

Our Faith and Earth Sustainability

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In June of 2015, the Vatican released Pope Francis' second encyclical: *Laudato Si: On Care for Our Common Home*, dedicated entirely to the topic of environmental issues. With its release, Pope Francis showed that environmental issues are a priority of his papacy. Written to "every person living on this planet," Pope Francis has asked citizens of the world to acknowledge, discuss, and take responsibility on a personal level to meet our environmental challenges.

Pope Benedict XVI called for a commitment to care for creation. He said creation is "exposed to serious risks by life choices and lifestyles that can degrade it." "In particular," he said, "environmental degradation makes the lives of the poor especially unbearable." (Angelus Address, August 27, 2006). The U.S. Catholic bishops have declared, "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." (*Global Climate Change: A Plea for Dialogue, Prudence and the Common Good*, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2001, p.1)

Living a Christian lifestyle today means being conscious of the universal connectedness of all life. What happens to the environment will affect all people, but it usually affects first and most severely those who are poor. Our faith teaches us to care for all of creation and in particular for people who are the most vulnerable.

Many organizations are working hard to communicate the message of Earth's survival. Do others see in us, as people of faith, a commitment to care for God's creation?

As cited in the scriptural parable of the fig tree, there is 'another year left before the tree will be cut down.' We too have a window of opportunity of what scientists say is ten years before irreparable harm is done by global warming. People who are poor and living on islands or near the coastline will not survive some natural disasters caused by increased temperatures around the planet. Let us respond to the grace of a call to care for all of creation. Then we may hope to bear fruit for future generations and the 'fig tree' called Earth will be able to offer its riches to our children and their children.

WAYS TO IMPLEMENT

In Class

Discuss how those who are poor may experience more of the effects of environmental degradation than others. Research how melting of the Arctic ice caused by global warming will affect those who are poor. Decide on something the class can do to raise awareness of caring for God's creation.

At Home

At home, how are we living an ecologically sustainable lifestyle? Are we "living simply so that others may simply live" as Ghandi taught? Have we made decisions to reduce consumption, reuse what is still functioning, and recycle what can be used again in another form? How can our family be involved in caring for God's creation?