

Dandelion Theology

April 26, 2026

This may or may not be a scene from my neighborhood last summer: A child crouches in the middle of her yard. For acres around her, the lawns feature trimmed grass, precision mowing, bordered edges. But hers, to the irritation of the neighbors, is rife with dandelions, rising like tiny suns through the cracks of conformity.

To some, they are weeds. To her, they are wishes. Medicine. Food. Bouquets of wild beauty. Resurrection with roots.

She plucks one yellow bloom, holds it up to the morning light, and discovers what the grown-ups forgot: what we call nuisance, God often calls miracle. Because dandelions do not ask permission to bloom. They do not wait for ideal conditions.

They push through concrete. They feed bees. They heal soil. They scatter seeds on the wind for miles. Mow them down, and they grow back lower, wiser, more resilient.

In other words: they practice Easter. And on this fourth Sunday of Easter, with Psalm 23 in one hand and John 10 in the other, perhaps the church needs a little dandelion theology.

“The Lord is my shepherd...”

Not my dictator. Not my exploiter. Not my CEO. My shepherd.

A shepherd does not strip-mine the pasture. A shepherd does not poison the stream. A shepherd does not sacrifice the sheep so the powerful can get richer.

A shepherd leads beside still waters. Restores souls. Protects pathways. Makes life possible.

Psalm 23 is not just private comfort for hospital rooms and funerals. It is an ecological vision. It is a picture of divine care rooted in green pastures, clean water, balance, and belonging.

This month, as humanity once again lifted its eyes toward the heavens with Artemis II, the mission that carried human beings around the moon for the first time in more than fifty years, we are reminded of something profound: the farther we travel into space, the more precious Earth becomes. Astronauts have said it time and again. From the moon, borders disappear. From orbit, politics shrink. From space, Earth is not a possession. It is a blue-and-green miracle suspended in darkness. Fragile. Radiant. Shared.

In one sense, Artemis is about exploration. But spiritually, it’s about perspective. Because sometimes you have to step back, take in the biggest picture ever, to truly see what has been beneath your feet all along: not property, not product, not profit—but pasture. Gift. Creation.

And Jesus, in John’s Gospel, says: “I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly.” Abundance. Not just for some. Not just for shareholders. Not just for nations wealthy enough to insulate themselves while others drown.

Abundant life for sheep. For fields. For rivers. For pollinators. For forests. For future generations.

Jesus does not describe himself as the thief. He names the thief: “The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy.”

And if we are honest this Earth Day, we know what theft looks like. It looks like protected wilderness sacrificed for profit. Freshwater endangered by greed. Forests clear-cut. Oceans choked. Species erased. The sacred desecrated for short-term gain.

As Richard Rohr, one of the greatest spiritual writers of our time, reminds us, the great spiritual mistake is dividing the world into sacred and profane, as though God lives here but not there, in church but not in wetlands, in sanctuaries but not in soil. This is one of the deepest truths that religion so often gets wrong: Nothing is profane unless we desecrate it. The Earth is not a warehouse of resources. It is not raw material for empire. It is green pasture. Still water. Sacrament.

There’s a story that a priest went to Africa and was sharing with the Maasai about the Catholic teaching that there are seven sacraments. He told them a sacrament is a physical encounter in which you experience the Transcendent or Grace or the Holy. After a while, an elder spoke up and said, “Seven? I thought there would be seven thousand!”

Seven thousand? Try seven million. Every dewdrop. Every sparrow. Every seed. Every dandelion breaking through asphalt. Every gust of wind. Every child learning the name of a tree. Every river not yet poisoned. Every photograph of Earthrise from the cold silence of space, farther away from the earth than any human has ever been. Every act of tending instead of taking. All holy. All sacred. All sacrament

Genesis tells us humanity’s first job was not domination as in destruction, but stewardship as in love: To till and keep. That is, to garden. To protect. To serve.

Somewhere along the way, we traded shepherding for stealing. We forgot that dominion was supposed to look like God’s tending: creative, generous, life-giving.

And so Earth Day becomes, for people of faith, not a secular interruption to the Easter season, but an Easter proclamation. Resurrection is not evacuation from Earth. It is God’s stubborn refusal to abandon creation. You see, so often folks get resurrection wrong. The risen Christ is not about escaping the world, but renewing it.

The 20th Century mystic Ed Hayes wrote: “Awaken, seeds of holiness buried deep within me.”

That is our call today. Awaken, church. Awaken, gardener. Awaken, protector. Awaken, holy troublemaker. Awaken, dandelion disciple. Awaken, activist.

Because this moment requires more than admiration for creation. It requires solidarity with it. The climate crisis is not only about polar bears and glaciers. It’s about the hungry, and our food deserts and high fructose corn syrup. It’s about the refugee, and multi-year crop failures that

force whole populations to flee. It's about 26-inch snowfalls followed a month later by record amounts of rain and how, while that's a pain for those of us with houses and insurance, it's a death sentence for those closer to the margins. The Good Shepherd's abundant life demands that we confront every system that steals life from the vulnerable.

So perhaps the question this Earth Day is simple: Will we live like thieves? Or shepherds? Will we keep treating creation as something to take? Or as a gift to tend? Will we curse the dandelions? Or learn from them?

My grade school science teacher was this wonderful spiritual woman who taught us that the three phases of a dandelion flower's lifecycle represent the sun and moon and stars. The yellow flower is the sun, the white puff ball is the moon, and the dispersing seeds on the wind are the stars. Not a weed or a nuisance, but yet another element of creation through which we can glimpse the sacred.

Beloveds, Christ our Good Shepherd is still leading. Still leading us away from greed. Away from fear. Away from desecration. Still leading us toward green pastures. Toward still waters. Toward restoration. Toward abundant life.

And maybe, just maybe, the kingdom of God looks less like a flawless lawn, and more like a view of Earth from the moon: borderless, beloved, breathtaking. Or like a field of golden dandelions, where everything we dismissed as ordinary turns out to be holy, and resurrection keeps blooming right beneath our feet. Every week, you hear me close worship with the benediction, "Our worship is ending, but our service is just begun."

As we celebrate Earth Day and continue to celebrate Easter, go plant something. Protect something. Vote like creation depends on it. Resist every policy, practice, and power that steals from the Earth and the poor. Let your lawn grow a little wilder. Let the bees have their feast. Let your choices preach that creation is not disposable. Teach your children that dandelions are not weeds, but teachers. Practice resurrection not only in prayer, but in public.

Because the Good Shepherd is still calling—not just to greener pastures someday, but to the sacred work of tending them now.

May it be so. Alleluia and Amen.

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Psalm 23, John 10:1-10
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