

Caring for God's Creation

These can be used for publication in parish bulletins, catechetical newsletters, etc.

Prayer for God's Creation

O God, the whole universe is your dwelling place. You blessed one corner of it as our home. Let us remember that in nature are many signs of your fidelity and wisdom. Help us to see Christ in all our neighbors, those both near and far. As Christian love calls us to serve the weak and vulnerable among us, we are also summoned to love the earth. May we hear your voice, and help all respond to your call. Send forth your Spirit to renew the face of the earth.

Above all, we seek to explore the links between concern for the person and for the earth..., avoiding false choices between the people and the planet. It is the poor, here and in the developing countries, who suffer first and most from damage to the environment; they are the prime victims of a global system that degrades them and the rest of God's creation.

Renewing the Earth, U.S. Catholic Bishops

At its core, global climate change is not about economic theory or political platforms, nor about partisan advantage or interest group pressures. It is about the future of God's creation and the one human family. It is about protecting both "the human environment" and the natural environment.¹ It is about our human stewardship of God's creation and our responsibility to those who come after us. With these reflections, we seek to offer a word of caution and a plea for genuine dialogue as the United States and other nations face decisions about how best to respond to the challenges of global climate change.

Global Climate Change: A Plea for Dialogue, Prudence & the Common Good, USCCB, 2001

If we harm the atmosphere, we dishonor our Creator and the gift of creation. The values of our faith call us to humility, sacrifice, and a respect for life and the natural gifts God has provided. Pope John Paul II reminds us in his statement *The Ecological Crisis: A Common Responsibility* that "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."¹³ In that spirit of praise and thanksgiving to God for the wonders of creation, we Catholic bishops call for a civil dialogue and prudent and constructive action to protect God's precious gift of the earth's atmosphere with a sense of genuine solidarity and justice for all God's children.

Global Climate Change: A Plea for Dialogue, Prudence & the Common Good, USCCB, 2001

Faced with the widespread destruction of the environment, people everywhere are coming to understand that we cannot continue to use the goods of the earth as we have in the past. The public in general as well as political leaders are concerned about this problem, and experts from a wide range of disciplines are studying its causes. Moreover, a new ECOLOGICAL AWARENESS is beginning to emerge which, rather than being downplayed, ought to be encouraged to develop into concrete programs and initiatives.

World Day Of Peace, Pope John Paul II, January 1, 1990

When man turns his back on the Creator's plan, he provokes a disorder which has inevitable repercussions on the rest of the created order. If man is not at peace with God, then earth itself cannot be at peace: "Therefore the land mourns and all who dwell in it languish, and also the beasts of the field and the birds of the air and even the fish of the sea are taken away" (Hos 4:3). The profound sense that the earth is "suffering" is also shared by those who do not profess our faith in God. Indeed, the increasing devastation of the world of nature is apparent to all. It results from the behavior of people who show a callous disregard for the hidden, yet perceivable requirements of the order and harmony which govern nature itself.

World Day Of Peace, Pope John Paul II, January 1, 1990

The gradual depletion of the ozone layer and the related "greenhouse effect" has now reached crisis proportions as a consequence of industrial growth, massive urban concentrations and vastly increased energy needs. Industrial waste, the burning of fossil fuels, unrestricted deforestation, the use of certain types of herbicides, coolants and propellants, all of these are known to harm the atmosphere and environment. The resulting meteorological and atmospheric changes range from damage to health to the possible future submersion of low-lying lands.

World Day Of Peace, Pope John Paul II, January 1, 1990

As people of faith, we are convinced that "the earth is the Lord's and all it holds" (Ps 24:1). Our Creator has given us the gift of creation: the air we breathe, the water that sustains life, the fruits of the land that nourish us, and the entire web of life without which human life cannot flourish. All of this God created and found "very good." We believe our response to global climate change should be a sign of our respect for God's creation.

*Global Climate Change:
A Plea for Dialogue, Prudence, and the Common Good, USCCB, 2001*

Global climate is by its very nature a part of the planetary commons. The earth's atmosphere encompasses all people, creatures, and habitats. The melting of ice sheets and glaciers, the destruction of rain forests, and the pollution of water in one place can have environmental impacts elsewhere. As Pope John Paul II has said, "*We cannot interfere in one area of the ecosystem without paying due attention both to the consequences of such interference in other areas and to the well being of future generations.*" Responses to global climate change should reflect our interdependence and common responsibility for the future of our planet. Individual nations must measure their own self-interest against the greater common good and contribute equitably to global solutions.

*Global Climate Change:
A Plea for Dialogue, Prudence, and the Common Good, USCCB, 2001*

Christian responsibility for the environment begins with appreciation of the goodness of all God's creation. In the beginning, "God looked at everything he had made, and he found it very good" (Gn 1:31). The heavens and the earth, the sun and the moon, the earth and the sea, fish and birds, animals and humans—all are good. God's wisdom and power were present in every aspect of the unfolding of creation (see Prv 8:22-31).

*Renewing the Earth, An Invitation to Reflection and Action on Environment in
Light of Catholic Social Teaching, USCCB, 1991.*

Let the earth bless the Lord; praise and exalt him above all forever.
Mountains and hills, bless the Lord; praise and exalt him above all forever.
Everything growing from the earth, bless the Lord; praise and exalt him above all forever.
You springs, bless the Lord; praise and exalt him above all forever.
Seas and rivers, bless the Lord; praise and exalt him above all forever.
You dolphins and all water creatures, bless the Lord; praise and exalt him above all forever.
All you birds of the air, bless the Lord; praise and exalt him above all forever.
All you beasts, wild and tame, bless the Lord; praise and exalt him above all forever

Deuteronomy 3:74-81

People share the earth with other creatures. But humans, made in the image and likeness of God, are called in a special way to "cultivate and care for it" (Gn 2:15). Men and women, therefore, bear a unique responsibility under God: to safeguard the created world and by their creative labor even to enhance it. Safeguarding creation requires us to live responsibly within it, rather than manage creation as though we are outside it. The human family is charged with preserving the beauty, diversity, and integrity of nature, as well as with fostering its productivity. Yet, God alone is sovereign over the whole earth.

*Renewing the Earth, An Invitation to Reflection and Action on Environment in
Light of Catholic Social Teaching, USCCB, 1991.*

Care for the environment represents a challenge for all of humanity. It is a matter of a common and universal duty, that of respecting a common good,[979] destined for all, by preventing anyone from using "with impunity the different categories of beings, whether living or inanimate — animals, plants, the natural elements — simply as one wishes, according to one's own economic needs".[980] It is a responsibility that must mature on the basis of the global dimension of the present ecological crisis and the consequent necessity to meet it on a worldwide level, since all beings are interdependent in the

universal order established by the Creator. "One must take into account the nature of each being and of its mutual connection in an ordered system, which is precisely the 'cosmos'".

Compendium of the Catechism of the Catholic Church, 2005

The attitude that must characterize the way man acts in relation to creation is essentially one of gratitude and appreciation; the world, in fact, reveals the mystery of God who created and sustains it. If the relationship with God is placed aside, nature is stripped of its profound meaning and impoverished. If on the other hand, nature is rediscovered in its creaturely dimension, channels of communication with it can be established, its rich and symbolic meaning can be understood, allowing us to enter into its realm of mystery. This realm opens the path of man to God, Creator of heaven and earth. The world presents itself before man's eyes as evidence of God, the place where his creative, providential and redemptive power unfolds.

Compendium of the Catechism of the Catholic Church, 2005

...the earth is ultimately *a common heritage, the fruits of which are for the benefit of all*. In the words of the Second Vatican Council, "God destined the earth and all it contains for the use of every individual and all peoples" (*Gaudium et Spes*, 69). This has direct consequences for the problem at hand. It is manifestly unjust that a privileged few should continue to accumulate excess goods, squandering available resources, while masses of people are living in conditions of misery at the very lowest level of subsistence. Today, the dramatic threat of ecological breakdown is teaching us the extent to which greed and selfishness - both individual and collective - are contrary to the order of creation, an order which is characterized by mutual interdependence.

World Day of Peace Message, Pope John Paul II, 1990

An education in ecological responsibility is urgent: responsibility for oneself, for others, and for the earth. This education cannot be rooted in mere sentiment or empty wishes. Its purpose cannot be ideological or political. It must not be based on a rejection of the modern world or a vague desire to return to some "paradise lost". Instead, a true education in responsibility entails a genuine conversion in ways of thought and behaviour. Churches and religious bodies, non-governmental and governmental organizations, indeed all members of society, have a precise role to play in such education. The first educator, however, is the family, where the child learns to respect his neighbour and to love nature.

World Day of Peace Message, Pope John Paul II, 1990

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 relationships with all of God's creation.

Sharing Catholic Social Teaching, U.S. Catholic Bishops, 1999

“And God saw that it was good.” Humanity must therefore respect the particular goodness of every creature, to avoid any disordered use of things which would be in contempt of the Creator and would bring disastrous consequences for human beings and their environment.

Catechism of the Catholic Church #339