

Ecumenical and Interreligious Guidebook: **CARE FOR OUR COMMON HOME**



ECUMENICAL AND INTERRELIGIOUS GUIDEBOOK: CARE FOR OUR COMMON HOME

A SUMMARY

When Pope Francis issued *Laudato Si'* in 2015, he wasn't somehow breaking with the past and propelling believers into a novel ecological direction. Instead, he was synthesizing a long tradition of Catholic understanding of creation and of humanity's moral obligations on behalf of the common good.

This guidebook offers diocesan ecumenical and interreligious officers, pastors, parish groups, and the faithful at large a number of theological and practical resources to put the counsels of Pope Francis and Catholic magisterial voices, along with selected interfaith voices, into practical action.

Biblical and Traditional resources are cited as foundational to Catholicism's beliefs about the things of this world, personal moral counsels, and long-standing social teaching. The guidebook offers questions which can serve as a kind of examen for personal, familial, parish, diocesan, and civic consideration. It also proposes models for ecumenical and interreligious dialogue and twenty-five possible topics. The guidebook includes citations of papal and episcopal statements, quotable quotes, liturgical resources, a calendar of observances of saints' days and seasons, and online and print media materials for ready reference.

This guidebook has been prepared with a sense of urgency about the health of planet Earth and the well-being of its peoples, particularly the most vulnerable. As St. John Paul II remarked in his Message for the 1990 World Day of Peace, "Respect for life and for the dignity of the human person extends also to the rest of creation, which is called to join man in praising God" (16, citing Psalm 148:96).

FOREWORD



DICASTERO PER IL SERVIZIO
DELLO SVILUPPO UMANO INTEGRALE

6 January,
Feast of the Epiphany of the Lord

Dear Sisters and Brothers,

I am pleased to offer my endorsement of this new Guidebook on *Laudato Si'* entitled *Care for Our Common Home. Laudato Si'*. Pope Francis' groundbreaking encyclical letter is addressed to the global community, not just to Catholics. For in remedying the damage we have done, "no branch of the sciences and no form of wisdom can be left out, and that includes religion and the language particular to it" (LS. 63). Hence its ecumenical and interreligious orientation is most appropriate.

Laudato Si' cannot remain merely a document on paper. Its vision requires incorporation into the Church's self-identity and spirituality. Integral human development and creational sustainability must become a pastoral priority for every Catholic and every Catholic institution. Without concrete implementation at every level of Catholic life, *Laudato Si'* will fail to achieve the goal that Pope Francis has set for it.

On 24 May 2020, Pope Francis announced a Special *Laudato Si'* Year. The Dicastery for the Promotion of Integral Human Development has come up with several initiatives for the celebration of the *Laudato Si'* Year, especially a seven year program of implementation for *Laudato Si'*. This Guidebook offers rich resources for Catholic participation, along with participation by our brothers and sisters in other faith communities, for the implementation of the Encyclical's vision for the future of global society, a vision that includes the creation of a green economy and the elimination of the use of fossil fuels and activities with heavy carbon footprint.

I offer my congratulations to those who have helped shape this Guidebook. I pray that the Catholic community, in association with our ecumenical and interreligious partners, will respond to the Guidebook's challenge and take up the many valuable suggestions it presents for the full scale implementation of *Laudato Si'*.

Cardinal Peter K.A. Turkson
Prefect

FOREWORD

The *Directory for the Application of the Principles and Norms on Ecumenism* from the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity states:

“Christians cannot close their hearts to the crying needs of our contemporary world. The contribution they are able to make to all the areas of human life in which the need for salvation is manifested will be more effective when they make it together, and when they are seen to be united in making it. Hence they will want to do everything together that is allowed by their faith” (162).

The Catholic Church has been actively engaged in the work of ecumenism, the healing of the divisions between Christians, for almost sixty years now. During this time we have grown closer together in Christ. As we more fully recognize each other as brothers and sisters our renewed relationships have helped all of us to perceive that challenges which afflict one of us afflict all of us. Pope Francis has invited all of us together to address the ecological crisis unfolding around us, a crisis that impacts all of creation. His invitation is not only for Christians, but also for people of other religious traditions and in fact all of humanity. As he wrote in *Laudato Si'*: “We need to strengthen the conviction that we are one single human family. There are no frontiers or barriers, political or social, behind which we can hide, still less is there room for the globalization of indifference” (52).

This guide offers insights into how Catholics can bring the riches of the Catholic theological tradition to ecumenical and interreligious discussions and actions that uphold the dignity and sanctity of our environment. The Lord has shared the earth with us and all of us are responsible for its proper stewardship. As we seek to build a better world we will undoubtedly come to recognize each other as brothers and sisters in the human family. May these materials serve as a reliable guide to the fostering of the “ecological conversion” which is so necessary for the healing of the world.

Most Reverend Joseph C. Bambera
Bishop of Scranton

Chairman, Bishops' Committee on Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs
United States Conference of Catholic Bishops



Ecumenical and Interreligious Guidebook: **CARE FOR OUR COMMON HOME**

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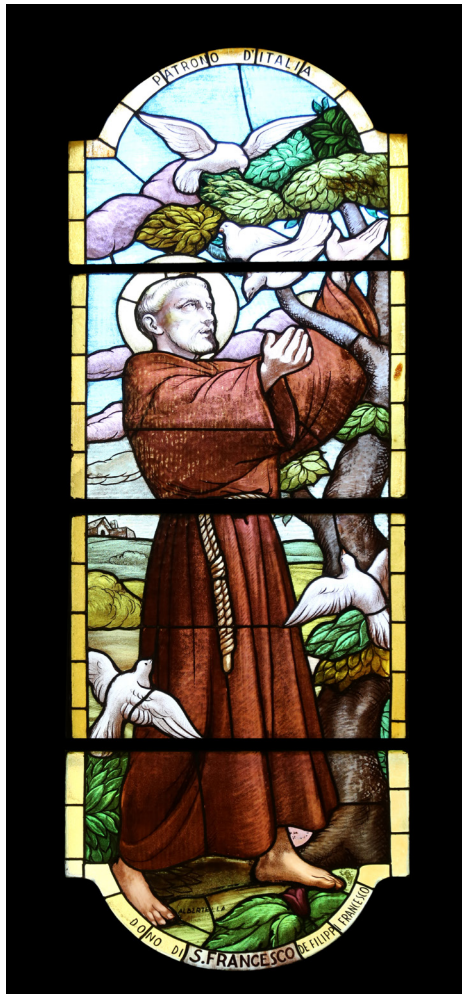
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A joint effort of the Catholic Association of Diocesan Ecumenical and Interreligious Officers (CADEIO), Catholic Climate Covenant, the Secretariat of Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs, and the Environmental Justice Program of the Department of Justice, Peace, and Human Development of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB)



I believe that St. Francis is the example par excellence of care for the vulnerable and of an integral ecology lived out joyfully and authentically. He is the patron saint of all who study and work in the area of ecology, and he is also much loved by non-Christians.... He was a mystic and a pilgrim who lived in wonderful harmony with God, with others, with nature and with himself. He shows us just how inseparable the bond is between concern for nature, justice for the poor, commitment to society, and interior peace. (Pope Francis, *Laudato Si'*, 10)

The majority of people living on our planet profess to be believers. This should spur religions to dialogue among themselves for the sake of protecting nature, defending the poor, and building networks of respect and fraternity. (*Ibid.*, 201)

We must respect and protect God's creation (The Dalai Lama).... God's work on earth must be our own because we have been entrusted with a precious gift and it is our moral responsibility to take care of it (Father William Beauchamp)....

Pay heed that you do not corrupt and destroy My world; for if you corrupt it there is no one to repair it after you (Rabbi Michael Cahana, quoting Midrash).... We are all in this leaky canoe together (Grandma Agnes Baker of the Confederated Tribes of Siletz).... (All quoted from an interfaith dialogue at the University of Portland, *Catholic Sentinel*, 9 May 2013)



I. INTRODUCTION

Wildfires, tornados, hurricanes, droughts in one area, monsoon-like rains in another, earthquakes, blizzards, and searing heat have assaulted the United States in recent decades. Such manifestations of the deadly power that nature can exert have cost Americans homes, health, work and wages, warmth and security. Human activities like fracking and mining, carbon emissions from vehicles and industry, factory farming, and careless use and waste disposal have polluted air and water and depleted soil in some areas while toxic materials have poisoned others, particularly in minority and poor communities.

Our experience of a global pandemic has been the proverbial canary in the threatened coal mine. It has highlighted our planetary interrelatedness and interdependence. Urban areas in particular have cited evidence that when people stay home more and consume less, air and water quality improve and noise decreases by decibels. Meanwhile, the pandemic has shown that minority populations are more vulnerable to more serious effects and greater mortality from a novel virus than more affluent populations are. This is similar to what we have learned about land despoliation, pollution and contamination, and anticipated climate change: marginalized people are more likely to suffer the most from environmental hazards. Thus, systemic racism has to be addressed and remedied simultaneously with our concern to tackle ecological issues.

On a more positive note, there is anecdotal evidence that the COVID-19 pandemic of 2020 reconnected people to spiritual resources and disciplines. Enforced shutdown of large gatherings and sacramental celebrations helped heighten appreciation for community and commonality along with a sense of the importance of sacred things--the sensory material things which help human beings experience the holy. Numerous denominational, ecumenical, and interreligious sites hosted online meetings and chats in which people from around the world were able to share faith, resources from their own religious traditions, and strategies for the healing of the planet. While hopes for abatement of the pandemic and the development of a successful vaccine have dominated conversation, environmentalists hope that some of the lessons learned about making do with less and relying less on highways and airways will help make for a more sustainable future.

The purpose of this guidebook is to assist diocesan ecumenical and interreligious officers, pastors, parish groups, and all the faithful in their efforts to cherish the gifts of creation which God has called good, to use and restore them wisely and temperately, to help heal the Earth when we find it damaged or desecrated. As our Catholic tradition urges, care for the Earth is part of our pro-life ethic. It is a matter of justice in the service of humanity and the planet itself. It is also an act of faith in the Holy Spirit. Addressing God, the psalmist says, as shown below:

**All of these look to you
to give them food in due time,
When you give it to them, they gather;
when you open your hand, they are
well filled.
When you hide your face, they panic.
Take away their breath, they perish
and return to the dust.
Send forth your spirit, they are created
and you renew the face of the earth
(Psalm 104: 27-30, NAB rev. ed.)**

II. OUR FAITH TRADITION

Catholic Tradition has long understood that we live in what the Bishops of the United States in 1991 called “a sacramental universe” (in *Renewing the Earth*). The call to treat the natural world with respect is grounded in a sense that what God has deemed good is both life-source and life-sign, pointing us to the richness of life with one another and life with God.

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (1994, 1997) speaks of the human responsibility to act on behalf of creation by promoting creaturely “harmony” and exercising a proper role of stewardship (302). It asserts the rightful use of animals for food, clothing, assistance in work or leisure, and in medical and scientific experiments conducted “within reasonable limits” (2417), but it also warns that inflicting pain on animals or causing needless deaths is an “affront to human dignity.” In regard to the gifts of creation at large, the Catechism warns that human beings have “moral obligations ... including those toward generations to come” (2456).

These teachings about the world of creation did not simply emerge thirty-some years ago.



From Genesis through Revelation, we find that God calls our attention to Earth and the heavens. In progressive fashion, the narrative of the days of creation describes the beginning in light and the unfolding of skies and waters,

our planet, its landforms and vegetation and animal life, climaxing with the creation of a couple gifted with reason and free will. Creation itself is seen as God's outpouring, with the Spirit present as the breath or mighty wind over the waters (Genesis 1:2) and as Wisdom, the artificer, the crafter, playing before God as Earth's bounty unfolds (Proverbs 8:22-36). "The heavens declare the glory of God," sings the opening of Psalm 19. The presumption is that the splendor of creation is meant to elicit awe and to move the perceiver to praise. Even non-human creatures are seen as joining in the holy act of worship. In Psalm 148, everything from monstrous sea creatures, through lightning and hail, to fruit trees, animals, and earthly kings in the company of young and old are all called to praise God.

The sensitivity that Jesus showed to his surroundings is evident as he traverses deserts, prays in gardens, notices how fig trees and sheep behave, rocks on stormy seas, and chooses mountains for powerful messages and his own transfiguration. The Letter to the Hebrews, in its first two verses, cites the presence of the Son in the very act of creation. It is not surprising, then, that Scripture over and over again expresses wonder at the bounty of the universe and our own planet and points to an end-time when "new heavens, new earth" will arise (Isaiah 65:17, 2 Peter 3:13, Revelation 21:1). Given the descriptions of the risen Lord, St. Paul's talk of the "glorified body" awaiting us, and the dogma of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin, Catholics expect some sort of transformed materiality to persist into the afterlife.

In the meantime, it is the meek who are meant to be the beneficiaries, the inheritors, of the Earth, as seen in Psalm 37:11, and in the Beatitudes (Matthew 5:5). We might speculate that the meek are those who have a proportional sense of what is important, those who are humble in the most profound sense of humility, those who know that we are made of Earth and all its elements but that, even while we are beloved of God, we are also dust and ashes.

Fathers of the Church, such as Basil and Augustine, preached sequences of sermons and extended reflections on Genesis and the stories of creation. These celebrate the action of God in creating a world repeatedly deemed "good" and revelatory. Creation and its many creatures are seen as manifesting God's own self to the observer and leading to praise. While there is sometimes a tendency to think of the Patristic and Medieval periods as world-renouncing, we find

that there are steady themes that affirm the goodness of creation, its way of leading to praise of the Creator, and also our human kinship to all creatures.

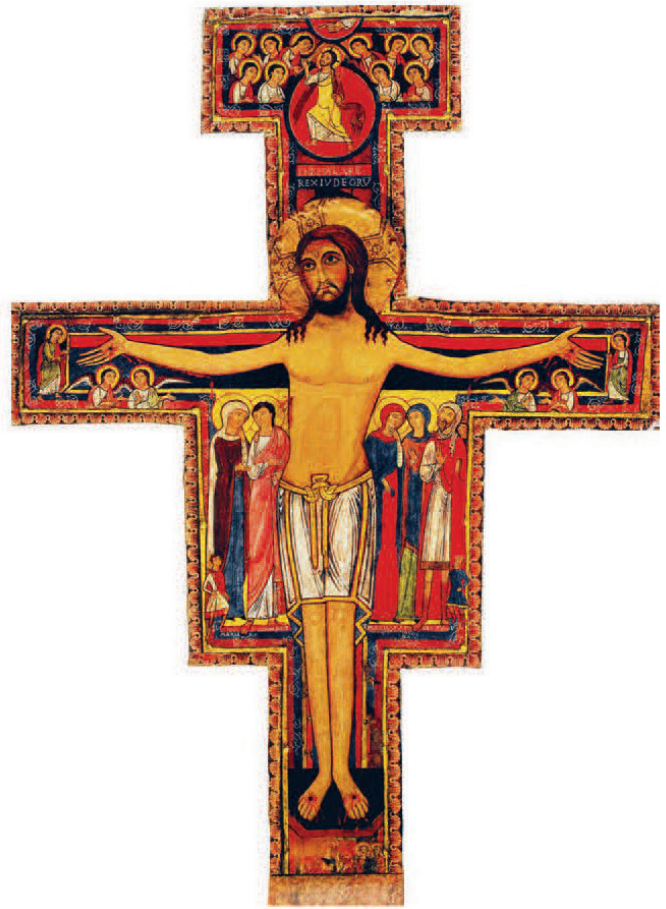
Among the Greek fathers, we find St. Basil the Great saying that “earth, air, sky, water, day, night, all visible things, remind us of Him who is our benefactor” (*Hexameron*, Homily III.10). His appreciation for natural beauty and what he terms “the creative arts” leads him to remark that “the world too is a work of art displaying for the beholding of all people; to make them know Him who created it” (*Hexameron*, Homily I.7).



Pope St. Gregory the Great also cites our interrelatedness with animate and inanimate creatures. In a homily given May 24, 591 A.D. for the celebration of the Ascension, he said: “Human beings have something in common with every creature. They share existence with stones, like trees they are alive, like animals, they feel, and like the angels, they have understanding. If human beings, then, have something in common with every creature, in some sense human beings are every creature.”

Centuries later, St. Thomas Aquinas reiterated these themes. Aquinas taught that all creatures “bear a trace of the Trinity” (*Summa Theologica* I.45.7). In his “Treatise on Creation” in the *Summa*, he speaks of the “unity of the world” and the importance of diversity and multiplicity among creatures. Aquinas describes the human being as “a little world because all creatures of the world are in a way to be found in him” (*Summa Theologica*. I.91.1). Existing as a body, made of bone and sinew, makes us like inanimate things; having life and the powers of nutrition makes us like the plants; having sense and the ability to move ourselves makes us like the animals; having reason makes us like the angels. He saw creatures as valuable for human use and enjoyment but also as works of beauty (or adornment) and, thus, as significant signs of God’s work of love. Aquinas’ medieval descriptions aptly express the connection of all to all and, therefore, impose on us the moral obligation to care for all creation and to participate in what popes and theologians have termed the “co-creation” of the world.

As is well known, St. Francis of Assisi and the Franciscan orders have celebrated love of God in his creatures. The “Canticle of Creation,” or “Canticle of the Sun,” as it is sometimes called, inspired the title and the substance of *Laudato Si’* and bespeaks a long Christian Catholic custom of looking to creatures for inspiration and insight into the nature of God and God’s will for the world. Stewardship, as a biblical and Traditional principle, has been ingrained in Catholic teaching. Any interpretation that would translate the Genesis mandate of “dominion” given to humanity vis-à-vis the Earth into wanton domination is a corruption of basic doctrine.



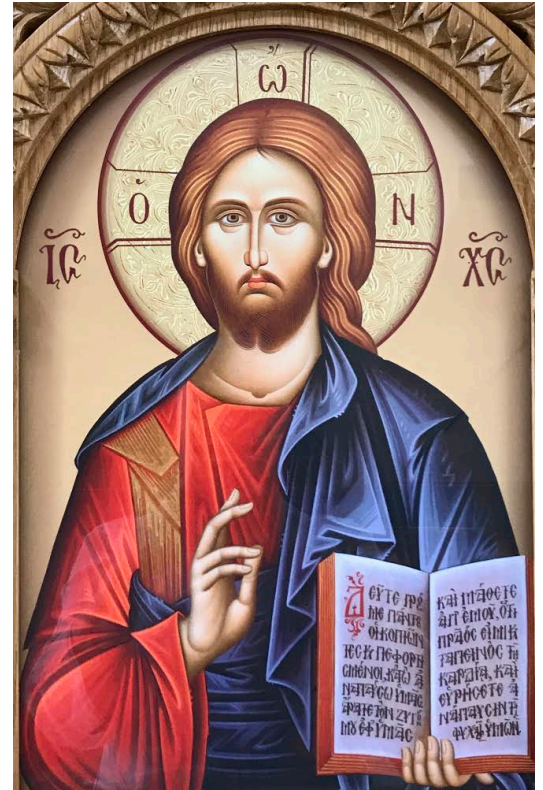
Because of growing concern over poisoning of the environment and species extinction, Church leaders have accelerated their comments on the moral implications of care for the Earth for nearly six decades.

Bishops’ statements, the documents of the Second Vatican Council, papal encyclicals from *Centesimus Annus* (1991) and *Evangelium Vitae* (1995) by St. John Paul II to the celebrated *Laudato Si’* (2015) of Pope Francis have highlighted moral issues around caring for our common home. St. John Paul II spoke in his encyclical *Laborem Exercens (On Human Work)* of the human role in co-creating. Pope Francis was unprecedented in devoting an entire encyclical to the topic of care and responsibility for our planetary home and our role in shaping and directing it.

Over recent decades, there has developed a certain rapprochement among Christians, whether Catholic, Orthodox, mainline Protestant, or evangelical. Even with the great divergence from the Thomistic vision found in many of the Protestant reformers, we find John Calvin averring that creation, in

all its diversity, should be seen as God’s “insignia,” the “marks of his glory” (*Institutes*, I.v.1). Thus, it should not be surprising to find congregational churches among those emphasizing care for the Earth in statements emerging from their bodies in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Among the more liturgical churches, we find an emphasis on sacramentality which correlates with a concern for creatures--their preservation and their flourishing--in themselves.

A variety of statements issued by bishops, patriarchs, conferences and councils emphasize the godliness to be found in the created world and the moral obligation we have to honor and protect it. Of particular note are the efforts of Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, sometimes described as “first among equals” among Orthodox patriarchs. Over more than 25 years, Patriarch Bartholomew has built on and expanded the work of his predecessor, Ecumenical Patriarch Demetrios, in exhorting the faithful to pray for the “protection and preservation of the natural creation of God” and to develop a “sacramental vision” which would prevent human abuses of the environment (John Chryssavgis, 187-188). As Orthodox and Catholic Christians have drawn closer, it is not surprising that Patriarch Bartholomew signed a joint statement on environmental ethics with St. John Paul II and has been cited by Pope Francis as a model of moral-spiritual leadership when it comes to environmental matters.



From the Filipino Bishops’ *What Is Happening to Our Beautiful Land?* in 1988, through numerous statements by episcopal conferences from various Latin American, African, Asian, European, Australian, and North American nations and states, there have been increasing calls from magisterial leaders to attend to looming environmental crises as not merely political problems but as profoundly moral concerns affecting the common good. Statements issued by the bishops of the United States, particularly *Renewing the Earth: An Invitation to Reflection and Action on Environment in Light of Catholic Social Teaching* (1991)

and *Global Climate Change: A Plea for Dialogue, Prudence, and the Common Good* (2001) have been echoed by regional groups of bishops, such as those from Appalachia, the Pacific Northwest, and Alaska. The Canadian Catholic bishops, too, have been vocal about the need to intensify environmental commitments and dedicated the 2020 National Day of Prayer in Solidarity with Indigenous Peoples to “Healing of the Earth.” All of these, in concert with Catholic bishops from South America, Europe, Asia, Australia, and Africa, call for attitudinal change and action on behalf of preserving the integrity of creation, understanding creaturely interdependence, and attending to the care of the poor.

As we study the Catholic Tradition on creation and the care due God’s handiwork, universal and planetary, a number of themes emerge:

1. Creation’s origin in an act of divine love at the beginning of time
2. Creation’s emergence from the gracious action of the Creator coming forth without any material origin, that is, no pre-existing matter (*creatio ex nihilo*)
3. The “unity of the world” (St. Thomas Aquinas) because of this divine origin
4. The conviction that creation as a whole and every creature are and can be revelatory of God
5. The goodness of all creation and, consequently, a call to reverence for all creatures
6. An appreciation for the simultaneous “intrinsic value” and “instrumental value” of nonhuman creatures
7. An active support for creaturely diversity
8. The extension of moral consideration to all living things
9. The human race’s “dominion” as responsible stewardship
10. Humanity’s obligation to exercise providence on behalf of the universal common good
11. The call to virtuous living and particularly to moderation in the use and consumption of the things of this world
12. A commitment to care for the Earth and action on behalf of renewal and restoration

III. ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES AND MAJOR THEMES OF CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHING

The Catholic bishops of the United States have identified seven major themes of Catholic social teaching. Environmental concerns relate to each of these.

1. Life and Dignity of the Human Person While direct attacks on life such as abortion, euthanasia, and the killing of innocents are at the forefront of concern, there are vital corollary matters. These have to do with nurturance, preservation, and quality of life. Provision for meaningful work, protections for family life, promotion of human health and education and access to these, the ability to participate in the civic community, peace and security in one's local surroundings and among nations, and the integrity and purity of the natural world and its riches are all connected to the promotion of human life, human dignity, and human rights. Human surviving and thriving are threatened by such phenomena as systemic racism, infringement on the lands of native peoples, global warming, pollution, depletion and degradation of natural resources, and species extinction.

2. The Call to Family, Community, and Participation

Our Christian belief in the Trinity informs us that God is, by nature, relational. Ecologists have repeatedly shown how patterns of interconnection and interrelation are at the heart of our universe and our planet. Built into the human being are basic impulses to live in community. Natural affinities for family, one's own ethnic group, one's nation are inscribed in the human person. The rights of humans include the ability to form new families by marriage, to care for the families into which one has been born, and to embrace relationships with other families in one's neighborhood and wider world. To do so requires not only the exercise of legal rights in general but also persons having a voice in policy-making and decisions which affect how they relate to the natural world and are able to benefit from the goods of creation that surround them.

“We need to think of ourselves more and more as a single family dwelling in a common home,”
(Pope Francis, *Fratelli Tutti*, 17)

3. Rights and Responsibilities Ethicists and philosophers continue to differ on the question of whether and to what extent contemporary human beings have obligations to future generations and whether those future generations have rights. It is clear from the Catechism of the Catholic Church and from ancient tradition that Christians are called to attend to the quality of life and the goods of the Earth that are to be left for generations to follow. The Book of Deuteronomy promises that those who “choose life” will impart life to their descendants. Another question debated among environmentalists is whether animals can be said to have rights and whether trees, forests and bioregions have “standing” in the legal sense. Catholicism does not propose that animals have rights or that other non-human creatures or natural features do, but it does clearly enunciate human responsibilities to use these resources wisely, distribute fairly, and eschew practices that are cruel and/or wasteful.



4. Option for the Poor and Vulnerable As mentioned elsewhere, Christians are called to a preferential option for the poor. The scene of the Last Judgment in the Gospel of St. Matthew, and St. Luke’s parable of Dives (the rich man) and Lazarus, make it very clear that Christ identifies with the least of the brothers and sisters and that the state of one’s soul can be determined by the degree to which one has attended to the needs of the neglected and marginalized. In *Querida*

Amazonia, Pope Francis has spoken of how important it is “to act together for the common good and the promotion of the poor” as believers proceed in “pursuit of the civilization of love and by the passion for the kingdom that the Lord calls us to build with him” (106, 109). We are repeatedly reminded that natural disasters and environmental accidents typically affect the poor--those lacking resources and alternatives--grievously.

Today . . . we have to realize that a true ecological approach always becomes a social approach; it must integrate questions of justice in debates on the environment, so as to hear *the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor.* (*Laudato Si'*, 49)

- 5. The Dignity of Work and Rights of Workers** Meaningful work, reasonable hours, fair wages, and safety and security in the workplace are understood to be basic human needs and basic human rights. Exposure to toxins, chemical and radioactive waste, and other environmental hazards can inflict great suffering, including disability and loss of life, particularly among the most vulnerable: the poor, the elderly, pregnant workers, offspring already born or in utero. Caring for our common home implies care for the conditions in which people labor and care for the products they produce. Workers' rights to just compensation, health and disability benefits, and assurance that their lives and health are protected as they work are clearly connected to environmental conditions.
- 6. Solidarity** As the bishops have said in their reflections on basic Catholic beliefs and teachings, it is now clearer than ever that “loving our neighbor has global dimensions.” Oil spills, nuclear accidents like Chernobyl and Fukushima, melting glaciers, and clear-cutting in the Amazon send shock waves around the world. Similarly, we have seen that viral or bacterial outbreaks in Asia and Africa rapidly affect people on every continent. The concept of human brotherhood and sisterhood has greater urgency. With that, the embrace of non-human creatures and a search for universal well-being--truly integral ecology--does too.



Everything is interconnected, and this invites us to develop a spirituality of global solidarity which flows from the mystery of the Trinity (*Laudato Si'*, 240)



7. **Care for God’s Creation** “Tilling and keeping” or “cultivating and caring” are the words used to express the charge to Adam and Eve in Eden (Genesis 2:15). The admonition to live lightly on the land and to use creation and enjoy it prudently and productively are charges given to human beings ever since. The “Prayer for the Earth” offered by Pope Francis near the conclusion of *Laudato Si’* should inform our work and our leisure, our enjoyment and our abstinence, our use and our replenishing:

All powerful God, you are present in the whole universe and in the smallest of your creatures.

You embrace with tenderness all that exists....

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....

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.

(Laudato Si’, 246)

Every violation of solidarity and civic friendship harms the environment, just as environmental deterioration in turn upsets relations in society. Nature, especially in our time, is so integrated into the dynamics of society and culture that by now it hardly constitutes an independent variable.

Desertification and decline in productivity in some agricultural areas are also the result of impoverishment and underdevelopment among the inhabitants....

Moreover, how many natural resources are squandered by wars!... *The Church has a responsibility toward creation and she must assert this responsibility in the public sphere.*

(Pope Benedict XVI, *Caritas in Veritate*, 51)

IV. SOME PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Diocesan ecumenical and interreligious officers have an overarching role in promoting dialogue for action on behalf of the universal common good. When it comes to these tasks, there are certain core themes but also practical steps that can be taken from those offices down and from the grassroots up. After looking at our core themes, we will offer a kind of examination of conscience and consciousness for dialogue and action.

Impetus to Action

In light of the signs of the times, positive action on behalf of the planet must be seen as both an environmental-ethical project and an important ecumenical one. Ecumenical and interreligious officers are charged with:

- Working with and within the four foundational dialogues: Theology, Experience, Life, and Action
- Knowing and fostering understanding of diocesan ecumenical and/or interreligious statements
- Collaborating in actions and calls to action from the Ordinary of the diocese, its media, and its various forums
- Embracing the call enunciated by St. John XXIII in *Mater et Magistra* and Pope Francis in *Laudato Si'*: See, Judge, Act
- Promoting and engaging in ecumenical prayer services (for example, World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation, Season of Creation)
- Joining with others to plan and participate in ecumenical and/or interreligious retreats, lectures (on such topics as theology of creation, eco-ethics, practical policies on energy and resource efficiency), and ecological advocacy and action
- Identifying resources provided by our partner organizations: CADEIO Care for Creation, Catholic Climate Covenant, Catholic Roundtable, Interfaith Power and Light (IPL), Franciscan Action Network (FAN), and the USCCB.

It is the obligation of diocesan ecumenical and interreligious officers to engage groups of Christians and those of other traditions in the matters

that press upon all for the sake of the well-being of the world and its diverse peoples. In order to do that effectively, it is important to collaborate with colleagues to see that Catholic faithful are equipped to engage intelligently in discussions of these matters. Thus, before highlighting potential strategies for those wider dialogues, consideration is given below to internal concerns for consciousness-raising and practice.

Given our obligation to all of creation that “is groaning in labor pains” (Romans 8:22, NAB), or “groans and travails,” as other versions have it (AKJV), we might develop some strategies for positive action to honor and preserve creation by asking the following questions.

On the Diocesan Level

- Are we tapping resources to provide faith-formation for our laity and using diocesan media to alert people to ecumenical and interreligious opportunities for dialogue and/or action related to care for our common home?
- Are we maximizing our opportunities to partner and participate with ecumenical and interreligious groups for action and advocacy?
- Are we available to participate on boards and to be a voice for the diocese to seek funding for eco-friendly legislation and action?
- Do we promote people’s sense of responsibility for families and parishioners in common concerns for the service of humanity and care for the Earth?
- Do we make known our ecclesial responsibility for the care of the Earth in the public sphere, by celebrating annual events such as the Season of Creation (September 1 - October 4) or Earth Day (April 22) and also by engaging current environmental concerns by adding our voices to those of our fellow citizens?



On the Home Front

- Do we instill in our children a sense of gratitude for food and drink by saying grace, caring for their rooms and play space, helping to care for our family property, and using material things without wasting or carelessly damaging them?
- Do we recycle and teach children how to use and reuse material things properly?
- Do we put reasonable limits on our replacing, acquiring, updating, and taking on debt?
- Do we teach children and also expect ourselves to be attentive and generous to the poor and disadvantaged?
- Do we encourage children to participate in tree-planting, garden-keeping, and other projects to protect and enhance our neighborhood “commons”?
- Do we frequent the sacraments and deepen our family’s life of prayer by using sacramentals and teaching the importance of ritual and sacred space?

STEM (science–technology–engineering–mathematics) and STREAM programs (the latter including religion and arts) are common in Catholic schools and include many projects that are environmentally friendly and creative. Liturgy Training Publications offers *Blessings and Prayers through the Year* as a resource for schools and parishes which can also serve families.



To enhance awareness, adults and children can be urged to consult fact-based scientific resources, such as those provided by NASA (National Aeronautics and Space Administration), EPA (Environmental Protection Agency), NOAA (National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration), or not-for-profit groups such as the American Geophysical Union. They might also avail themselves of materials promoting practical solutions such as Sustainable Development Solutions Network with Fondazione Eni Enrico Mattei (“Roadmap to 2050: A Manual for Nations to Decarbonize by 2050”) for helping to inculcate environmental responsibility in children and family members.

In the Parish

- Do we make our churches and chapels beautiful and serene, using tasteful colors, flowers, candles, incense, statuary, and stained glass to enhance our worship?
- Do our preaching, music, and faith formation inspire reverence for creation and a sense of duty to use wisely and care for our common home?
- Do we align our parish’s operational, financial and business policies and practices so that we responsibly steward God’s bountiful gifts?
- Do we engage in projects to preserve and enhance our parish properties and buildings?
- Do we have an active parish “care for creation team” to keep us on track in terms of simplicity, consumption, wise use, local environmental activities, and Catholic social teaching related to Earth-care?
- Do we use Facebook, websites, Flocknotes, and other social media to highlight environmental concerns and potential ecumenical and interfaith dialogue and action?
- Do we understand stewardship as our contribution of time, talent, and treasure in a way that includes ecological consciousness?
- When we consider building or renovation, are we mindful of environmental impact, use of sustainable materials, and preservation of such healthful resources as trees and gardens, streams, and landforms?
- Do we build to last?
- Do we maximize the use of online meetings as a way to limit fuel consumption in such a way as to limit travel without impairing presence and sociability?
- Do our parish, regional, and diocesan Catholic schools teach science

with an eco-ethical perspective while also sponsoring projects and field trips which enhance an appreciation for the natural world?

- In our religion classes, do students become acquainted with patrons of ecology and exemplars of love of creation--St. Francis of Assisi, St. Kateri Tekakwitha, St. Philip Neri, St. Isidore the Farmer?
- Do we bless animals on October 4 in honor of St. Francis?

NCEA (the National Catholic Education Association) offers materials and has hosted presentations on the STREAM program which integrates religion and the arts with STEM's focus on science, technology, engineering, and mathematics. The Archdiocese of Los Angeles has active parish Green Teams of five or more persons, usually made up of volunteers whose service and activities are approved by pastors.



In the Local Civic Community

- Do parishioners receive information and encouragement about local beautification projects, clean-up opportunities, river watches or other nature watches, animal rescue, tree planting, and, where possible, community vegetable gardens?
- Are parishioners reminded that candidates for local office should be attuned to life issues, racial justice, pursuit of the common good, and a commitment to development that respects the traditions and customs and land-holdings of racial and ethnic groups, along with care for the health of the local ecosystem?

- Do we encourage participation in interfaith activities, seminars, and public witness events that focus on care for the Earth?

Catholic Social Teaching is a frequent topic of presentations, conferences, and materials offered by diocesan offices dedicated to ethnic ministries and faith formation. Their websites advertise events. Diocesan media send notices about recent episcopal and papal statements on matters of care for the poor, Earth-care, and racial justice--and how these are linked.

On the State and National Level

- Do our parishes provide formation on the moral obligation to participate in the political process and to evaluate candidates on a whole spectrum of pro-life commitments?
- Are Catholics aware of voter guides which detail the positions of candidates on a number of societal issues?
- Are parishioners and those in paid or volunteer church ministries encouraged to tithe to support numerous pro-life, pro-poor, and pro-earth missions, as well as the parish church or bishops' appeals?
- Do homilies ever touch on the moral issues involved in tax-paying and active citizenship?
- Do our dioceses help organize ecumenical and interfaith dialogues on environmental ethics and denominational commitments?

Much information is available from state Catholic conferences and from the websites and practice of religious communities. For information on faithful citizenship and political participation, visit www.FaithfulCitizenship.org. USCCB provides numerous resources to assist with conscience formation on care for creation at www.usccb.org/environment. Additional materials are available from the Catholic Climate Covenant at www.catholicclimatecovenant.org.

V. HANDS-ON PROJECTS: A FEW EXAMPLES

While these can easily be organized internally among parish groups, youth and young adults ministry, and the like, they also lend themselves to ecumenical and interreligious cooperation.

1. Parishioners designate one day a month for removing roadway litter and/or gathering lightly-used clothing, shoes, housewares and furniture to donate to local charity-run thrift shops.
2. Parishioners commit to Earth Day or Arbor Day projects—such as on Earth Day partnering with an inner-city or rural or mission church to implement a project that has been jointly planned beforehand. For example, parishioners from both institutions can work together to plant flowers or shrubs, mulch, and spend the afternoon and early evening gardening and weeding and planting. On Arbor Day, plant a tree and pray or sing a contemporary version of the Cantic of the Sun by St. Francis of Assisi.
3. Youth join in or initiate a community project to improve parks and common recreational areas, clean up and plant wildflower seed in vacant lots, or engage in other beautification projects.
4. Students are encouraged to do science projects which have them studying local flora and fauna, the origins and conditions of local streams, or attending to woodlands and the impact of deforestation.
5. Area bodies of water lend themselves to the attention of older and younger adults, children and youth. Riverwatches and stream clean-ups are common projects. In coastal areas, groups safeguard sea turtle nesting places and collect litter on beaches.
6. Have parishioners, as families or groups, participate in local farmers' markets, selling plants, herbs, or vegetables; marketing home-made baked goods; or displaying and selling crafts.

All around the United States there are numerous local concerns about air, water, and land quality--and the quality of human life and health.

Parishioners can embody the long-time call to “Think Globally, Act Locally.” Parish and neighborhood projects can attract ecumenical and interreligious attention and cooperation almost effortlessly when they are seen as beneficial to the local community.

VI. MODELS FOR DIALOGUE AND ADULT FAITH FORMATION GATHERINGS

The following quotations from a variety of religious sources offer just one example of how certain common threads (here, revelation and interconnection) may be found as the basis for fruitful dialogue:

Praise the LORD from the earth,
you sea monsters and all the deeps of
the sea;
Lightning and hail, snow and thick clouds,
storm wind that fulfills his command;
Mountains and all hills,
fruit trees and all cedars;
Animals wild and tame,
creatures that crawl and birds that fly;
Kings of the earth and all peoples,
princes and all who govern on earth;
Young men and women too,
old and young alike.
Let them all praise the LORD's name,
for his name alone is exalted,
His majesty above earth and heaven.
(Psalm 148:7-13)

[The Son] is the image of the invisible God,
the firstborn of all creation.
For in him were created all things in heaven and
on earth,
the visible and the invisible,
whether thrones or dominions or principalities
or powers;
all things were created through him and for him.
He is before all things,
and in him all things hold together.
He is the head of the Body, the Church.
He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead,
that in all things he himself
might be preeminent.
For in him the fullness was pleased to dwell.
(Colossians 1:15-19)



As a spider projects forth and draws back [its threads], as plants grow on earth, as hair grows on the body, so does the universe emerge from the Imperishable Being. (Mundak Upanishad 1.1.7)

All things carry yin and embrace yang. They reach harmony by blending with the vital breath. (Tao Te Ching, chapter 42)

Behold! In the creation of the heavens and the earth; in the alternation of the Night and the Day; in the sailing of the ships through the Ocean for the profit of mankind; in the rain which Allah sends down from the skies; and the life which He gives therewith to an earth that is dead; in the beasts of all kinds that He scatters through the earth; in the change of the winds, and the clouds which they trail ... between the sky and the earth; (here) indeed are Signs for a people that are wise. (The Qur'an, trans. Abdullah Yusuf Ali, Surah 2.164)

In all creatures there is found the trace of the Trinity. (Thomas Aquinas, Summa Theologica, I.45.7)

Wherever you cast your eyes, there is no spot in the universe wherein you cannot discern at least some sparks of [God's] glory. (John Calvin, Institutes, 1.5.1)

Every created thing in the whole universe is but a door leading into His knowledge. (Baha'u'llah)

Let the people be holy, and the earth under their feet will be holy. Let the people be holy, and filled with the Spirit of God, and every animal and creeping thing will be filled with peace; the soil of the earth will bring forth in its strength, and the fruits thereof will be meat for man. The more purity that exists, the less is the strife; the more kind we are to our animals, the more will peace increase ... (Brigham Young, Presidents of the Church Journal of Discourses 1:203)



In a number of locations around the country, ecumenical and interfaith dialogues on environmental matters and, at times, specific responses to *Laudato Si'* have been underway and others remain in planning stages. The Parliament of the World's Religions has been engaged in eco-justice matters for decades. Greenfaith regularly gathers, via Zoom and Facebook, a global interfaith community for presentations by representatives of various faith traditions and invites participants into chat rooms with persons from diverse faiths and regions, focusing on calls for "Care and Resilience," in terms of human and environmental health. Catholic-Buddhist dialogues have been engaged in via face-to-face gatherings and online. Catholic-Jewish convenings on the specific topic of commonalities in regard to *Laudato Si'* have been held or are being planned in a number of dioceses and archdioceses around the states (e.g., Scranton, Harrisburg, Charleston). The Rumi Forum and Greenfaith have offered online opportunities for Christians and others to dialogue with Islamic scholars on matters of environment and race, and the Atlantic Institute has sponsored events in which people are invited online into



one another's places of worship for an introduction to the fundamental beliefs and practice of their respective faith traditions. These gatherings build mutual understanding, while also buttressing commitments to care for our "common home."

Among the varied religious traditions in the world, there are a number of points of convergence. The most basic is the acknowledgment that the condition of planet Earth, of the world of nature, is both gift and responsibility. The natural world requires our care if it is to flourish and to be a source of well-being. While it can be valued for its own sake, all of creation also is of eminent value to us.

A second matter of agreement is that nature inspires our arts and crafts, provides the elements with which we make things, and influences the designs and materials we use to construct and adorn the places in which we live and, often enough, the places in which we worship.

Another point of commonality is our observation that creation, as a whole and in its many parts, is a source of inspiration and connection with the sacred. It has a healing and restorative role and tends to feed the spirit. Thus, while we may have deep spiritual convictions about God's creation, we can also say that all of us, believers and unbelievers, have a vested interest in caring for the planet. In many ways, we are thereby caring for ourselves and for all that we treasure and love.

As we gather ecumenically and interreligiously, we can celebrate our commonalities and, together, come to some conclusions about actions we ought to take and commitments we ought to make in order to preserve and protect our world.



For Dialogue and Ecumenical or Interreligious Celebrations

A number of ritual or liturgical resources are cited by Interfaith Power and Light, and Earth Ministry (earthministry.org/worship), as being available as models for ecumenical and interfaith celebrations, along with the USCCB's booklet "Caring for God's Creation: Resources for Liturgy, Preaching, and Taking Action," which can be found in PDF form at www.usccb.org, by searching the title.

- National Council of Churches, featuring "Earth Day Liturgy"
- Presbyterian Church (USA) and Creation Justice Ministries, "Care for God's Creatures"
- Season of Creation, offering "Planet Earth Sunday Liturgy"
- Green Church, offering "Environmental Stations of the Cross"

1. In-Person Ecumenical Prayer Services:

Typical Structure

- A. Opening Hymn or Gathering Song
- B. Reading from Sacred Scripture, holy writings from any faith tradition, or other inspirational materials
- C. Reflective pause
- D. Homily, sermon, or commentary--possibly with respondent or respondents
- E. Connecting issues with call to active engagement, which may include small group sharing, and large group summary
- F. Closing meditation or prayer, followed by hymn or song

2. Online Interreligious Gatherings:

Ponder and Pray

- A. Several participants read from their own religious traditions and offer a prayer.
- B. A facilitator offers two or three questions for dialogue and breaks participants into chat rooms. Questions may include matters of principle, recommendations for policy, ideas to strengthen personal and local action, or recruitment of more participants in the online dialogues.
- C. Reconvene and ask several designated persons to offer highlights of the chat.
- D. If practical, draw a simple consensus statement or resolution to action.
- E. Have a concluding blessing or a farewell, generic in nature, or unmute all participants so that each can offer final wishes to the others.

A variety of biblical resources are cited at the end of this document. Hymns which might be useful in ecumenical circles would be “All Creatures of Our God and King,” “For the Beauty of the Earth,” “Let All Things Now Living,” “We Plow the Fields and Scatter” or many others.

Visit www.interfaithpowerandlight.org for numerous suggestions.

3. Topical Dialogue Days

- A. Facilitator introduces focused topic on ecology, environmental issues, eco-spirituality.
- B. Presenters have an allocation of time to elaborate on focal points of belief and ethical action and/or spiritual stance and practices in their particular tradition.
- C. Attendees have an opportunity to ask questions of individual speakers or panel.
- D. Facilitator challenges group to identify points of consensus and possibly develop a consensus statement or commitment to mission.
- E. The group determines how to communicate content and outcomes.

For Parish, Regional, or Diocesan Faith Formation Days

When attendees are Catholic, formation on the theology of creation, theology of the Holy Spirit (pneumatology), environmental ethics, and eco-spirituality may use a variety of resources from Scripture, the writings of the Eastern and Western Fathers of the Church, saints, and more contemporary statements. Another possibility is to undertake a study of the four cardinal virtues--prudence, justice, fortitude, and temperance--and how they apply to our treatment of the natural world. The typical format for such studies is prayer, presentation, discussion, and closing round-up.



Given the attention given globally to *Laudato Si'*, it can be very useful to develop plans for presentations using the six major divisions used by Pope Francis in this Pentecost 2015 encyclical, paraphrased here:

1. **The condition of the planet**, our “common home”
2. **The Good News of Creation**--the fundamental goodness of Creation, the fact that our Catholic tradition sees creatures as having both *instrumental* value (for our reasonable use and enjoyment) and *intrinsic* value (inherent worth as creatures of God, bearing revelatory qualities and capable of, in themselves, praising the Creator)
3. **Human impact and issues**--a look at roots, current practices and problems, and steps necessary to remedy environmental harm
4. **Integral ecology**--which implies matters of justice in terms of care for the poor, fair distribution of the goods of the Earth, human health and well-being, preservation of diversity and multiplicity among species, restoration of depleted soils, prudent practices in lumbering, mining, agriculture, and industry
5. **Action**--voluntary initiatives, legislative action, covenants, etc.
6. **Ecological Education and Spirituality**—delving into the education and Christian spirituality that is fundamental to caring for God’s creation.

In Catholic circles, we might also do well to consider how Marian devotion relates with care for creation. Among the many titles of the Blessed Virgin Mary which are popular in the United States as names for parishes is “Queen of the Universe.” Generations of the devout have understood Mary to be Mother of the Lord, Mother of the Church, mother of each individual, and one whose mantle overspreads the world. In speaking of Mary’s spousal relationship with the Holy Spirit, St. Maximilian Kolbe offered this observation: “In the union of the Holy Spirit with her, not only does love unite these two beings, but the first one of them is all the love of the Most Holy Trinity, while the second is the love of creation. Thus, in this union heaven meets earth, ... all Uncreated Love with created love” (*The Writings of Maximilian Maria Kolbe*, II). Particularly when Orthodox and Catholic are dialogue partners, the role of Mary might lend itself to fruitful discussion.

VII. SUGGESTED TOPICS FOR ECUMENICAL AND/OR INTERRELIGIOUS DIALOGUE ON CREATION AND EARTH CARE

1. Teachings about Creation from our Sacred Writings: Insights and Implications
2. The Call for Reverence toward Earth, Its Creatures, Landscapes, and Seascapes (This might include statements and prayers from popes and saints, rabbis, imams, gurus, biblical and Koranic figures, Buddha, Baha'u'llah, etc.)
3. Ecological Virtues
4. How Race and Environmental Quality Intersect
5. Ecological Sin and Acts of Reparation
6. Human Health and the Health of the Planet
7. Dealing with Climate Change Locally and Globally
8. Obligations to Future Generations
9. Meat-eating, Vegetarianism, and Fasting
10. The Connection between Poverty and Environmental Ills
11. Habitat: How Do We Protect the Species Who Live in Our Region?
12. Spirituality and Consumerism: A Call for Conversion
13. Animal Rights and Human Responsibilities
(This presumes that Catholicism hasn't assigned rights to animals, but the Catechism, in its treatment of the 7th Commandment, talks about fair treatment of animals and human responsibilities vis-à-vis pets and both domestic and wild animals)
14. Creation, a Source of Revelation
15. Inherent Worth and Instrumental Value: A Philosophical Look at Our Regard for the Natural World
16. Water: Why's, Where's, and Matters of Access
17. The Call to Stewardship
18. Ecojustice: Theory and Action
19. War, Peace, and the Plight of the Planet
20. Rising Waters, Shrinking Shores
21. Forests and How Deforestation Hurts Us All
22. Prayer, Fasting, and Almsgiving: Applying Lent All Year 'Round to Our Planet

23. Alternative Energies and Global Solidarity
24. Wilderness Writers and Their Contribution to Our Moral-Spiritual Reading
25. Social and Environmental Principles and How We Invest Our Money

VIII. HOMILY HELPS

A number of gospels, along with many readings from the Pentateuch, Psalms and Proverbs, as well as the Wisdom books and prophets lend themselves to including references to the bounty of creation and our call to revere it and the consequences of violating the law of God and the laws of nature. The Jewish focus on *ha'aretz*, the land, carries with it a sense that the Covenant implies earth-treasuring and earth-care. New Testament parables and narratives show that Jesus, and his disciples and apostles after him, were attentive to light and seasons, wind and water, wildlife and domesticated animals, desert and rich vegetation.

Along with celebrations of the saints days cited in the list of dates found in Section X, Masses and Prayers for Various Needs and Occasions and Votive Masses can be found in the Roman Missal. These Masses may lend themselves to preaching about: 1) how care for the Earth impacts human health, welfare,

Almighty, ever-living God,
 who heal us through correction
 and save us by your forgiveness,
 grant to those who seek your favor
 that we may rejoice at the good weather
 for which we hope
 and always use what in your goodness you bestow
 for the glory of your name and for our well-being.
 Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
 who lives and reigns with you
 in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
 One God, for ever and ever. Amen.
 (Collect for Mass for Fine Weather)

peace, and security;
 2) how the human
 is responsible to
 cherish and use
 wisely the
 gifts of creation;
 or 3) how the
 health of our
 natural surroundings
 connects with the
 matters addressed
 in any of the
 Masses listed on
 the next page.

The following are some of the special Masses which invite reflection on reverence for life and all of creation:

- Mass for Promoting Harmony
- Mass for Unity of Christians
- Mass for the Sanctification of Human Labor
- Mass at Seedtime
- Mass after the Harvest
- Mass for the Progress of Peoples
- Mass for the Preservation of Peace and Justice
- Mass in Time of Famine or for Those Suffering from Hunger
- Mass in Time of Earthquake
- Mass for Rain
- Mass for Fine Weather
- Mass for an End to Storms
- Mass for Giving Thanks to God for the Gift of Human Life (USA)
- Votive for the Mercy of God
- Votive of the Holy Spirit

**O God, who sanctify your universal Church
in every people and nation,
pour out, we pray, the gifts of your Spirit
across the face of the earth,
so that your divine grace, which was at work
when the Gospel was first proclaimed,
may now spread through the hearts
of those who believe in you.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever.
(Collect C, Votive of the Holy Spirit)**



We might note that particular prayers from these Masses might also be used or adapted for pulpit use in ecumenical gatherings.

There are, of course, readings which occur and recur in the liturgical cycle which can be used not only for their standard theological and pastoral meanings but also for reflection on relevant themes. In preaching about Old and New Testament accounts of encounters at wells (Isaac, Moses, Jesus with the Samaritan woman), the homilist can call attention to the messages usually highlighted while also bringing in commentary on the fundamental human need for pure water, the call to help persons in poverty build wells, and the need to conserve water for ourselves and future generations. In areas near oceans or other bodies of water affected by oil spills or toxic waste, drawing attention to those cases as moral issues is appropriate, along with positive Christian action to remedy.

When the gospel reading is the multiplication of the loaves and fishes, not only Jesus' miraculous power and Eucharistic connections are appropriate. It is also timely to weave in comments about world hunger, the excesses of consumption in Western, and especially American, society, and the need to assure that communities find ways that all can be fed. Local food pantries can be cited, with encouragement for parishioners to donate and volunteer.

These are just two examples of how contemporary themes and issues can be woven in.

Catholic Climate Covenant includes a segment entitled "Homily Helps-- Season of Creation," posted in September 2019. It focuses on the parable of the Prodigal Son and includes comments on the implications of squandering, suggests hymns, and offers prayers of the faithful. It also offers homily helps for Sundays, Cycles A, B and C. Aside from use in Catholic settings, elements of these can readily be adapted for ecumenical services.

See: tinyurl.com/yyggpxpl

Resources for homilies may also be found on the site of the Association of U.S. Catholic Priests, www.auscpc.org. Click on What We Stand For, and then click Climate Crisis and Church in the Political World.

Another sample homily can be found at the Global Catholic Climate Movement: tinyurl.com/y5mkazxt

In addition, Pope Francis has, on several occasions, suggested that there is a call to penance and reparation that must be heard by the global North and by those who have enjoyed privilege from the eras of exploration and colonization through today. The Christian season of Lent, the Jewish observance of Yom Kippur, and the Muslim season of Ramadan are all occasions on which clergy in their own places of worship but also with one another might speak of and mark the ways in which to pay what Pope Francis has called “a true ‘ecological debt’” (*Laudato Si'*, 51).



IX. SUGGESTIONS FOR PRAYER AND MEDITATION

**All creatures are like syllables in a song which God is singing.
(Thomas Merton, Letter to Sister M. Emmanuel, 1962)**

Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew has been cited as “inviting the Orthodox to contemplate the Creator through the icon of creation” (Chryssagvis, 99). One of the simplest contemplative exercises is to sit in wonder before vistas of mountains and valleys, forests and rivers, islands and oceans, canyons and deserts, or corners of botanical gardens or aviaries. When it is not physically possible to do so, many religious groups have integrated YouTube segments of natural landscapes or seascapes into prayer services for quiet reflection after

readings. Sometimes these are silent; at other times, they may be accompanied by music, chant, or brief readings from sacred writings.

Aside from “the icon of creation,” icons and works of religious art, ancient or more contemporary, often are a window into reflection on the gift of beauty and the inter-penetration of natural and supernatural. Works by Mary Southard, CSJ or Brother Mickey McGrath, OSFS are among those sometimes used to evoke a meditative response.

Excerpts from biblical and traditional sources, prayers of saints, or writings from other Christian traditions can serve as the impetus to deeper prayer and reflection. Psalm 104, God’s response to Job (in Job 38-41), or Solomon’s recitative on the wonders of the world (in Wisdom 7:13-8:1) are among many fruitful resources.

The Liturgy of the Hours, especially in its many canticles, must also be remarked on as a source of reflection on God’s manifestation in the world of nature. Those that might come to mind immediately for those accustomed to praying Morning and Evening Prayer are Zechariah’s Canticle from the daily Morning Prayer and the following:

- Daniel 3:57-88, 56 (Sunday, Week I, and Week III, Morning Prayer)
- Judith 16:2-3a, 13-15 (Wednesday, Week I, Morning Prayer)
- Colossians 1:12-30 (Wednesday, Week I and Week IV, Evening Prayer)
- Jeremiah 31:10-14 (Thursday, Week I, Morning Prayer)
- Daniel 3:52-57 (Sunday, Week II and Week IV, Morning Prayer)
- Colossians 1:12-20 (Wednesday, Week II and Week III, Evening Prayer)
- Habakkuk 3:2-4, 13a, 15-19 (Friday, Week II, Morning Prayer)
- Deuteronomy 32:1-12 (Saturday, Week II, Morning Prayer)
- Isaiah 33:13-16 (Wednesday, Week III, Morning Prayer)
- Isaiah 40: 10-17 (Thursday, Week III, Morning Prayer)
- Wisdom 9:1-6, 9-11 (Saturday, Week III, Morning Prayer)
- Daniel 3: 26, 27, 29, 34-41 (Tuesday, Week IV, Morning Prayer)
- Isaiah 66: 10-14a (Thursday, Week IV, Morning Prayer)
- Ezekiel 36:24-28 (Saturday, Week IV, Morning Prayer)

X. Dates for Ecological Observances and Conversation

On the Catholic calendar of saints, the following dates are particularly appropriate for ecologically focused observances and teaching:

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|---|
| February 10 | St. Scholastica, twin sister of St. Benedict, founder of monastic movement for nuns, dedicated to community and to prayer, appreciative of the intervention of storms as affording the opportunity to spend time in spiritual conference with her brother. |
| May 26 | St. Philip Neri, founder of the Oratory, noted for his sense of humor, vegetarian diet, and care for cats. |
| July 11 | St. Benedict, with his sister St. Scholastica, founder of Western monasticism, balanced his monks' lives with work and prayer, which included cultivation of fields, preservation of treasures of learning, and reverent care of sacred space. Said to have been saved from poisoning by the intervention of a raven. |
| July 14 | St. Kateri Tekakwitha, "Lily of the Mohawks," a martyr who was steeped in both Christianity and her Native American affinity for the forests as a source of solitude and strength. Among Americans, St. Kateri is also celebrated as a patron saint of ecology by Americans. |
| September 1 through October 4 | The Season of Creation is a time of prayer and attention to the gift of God's creatures and of life on our planet. It is celebrated as a kind of jubilee of life and also as a time for prayer for the health and well-being of Earth and all who live there. |
| September 1 | World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation, originally an Orthodox celebration later joined by Pope Francis and other churches. |
| September 17 | St. Hildegard of Bingen, abbess, mystic, and composer of music, poetry, and prose, sensitive to the interrelatedness of God's creation and the goodness in rejected souls. |

October 4 St. Francis of Assisi, declared the patron saint of ecology by St. John Paul II, founder of the Franciscan movement, dedicated to prayer and evangelization, noted for his love for the poor and his sense of brotherhood and sisterhood with all creation.

In addition to these days on the Catholic calendar (some also listed in the Anglican Book of Common Prayer), Earth Ministry has noted the following seasons or holidays as days to raise awareness of care for the Earth:

Mid-January Sunday celebration of the Epiphany among Orthodox Christians, celebrated with blessing of water

January 18-25 Week of Prayer for Christian Unity

Mid to Late January Plow Monday, first Monday after Epiphany, dedicated to blessing plows and other farm tools for spring planting

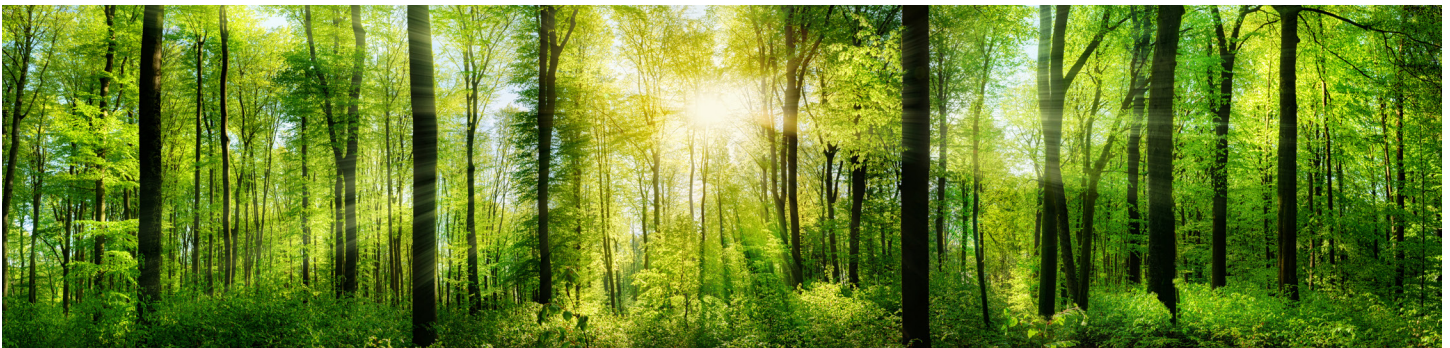
**Late January/
early February** Tu B'Shvat, Jewish New Year of Trees, observed by partaking of new fruit and planting trees in Israel and celebrating a seder similar to Passover

Lent Days of abstinence and simplicity, traditional 40 days of fasting and penitence intended to awaken souls to the need for grace and an ethic of sufficiency rather than indulgence

Easter From the Sunday observing Christ's Resurrection through Pentecost, celebration of life and renewal of all creation

April 8, 2037 Birkat HaHammah, an observance occurring every 28 years in which Jewish people recite a blessing on the sun

April 22	Earth Day, observed since 1970 as a way to raise consciousness about our dependence on the natural world and interdependence among all creatures
6th Week of Easter	Rogation Days, long celebrated as a time to bless fields, gardens and parks, with a focus on fruitfulness and restoration, celebrated on Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday of this week—days originating in Western Christianity as days of “asking” (Latin <i>rogare</i>) for protection from blight
1st Sunday in June	United Nations Environmental Sabbath/Earth Rest, observed with attentiveness to the goodness of creation
Late September /early October	Sukkot, the Jewish festival marking the fall harvest, celebrated with prayer and blessing of structures (booths) made of vegetation to recall the reality of being a pilgrim people, reliant on what is native to one’s place
Thanksgiving	Celebrated on various dates globally, always the fourth Thursday of November in the United States, a day originating with the need to express gratitude to God for the gifts of the Earth that provide nourishment and strength—fowl, fruits and vegetables
Advent and Christmas	From late November or early December through Epiphany, preparation for and celebration of the Incarnation, the Christian belief that God has become human, an earthling, and came to live among us



XI. RESOURCES*

* Please note that the 2020 USCCB publication, *Catholic Teaching on the Environment: Celebrating the Fifth Anniversary of Laudato Si'*, offers 140 pages of substantial quotations from primary sources--Magisterial, Biblical, and Traditional--pertaining to our Catholic understanding of creation and our call to care for the Earth. The list which follows refers to a number of passages quoted in that text while also citing some additional sources not presented there.

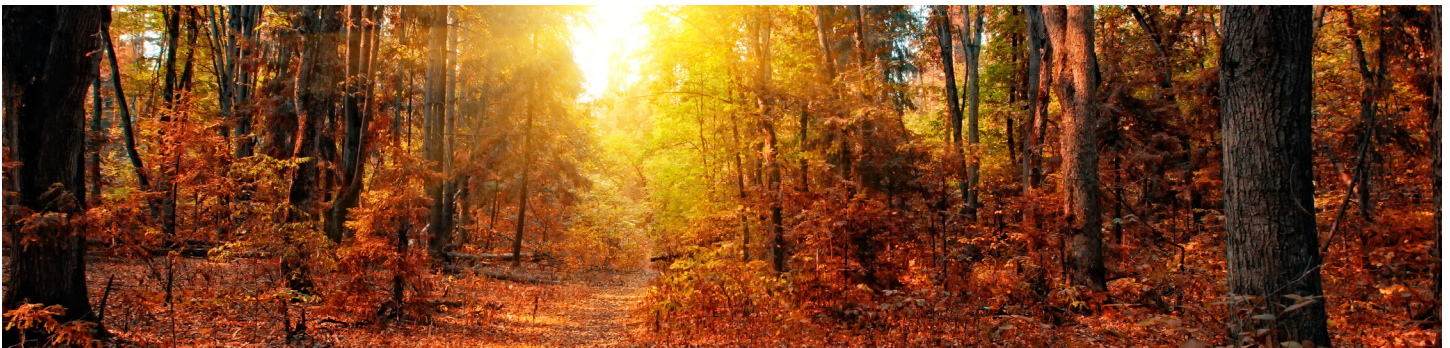
Biblical

Old Testament, a selection:

- All of Genesis 1 or Genesis 1:26-2:3
- Exodus 35:4-29
- Leviticus 25:1-7, 18-23
- Deuteronomy 8:7-18
- Ecclesiastes 3:1-8
- Ecclesiastes 11:1-6
- Isaiah 11:1-10
- Isaiah 65:17-25
- Daniel 3:42-90
- Psalm 19:1-7
- Psalm 23
- Psalm 65
- Psalm 67
- Psalm 104, especially 24, 27-33
- Psalm 113
- Psalm 136:1-9, 23-26
- Psalm 147
- Psalm 148
- Psalm 150

New Testament, a selection:

- Matthew 6:25-33 or Luke 12:22-34
- Matthew 13:31-32
- Matthew 25:31-46
- Mark 4:35-41
- John 15:1-10
- Acts 4:32-35
- Colossians 3:9-20
- Hebrews 1;1-12
- 1 John 1:1-3
- 1 John 4:7-13
- Revelation 21:1-6



Catechism of the Catholic Church

- Creation as a source of revelation, 32, 51, 54
- The Creator and a catechesis on Creation, its mystery, and Divine Providence, 279-324
- The “richness, diversity, and order” of Creation designed by God; creaturely interdependence and solidarity, 337-354
- The Incarnation, 461-463
- Symbols of the Holy Spirit, 694-701
- Communion of saints including the sacraments and “holy things,” 947-953
- New heaven, new earth, implying responsibility for the things of this world, 1042-1050
- Liturgy and the blessings of Creation, 1110, 1145-1149, 1152, 1189
- Eucharist, the poor and Christian unity, 1397-1399
- The common good, 1905-1912, 1926-1927
- Idolatry, 2113
- The Seventh Commandment and the integrity of Creation, 2415-2418

The seventh commandment enjoins respect for the integrity of creation.... Use of the mineral, vegetable, and animal resources of the universe cannot be divorced from respect for moral imperatives. (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 2415)

Documents of Vatican II

(See Flannery, Austin, O.P., General Editor. *Vatican Council II: The Basic Sixteen Documents--Constitutions, Decrees, Declarations*. Northport, NY: Costello Publishing Company, 1996, sixth printing 2007)

- *Gaudium et Spes: Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World*, especially 27-29 and 69
- *Unitatis Redintegratio: Decree on Ecumenism*, especially 10, 11, and 12
- *Nostra Aetate: Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions*, especially 1-2

Papal Statements and Encyclicals

Note: Catholic Charities of St. Paul and Minneapolis offers a resource list which includes excerpts from papal encyclicals which refer to created goods, their distribution, and care for the Earth.

(See www.cctwincities.org, “Environment: Education and Advocacy.”)

These texts in English are available at www.vatican.va.

- Leo XIII, *Rerum Novarum*, 1891, especially 21-22
- John XXIII, *Mater et Magistra*, 1961, especially 146-147, 153-154, and 196-198
- John XXIII, *Pacem in Terris*, 1963, especially 157-168
- Paul VI, *Populorum Progressio*, 1967, especially 22
- John Paul II, *Laborem Exercens*, 1981, especially 25
- John Paul II, *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, 1987, especially 34
- John Paul II, “The Ecological Crisis: A Common Responsibility: World Day of Peace Letter,” 1990, in its entirety
- John Paul II, *Centesimus Annus*, 1991, especially 30-32, and 37-40
- John Paul II, *Evangelii Vitae*, 1995, especially 42
- John Paul II, *Ut Unum Sint*, 1995 in its entirety (for promotion of ecumenical action and accord)
- John Paul II, *Ecclesia in America*, 1999, especially 25
- Benedict XVI, *Caritas in Veritate*, especially 48, 51, and 56
- Francis, *Laudato Si'*, 2015, in its entirety
- Francis, *Querida Amazonia*, 2020, in its entirety
- Francis, *Fratelli Tutti*, 2020, in its entirety

To men and women, the crown of the entire process of creation, the Creator entrusts the care of the earth (cf. Gen 2:15). This brings concrete obligations in the area of ecology for every person. Fulfillment of these obligations supposes an openness to a spiritual and ethical perspective capable of overcoming selfish attitudes and ‘lifestyles which lead to the depletion of natural resources’ ... Alongside legislative and governmental bodies, all people of good will must work to ensure the effective protection of the environment, understood as a gift from God. How much abuse and ecological destruction there is in many parts of America! (John Paul II, *Ecclesia in America*, 25)

I dream of an Amazon region that fights for the rights of the poor, the original peoples and the least of our brothers and sisters, where their voices can be heard and their dignity advanced.

I dream of an Amazon region that can preserve its distinctive cultural riches, where the beauty of our humanity shines forth in so many varied ways.

I dream of an Amazon region that can jealously preserve its over-whelming natural beauty and the superabundant life teeming in its rivers and forests.

I dream of Christian communities capable of generous commitment, incarnate in the Amazon region, and giving the Church new faces with Amazonian features. (*Querida Amazonia*, 7)



Statements from the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops: A Selection

Renewing the Earth, November 14, 1991. tinyurl.com/y2cxftfv

Global Climate Change: A Plea for Dialogue, Prudence and the Common Good, June 15, 2001 tinyurl.com/3smna5c

Global Climate Change 2010, February, 2010 tinyurl.com/y5othu4r

Statement on the World Day of Prayer for Care of Creation, September 1, 2016
Archbishop Thomas Wenski, Chairman, Committee on Domestic Justice and Human Development; Bishop Oscar Cantu, Chairman, Committee on International Peace and Justice tinyurl.com/zaopuo8

Letter to Secretary Tillerson Regarding Care for Creation, February 17, 2017
tinyurl.com/y4tcaon2

Comments on Proposed EPA rule on the Clean Power Plan, April 25, 2018
Anthony R. Picarello, Jr., Associate General Secretary and General Counsel,
U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops tinyurl.com/yyqesw9q

Bishop Chairman Issues Statement in Celebration of the Fifth Anniversary of Laudato Si'—with additional link to PDF. “Summary of Activities of the U.S. Church in Response to *Laudato Si'*” Go to www.usccb.org, click About USCCB, click Offices, click Justice, Peace & Human Development, click Committee on Domestic Justice and Human Development, and scroll down to the August 18, 2020 statement.

Numerous letters and responses to current crises and both national and international issues may be found on the USCCB site at www.usccb.org, focusing on the Committee on International Justice and Peace and the Committee on Domestic Justice and Human Development; other information and accounts of action and positions taken may be found on the sites of Catholic Relief Services at www.crs.org, and Catholic Charities at www.catholiccharitiesusa.org.

Regional Bishops' Statements

Appalachian Catholic Bishops, *This Land Is Home to Me*, February 1, 1975

Appalachian Catholic Bishops, *At Home in the Web of Life: A Pastoral Message on Sustainable Communities in Appalachia*, 1995

Catholic Bishops of the Pacific Northwest, *The Columbia River Watershed: Caring for Creation and the Common Good*, January 8, 2001.

Washington State Bishops, *Environmental Policy--A Statement from Washington State's Bishops*, October 4, 2018

Washington State Bishops, *Who Is My Neighbor? The Face of Poverty in Washington State*, 2016

Massachusetts Catholic Conference, *Bishops' Statement on Climate Change: Embracing Laudato Si'*, 2018--from His Eminence Sean P. Cardinal O'Malley, OFM Cap., Archbishop of Boston; Most Reverend Robert J. McManus, Bishop of Worcester; Most Reverend Edgar M. da Cunha, Bishop of Fall River; Most Reverend Mitchell Rozanski, Bishop of Springfield

Catholic Bishops of Alaska, *A Catholic Perspective on Subsistence: Our Responsibility toward Alaska's Bounty and Our Human Family*, April 12, 2002.

Website Resources

Please note that some sites appearing on the list below are actively working with CADEIO. Others have been found to be helpful by some ecumenical and interreligious officers.

The Vatican Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development
www.humandevlopment.va/en.html

Catholic Association of Diocesan Ecumenical and Interreligious Officers — Care for Creation creation.cadeio.org

Catholic Climate Covenant www.catholicclimatecovenant.org

Creation Justice Ministries www.creationjustice.org

Center for Interfaith Relations www.centerforinterfaithrelations.org

Earth Ministry www.earthministry.org

Global Catholic Climate Movement: catholicclimatemovement.global

Goodfaith Media goodfaithmedia.org Especially see John T. Pawlikowski, “Interreligious Relations Must Become Imperative, Not a Sidebar,” 28 April 2020, tinyurl.com/y2vs4xrc

Greenfaith www.greenfaith.org

Interfaith Power and Light www.interfaithpowerandlight.org

Parliament of the World’s Religions www.parliamentofreligions.org

“**Roadmap to 2050: A Manual for Nations to Decarbonize by Mid-Century,**” by Paolo Carnevale (Fondazione Eni Enrico Mattei [FEEM]) and Jeffrey D. Sachs, (Sustainable Development Solutions Network) is found at www.unsdsn.org or tinyurl.com/y3jwjqfm

USCCB, Committee on Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs
tinyurl.com/yyqroj7w

USCCB, Justice, Peace and Human Development, Environment
tinyurl.com/y4unb55q www.usccb.org/environment

Yale University Forum on Religion and Ecology, overseen by Mary Evelyn Tucker and John Grim at fore.yale.edu/World-Religions

Note: In addition, the **Society of Christian Ethics** at www.scethics.org, the **Society of Jewish Ethics** at www.societyofjewishethics.org, and the **Society for the Study of Muslim Ethics** at www.ssmethics.org all have interest groups focused on environmental issues, especially from the ethical perspective. These groups typically meet annually at a common conference site and share theological ethical perspectives, common concerns, and information about initiatives and events affecting the environment.

A Selection of Useful Books

Berry, Thomas. *The Dream of the Earth*. San Francisco: Sierra Club Books, 1988.

Berry, Thomas, C.P., with Thomas Clarke, S.J. *Befriending the Earth: A Theology of Reconciliation Between Humans and the Earth*, ed. Stephen Dunn, C.P., and Anne Lonergan. Mystic, CT: Twenty-Third Publications, 1991.

Berger, Teresa, ed. *Full of Your Glory: Liturgy, Cosmos, Creation*. Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2020.

Bullard, Robert and Beverly Wright, eds. *Race, Place, and Environmental Justice after Hurricane Katrina*. New York: Taylor and Francis, 2009.

Bullard, Robert and Beverly Wright. *The Wrong Complexion for Protection: How the Government Response to Disaster Endangers African American Communities*. New York: New York University Press, 2012.

Chryssavgis, John. *Creation as Sacrament: Reflections on Ecology and Spirituality*. New York: T&T Clark, 2019.

Dear, John. *Praise Be Peace: Psalms of Peace and Nonviolence in a Time of War and Climate Change*. New London: Twenty-Third Publications, 2020.

Delio, Ilia, O.S.F. *A Franciscan View of Creation: Learning to Live in a Sacramental World*. Franciscan Heritage Series, Vol. 2. St. Bonaventure, NY: Franciscan Institute, 2003.

Delio, Ilia, O.S.F. with Keith Douglass Warner and Pamela Wood. *Care for Creation: A Franciscan Spirituality of the Earth*. Cincinnati: Franciscan Media, 2008.

Edwards, Denis. *Deep Incarnation: God's Redemptive Suffering with Creatures*. Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2019.

_____. *Ecology at the Heart of Faith: The Change of Heart That Leads to a New Way of Living on Earth*. Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2006.

Fragomeni, Richard and John T. Pawlikowski. *The Ecological Challenge: Biblical, Liturgical, and Spiritual Resources*. Collegeville, Michael Glazer Books, 1994.

Irwin, Kevin. *A Commentary on Laudato Si'*. New York: Paulist Press, 2016.

Kureethadam, Joshtrom Isaac. *The Ten Green Commandments of Laudato Si'*. Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2019.

Mitchell, Donald W., and William Skudlarek, O.S.B., eds. *Green Monasticism: A Buddhist-Catholic Response to and Environmental Calamity*. Brooklyn: Lantern Books, 2010.

Nothwehr, Dawn M. *Ecological Footprints: An Essential Franciscan Guide for Faith and Sustainable Living*. Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2012.

_____, ed. *Franciscan Theology of the Environment: An Introductory Reader*. Quincy: Franciscan Press, 2002.

Nunez, Ted. *Sustainable Abundance for All: Catholic Social Thought and Action in a Risky, Runaway World*. Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2018.

Schaefer, Jame. *Theological Foundations for Environmental Ethics: Reconstructing Patristic and Medieval Concepts*. Washington: Georgetown University Press, 2009.

Smith, Pamela. *EarthTones: Paying the Psalms with All Creation*. Mystic: TwentyThird Publications, 2004.

_____. *What Are They Saying about Environmental Ethics?* New York: Paulist Press, 1997.

Teilhard de Chardin, Pierre. *Hymn of the Universe*. New York: Harper and Row, 1961.

Thompson, Christopher J. *The Joyful Mystery: Field Notes Toward a Green Thomism*. Steubenville: Emmaus Road Publishing, 2017.



XII. ENVIRONMENTAL GUIDEBOOK ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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Quoted material from the *Tao Tè Ching*, 42, is from *Taoistic: Taoism Explained* copyright © 2011, 2015 Stefan Stenudd, www.taoistic.com, accessed December 3, 2020.

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Quoted material from Brigham Young is from *Presidents of the Church: Journal of Discourses*, Vol. 11, (also referenced as DBY 115–116), cited in several publications of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, including www.churchofjesuschrist.org and in www.ldsearthstewardship.org.

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