

care for God's creation

COUNTRY SPOTLIGHT: MADAGASCAR

LESSON PLANS GRADES 1-8



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background information for session leaders



CARE FOR GOD'S CREATION

Care for God's Creation is one of the seven principles of Catholic social teaching, as outlined by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, or USCCB. We believe that God created the world and all living things. Creation reflects God's glory: "Ever since the creation of the world, his invisible attributes of eternal power and divinity have been able to be understood and perceived in what he has made." (Romans 1:20) We honor God by taking care of what he has created and being good stewards of the earth. By caring for creation, we also help protect people and the planet.



Rising temperatures in Nicaragua mean farmers' coffee crops have been plagued by coffee leaf rust. CRS is showing them how to plant alternative crops for food and income.

Photo by Oscar Leiva/
Silverlight for CRS

CATHOLIC RELIEF SERVICES

Catholic Relief Services is the official international humanitarian agency of the Catholic community in the United States. We are motivated by the example of Jesus Christ to assist poor and suffering people in more than 100 countries on the basis of need, without regard to race, religion or nationality. Founded in 1943, CRS reaches 85 million of the world's poorest people each year with innovative solutions to poverty, hunger, drought, disease and emergencies. CRS works in close partnership with the Catholic Church around the world, and with local, national and international organizations that share our commitment to finding ways to meet immediate needs while empowering communities for the long term.

CARE FOR GOD'S CREATION AND CRS

In Madagascar, CRS uses the System for Rice Intensification to help farmers like Suzy Razafindrafara save water, take care of the land, preserve the nutrients in the soil and maximize crop yields. These practices promote environmental stewardship, long-term sustainability and respect for the goodness of God's creation.

Yasinta Amsi of Tanzania stands on a ridge constructed to prevent soil erosion in her community. The CRS-funded project protects the hill from future erosion and redirects rainfall into underground aquifers.

Photo by Sara A. Fajardo/CRS



Suzy's story



Suzy Razafindrafara, pronounced Rah-zah-feen-drah-far-ah, is a farmer in Madagascar, an island off the coast of Africa. Many farmers like Suzy depend on creation for resources like water and seeds so they can grow their own food—but these resources are often scarce. A few years ago, Catholic Relief Services taught Suzy a new way to plant rice that used less water and fewer seeds. When she first heard about it,

Top: Suzy harvests green beans in the village of Tsinjorano, Madagascar. Above left: Madagascar is a large island located in the Indian Ocean just east of the continent of Africa. The Malagasy eat more rice per capita than any other country in the world. Above right: Suzy with her husband, Valerien, 45, and their daughter, Vatosoa, 8. Map credit: OCHA. Photos by Sara A. Fajardo/CRS

she thought the idea sounded a little crazy. If you used less water and fewer seeds, how could you possibly grow more rice? Her neighbors laughed at her for trying it. But when her fields produced 1.5 times more rice than theirs did, no one laughed anymore. Instead, people in the village asked her to teach them the new method too. This new way of planting requires more work. Suzy and other farmers used to flood their fields to get rid of the weeds, but they learned that this damages the roots of the rice plants. It also wastes water. So now they weed by hand, a task that takes four people 2 whole days to complete. But the extra work is worth it. Before Suzy learned this new way of planting rice, her family was only able to grow enough rice to provide meals for about 10 months. Now the rice crop lasts the whole year. The family often has extra rice to sell, which helps Suzy pay for her children's education. Now every farmer in Suzy's village is using this new planting method, and they are conserving precious resources like water and seeds while producing greater harvests.

CARE FOR GOD'S CREATION

We believe that God created the world and all living things. God invites us to care for all of his creation, no matter how big or small. Suzy and other farmers who depend directly on creation for their food are very vulnerable to climate change. For example, if there is a natural disaster or it becomes too hot to grow rice, Suzy will not be able to feed her family.

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COUNTRY SPOTLIGHT: MADAGASCAR

LESSON PLAN GRADES 1-3

40 Minutes

OBJECTIVE

Students will learn about the Catholic social teaching principle Care for God's Creation (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, Seven Themes of Catholic Social Teaching) through the story of Suzy Razafindrafara, a rice farmer in Madagascar.

MATERIALS

- Bible
- Coloring supplies
- Construction paper
- **Care for Creation Activity Sheet, Grades 1-3**
- Scissors
- **Suzy's Story**
- Tape
- World map

DISCUSSION (10 MINUTES)

1. Explain that our Catholic faith invites us to care for God's creation. Share that students will learn about Suzy Razafindrafara, a farmer who relies on creation every day.
2. Share that Suzy lives in Madagascar. Locate Madagascar on a map.
3. Distribute **Suzy's Story** and read it with the students. Discuss the story and answer any questions students might have.
4. Ask students how Suzy and her village have cared for creation.

ACTIVITY (20 MINUTES)

1. Divide students into four groups. Give each group a **Care for Creation Activity Sheet, Grades 1-3**, coloring supplies, construction paper, scissors and tape.
2. Explain to students that they are going to design their own farm that reflects their care for God's creation.
3. After cutting out the images on the activity sheet, students should develop a story and a collage that reflects their farm. They can use words and drawings to help tell the story.
4. After 15 minutes, invite each group to post their collage and briefly explain one way their farm shows how we care for God's creation.

CLOSING PRAYER (10 MINUTES)

Gather students in a circle and ask each student to name his/her favorite part of creation. Read Genesis 1:11-12.

God of creation, thank you for the gifts of the earth which bring food to our tables. We pray that people who are hungry may have more food on their tables. Amen

TAKING IT HOME

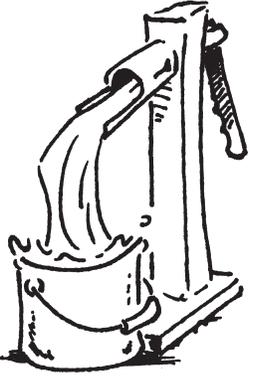
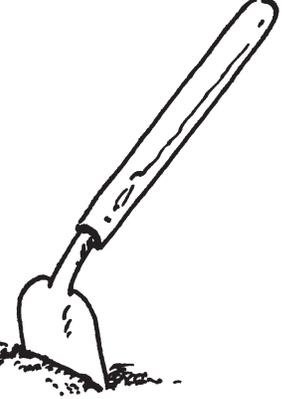
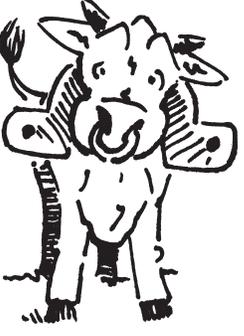
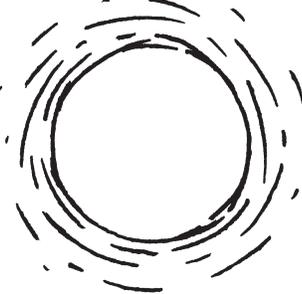
Invite students to pay attention to what they have for dinner and to discuss with their families where different parts of their meal comes from.

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ACTIVITY SHEET GRADES 1-3



<p>Seeds</p> 	<p>Plants/Crops</p> 	<p>Water</p> 
<p>Hoe</p> 	<p>Animals</p> 	<p>Sun</p> 
<p>Soil</p> 	<p>People</p> 	<p>What else do farmers need?</p>

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COUNTRY SPOTLIGHT: MADAGASCAR

LESSON PLAN GRADES 4-6

45 Minutes

OBJECTIVE

Students will learn about the Catholic social teaching principle Care for God's Creation (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, Seven Themes of Catholic Social Teaching) through the story of Suzy Razafindrafara, a rice farmer in Madagascar. They will reflect on how they can become better stewards of God's creation by living this principle out in their own lives.

MATERIALS

- Bible
- **Care for Creation Activity Sheet, Grades 4-6**
- Markers
- Pens or pencils
- Posters or chart paper
- **Suzy's Story**
- Tape
- Whiteboard and marker
- World map

DISCUSSION (20 MINUTES)

1. Ask a volunteer to read Genesis 2:15.
2. Explain that our Catholic faith invites us to care for God's creation. Share that students will learn about Suzy, a farmer in Madagascar who relies on creation every day.
3. Locate Madagascar on a map. Distribute **Suzy's Story** and read it together.
4. Explain the Catholic social teaching principle Care for God's Creation and discuss how Suzy's new farming method demonstrates this principle.

5. Distribute the **Care for Creation Activity Sheet, Grades 4-6**, and give students time to complete them.

ACTIVITY (20 MINUTES)

1. Explain that a "steward" of creation is someone who is a caretaker of the environment and all created things. Ask everyone to brainstorm a list of ways in which their own families could be better stewards of God's creation every day. Write the list on the board.
2. Divide the students into small groups. Assign each group one idea from the list and ask them to make a poster illustrating this idea.

CLOSING PRAYER (5 MINUTES)

Loving God, You have given us a beautiful home and have asked us to care for it. Help us to remember that we are the earth's caretakers and to be respectful and loving to all elements of your creation. We ask this in your name. Amen

TAKING IT HOME

Invite students to choose one idea from the list of ways they could be better stewards of creation to share with their families.

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ACTIVITY SHEET GRADES 4-6



WORD BANK

RICE

ENVIRONMENT

GENESIS

ROOTS

STEWARD

MADAGASCAR

FARMING

WATER

1. Suzy used water to flood the fields, which damaged the _____ of her rice plants.

2. Besides rice seed, what else did Suzy save with her newly learned farming method?

3. Suzy lives in an island nation located off the southern coast of Africa called _____.

4. Water conservation is one way to help protect the _____.

5. What is another word for caretaker?

6. The method Suzy learned for planting _____ helped her increase her harvest by 1.5 times.

7. _____ is the primary source of income in the world's poorest countries.

8. Which book of the Bible tells us that God wants us to be caretakers of creation?

UNSCRAMBLE THE UNDERLINED LETTERS ABOVE TO COMPLETE THE FOLLOWING STATEMENT

The story of how Catholic Relief Services helped Suzy Razafindrafara demonstrates the Catholic social teaching principle Care for God's

_____.

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COUNTRY SPOTLIGHT: MADAGASCAR

LESSON PLAN GRADES 7-8

45 Minutes

OBJECTIVE

Students will learn about the Catholic social teaching principle Care for God's Creation (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, Seven Themes of Catholic Social Teaching) through the story of Suzy Razafindrafara, a rice farmer in Madagascar.

MATERIALS

- Whiteboard and marker
- World map

ACTIVITY (20 MINUTES)

1. Explain that today the class will examine the Church's invitation to care for God's creation, with a special concern for those who are most vulnerable to environmental changes.
2. Invite students to complete the following statement: "We would be able to take better care of the environment if ...". Record the students' answers on the board.
3. Pick one or two responses and ask the class to line up on a continuum for each of the following questions:
 - How well do you think this would help the earth's environment? (Line up on a continuum from Very Little to Very Much)
 - How easy would this be for you to do? (Line up on a continuum from Impossible to Easy)
 - Would you do it? (Line up on a continuum from Definitely Not to Definitely Yes)

Ask a few students along each continuum to explain why they chose to stand where they did. Invite all students to return to their seats.

DISCUSSION (20 MINUTES)

1. Point to Madagascar on a map. Then read **Suzy's Story**.
2. Discuss the following questions:
 - Why do you think communities in developing countries, like Suzy's, are especially vulnerable to environmental changes?
 - How do the actions of caring for the earth and caring for the community work together in this story?

CLOSING PRAYER (5 MINUTES)

Creator of the universe, as your children, we are your hands and feet in caring for the gift of your creation. As we seek to understand the environment and the needs of those affected most severely by its changes and threats, grant us your spirit of gentle action to bring hope and healing to our planet and its people. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen

TAKING IT HOME

Invite students to talk to their families about a commitment they can make as a family to care for creation.