

Theme 7

Care For Creation

USCCB > Beliefs And Teachings > What We Believe

We show our respect for the Creator by our stewardship of creation. Care for the earth is not just an Earth Day slogan, it is a requirement of our faith. We are called to protect people and the planet, living our faith in relationship with all of God's creation. This environmental challenge has fundamental moral and ethical dimensions that cannot be ignored.

Scripture

Genesis 1:1-31

God made the heavens and the earth and it was good.

Genesis 2:15

Humans are commanded to care for God's creation.

Leviticus 25:1-7

The land itself must be given a rest and not abused.

Deuteronomy 10:14

All of heaven and earth belong to the Lord.

Psalms 24:1-2

All the earth is the Lord's.

Daniel 3:56-82

Creation proclaims the glory of God.

Matthew 6:25-34

God loves and cares for all of creation.

Romans 1:20

Creation reveals the nature of God.

1 Corinthians 10:26

Creation and all created things are inherently good because they are of the Lord.

Tradition

The environment is God's gift to everyone, and in our use of it we have a responsibility towards the poor, towards future generations and towards humanity as a whole. . . Our duties towards the environment are linked to our duties towards the human person, considered in himself and in relation to others. It would be wrong to uphold one set of duties while trampling on the other. *Charity in Truth (Caritas in Veritate. . .)*, #48, 51

Equally worrying is the ecological question which accompanies the problem of consumerism and which is closely connected to it. In his desire to have and to enjoy rather than to be and to grow, man consumes the resources of the earth and his own life in an excessive and disordered way. . . . Man, who discovers his capacity to transform and in a certain sense create the world through his own work, forgets that this is always based on God's prior and original gift of the things that are. Man thinks that he can make arbitrary use of the earth, subjecting it without restraint to his will, as though it did not have its own requisites and a prior God-given purpose, which man can indeed develop but must not betray. Instead of carrying out his role as a co-operator with God in the work of creation, man sets himself up in place of God and thus ends up provoking a rebellion on the part of nature, which is more tyrannized than governed by him. *On the Hundredth Year (Centesimus Annus. . .)*, #37

Discussion Questions

1. Genesis 2:15 "The LORD God then took the man and settled him in the garden of Eden, to cultivate and care for it." The U.S. bishops use stronger language. "Humans are commanded to care for God's creation." Is this a reasonable interpretation? Is there a conflict between cultivating the garden and caring for it?
2. 1 Corinthians 10:26 "for the earth and its fullness are the Lord's." It is clear from the surrounding verses that the U.S. bishops are consistent with Paul's message when they insist that "all created things are inherently good because they are of the Lord." But Paul also says (in verse 23) that "not every thing is beneficial." Is that a contradiction?
3. In *Caritas in Veritate* Pope Benedict XVI points out that "It would be wrong to uphold one set of duties while trampling on the other." Many current proposals for reduction of carbon dioxide emissions would discourage the use of fossil fuels by making them more expensive. How can we reconcile that with our responsibilities to the poor who need access to reliable, plentiful, and inexpensive energy if they are to develop?
4. Pope Francis has been widely criticized for his recent encyclical *On Care for Our Common Home*, particularly his discussion on Climate Change where he asserts that "a number of scientific studies indicate that most global warming in recent decades is due to the great concentration of greenhouse gases (carbon dioxide, methane, nitrogen oxides and others) released mainly as a result of human activity." (*Laudato Si'*) #23 Should, as a number of critics suggest, the Pope have avoided taking sides on this very controversial subject?

5. Pope Francis doesn't stop with climate change. He covers a lot of ground, including another assertion that "access to safe drinkable water is a basic and universal human right, since it is essential to human survival and, as such, is a condition for the exercise of other human rights. Our world has a grave social debt towards the poor who lack access to drinking water, because they are denied the right to a life consistent with their inalienable dignity." He goes on to say that part of the solution is increased funding from the developed world. #30 Is he right? Is it our responsibility to see to it the world's poor have access to safe clean drinking water? And pay for it?

6. The Pope reminds us that his namesake St. Francis "asked that part of the friary garden always be left untouched, so that wild flowers and herbs could grow there, and those who saw them could raise their minds to God, the Creator of such beauty." #12 How much of the world that remains undeveloped should be left untouched, in its original pristine condition?

Opening Prayer (Laudato Si') #246

A prayer for our earth

All-powerful God, you are present in the whole universe
and in the smallest of your creatures.
You embrace with your tenderness all that exists.
Pour out upon us the power of your love,
that we may protect life and beauty.
Fill us with peace, that we may live
as brothers and sisters, harming no one.
O God of the poor,
help us to rescue the abandoned and forgotten of this earth,
so precious in your eyes.
Bring healing to our lives,
that we may protect the world and not prey on it,
that we may sow beauty, not pollution and destruction.
Touch the hearts
of those who look only for gain
at the expense of the poor and the earth.
Teach us to discover the worth of each thing,
to be filled with awe and contemplation,
to recognize that we are profoundly united
with every creature
as we journey towards your infinite light.
We thank you for being with us each day.
Encourage us, we pray, in our struggle
for justice, love and peace.

Amen

Closing Prayer

Christian prayer in union with creation

Father, we praise you with all your creatures.
They came forth from your all-powerful hand;
they are yours, filled with your presence and your tender love.
Praise be to you!

Son of God, Jesus,
through you all things were made.
You were formed in the womb of Mary our Mother,
you became part of this earth,
and you gazed upon this world with human eyes.
Today you are alive in every creature
in your risen glory.
Praise be to you!

Holy Spirit, by your light
you guide this world towards the Father's love
and accompany creation as it groans in travail.
You also dwell in our hearts
and you inspire us to do what is good.
Praise be to you!

Triune Lord, wondrous community of infinite love,
teach us to contemplate you
in the beauty of the universe,
for all things speak of you.
Awaken our praise and thankfulness
for every being that you have made.
Give us the grace to feel profoundly joined
to everything that is.

God of love, show us our place in this world
as channels of your love
for all the creatures of this earth,
for not one of them is forgotten in your sight.
Enlighten those who possess power and money
that they may avoid the sin of indifference,
that they may love the common good, advance the weak,
and care for this world in which we live.
The poor and the earth are crying out.
O Lord, seize us with your power and light,
help us to protect all life,
to prepare for a better future,

for the coming of your Kingdom
of justice, peace, love and beauty.
Praise be to you!
Amen.