners to Creation (and to Indigenous Peoples)—we would rather *not* hear, because we would rather *not* be accountable and therefore have to change our ways.

Let us pray in this month (of August) before the Season of Creation to be gifted with listening hearts. Let us pray for humility. Let us pray for courage to step outside of a dominant and damaging paradigm.

Let us understand humanity not as the pinnacle and crowning achievement of Creation. Perhaps we will become only truly human once we see ourselves as kin *with* and truly listen *to* Creation.

Then we can humbly and heartfully listen and heed these words from Job 12: 7-8:

*“But now ask the animals to teach you,*

*and the birds of the air to tell you;*

*or the reptiles on Earth to instruct you,*

*and the fish of the sea to inform you.”*