

Catholic Social Teaching Series for Lent 2019

For Week 6, the Catholic Social Teaching principle is:

Care for God's Creation

From our U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops website: “We show our respect for the Creator by our stewardship of creation. Care for the earth is not just an Earth Day slogan, it is a requirement of our faith. We are called to protect people and the planet, living our faith in relationship with all of God's creation. This environmental challenge has fundamental moral and ethical dimensions that cannot be ignored.”

More about Kayla and Joe:

While Kayla was continuing to figure out her path forward, she kept getting pushed to continue to live in the home where she grew up in order to help pay bills. She saw somewhere some information about how her family could save significant money on heating costs and reduce natural gas use by having a professional do a free energy assessment of her home. That energy assessment led to work that her family could do with only small out-of-pocket payments that resulted in saving lots of money on home energy use! Kayla's mother praised her up and down and treated her with special gratitude!! Kayla felt proud of her efforts and told all of her friends who, in turn, spread the word

(Photo copyright: Unsplash.com) and saved money (and energy)

themselves for their families.

Joe got an opportunity one summer to do some outdoor work for a few weeks in a forest within a mountainous area a few hours away from his college. Joe enjoyed the natural beauty of the forest very much! As that summer continued, Joe gradually saw how the forest was teeming with many different forms of life. He also heard stories that summer about how in the past the forest had not been teeming with so much healthy life. Human use of the forest in the past had conflicted at times with the health of the forest, particularly where the forest bordered farmlands with grazing livestock. Predator animals had attacked some of the livestock for food which very much upset the local farmers. When the wolves from the region for awhile, many life forms in the forest struggled to survive. But when the predator animals were reintroduced to the area a few decades later, the entire forest system of life became healthier / more balanced. How could this be, Joe asked? Part of the answer is that all forms of life are inter-related and need each other to be successful.



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Reflecting on Kayla's and Joe's situations:

Kayla used her creativity and energy to come up with a way to save her family money and reduce their use of natural gas at the same time. Are similar opportunities available for your home or workplace or the home or workplace of someone you know?

Joe's life was altered significantly as a result of spending a summer working in a forest. How can we get more engaged with God's creation / our natural world?

Scripture passages:

"Then God said: Let the water under the sky be gathered into a single basin, so that the dry land may appear. And so it happened: the water under the sky was gathered into its basin, and the dry land appeared. God called the dry land 'earth,' and the basin of water he called 'sea.' God saw that it was good. Then God said: Let the earth bring forth vegetation: every kind of plant that bears seed and every kind of fruit tree on earth that bears fruit with its seed in it. And so it happened: the earth brought forth vegetation.... God saw that it was good." (The Book of Genesis, Chapter 1, verses 9-12)

"Ask the animals, and they will teach you, or the birds of the air, and they will tell you; or speak to the earth, and it will teach you, or let the fish of the sea inform you. Which of these does not know that the hand of the Lord has done this? In his hand is the life of every creature and the breath of all..." (The Book of Job, Chapter 12, verses 7-10).

"Look at the birds in the sky; they do not sow or reap, they gather nothing into barns, yet your heavenly Father feeds them....If God so clothes the grass of the field, which grows today and is thrown into the oven tomorrow, will he not much more provide for you, O you of little faith?" (The Gospel of Matthew, Chapter 6, verses 20 and 30).

Reflection about these Scripture passages: God clearly places a high value on his work to create the Earth and its many, many forms and varieties of life. God in doing so also gives us phenomenal natural beauty to behold and appreciate. What is our role to help all of us hold onto what God has created??

More to Consider:

- Have you experienced awe and wonder at God's creation? What has your experience with nature taught you about God?

- Do you agree that we share the Earth as our common home and as a gift from God? If you agree, do you think we are being good stewards of the Earth? Why or why not?
- How do you feel about the following statements? Climate change is happening as evidenced by swings in weather patterns such as storms and droughts which, in turn, alters ways of life and futures for many people particularly the poor and vulnerable. What can individuals, our region, our state and our country do?
- Once we lose too much of our natural world and once global temperatures increase significantly, it is exceedingly difficult to get back what we have lost. Can we save some of the remaining natural habitat that we still have? How can we reduce our carbon emissions significantly in the next decade or so?

Church Tradition:

“...God’s love is the fundamental moving force in all created things.... Every creature is thus the object of the Father’s tenderness, who gives it its place in the world. Even the fleeting life of the least of beings is the object of his love, and in its few seconds of existence, God enfolds it with his affection.” - Pope Francis, On Care for our Common Home (Laudato Si), Paragraph 77, 2015.

“Climate change is an urgent moral issue because it compromises the future of our common home, threatens human life and human dignity, and adds to the hardships already experienced by the poorest and most vulnerable people both at home and abroad. We teach that governments exist to protect and promote the common good, and that the climate is a common good, belonging to all and meant for all.” - Pope Francis, On Care for our Common Home (Laudato Si), Paragraph 23, 2015.

Prayer: (also from Pope Francis, On the Care for our Common Home (Laudato Si)):

“All-powerful God, You are present in the whole universe and in the smallest of your creatures. You embrace with your tenderness all that exists. Pour out upon us the power of your love, that we may protect life and beauty. Fill us with peace, that we may live as brothers and sisters, harming no one.” Amen!

NEXT WEEK: The Catholic Social Teaching Principle we will discuss next week is The Dignity of Work and the Rights of Workers. We will also continue to relate to the lives of Joe and Kayla as they grow into adults.

Each week this Lent, we are discussing here one of the core principles of Catholic Social Teaching. The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops’ website (usccb.org) says that Catholic Social Teaching is a “central and essential element of our faith. It’s roots are in the Hebrew prophets (like Isaiah and Jeremiah). Catholic Social Teaching is founded on the life and words of Jesus Christ.

If you have any questions or comments about any part of this series or if you wish to discuss any of these principles, please feel free to contact Debbie Krisher at the Parish Office or Dave Babcock (dave.babcock21@gmail.com). Scripture citations are from the New American translation of the bible.