Care for God’s Creation

The 10 second Summary:

What Does The Church Say About The Care For God’s Creation?

God’s love is made known through God’s creation, incarnation and ongoing revelation. In the Book of Genesis we read how God speaks and God’s word brings all things into being. This life-giving word brings order out of chaos. Creation has an order and a purpose ordained and willed by God, and God names it “good.” The goodness of creation therefore is a divine proclamation. The human person is created last from the clay of the earth, the only creation made in the image and likeness of God. Human beings are to live in partnership with creation, drawing life and sustenance from it and in turn treating all creation with care and reverence. Human beings are to be stewards, the voice of creation, protecting and respecting its use and existence.

- One’s relationship with God is inextricably bound up with one’s relationship with creation.

Where Does This Teaching Come From?

- Scripture—Biblical source: rooted in scripture
- Tradition—Moral source: located in the Catholic tradition, shaped by the past and the present.
- Teaching—Ecclesial source: expressed in the Pope’s Encyclical letters, Apostolic letters, Apostolic exhortations, and the Bishops’ Pastoral letters, which respond to the issues of the day. (This source is often what is referred to as Catholic Social Teaching.)

How does this teaching connect with my life?

It provides:
- Principles for reflection;
- Criteria for judgment;
- Guidelines for action;
- Tools for conscience formation.

“The world presents itself before our eyes as evidence of God, the place where God’s creative, providential and redemptive power unfolds.”

- Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church, #487.
What Are Some Of The Historical Threats To Care For God's Creation That Caused The Church To Take Note And Respond?

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>What were the signs of the times?</th>
<th>Document &amp; Year</th>
<th>What was presented?</th>
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<td>Great suffering and poverty in developing countries, accentuated by the growing global divide between the rich and poor of the world, is a critical concern.</td>
<td><em>On the Development of Peoples (Populorum Progressio)</em>, 1967</td>
<td>Respect for the universal purpose of creation (God intends the earth and its goods for all) is needed for authentic development.</td>
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<td>New social problems of urbanization (poverty, marginalization, etc.), including the environment, emerge.</td>
<td><em>A Call to Action (Octogesima Adveniens)</em>, 1971</td>
<td>The harmful exploitation of nature is leading to an “environment for tomorrow which may well be intolerable.” People have a responsibility to respect the environment.</td>
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<td>A growing awareness that resources and the biosphere are not infinite develops—they must be saved and preserved.</td>
<td><em>Justice in the World (Justicia in Mundo)</em>, 1971</td>
<td>Concern for the environment is expressed in the context of discussions of development. Richer nations are using too much energy and resources, to the detriment of nature. Conservation of natural resources is needed.</td>
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<td>An increasing interdependence in the world is becoming apparent. There is also a growing awareness of the need to respect the integrity and cycles of creation.</td>
<td><em>The Social Concerns of the Church (Sollicitudo Rei Socialis)</em>, 1988</td>
<td>Ecological solidarity (among peoples and nations, and with future generations) is treated for the first time; ecological solidarity is essential to true development. John Paul II notes that the earth’s resources are limited, and that pollution threatens the health of all.</td>
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<td>The fall of communism has brought attention to the newly independent countries of Eastern Europe and their development, including environmental concerns.</td>
<td><em>One Hundred Years (Centesimus Annus)</em>, 1991</td>
<td>John Paul II states that “an anthropological error” lies at the root of the mistreatment of the environment. He cautions against this arbitrary use of the earth “as though it did not have its own requisites and a prior God-given purpose.”</td>
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Sources:
More On The Care For God’s Creation From CST:

Christians, in particular, realize that their responsibility within creation and their duty towards nature and the Creator are an essential part of their faith.

God destined the earth with all that it contains for the use of all people and nations, in such a way that created things in fair share should accrue to all people under the leadership of justice with charity as a companion.

Vatican II, The Church in the Modern World, #69

It is a requirement of our human dignity and therefore a serious responsibility, to exercise dominion over creation in such a way that it truly serves the human family. Exploitation of the riches of nature must take place according to criteria that take into account not only the immediate needs of people but also the needs of future generations. In this way, the stewardship over nature, entrusted by God to human beings, will not be guided by shortsightedness or selfish pursuit; rather, it will take into account the fact that all created goods are directed to the good of all humanity. The use of natural resources must aim at serving the integral development of present and future generations.


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 that is characterized by mutual interdependence.

Pope John Paul II, 1990 World Day of Peace Message, #8

The human person, who discovers his or her capacity to transform and in a certain sense create the world through his or her own work, forgets that this is always based on God’s prior and original gift of the things that are. The human person thinks that he or she can make arbitrary use of the earth, subjecting it without restraint to his or her will, as though it did not have its own requisites and a prior God-given purpose, which the human person can indeed develop but must not betray. Instead of carrying out his or her role as a cooperator with God in the work of creation, the human person sets himself or herself up in the place of God and thus ends up provoking a rebellion on the part of nature, which is more tyrannized than governed by him or her.

Pope John Paul II, One Hundred Years, #37

Modern society will find no solution to the ecological problem unless it takes a serious look at its lifestyle. In many parts of the world society is given to instant gratification and consumerism while remaining indifferent to the damage, which these attitudes cause. Simplicity, moderation and discipline, as well as a spirit of sacrifice, must become part of everyday life, lest all suffer the negative consequences of the careless habits of a few.

Pope John Paul II, Call for Ecological Conversion, January 18, 2001, General Audience
Humans are suddenly becoming aware that by an ill-considered exploitation of nature they risk destroying it and becoming in turn the victim of this degradation. ... The Christian must turn to these new perceptions in order to take on responsibility, together with the rest of humanity, for a destiny which from now on is shared by all.

A Call to Action, #21

Among today's positive signs we must also mention a greater realization of the limits of available resources, and of the need to respect the integrity and the cycles of nature and to take them into account when planning for development, rather than sacrificing them to certain demagogic ideas about the latter. Today this is called ecological concern.

Pope John Paul II, The Social Concerns of the Church, #26

The dominion accorded to man by the Creator is not an absolute power, nor can one speak of freedom to "use and abuse" nor to utilize things as one pleases. The limitation imposed by the Creator from the very beginning and expressed symbolically with the prohibition against 'eating of the fruit of the tree' (Genesis 2:16) shows with sufficient clarity that in the relationship with visible nature, we are subject to laws which are not only biological, but also moral, and they may not be transgressed with impunity.

Pope John Paul II, The Social Concerns of the Church, #34

Other Papal Writings of Relevance and Interest:

Notable Pastoral Letters of Bishops on the Care for God's Creation: