



Welcome to Awakening Our Ecological Consciousness through the Way of Beauty

This resource is meant to complement the ecological reflection guides linking the Ethical and Professional Standards of Practice to issues of Eco-Justice. You can access the nine reflection guides [here](#).

We propose that the Indigenous art commissioned for the Ethical and Professional Standards and found on the eco-reflection guides can be a way of exploring our relationship with God and God's Creation and the ways in which we may be called, as educators, to act in new ways to care for our common home and to help form students in a greater care for the Earth as part of our Christian responsibility.

As Catholics, we affirm that God is everywhere. We hear in Scripture that God's glory fills the earth (Isaiah 6:3), that there is nowhere we can flee from God's presence (Psalm 139: 7-12), and that God is over all, through all and in all (Ephesian 3:4-6). We want to distinguish this insight from a purely pantheistic view that equates God and nature. See here how Pope Francis speaks about the interconnectedness of everything:

We can hardly consider ourselves to be fully loving if we disregard any aspect of reality: "Peace, justice and the preservation of creation are three absolutely interconnected themes, which cannot be separated and treated individually without once again falling into reductionism". Everything is related, and we human beings are united as brothers and sisters on a wonderful pilgrimage, woven together by the love God has for each of his creatures and which also unites us in fond affection with brother sun, sister moon, brother river and mother earth. (*Laudato Si*, 92)

These works of art express a deeply connected relationship between all aspects of Creation and can be helpful to us in seeing this interconnectedness in a new way.

We encourage you to approach this reflection prayerfully and as a community. This reflection is best shared in a group. For each of the standards, the same process can be followed.

Step 1: Pause on the word or words that name the Standard. Allow participants to hear the word spoken and call to mind any images it evokes. **Then move to the next slide which shows the art.** In each case, the first slide shows the whole artwork, a second slide offers a close-up of some element. Stay with the whole artwork for a few minutes to allow participants time to see the whole image. Then, go to the next slide to show the close-up. Ask the first question - Step 2 - as you display both the previous slide and the closeup slide. You may return to the whole artwork as you work your way through the Steps 2 - 5 below.

Step 2: What do we see? Take time to listen to the observations of everyone. These are meant to be simple observations - noticing figures or shapes, colours that strike the viewer, patterns - both explicit and implicit, etc. Some sharing may take the form of questions; that is, some participants may ask: What is that shape or figure in the corner? or What animal is that exactly? Seek the wisdom of the room to suggest a response.

Step 3: What do you think it means? Remember that art is a form of communication and the artist is intending to communicate something to every observer. No one needs a special key or code to participate here. This is a question of sharing what we think. Our thinking can, of course, be aided by the reflection of others. This group sharing may lead to someone coming to a new understanding or someone finding their initial thoughts affirmed or

deepened. As the leader of this reflection, you may choose to refer to the [Guide for Exploring the Standards of Practice](#) (hyperlink) which includes some of the artists' own reflection on the art. The art was created specifically for each of the standards, however, and was not originally linked to the question of ecological justice as it has been in its current use on the Eco Placemats. It is interesting to see how it has been seen to be relevant in this new way. You may choose to share some of the artists' thoughts but do so after the group has had ample opportunity to share on their own. Giving people the artists' description of the work too early may shut down discussion and lead participants to believe that there is only one right way to see the artwork. This is, of course, not true.

Step 4: What is being awakened in us in our reflection on this artwork? Have the group suggest what this may be helping us to see or see in a new way about our own understanding of ecological justice or our sense of how to inspire and form students. Here, we are contemplating the beauty of these works and asking how it helps us to see differently. It becomes a faith activity when we prayerfully ask God to lead us in our new insights to a right understanding of our relationships to Creation and the Creator and our fellow creatures.

Step 5: End prayerfully asking that God help to lead you to a deeper love of all Creation. Consider a moment of silence to allow for personal prayer. You may say the following or something similar: "God, through the beauty of all Creation you reveal yourself to us. Help each of us to see our calling as an educator in a new way aided by the beauty of this art called [insert the name of the standard here]. Amen." Proceed to the next standard.

You may close the session using one of the prayers from Pope Francis' encyclical *Laudato Si* [[hyperlink](#)] or another suitable prayer.