

Happy Monday to all,

On this date, Jan 12, in 2025, California Gov. Gavin Newsom told NBC News' "Meet the Press" that the Los Angeles-area wildfires will be one of the worst natural disasters in U.S. history. The fire damaged about 17,000 structures and killed over 30 people.

Now, one year later, the disaster continues to take a toll as recent heavy rainfall rates could cause flash flooding in the fire's burn scar areas, while strong winds could topple trees in saturated mountain regions. Southern California's already wet winter is breaking rainfall records creating a threat of mudslides.

It is sometimes difficult to link specific natural disasters such as wildfires, floods and landslide to climate change. However, scientific studies show that climate change is creating warmer, drier conditions that cause fire seasons in some regions to last longer as well as unusually wet weather events to be more active. The Santa Ana winds, which caused the wildfires to spread rapidly, are also exacerbated by climate change.

One of the seven key themes of Catholic Social Teaching (CST) is Caring for God's creation. This describes our responsibility as responsible stewards of the environment, a core biblical mandate. We are all called to exercise sustainable practices like reducing waste, conserving resources, protecting biodiversity, and restoring ecosystems. The Earth belongs to God and we are called to nurture it for future generations.

On October 1, 2025, while celebrating the 10th anniversary of Pope Francis' encyclical, "Laudato Si', on Care for Our Common Home," at an international conference on climate justice, Pope Leo XIV continued his predecessor's call for people to hold God's creation dear in their hearts and to take concrete action to protect our environment.

He warned against indifference, called the faithful to care for the earth and the poor, and he praised climate justice efforts across the globe. Pope Leo noted," that "some have chosen to deride the increasingly evident signs of climate change, to ridicule those who speak of global warming and even to blame the poor for the very thing that affects them the most." "What must be done now to ensure that caring for our common home and listening to the cry of the earth and the poor do not appear as mere passing trends or, worse still, are seen and felt as divisive issues?" he asked.

Catholic Charities of Stockton, in partnership with the Catholic Climate Covenant, Stockton Rising, Interfaith Power and Light, ClimatePlan and other environmental advocates, urgently calls on all people to take action on climate change and to better care for God's creation. Generous donations to Catholic Charities are an excellent first step toward protecting our environment as well as providing aid those who suffer the effects of climate degradation.

As the new year begins, let us continue to pray for those who remain devastated by the LA wildfires and for all who suffer the consequences of environmental abuses. As a Catholic

organization dedicated to protecting our environment and the people who rely on its viability, we acknowledge the deep interconnectedness of all creation.

Let us remain united in hope, prayer, and action-- providing help for today and hope for tomorrow, Catholic Charities of Stockton remains committed to providing services that will assist in building up our local community as well as working toward the healing of our entire planet.

Blessings

Deacon Mike