“I will sprinkle clean water over you to make you clean; from all your impurities and from all your idols I will cleanse you. I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh.”

Ezekiel 36: 24-26

Creation is a gift. Creation gives glory to God, and in making wise use of it, the human family is built up. In looking after the environment, we care for our neighbor and pass on a gift to generations to come.

Creation is the great space where we live out our relationship with God and neighbor. As part of a life of gratitude to God for this gift and of justice towards our neighbor, we are called to build communities that are sustainable, respectful of creation and that promote the development of all. Sustainable communities are healthy, safe for our children, and by making prudent use of natural resources, are home to economic development that creates good paying wage jobs.

Today the gift of creation is threatened by excessive lifestyles and a lack of respect for the sacredness of creation and the dignity of our neighbor.

We prize what Pope Francis calls a “culture of waste” over a culture of conservation and virtuous moderation. As Catholics, we should reject an economy that puts profit and unrestrained consumption ahead of the good of communities and the environment. We desperately need to rethink the path we are travelling together.

The consequences of a “culture of waste” and a “more is better” economy are serious. Poor and vulnerable communities shoulder the biggest burden as they are threatened by climate change: drought, famine and other natural calamities take a toll on them. Children, especially those in the womb, are put in danger by pollutants in the environment. Competition for natural resources makes it more difficult for already struggling families to get food on the table and keep homes warm in the winter.

The covenant between human beings and the environment needs to be strengthened. To do this, we should seek the wisdom that comes from prayer and a desire to stand in solidarity with our neighbor. As the bishops have said, first “we need a change of heart to preserve and protect the planet for our children and for generations yet unborn.”

By taking a fresh look at our lifestyles and choosing to live simply, we can reduce our carbon footprint and build communities in balance and in harmony with God’s gift of creation. Personal and
societal decisions should always reflect concern for “the least of these.” The development of new, sustainable types of energy holds much promise for contributing to our economy through the creation of “green jobs.” It is also important to support policies that protect human life and dignity through prudent stewardship of the environment.

“Whenever we fail to care for creation and for our brothers and sisters, the way is opened to destruction and hearts are hardened.”

Pope Francis

Take up Pope Francis’ challenge to be protectors of creation: “I would like to ask …all men and women of goodwill: let us be ‘protectors’ of creation, protectors of God’s plan inscribed in nature, protectors of one another and of the environment.”

For more on how you can help steward the gift of creation, take the St. Francis Pledge below and see our additional resources.

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**Additional Resources**

Visit [www.usccb.org/jphd](http://www.usccb.org/jphd) for the complete series of reflections.

- **Take the St. Francis Pledge to Care for Creation and the Poor**
  - This is a commitment by Catholics to live out our faith by protecting God’s Creation and those most vulnerable to the impacts of global climate change. ([http://catholicclimatecovenant.org/the-st-francis-pledge/](http://catholicclimatecovenant.org/the-st-francis-pledge/))

- **USCCB Environmental Justice Program**

- **Bishops’ Committee Energy Statement, Reflections on the Energy Crisis**


- **Bishops’ Climate Change statement**

- **Bishops’ Renewing the Earth statement**

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