

6 Catholic Tradition

Check in

Introduction: Within our Catholic tradition there are several references to concern for our world including society and our environment. This reflection invites us to reflect on some of these teachings in the light of our current responsibilities.

Grace: I ask that I recognize my responsibility within and for all of creation.

Opening Prayer: to be selected by the session leader.

Hymn. “*Canticle of the Sun*” or other appropriate hymn.

Scripture: St Paul to the Romans: Chapter 8: 19-23.

¹⁹ All of creation waits with eager longing for God to reveal his children. ²⁰ For creation was condemned to lose its purpose, not of its own will, but because God willed it to be so. Yet there was the hope ²¹ that creation itself would one day be set free from its slavery to decay and would share the glorious freedom of the children of God. ²² For we know that up to the present time all of creation groans with pain, like the pain of childbirth. ²³ But it is not just creation alone which groans; we who have the Spirit as the first of God's gifts also groan within ourselves as we wait for God to make us his children and set our whole being free.

Explanation:

Pope Paul VI wrote in 1971, “*Due to an ill-considered exploitation of nature, humanity runs the risk of destroying it and becoming in turn a victim of this degradation.*” (Apostolic Letter Octogesima Adveniens 14 May 1971, 21 AAS 63,416-417.)

“*Saint John Paul II became increasingly concerned about this issue. He warned that human beings frequently seem to see no other meaning in their natural environment than what serves for immediate use and consumption.*” (Encyclical Letter Redemptor Hominis, 4 March 1979, 15AAS 71, 287)

Benedict XVI proposed “*eliminating the structural causes of the dysfunctions of the world economy and correcting models of growth which have proved incapable of ensuring respect for the environment*” (Address to the Diplomatic Corps Accredited to the Holy See 8 January 2007:AAS 83, 840)

Pope Benedict also asked us to recognize that the natural environment has been gravely damaged by our irresponsible behaviour. The social environment has also suffered damage. *Glance at the sun. See the moon and the stars. Gaze at the beauty of greenings. Now, think. What delight God gives to humankind with all these things. ... All nature is at the disposal of humankind. We are to work with it. For without it we cannot survive.* (St Hildegard of Bingen as quoted by Matthew Fox in “*Original Blessings*”.)

Exercise/Prayer: Individually write a brief statement describing your key responsibilities in responding to the above readings and the tradition of care for all creation.

Sharing: After some time in reflection, members share briefly what touched them in this session.

Final prayer: A Christian prayer in union with creation (from Laudato Si')

*Father, we praise you with all your creatures.
They came forth from your all-powerful hand;
They are yours, filled with your presence and your tender love.
Praise be to you! Son of God, Jesus,
Through you all things were made.
You were formed in the womb of Mary our Mother,
you became part of this earth,
and you gazed upon this world with human eyes.
Today you are alive in every creature in your risen glory.
Praise be to you! Holy Spirit, by your light
you guide this world towards the Father's love
and accompany creation as it groans in travail.
You also dwell in our hearts
and you inspire us to do what is good.
Praise be to you!*

Ongoing practice: I spend some time in contemplating and naming for myself a possible way forward in embracing my responsibilities towards creation.
I read the material given out on Integral Ecology.

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