

“And God looked upon Creation and saw that it was good”

Justice for the Earth is Justice for us all.

It can be easy to think of “social justice” only in terms of human beings and their socio-economic relationships. However, Catholic Social Teaching reminds us that mindfulness of the needs of Planet Earth is essential to a proper understanding of what it means to live justly.

We cannot afford to see ourselves as separate beings in competition with creation and each other. Instead, God calls us to exist in harmony with all around us. To live justly means working for all creation, including the environment in which we live.

Here are some key themes of Catholic Social Teaching to keep in mind as our nation continues to engage environmental issues at the local, state and federal levels. When analyzing legislation or policies, consider:

1. The dignity of the human person.

Does this legislation disrespect the humanity of others by robbing them of clean air, clean water or other essentials?

2. The common good / The Universal purpose of material goods.

Does this policy ensure that Earth’s resources are put to their best use in order to enhance the quality of life for all our planet’s inhabitants without harming the Earth? Or does it instead damage creation in order to advance the economic agenda of a small group?

3. Solidarity.

We are connected to other human beings and to the natural world. Are we listening to their needs?

4. Subsidiarity.

Catholic Social Teaching values local and personal participation. Are we wasting resources by importing goods which our neighbors can produce? Do we treat the needs and the environment of those distant from us as we would our own?

Oh God,
Open our eyes
to your resplendent world,
that we may care for the earth
as our companion in creation.

May the pure song
of air, water, and trees
broaden our minds,
lift up our hearts, and guide us to you.

—Thomas Berry

Simple and Creative Ways to Support Global Sustainability

First, find out the impact you have on the Earth by taking the Ecological Footprint quiz at www.myfootprint.org. Then use these simple ideas to help make a difference!



Arrange to carpool, use public transportation or ride a bike to work or school for at least one day each week.



Reduce your consumption and control spending habits by implementing a 7-day waiting period before buying items that are not everyday necessities.



Choose one product that you will commit to buying “green.” This could be coffee, tea, clothes or produce. Find a socially responsible company in your area that can regularly sell you that product.



Just say no to Styrofoam—it is not biodegradable and will last forever! If you do not have a reusable cup or mug, then choose paper cups instead.



If you have an old, unused computer around the house or workplace, help keep toxic chemicals out of the air and ground by donating it to a charity or school (800-939-6000, www.pcsforschools.org, or www.cristina.org) or finding a recycling center near you at www.eiae.org.



Before you get rid of household items, join your local “Freecycle” group at www.freecycle.com, an effort to reduce the amount we send to landfills.



Find out about tax rebates and other economic incentives for going green with your home and car by visiting the Database of State Incentives for Renewable Energy at www.dsireusa.org.



Set up a “Free Pile” in your neighborhood, apartment building or community center where people can leave items for others to have. Each week, donate items leftover to a local charity.



This holiday season, celebrate a Green Holiday by preparing a “green” meal from only local produce and meats or foods sold by organic producers.



Raise awareness about our huge ecological footprints by giving “green” this Christmas. Host a green and fair-trade gift exchange with family and friends or designate your Christmas stockings as a “green gifts only” zone.



Engage in environmental political action and organizing activities. Check out these and other websites for ideas:

www.nrdc.org
www.protectingcreation.org
www.waterspirit.org

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