

WHY WE care for God's creation



WHERE IN SCRIPTURE DO WE HEAR A CALL TO CARE FOR CREATION?

In the very beginning of time, God created all that is, and proclaimed it good (Genesis 1:1-31). He instructs us to “cultivate and care” for creation (Genesis 2:15). God also tells Moses to make sure the Israelites let their land lie fallow every 6 years, giving the land itself a Sabbath, or time to rest (Leviticus 25:4-5). The Scriptures brim with reminders that creation belongs to God and reveals his goodness (Romans 1:19-20, 1 Corinthians 10:26), which invites us to respect our Creator by caring for nature.



WHY DOES THE CHURCH CARE ABOUT THE ENVIRONMENT?

The Church has a long tradition of caring for creation. St. Francis of Assisi, considered a patron saint of ecology, praised God for revealing his greatness through “Brother Sun” and “Sister Water.” By being good stewards of creation, we recognize and honor our Creator. We also care for creation because we believe that people deserve to live in conditions that uphold their God-given dignity. When the environment suffers, human beings suffer too.

HAVE ANY POPES SPOKEN ABOUT THE ENVIRONMENT?

Dubbed the “green Pope,” Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI emphasized a human ecology that stresses the link between the well-being of the environment and human beings. “The way humanity treats the environment influences the way it treats itself, and vice versa ... Every violation of solidarity and civic friendship harms the environment, just as environmental deterioration in turn upsets relations in society” (Caritas in Veritate, no. 51). The Holy Father Pope Francis echoes Pope Benedict, saying that “We are called not only to respect the natural environment, but also to show respect for, and solidarity with, all the members of our human family. These two dimensions are closely related ...” (Papal Audience, June 5, 2013).

Top: CRS' Watersheds for Well-Being program shows farmers how to protect their hillsides and water sources from flooding. Bottom: CRS has partnered with Caritas Bangladesh to make homes more resilient to disaster so women like Rahima Begum have safe, permanent shelter. Top photo by Benjamin Depp for CRS; bottom photo by Jennifer Hardy/CRS





WHAT EFFECT IS CLIMATE CHANGE HAVING ON THE WORLD'S MOST VULNERABLE PEOPLE?

When natural disaster strikes, people living in fragile homes and those whose livelihoods depend on nature are the most devastated. Catholic Relief Services witnesses this through our work with the poor in more than 100 countries. Luis Cortés is a farmer in Honduras whose corn crop is at risk because of climate change. His family is one of more than 1 million in Central America that rely on growing corn or beans to earn their living. In a CRS study, "Tortillas on the Roaster," researchers predicted that because of climate change, water will become scarcer in Central America, meaning smaller corn and bean crops—and less income for families like Luis'.

WHAT CAN I DO TO CARE FOR GOD'S CREATION?

Taking small, conscious steps in your everyday life can help you reflect on our call to care for creation—and make an impact on the environment. Simple things like composting kitchen scraps, recycling and eating less meat can reduce waste and shrink your carbon footprint. Turning down your thermostat, shutting off the lights when you leave a room and making sure your car tires are properly inflated mean you'll use less energy from nonrenewable resources—and save some money! Even the things we buy can make a difference. "Fair trade" means that workers in other countries were paid a fair wage and ensures that products were created through environmentally responsible practices. By buying fair trade products like coffee, chocolate, clothing and home decor, you support workers and the environment.

A CRS-led study found that higher temperatures and changes in rainfall patterns could threaten the livelihoods of 1 million corn and bean farmers in Central America. See the study "Tortillas on the Roaster" at crsprogramquality.org. Photo by Oscar Leiva/Silverlight for CRS



Top: About Deng Ajuoi uses techniques he learned in a CRS program to prevent the Nile River from flooding his village. Bottom: Nancy Bargayo and her family lost everything to Typhoon Haiyan. Today, a CRS-supported program is helping them earn a living growing crops and rearing pigs. Top photo by Ric Francis for CRS; bottom photo courtesy of Lukasz Cholewiak/Caritas

