



# Environmental Quotes

On Caring for God's Creation

Dear Reader,

As Catholics, we have a rich heritage of faith, tradition, and social teaching to draw upon as we seek to live the Gospel faithfully in our own time and situation. As a community of faith, we seek to protect the dignity of every person and promote the common good of the human family, particularly the most vulnerable among us. The Church champions the rights of the unborn, seeks to bring dignity to the poor, works to overcome the scourge of racism, and welcomes the stranger among us.

In parishes, diocese and other Catholic organizations, we encourage efforts to bring about discussion on issues affecting the environment (climate change, consumption, pollution, stewardship of the land) that is civil and constructive, that invokes the virtue of prudence in seeking solutions, and that is more responsive to the needs of the poor, both here in the United States and abroad. As Catholics, we have a unique opportunity and responsibility to make a difference in addressing the impacts these issues present, particularly on those least able to endure the burdens.

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# Environmental Quotes

## QUOTATIONS FROM THE VATICAN

Respect for life and for the dignity of the human person extends also to the rest of creation, which is called to join man in praising God. (Pope John Paul II, *1990 World Day of Peace Message*, no. 16)

Christians, in particular, realize that their responsibility within creation and their duty towards nature and the Creator are an essential part of their faith. (Pope John Paul II *1990 World Day of Peace Message*, no. 15)

We cannot interfere in one area of the ecosystem without paying due attention to both the consequences of such interference in other areas and to the well-being of future generations. (Pope John Paul II, *1990 World Day of Peace Message*, no. 6)

The most profound and serious indication of the moral implications underlying the ecological problem is the lack of *respect for life* evident in many of the patterns of environmental pollution. (Pope John Paul II, *1990 World Day of Peace Message*, no. 7)

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. (Pope John Paul II, *1990 World Day of Peace Message*, no. 8)

*The aesthetic value of creation cannot be overlooked.* Our very contact with nature has a deep restorative power; contemplation of its magnificence imparts peace and serenity. The Bible speaks again and again of the goodness and beauty of creation, which is called to glorify God. (Pope John Paul II, *1990 World Day of Peace Message*, no. 14)

We face a fundamental question which can be described as both ethical and ecological. How can accelerated development be prevented from turning against man? How can one prevent disasters that destroy the environment and threaten all forms of life, and how can the negative consequences that have already occurred be remedied? (Pope John Paul II, "International Solidarity Needed to Safeguard Environment," address by the Holy Father to the European Bureau for the Environment, *L'Osservatore Romano*, June 1996)

Environmental degradation makes the life of the poor intolerable. In dialogue with Christians of different denominations, we need to commit ourselves to caring for creation,

without squandering its resources, but instead sharing in them in a collaborative way. (Pope Benedict XVI, remarks after *Angelus* address, August 27, 2006)

The liturgy itself teaches us this, when, during the presentation of the gifts, the priest raises to God a prayer of blessing and petition over the bread and wine, "fruit of the earth," "fruit of the vine" and "work of human hands." With these words, the rite not only includes in our offering to God all human efforts and activity, but also leads us to see the world as God's creation, which brings forth everything we need for our sustenance. The world is not something indifferent, raw material to be utilized simply as we see fit. Rather, it is part of God's good plan, in which all of us are called to be sons and daughters in the one Son of God, Jesus Christ (cf. Eph 1:4-12). The justified concern about threats to the environment present in so many parts of the world is reinforced by Christian hope, which commits us to working responsibly for the protection of creation. (Pope Benedict XVI, *Sacramentum Caritatis* [The Sacrament of Charity], no. 92)

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. (Pope Benedict XVI, *Caritas in Veritate* [Charity in Truth], 2009, no. 48)

In nature, the believer recognizes the wonderful result of God's creative activity, which we may use responsibly to satisfy our legitimate needs, material or otherwise, while respecting the intrinsic balance of creation. If this vision is lost, we end up either considering nature an untouchable taboo or, on the contrary, abusing it. Neither attitude is consonant with the Christian vision of nature as the fruit of God's creation. (Pope Benedict XVI, *Caritas in Veritate* [Charity in Truth], 2009, no. 48)

The right to food, like the right to water, has an important place within the pursuit of other rights, beginning with the fundamental right to life. It is therefore necessary to cultivate a public conscience that considers *food and access to water as universal rights of all human beings, without distinction or discrimination*. (Pope Benedict XVI, *Caritas in Veritate* [Charity in Truth], 2009, no. 27)

On this earth there is room for everyone: here the entire human family must find the resources to live with dignity, through the help of nature itself — God's gift to his children — and through hard work and creativity. At the same time we must recognize our grave duty to hand the earth on to future generations in such a condition that they too can worthily inhabit it and continue to cultivate it. (Pope Benedict XVI, *Caritas in Veritate* [Charity in Truth], 2009, no. 50)

*The way humanity treats the environment influences the way it treats itself, and vice versa.* This invites contemporary society to a serious review of its life-style, which, in many parts of the world, is prone to hedonism and consumerism . . . What is needed is an effective shift in mentality which can lead to the adoption of *new life-styles*. (Pope Benedict XVI, *Caritas in Veritate [Charity in Truth]*, 2009, no. 51)

Please, I would like to ask all those who have positions of responsibility in economic, political and social life, and 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. (Pope Francis, Homily at Mass for Inauguration, 3/19/13)

Faith . . . by revealing the love of God the Creator, enables us to respect nature all the more, and to discern in it a grammar written by the hand of God and a dwelling place entrusted to our protection and care. Faith also helps us to devise models of development which are based not simply on utility and profit, but consider creation as a gift for which we are all indebted. (Pope Francis, *Lumen Fidei [The Light of Faith]*, 2013, no. 55)

An economic system centered on the deity [of] money also needs to plunder nature to sustain consumption at the frenetic level it needs. Climate change, the loss of biodiversity, deforestation are already showing their devastating effects in terrible cataclysms which we see and from which you the humble suffer most – you who live near the coast in precarious dwellings, or so economically vulnerable that you lose everything due to a natural disaster. (Pope Francis, Address to Participants in the World Meeting of Popular Movements, 10/28/14)

With the progress of science and technology, questions as to their meaning increase and give rise to an ever greater need to respect the transcendent dimension of the human person and creation itself. (Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, 2005, no. 462)

Modern ecological problems are of a planetary dimension and can be effectively resolved only through international cooperation capable of guaranteeing greater coordination in the use of the earth's resources. (Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, 2005, no. 481)

The present environmental crisis affects those who are poorest in a particular way, whether they live in those lands subject to erosion and desertification, are involved in armed conflicts or subject to forced immigration, or because they do not have the economic and technological means to protect themselves from other calamities. (Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, 2005, no. 482)

The ecological question must not be faced solely because of the frightening prospects that environmental destruction represents; rather it must above all become a strong motivation for an authentic solidarity of worldwide dimensions. (Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, 2005, no. 486)

If the relationship with God is placed aside, nature is stripped of its profound meaning and impoverished. If on the other hand, nature is rediscovered in its creaturely dimension, channels of communication with it can be established, its rich and symbolic meaning can be understood, allowing us to enter into its realm of mystery. This realm opens the path of man to God, Creator of heaven and earth. *The world presents itself before man's eyes as evidence of God*, the place where his creative, providential and redemptive power unfolds. (Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, 2005, no. 487)

## QUOTATIONS FROM THE CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

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Our Creed begins with the creation of heaven and earth, for creation is the beginning and the foundation of all God's works. (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 198)

Creation is the foundation of "all God's saving plans," the "beginning of the history of salvation" that culminates in Christ. (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 280, citing the *General Catechetical Directory*, no. 51)

Creation is the common work of the Holy Trinity. (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 292)

The world was made for the glory of God. St. Bonaventure explains that God created all things "not to increase his glory, but to show it forth and to communicate it." (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 293, citing *Dei Filius*, can. § 5 and *In II Sent.* 1, 2, 2, 1)

Because creation comes forth from God's goodness, it shares in that goodness-" And God saw that it was good ... very good." (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 299, citing Gn 1:4, 10, 12, 18, 21, 31)

Use of the mineral, vegetable, and animal resources of the universe cannot be divorced from respect for moral imperatives. (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 2415)

There is a *solidarity among all creatures* arising from the fact that all have the same Creator and are all ordered to his glory. (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 344)

The *right to private property*, acquired or received in a just way, does not do away with the original gift of the earth to the whole of mankind. The *universal destination of goods* remains primordial, even if the promotion of the common good requires respect for the right to private property and its exercise. (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 2403)

Creation has its own goodness and proper perfection, but it did not spring forth complete from the hands of the Creator. The universe was created "in a state of journeying" (*in statu viae*) toward an ultimate perfection yet to be attained, to which God has destined it. (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 302)

Man must therefore respect the particular goodness of every creature, to avoid any disordered use of things which would be in contempt of the Creator and would bring disastrous consequences for human beings and their environment. (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 339)

God speaks to man through the visible creation. The material cosmos is so presented to man's intelligence that he can read there traces of its Creator (cf. Wis 13: 1; Rom 1: 19f.; Acts 14: 17). Light and darkness, wind and fire, water and earth, the tree and its fruit speak of God and symbolize both his greatness and his nearness. (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 1147)

*Political authority* has the right and duty to regulate the legitimate exercise of the right to ownership for the sake of the common good. (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 2406; cf. *Gaudium et Spes*, no. 71 §4; *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, no. 42; *Centesimus Annus*, nos. 42, 48)

Those *responsible for business enterprises* are responsible to society for the economic and ecological effects of their operations. (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 2432; cf. *Centesimus Annus*, no. 37)

In his use of things man should regard the external goods he legitimately owns not merely as exclusive to himself but common to others also "in the sense that they can benefit others as well as himself." 'The ownership of any property makes its holder a steward of Providence. (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 2404, citing *Gaudium et Spes*, no. 69 § 1)

Those who hold goods for use and consumption should use them with moderation, reserving the better part for guests, for the sick and the poor. (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 2405)

Man's dominion over inanimate and other living beings granted by the Creator is not absolute; it is limited by concern for the quality of life of his neighbor, including generations to come; it requires a religious respect for the integrity of creation. (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 2415; cf. *Centesimus Annus*, no. 37-38)

Created in God's image and called to know and love him, the person who seeks God discovers certain ways of coming to know him. These are also called proofs for the existence of God, not in the sense of proofs in the natural sciences, but rather in the sense of "converging and convincing arguments," which allow us to attain certainty about the truth. These "ways" of approaching God from creation have a twofold point of departure: the physical world and the human person. (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 31)

## QUOTATIONS FROM THE UNITED STATES CONFERENCE OF CATHOLIC BISHOPS

Our mistreatment of the natural world diminishes our own dignity and sacredness, not only because we are destroying resources that future generations of humans need, but because we are engaging in actions that contradict what it means to be human. Our tradition calls us to protect the life and dignity of the human person, and it is increasingly clear that this task cannot be separated from the care and defense of all of creation. (*Renewing the Earth: An Invitation to Reflection and Action on Environment in Light of Catholic Social Teaching*, 1991)

As individuals, as institutions, as a people, we need a change of heart to preserve and protect the planet for our children and for generations yet unborn. (*Renewing the Earth: An Invitation to Reflection and Action on Environment in Light of Catholic Social Teaching*, 1991)

The whole human race suffers as a result of environmental blight, and generations yet unborn will bear the price for our failure to act today. (*Renewing the Earth: An Invitation to Reflection and Action on Environment in Light of Catholic Social Teaching*, 1991)

It is to the Creator of the universe, then, that we are accountable for what we do or fail to do to preserve and care for the earth and all its creatures. (*Renewing the Earth: An Invitation to Reflection and Action on Environment in Light of Catholic Social Teaching*, 1991)

Stewardship implies that we must both care for creation according to standards that are not of our own making and at the same time be resourceful in finding ways to make the earth flourish. (*Renewing the Earth: An Invitation to Reflection and Action on Environment in Light of Catholic Social Teaching*, 1991)

By preserving natural environment's, by protecting endangered species, by laboring to make human environments compatible with local ecology, by employing appropriate technology, and by carefully evaluating technological innovations as we adopt them, we exhibit respect for creation and reverence for the Creator. (*Renewing the Earth: An Invitation to Reflection and Action on Environment in Light of Catholic Social Teaching*, 1991)

Created things belong not to the few, but to the entire human family. (*Renewing the Earth: An Invitation to Reflection and Action on Environment in Light of Catholic Social Teaching*, 1991)

At its core, global climate change is not about economic theory or political platforms, nor about partisan advantage or interest group pressures. It is about the future of God's creation and the one human family. (*Global Climate Change: A Plea for Dialogue, Prudence, and the Common Good*, 2001)

As Catholic bishops, we seek to offer a distinctively religious and moral perspective to what is necessarily a complicated scientific, economic, and political discussion. Ethical questions lie at the heart of the challenges facing us. (*Global Climate Change: A Plea for Dialogue, Prudence, and the Common Good*, 2001)

Because of the blessings God has bestowed on our nation and the power it possesses, the United States bears a special responsibility in its stewardship of God's creation to shape responses that serve the entire human family. As pastors, teachers, and citizens, we bishops seek to contribute to our national dialogue by examining the ethical implications of climate change. We offer some themes from Catholic social teachings that could help to shape this dialogue, and we suggest some directions for the debate and public policy decisions that face us. We do so with great respect for the work of the scientists, diplomats, business and union representatives, developers of new technologies, environmental leaders, and policymakers who have been struggling with the difficult questions of climate change for many years. (*Global Climate Change: A Plea for Dialogue, Prudence, and the Common Good*, 2001)

Freedom and the capacity for moral decision making are central to what it means to be human. Stewardship-defined in this case as the ability to exercise moral responsibility to care for the environment-requires freedom to act. Significant aspects of this stewardship include the right to private initiative, the ownership of property, and the exercise of

responsible freedom in the economic sector. Stewardship requires a careful protection of the environment and calls us to use our intelligence "to discover the earth's productive potential and the many different ways in which human needs can be satisfied." (*Global Climate Change: A Plea for Dialogue, Prudence, and the Common Good*, 2001, citing *Centesimus Annus*, no. 32)

True stewardship requires changes in human actions-both moral behavior and technical advancement. Our religious tradition has always urged restraint and moderation in the use of material goods, so we must not allow our desire to possess more material things to overtake our concern for the basic needs of people and the environment. Pope John Paul II has linked protecting the environment to "authentic human ecology," which can overcome "structures of sin" and which promotes both human dignity and respect for creation. Technological innovation and entrepreneurship can help make possible options that can lead us to a more environmentally benign energy path. 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. (*Global Climate Change: A Plea for Dialogue, Prudence, and the Common Good*, 2001, citing *Centesimus Annus*, no. 38)

As people of religious faith, we bishops believe that the atmosphere that supports life on earth is a God given gift, one we must respect and protect. It unites us as one human family. If we harm the atmosphere, we dishonor our Creator and the gift of creation. The values of our faith call us to humility, sacrifice, and a respect for life and the natural gifts God has provided. Pope John Paul II reminds us in his statement *The Ecological Crisis: A Common Responsibility* that "respect for life and for the dignity of the human person extends also to the rest of creation, which is called to join man in praising God." In that spirit of praise and thanksgiving to God for the wonders of creation, we Catholic bishops call for a civil dialogue and prudent and constructive action to protect God's precious gift of the earth's atmosphere with a sense of genuine solidarity and justice for all God's children. (*Global Climate Change: A Plea for Dialogue, Prudence, and the Common Good*, 2001, citing *The Ecological Crisis*, no. 16)

From the patristic period to the present, the Church has affirmed that misuse of the world's resources or appropriation of them by a minority of the world's population betrays the gift of creation since "whatever belongs to God belongs to all." (*Economic Justice for All*, 1997, no. 34, citing St. Cyprian)