

## Recent Popes' statements on Creation Care

This is just a sampling; the reader is encouraged to consult *The Environment* by Pope Benedict XVI (Our Sunday Visitor, 2012), and, of course, *Laudato Si'* by Pope Francis.

### St. John Paul II

- '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.'
- 'The seriousness of ecological degradation lays bare the depth of man's moral crisis...Simplicity, moderation and discipline as well as the spirit of sacrifice must become a part of daily life'
  - Pope St. John Paul II, World Day of Peace, January 1<sup>st</sup>, 1990
  - [http://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/messages/peace/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_mes\\_19891208\\_xxiii-world-day-for-peace.html](http://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/messages/peace/documents/hf_jp-ii_mes_19891208_xxiii-world-day-for-peace.html)
- 'The dominion granted to man by the Creator is not an absolute power, nor can one speak of a freedom to "use and misuse," or to dispose of things as one pleases.'
- '...when it comes to the natural world, we are subject not only to biological laws but also to moral ones, which cannot be violated with impunity.'
- 'A true concept of development cannot ignore the use of the elements of nature, the renewability of resources and the consequences of haphazard industrialization - three considerations which alert our consciences to the moral dimension of development.'
  - Pope St. John Paul II, *On Social Concerns* [[Sollicitudo rei Socialis](#)]
- 'Man thinks that he can make arbitrary use of the earth, subjecting it without restraint to his will, as though it did not have its own requisites and a prior God-given purpose, which man can indeed develop but must not betray.'
- 'Instead of carrying out his role as a cooperator with God in the work of creation, man sets himself up in place of God and thus ends up provoking a rebellion on the part of nature, which is more tyrannized than governed by him.'
  - St. John Paul II, *On the Hundredth Year* [[Centesimus Annus](#)], no. 37). This marks the hundredth anniversary of *Rerum Novarum* - - "Rights and Duties of Capital and Labor", an encyclical issued by Pope Leo XIII on 15 May 1891. It was an open letter, passed to all Catholic patriarchs, primates, archbishops and bishops, that addressed the condition of the working classes.

## Pope Benedict XVI

- ‘Can we remain indifferent before the problems associated with such realities as climate change, desertification, the deterioration and loss of productivity in vast agricultural areas, the pollution of rivers and aquifers, the loss of biodiversity, the increase of natural catastrophes and the deforestation of equatorial and tropical regions?’
  - Pope Benedict XVI, <http://legal-planet.org/2013/02/11/benedict-xvi-environmentalist-pope/>
- ‘The Earth is indeed a precious gift of the Creator who, in designing its intrinsic order, has given us bearings that guide us as stewards of his creation ...’
- ‘... the natural environment is given by God to everyone. And our use of it entails a personal responsibility toward humanity as a whole, and in particular toward the poor and towards future generations ...’
  - Page 114, “The Environment” by Pope Benedict XVI, Our Sunday Visitor 2012
- ‘Experience has taught us that *disregard for the environment always harms human coexistence and vice versa ...*’
- ‘... the destruction of the environment, its improper or selfish use, and the violent hoarding of the Earth’s resources cause grievances, conflicts and wars, precisely because they are the consequences of an inhumane concept of development.’
  - Emphasis the author’s. Pages 28-29, “The Environment” by Pope Benedict XVI, Our Sunday Visitor 2012
- The family needs a home, a fit environment in which to develop its proper relationships. For the human family, this home is the earth, the environment that God the Creator has given us to inhabit with creativity and responsibility. We need to care for the environment: it has been entrusted to men and women to be protected and cultivated with responsible freedom, with the good of all as a constant guiding criterion.
  - Pope Benedict XVI, 2007 World Day of Peace message
- ‘The environment is God’s gift to everyone, and in our use of it we have a responsibility towards the poor, towards future generations and towards humanity as a whole. . .
- ‘Our duties towards the environment are linked to our duties towards the human person, considered in himself and in relation to others. It would be wrong to uphold one set of duties while trampling on the other.’
  - Pope Benedict XVI, *Charity in Truth* [[Caritas in Veritate](#)], nos. 48, 51. The third and last encyclical of Pope Benedict XVI, and his first social encyclical, concerned with the problems of global development and progress towards the common good, arguing that **both Love and Truth are essential elements of an effective response**. The work is

addressed to all strata of global society – there are specific points aimed at political leaders, business leaders, religious leaders, financiers, and aid agencies but the work as a whole is also addressed to all people of good will.

- ‘The mastery of man over life on earth, God’s creation, has become despotic and senseless. We must safeguard life on earth, God’s creation...’
  - <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2007/apr/27/catholicism.religion>
- ‘Sad to say, it is all too evident that large numbers of people in different countries and areas of our planet are experiencing increased hardship because of the negligence or refusal of many others to exercise responsible stewardship over the environment...’
  - <http://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/human-life-and-dignity/war-and-peace/2010-world-day-of-peace-quotes.cfm>

#### US Catholic Conference of Bishops

- ‘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 relationship with all of God’s creation.’
- ‘This environmental challenge has fundamental moral and ethical dimensions that cannot be ignored.’
- ‘Changes in lifestyle based on traditional moral virtues can ease the way to a sustainable and equitable world economy in which sacrifice will no longer be an unpopular concept.’
- ‘For many of us, a life less focused on material gain may remind us that we are more than what we have.’
- ‘Rejecting the false promises of excessive or conspicuous consumption can even allow more time for family, friends, and civic responsibilities.’
- ‘A renewed sense of sacrifice and restraint could make an essential contribution to addressing global climate change.’
  - <https://www.usccb.org/resources/global-climate-change-plea-dialogue-prudence-and-common-good>