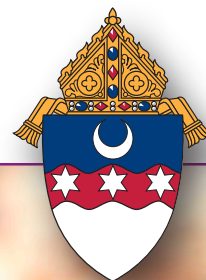
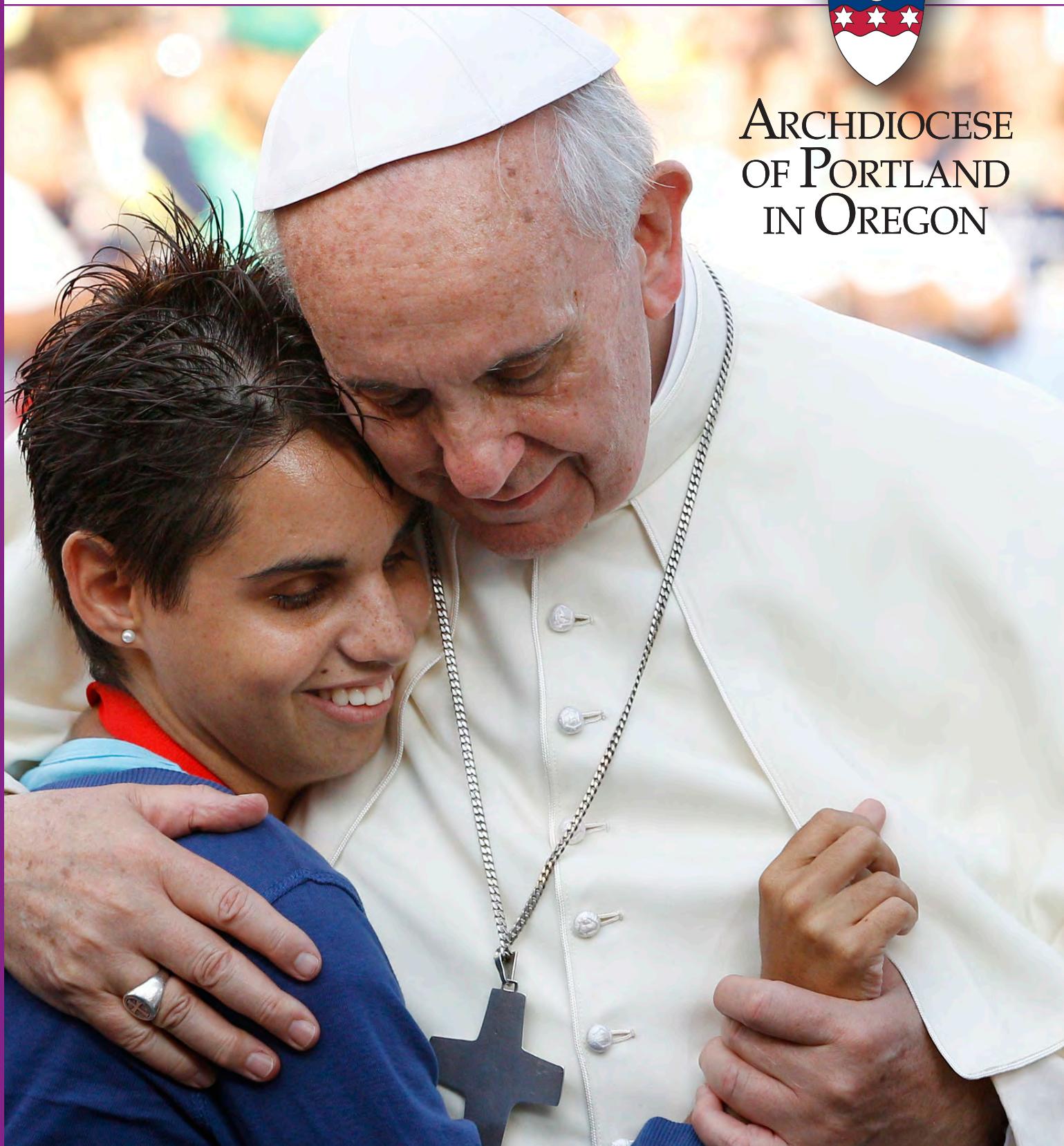


Heal Relationships in Lent

with Pope Francis



ARCHDIOCESE
OF PORTLAND
IN OREGON



Dear Brothers & Sisters in Christ,

Praised be Jesus Christ!

This Lent we have an opportunity to “Heal Relationships” using as a guide the recent encyclical letter from Pope Francis: *On Care of Our Common Home (Laudato Si’)*.

Pope Francis wrote in *Laudato Si’*, paragraph 217:

“The external deserts in the world are growing, because the internal deserts have become so vast” (Benedict XVI, *Homily for the Solemn Inauguration of the Petrine Ministry*, 2005). For this reason, the ecological crisis is also a summons to profound interior conversion. . . . an “ecological conversion”, whereby the effects of their encounter with Jesus Christ become evident in their relationship with the world around them. Living our vocation to be protectors of God’s handiwork is essential to a life of virtue; it is not an optional or a secondary aspect of our Christian experience.”

Heal Relationships in Lent with Pope Francis is a parish-based and religious community-based faith-sharing program designed to deepen our faith and build relationships within our Catholic community through the warm invitation of Pope Francis.


Heal Relationships in Lent with Pope Francis guides us into healing relationships with ourselves, with each other, with God, and with creation.

Preparing for the Jubilee Year of Mercy, Pope Francis writes that the relationships Jesus forms with the people who approach him manifest something entirely unique and unrepeatable. The signs he works . . . are all meant to teach mercy. *Heal Relationships in Lent with Pope Francis* will teach open hearts that it is *mercy* that brings us into healing our broken relationships.

The Season of Lent is an especially good time for each of us to enter deeply into spiritual conversion, which as Pope Francis points out, includes “ecological conversion.”

I encourage each parish and religious community to participate in *Heal Relationships in Lent with Pope Francis*.

Sincerely yours in Christ,



Most Rev. Alexander K. Sample
Archbishop of Portland in Oregon

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WELCOME!

On Care for Our Common Home (Laudato Si') is a remarkable encyclical calling all persons to conversion:

“There can be no renewal of our relationship with nature without a renewal of humanity itself” (no. 118).

The encyclical is about hope:

“The urgent challenge to protect our common home includes a concern to bring the whole human family together to seek a sustainable and integral development, for we know that things can change. The Creator does not abandon us; he never forsakes his loving plan or repents of having created us. Humanity still has the ability to work together in building our common home” (13).

It is a call to live life more fully:

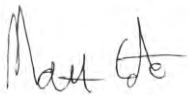
“Christian spirituality proposes an alternative understanding of the quality of life, and encourages a prophetic and contemplative lifestyle, one capable of deep enjoyment free of the obsession with consumption” (no. 222).

On Care for Our Common Home (Laudato Si') can be summed up in two words:

“Heal relationships.”

This began as a study guide from the U.S. Conference of Catholics Bishops and, with their permission, modified for a Lenten journey toward conversion. We pray that you find this faith-sharing program a useful guide during the Season of Lent – or any time of year – on your journey to conversion.

Much peace,



Matt Cato
Director of the Office of Life, Justice & Peace



Br. Cyril Drnjevic
Mount Angel Abbey

Leader: Together, we now pray the Cantic of the Creatures, from St. Francis of Assisi.

All:

Praised be you, my Lord, with all your creatures,
especially Sir Brother Sun,
who is the day and through whom you give us light.

And he is beautiful and radiant with great splendor;
and bears a likeness of you, Most High.

Praised be you, my Lord, through Sister Moon and the stars,
in heaven you formed them clear and precious and beautiful.

Praised be you, my Lord, through Brother Wind,
and through the air, cloudy and serene, and every kind of weather
through whom you give sustenance to your creatures.

Praised be you, my Lord, through Sister Water,
who is very useful and humble and precious and chaste.

Praised be you, my Lord, through Brother Fire,
through whom you light the night,
and he is beautiful and playful and robust and strong.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

In his new encyclical *Laudato Si'*, Pope Francis gives us a wide-ranging and comprehensive plan to restore our relationships with God, one another and the good things of the earth.

Surrounded by both human and natural ecological crises, the Christian vision set out by the Holy Father in his new encyclical is antidote to the carelessness and decay that is poisoning our hearts and habitats.

Pope Francis gives us the framework to undertake a restoration project that will have real consequences for us in this life and the world to come.

The title is taken from the first line of the encyclical, “*Laudato Si', mi Signore,*” or “Praise be to you, my Lord.” In the words of this beautiful canticle, Saint Francis of Assisi reminds us that our common home is like a sister with whom we share our life and a beautiful mother who opens her arms to embrace us.

An “encyclical” is a letter that is a teaching document by the Holy Father. An “encyclical” is a “circular” letter, one that is meant to be circulated, discussed and put into service. A “social encyclical” applies the consistent, traditional moral teachings of the Church to the social and economic challenges of the current day.

The solemn season of Lent is a time of penance and fasting – the perfect setting for reflection on our relationships with God, with each other, with ourselves, and with creation.

Pope Francis is an expert in Jesus Christ, the Creator, and in guiding people to live as Jesus calls us to live: in relationship with the Creator (God), one another, and all of creation.

The encyclical “On Care of Our Common Home” (Laudato Si’) emphasizes “the climate within,” which is to say, our spirituality. A two-word description of the purpose of the document is: “heal relationships”. A simple message of the encyclical is that an effective approach to ecology (or to any human relationship) begins with spirituality.

What better time than Lent to heed the Call to Conversion and begin to “heal relationships?”

WEEK 1: WHAT IS HAPPENING TO OUR COMMON HOME

OUR COMMON HOME

“I urgently appeal . . . for a new dialogue about how we are shaping the future of our planet. We need a conversation which includes everyone, since the environmental challenge we are undergoing, and its human roots, concern and affect us all” (no. 14).

“The climate is a common good, belonging to all and meant for all” (no. 23).

“The urgent challenge to protect our common home includes a concern to bring the whole human family together to seek a sustainable and integral development, for we know that things can change” (no. 13).

CLIMATE CHANGE

“Climate change is a global problem with grave implications: environmental, social, economic, political and for the distribution of goods. It represents one of the principal challenges facing humanity in our day. Its worst impact will probably be felt by developing countries in coming decades” (no. 25).

“Humanity is called to recognize the need for changes of lifestyle, production and consumption, in order to combat this warming or at least the human causes which produce or aggravate it” (no. 23).

CARE FOR PERSONS IN POVERTY

“Many of the poor live in areas particularly affected by phenomena related to warming, and their means of subsistence are largely dependent on natural reserves and ecosystemic services such as agriculture, fishing and forestry. They have no other financial activities or resources which can enable them to adapt to climate change or to face natural disasters, and their access to social services and protection is very limited. For example, changes in climate, to which animals and plants adapt, lead them to migrate; this in turn affects the livelihood of the poor, who are then forced to leave their homes, with great uncertainty for their future and that of their children. There has been a tragic rise in the number of migrants seeking to flee from the growing poverty caused by environmental degradation. . . . Our lack of response to these tragedies involving our brothers and sisters points to the loss of that sense of responsibility for our fellow men and women upon which all civil society is founded” (no. 25).

Questions

1. What changes can we make to our lifestyles, consumption and relationships to better care for one another and creation? How are we beginning this change in our lifestyle during Lent? How can we continue this change in our lifestyle after Lent?
2. What are you observing locally or in other parts of the country or world that causes you to think about climate change??
3. How are persons in poverty—who contribute the least to environmental devastation — often impacted the worst by environmental devastation?
4. Why and how does our faith call us to “*heal relationships*” with persons in poverty, especially during Lent and after Lent?
5. The climate belongs to all and is meant for all, yet a disproportionate amount of the earth’s resources are consumed by the United States and other wealthy countries.

What does Pope Francis propose must happen in order to address this? How can this relate to conversion in Lent?

FOLLOW UP ACTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION

Taking Action Nationally

The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops is urging that any legislative action on climate change include provisions that

- a) Ease the burden on low-income communities and those who live in poverty;
- b) Offer relief for workers who may be displaced because of climate change policies; and
- c) Promote the development and use of alternate renewable and clean-energy resources, including the transfer of such technologies and also technical assistance that may be appropriate and helpful to developing countries in meeting the challenges of climate change.

Let Congress know that you care about climate change and support action on a national level that includes the three key priorities above. For background information on the issue, go to <http://www.usccb.org/environment> and the Catholic Climate Covenant catholicclimatecovenant.org.

Please turn to Page 16 for the Closing Prayer

WEEK 2: THE GOSPEL OF CREATION

A MORAL AND SPIRITUAL ISSUE

“The universe as a whole, in all its manifold relationships, shows forth the inexhaustible riches of God” (no. 86).

“Whether believers or not, we are agreed today that the earth is essentially a shared inheritance, whose fruits are meant to benefit everyone” (no. 93).

“Disregard for the duty to cultivate and maintain a proper relationship with my neighbor, for whose care and custody I am responsible, ruins my relationship with my own self, with others, with God and with the earth. When all these relationships are neglected, when justice no longer dwells in the land, the Bible tells us that life itself is endangered” (no. 70).

WE ARE NOT GOD

“We are not God. The earth was here before us and it has been given to us” (no. 67).

“A fragile world, entrusted by God to human care, challenges us to devise intelligent ways of directing, developing and limiting our power” (no. 78).

Questions

1. What does nature teach us about the Creator? Has your own experience of the created world helped you to pray or communicate with God?
2. When we fail to care for creation, what impact does this have on our relationship with ourselves, others, God and the earth? How important is it for us to “*heal relationships*,” especially during Lent?
3. “Christians ... “realize that their responsibility within creation, and their duty towards nature and the Creator, are an essential part of their faith” (no. 64).

How is this responsibility an essential part of *your* faith (or how can it become an essential part of *your* faith)?

4. What does it mean to presume to take the place of God?
5. How does Pope Francis’ explanation of the correct interpretation of Genesis 1:28 (about humans having “dominion” over the earth) (Laudato Si’ 67-69) help clarify our role in caring for the earth? For each other?

FOLLOW UP ACTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION

Taking Action at Home

Brainstorm what lifestyle changes you can make as an individual or family to reduce your own consumption in order to better protect God's creation.

Here are some ideas based on those Pope Francis mentions in *Laudato Si'* (no. 211):

1. Use fewer paper and plastic products – e.g. use a re-usable water bottle
2. Reduce water consumption – e.g. take shorter showers, wash dishes by hand, etc.
3. Don't cook more than you will consume
4. Compost (instead of disposing) food waste
5. Recycle
6. Reuse instead of disposing
7. Use public transportation, carpool, walk, or ride a bike
8. Conserve electricity – e.g. turn off lights and buy energy-efficient appliances
9. Plant trees

Please turn to Page 16 for the Closing Prayer

WEEK 3: THE HUMAN ROOTS OF THE ECOLOGICAL CRISIS

TECHNOLOGY: CREATIVITY AND POWER

“We have to accept that technological products are not neutral, for they create a framework which ends up conditioning lifestyles and shaping social possibilities ...” (no. 107).

“Technoscience, when well directed, can produce important means of improving the quality of human life ... Yet it must also be recognized that nuclear energy, biotechnology, information technology, knowledge of our DNA, and many other abilities which we have acquired, have given us tremendous power. More precisely, they have given those with the knowledge, and especially the economic resources to use them, an impressive dominance over the whole of humanity and the entire world” (no.103-104).

THE CRISIS AND EFFECTS OF MODERN ANTHROPOCENTRISM

“Our ‘dominion’ over the universe should be understood more properly in the sense of responsible stewardship” (no. 116).

“When we fail to acknowledge as part of reality the worth of a poor person, a human embryo, a person with disabilities – to offer just a few examples – it becomes difficult to hear the cry of nature itself; everything is connected” (no. 117).

“When human beings place themselves at the center, they give absolute priority to immediate convenience and all else becomes relative (no.122) “We cannot interfere in one area of the ecosystem without paying due attention to the consequences of such interference in other areas.’ We need constantly to rethink the goals, effects, overall context and ethical limits of [genetic modifying], which is a form of power involving considerable risks” (no.131).

Questions

1. "The accumulation of constant novelties exalts a superficiality which pulls us in one direction. It becomes difficult to pause and recover depth in life" (no.113).

As a consumer, does technology interfere with your prayer and spiritual life? How can we use the Season of Lent to "pause and recover depth in life," so that we control objects and that they do not control us?

2. "We cannot presume to heal our relationship with nature and the environment without healing all fundamental human relationships" (no.119).

How is "everything connected?"

How can we use the Season of Lent to heal *our* "fundamental *human relationships*?"

3. What has "having dominion" mean to you?

4. "Pope Francis writes that "The idea of ... employing technology as a mere instrument is nowadays inconceivable. ... It has become countercultural to choose a lifestyle whose goals are even partly independent of technology, of its costs and its power to globalize and make us all the same" (no. 108).

What could your world look like if you employed "technology as a mere instrument" (with "goals even partly independent of technology)?"

How can we use the Season of Lent to move toward a more harmonious relationship with technology??

5. Pope Francis questions the reflexive acceptance of genetic modification as "progress."

As Catholics, we understand "progress" as whatever moves us closer to God. How may genetically modified foods (GMO's) be an example of an ecological challenge to us?

FOLLOW UP ACTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION

Taking Action in my Parish, at School, or at Work

Brainstorm what institutional changes you can make in your parish, faith community, school or workspace. Here are a few ideas:

1. At Catholic institutions, ensure that learning about care for God's creation is part of formation for both adults and youth. Educational resources, homily helps, and more are at <http://www.usccb.org/environment>
2. Do an energy audit to identify where energy consumption could be reduced. Such an audit will benefit both the earth and your institution's budget!
3. Consider going solar. Explore whether efforts are happening in your local community to form solar cooperatives, in which institutions purchase affordable solar energy in bulk.
4. Implement recycling and composting.
5. At events where food or beverages are consumed, and in cafeterias, replace disposable cups, plates, and silverware with washable or compostable items.
6. Donate leftovers to local soup kitchens, or cook only what will be reasonably consumed.
7. Offer employees benefits for using public transportation or carpooling.
8. Conserve electricity – e.g. turn off lights and air conditioning during non-business hours and buy energy-efficient appliances.
9. Plant trees on your institution's property.
10. Find out about and join efforts to care for creation in your local community.
11. Find out what other faith communities across the United States are doing to care for God's creation: <http://www.wearesaltandlight.org/success-stories-act>

Please turn to Page 16 for the Closing Prayer

WEEK 4: INTEGRAL ECOLOGY (HUMAN ECOLOGY)

INTEGRAL ECOLOGY

"Everything is connected. Concern for the environment thus needs to be joined to a sincere love for our fellow human beings and an unwavering commitment to resolving the problems of society" (no. 91).

"A true ecological approach always becomes a social approach; it must integrate questions of justice in debates on the environment, so as to hear both the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor" (no. 49).

"We are faced not with two separate crises, one environmental and the other social, but rather with one complex crisis which is both social and environmental. Strategies for a solution demand an integrated approach to combating poverty, restoring dignity to the excluded, and at the same time protecting nature" (no. 139).

"In the present condition of global society, where injustices abound and growing numbers of people are deprived of basic human rights and considered expendable, the principle of the common good immediately becomes, logically and inevitably, a summons to solidarity and a preferential option for the poorest of our brothers and sisters" (no. 158).

Questions

1. **Everything is connected!** Integral ecology links care for people and care for God's creation. How is our concern for our fellow human beings connected to our concern for the environment? How can we use Lent to connect with and care for our fellow human beings?
2. Pope Francis encourages us to listen both to the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor (no. 49). What happens when we are attuned to only one or the other? How can our Season of Lent help us to be attuned to both the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor?
3. What does Pope Francis mean when he says, "An ethical and cultural decline ... has accompanied the deterioration of the environment" (no. 162)? How can the Season of Lent lead us to ethical and cultural "progress," to growing closer to God and "*heal our relationships*" with God?
4. Why does Pope Francis argue that "we are faced not with two separate crises, one environmental and the other social, but rather with one complex crisis which is both social and environmental" (no. 139)?

How does this relate to Lent?

5. Pope Francis speaks of an "integral ecology," which we can understand as "human ecology," because it combines environmental (no.138-140), economic (no. 141), social (no. 142), and cultural (no. 143) ecologies.

What does that mean? How does it work? What can Lent teach us about "human ecology"?

6. What does the principle "common good" (no.158) mean to you from a faith perspective?

FOLLOW UP ACTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION

Taking Action in my State

1. Encourage lawmakers to improve and update public transportation options. When effective and far-reaching public transportation systems are in place, fewer cars clog the roads to emit greenhouse gases and air-polluting contaminants.
2. Join local efforts of groups working with elected officials and community leaders to explore ways your local community can do business in sustainable ways, reduce harmful emissions, and use renewable energy.
3. Organize or participate in local and state Earth Day celebrations to raise awareness of the challenges of climate change and move towards sustainability.
4. Pay attention to legislation going before the state legislature that concerns climate, emissions, or energy policies. Urge legislators to remember that people who live in poverty in your state may suffer the most from climate change and that legislative measures should include provisions that address disproportionate economic impacts, e.g., in heating and transportation costs.
5. Consider how we can allow the Holy Spirit to move us toward innovative, creative solutions that create jobs and care for people and God's creation.

Please turn to Page 16 for the Closing Prayer

WEEK 5: LINES OF APPROACH AND ACTION

TIME TO ACT—AS INDIVIDUALS AND COMMUNITIES

"Believers themselves must constantly be challenged to live in a way consonant with their faith and not to contradict it by their actions" (no. 200).

"Local individuals and groups can make a real difference. They are able to instill a greater sense of responsibility, a strong sense of community, a readiness to protect others, a spirit of creativity and a deep love for the land" (no. 179).

A TIME TO ACT – CIVIL AND POLITICAL LEADERS

"To take up these responsibilities and the costs they entail, politicians will inevitably clash with the mindset of short-term gain and results which dominates present-day economics and politics. But if they are courageous, they will attest to their God-given dignity and leave behind a testimony of selfless responsibility" (no. 181).

"Public pressure has to be exerted in order to bring about decisive political action. Society, through non-governmental organizations and intermediate groups, must put pressure on governments to develop more rigorous regulations, procedures and controls. Unless citizens control political power – national, regional and municipal – it will not be possible to control damage to the environment. Local legislation can be more effective, too, if agreements exist between neighboring communities to support the same environmental policies" (no. 179).

"What kind of world do we want to leave to those who come after us, to children who are now growing up" (no. 160)?

Questions

1. How are we individually called to participate in caring for God's creation (thus "*healing our relationship*" with creation)? How does this relate to the Season of Lent?
2. How can we encourage a serious dialogue in the Catholic community—in our parishes, schools, colleges, universities, religious communities, and other settings—on the significant ethical dimensions of the environmental crisis?
3. What efforts are happening in our local community that individuals, families, and Catholic communities can participate in?
4. How can faith communities, including parish and religious communities, in the United States be involved in encouraging leaders and governments, both locally and nationally, to be more responsible stewards of creation?
5. What ideas do you have to help civil and political leaders make decisions and policies that will benefit the generations to come, instead of only considering the short-term?

FOLLOW UP ACTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION

Pope Francis is critical of many business practices: he has no faith in the marketplace to safeguard the environment, and sees a robust role for government in the regulation of the economy and protecting the environment.

How will you respond to this, advocating to "*heal the relationship*" between business and creation?

Discuss and share ways you can act on what you have learned as family members, workers, owners, consumers, and voters

Please turn to Page 16 for the Closing Prayer

WEEK 6: ECOLOGICAL EDUCATION AND SPIRITUALITY

EUCHARIST AND CREATION

“The Eucharist joins heaven and earth; it embraces and penetrates all creation. The world which came forth from God’s hands returns to him in blessed and undivided adoration: in the bread of the Eucharist, ‘creation is projected towards divinization, towards the holy wedding feast, towards unification with the Creator himself’. Thus, the Eucharist is also a source of light and motivation for our concerns for the environment, directing us to be stewards of all creation” (no. 236).

“Christian spirituality proposes an alternative understanding of the quality of life, and encourages a prophetic and contemplative lifestyle, one capable of deep enjoyment free of the obsession with consumption” (no. 222).

A REASON TO HOPE

“Inner peace is closely related to care for ecology and for the common good because, lived out authentically, it is reflected in a balanced lifestyle together with a capacity for wonder which takes us to a deeper understanding of life” (no. 225).

“The God who created the universe out of nothing can also intervene in this world and overcome every form of evil. Injustice is not invincible” (no. 74).

“We must not think that these efforts are not going to change the world” (no. 212).

Questions

1. How does the Eucharist inspire and motivate your concern for the environment? How could Sunday worship impact weekday witness?
2. How does (or could) our Christian spirituality influence your lifestyle? How can you make simple, sustainable lifestyle changes beginning during this Season of Lent?
3. In the face of vast challenges, how does your faith call you to hope? How does the Season of Lent help you to live in this hope?
4. How can you “*heal relationships*” to live out God’s vision for healed and renewed relationships with God, self, others and creation?

FOLLOW UP ACTIONS

Across the United States, Catholics are taking the St. Francis Pledge to Care for Creation and the Poor and joining the Catholic Climate Covenant. The St. Francis Pledge is a promise and a commitment by Catholic individuals, families, parishes, organizations and institutions to live our faith by protecting God's Creation and advocating on behalf of people in poverty who face the harshest impacts of global climate change. To join the Covenant, you commit to act on each of the five elements of the St. Francis Pledge.

The St. Francis Pledge

I/We Pledge to:

- + PRAY and REFLECT on the duty to care for God's Creation and protect the poor and vulnerable.
- + LEARN about and educate others on the causes and moral dimensions of climate change.
- + ASSESS how we-as individuals and in our families, parishes and other affiliations contribute to climate change by our own energy use, consumption, waste, etc.
- + ACT to change our choices and behaviors to reduce the ways we contribute to climate change.
- + ADVOCATE for Catholic principles and priorities in climate change discussions and decisions, especially as they impact those who are poor and vulnerable

Please turn to Page 16 for the Closing Prayer

Closing Prayer

A Christian prayer in union with creation

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

Praise be to you!

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

Praise be to you!

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

Praise be to you!

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

God of love, show us our place in this world
as channels of your love
for all the creatures of this earth,
for not one of them is forgotten in your sight.
Enlighten those who possess power and money
that they may avoid the sin of indifference,
that they may love the common good, advance the
weak, and care for this world in which we live.

The poor and the earth are crying out.
O Lord, seize us with your power and light,
help us to protect all life,
to prepare for a better future,
for the coming of your Kingdom
of justice, peace, love and beauty.

Praise be to you!

Amen.

EVALUATION

How well did your parish Lent faith sharing or your Lent religious community discussions help you to enter deeply into conversion?

Should your parish community or religious community continue faith sharing on Catholic topics? What form could this take?

Brother Cyril, a monk at Mt. Angel Abbey, has an interest in bringing a Passion Play to the Archdiocese. The purpose of Passion Play would be to invite many people, Christians and non-Christians, to enter into long-term conversion in Christ, which includes ecological conversion.

As a parishioner or a religious community member please comment on whether you think there should be a Passion Play staged annually in the Archdiocese.

Other Comments

Please return by mail to Matt Cato, 2838 East Burnside Street, Portland, OR, 97214.
Or email to justiceandpeace@archdpdx.org