

Mother Earth Day Assembly

Audience: Primary Schools

Duration: 25 minutes

The assembly can be used on Mother Earth Day every year on the 22nd of April and on any other occasion you would like to focus on environmental issues.

A conversation between Francis of Assisi, Kateri Tekakwitha and Pedro Arrupe

Characters [can be a mixture of teachers and pupils]

Narrator

Francis of Assisi (wearing a Franciscan robe)

Kateri Tekakwitha (wearing Native American dress)

Pedro Arrupe (wearing a Jesuit robe and berretta)

A pupil (incognito) in front row

[Three characters in period dress stand with their backs to the audience. Each wears a sign on their back indicating who they are. Once the narrator reads their biography each turns around.]

Narrator:

Francis of Assisi was the son of a wealthy cloth merchant in 12th century Italy. Francis gave up his family's wealth to pursue a simple life of service and to follow God. He founded the Franciscan Order. He is noted for his love of the natural world and is one of the patron saints of ecology and the environment.

Kateri Tekakwitha lived in the 1600s and was Native American. She lost her family to smallpox at the age of 4 and was severely disfigured by the disease herself. She went to live with an anti-Christian uncle. She was deeply impressed by the words and actions of Jesuit missionaries and in spite of the opposition of her family became a Christian. For this she faced persecution from her own people and eventually fled some 200 miles away to the Christian Indian Mission of St. Francis Xavier. She was noted for her kindness, prayer life and for her courage in suffering. She came to be known as 'The Lily of the Mohawks'. She was canonised in 2012.

Pedro Arrupe was the Superior General of the Society of Jesus in the 1960s and 70s. Like Ignatius Loyola he was from the Basque region of Spain. Initially he trained as a medic, but later decided to become a Jesuit priest. He was novice master in Hiroshima, Japan at the time of the dropping of the nuclear bomb. He placed particular emphasis on outreach to the marginalised in society and established the Jesuit Refugee Service. It was Fr. Arrupe who coined the Phrase 'men (and women) for others.

The place is heaven. The time is now. The conversation is...

Kateri: Sigh. They are making me a patron saint of ecology and the environment and I really do not know what to do. It is a huge task.

Francis: Me too! I can't help thinking that they have left it a little late. It certainly took them a long time to get the message. It was easier preaching to the birds, at least they listened.

Kateri: Yes, I imagine that the wolf of Gubbio was a picnic compared to the people who are living today.

Francis: Yes, the wolf of Gubbio! How the villagers came to love that old wolf...once they tried to stop killing it. You know once they made friends with it, it became like a pet. They even named it. I think that they called it Lobo. They were all very sad when it died.

Kateri: If only it hadn't said 'subdue' and 'be masters' in Genesis. Human beings seem to associate it with violence, just like the people of Gubbio did with the wolf.

Francis: You know, with the way that people treat the environment, if God had been a landlord, humans would have been evicted years ago for the mess that we've made of his property!

Kateri: Perhaps, we were fortunate. We lived at a time when today's issues just didn't exist. There was no carbon footprint, no green-houses gasses, no CO2 emissions, no landfill problems, no deforestation and no global warming. Although the Romans and the Tudors did have a go at CO2 emissions and deforestation!

Francis: Yes, but they just didn't have the technology to wreak all the havoc that has happened since the industrial revolution.

Kateri: I think too, that my native culture got many things right about the environment. We understood that we were dependent on nature. Remember what Sitting Bull said?

Francis: Yes, *"Only after the last tree has been cut down, only after the last river has been poisoned, only after the last fish has been caught, only then will you find that money cannot be eaten."*

Kateri: I do think that people are becoming more aware, think of all the recycling that is happening and there is a greater willingness to help those in the world who are less well off. To live simply.

Francis: Yes, but there is still so much to do. Think about it! The polar ice caps are melting at an alarming rate and many species are endangered and may soon become extinct. Noah is particularly upset about that! Human beings have had the resources to feed everyone on the planet since the 1950's, yet every day 36,000 people, many of them children, die from starvation. That is to say that during the time it takes for this assembly 137 people in the world will have died from hunger.

[He looks away and motions.]

That's basically like *an entire year group* being wiped out while we are having this conversation.

[They stare silently at the audience, contemplating this fact.]

[Enter Pedro Arrupe]

Francis: Fr. Arrupe, Greetings.

Pedro: Brother Francis, Sister Kateri, greetings. I couldn't help overhearing your conversation about the environment. You two do have your work and prayer life cut out for you. The human race can be pretty stubborn at times!

Kateri: You should know. You lived through the bombing at Hiroshima! Not one of human kind's better moments.

Pedro: No, not at all. We haven't always been particularly good stewards of God's creation, have we? But still, I am always hopeful. Take for example that group down at [cite location of your school]

Francis: Yes, I have heard about the work they are doing.

Kateri: Did you know that they now recycle paper, cardboard, batteries, ink cartridges and plastic. [Use relevant examples]

Pedro: ***[Getting quite animated]*** Yes, and last year [Here again use relevant local examples]

For example:

The College community donated nearly two tons of reusable household items to Glasgow Starter Packs and sent clothes that they weren't using to a local charity that takes care of homeless people.

Francis: And there were the [use relevant local examples].

For example:

Field Trips in Geography, the S2 Environment Awareness Day, Outdoor Education and Duke of Edinburgh.

Pedro: And, they also reach out to the Community. There is the [use relevant local examples]

For example:

...Children's Fund, the Lourdes Pilgrimage, and...um, well, the Arrupe Programme. They are looking out for their fellow human beings!

Kateri: They are even getting better about turning off the lights and the computers automatically switch off each evening. I think that you are right. They are getting the message. They were even brainstorming to generate new ideas this week.

Francis: Well, maybe they are listening, perhaps almost as well as the birds!

Pedro: That reminds me, I need to make a telephone call.

[Fr. Arrupe takes out a mobile and dials.]

[A phone rings in the audience and a pupil stands up.]

Pedro: Yes, [NAME], this is Fr. Arrupe. Yes, Fr. Pedro Arrupe, former Superior General of the Society of Jesus, calling from heaven.

Pupil: Sorry, who? I think you have a wrong number. **[Starts to hang up]**

Pedro: No, [NAME], don't hang up. It's me Fr. Pedro Arrupe.

The Headmaster asked me to give you a ring, something about the matter of your locker. Yes, cleaning up the environment begins at home and The Head (mistress/master) asks for no more science experiments in your locker! [NAME], remember! Tuna begins to smell after three days.

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