

# Earth Day Reflection



*One of the main themes of Catholic Social Teaching is Care for Creation. Concern for the environment, God's gift of the created world, has become a significant social justice issue during the last 50 years. Since Pope Paul VI, all popes have spoken out about environmental degradation. Pope Francis has declared he is writing an encyclical dedicated to the environmental crises, and he has been clear in reminding us that people of faith are called to be actively involved in promoting environmental justice.*

**“IT’S OUR TURN TO LEAD”** is the theme for Earth Day 2015, calling on individuals, grassroots organizations, community groups to unite and to convey a common message

to political leadership on the national and international level: we cannot wait any longer for substantial change in policies and programs and for new initiatives to reverse the growing problems of climate change and environmental degradation. Creation is a gift to all, and we all have the responsibility to protect this gift.

Earth Day began in 1970; celebrated, on April 22 each year, over a billion people in 190 countries will take action for the environment. Earth Day 2015 will continue to focus on the environmental challenges of our time and on the power of people joining together to create change from the grassroots up. For 45 years, there has been a growing momentum to involve more people and diverse communities and groups in advocating for environmental justice.

Environmental problems can no longer be separated from issues of health, workers' rights, poverty, and human trafficking. Sustainable development that considers the long-term effects on people and the planet must out-rank economic development that is more concerned with immediate high profits for a few than for human flourishing for all, now and in the future.

It is the people's time to lead and ensure that the world's political leaders finally sign a significant, binding, global climate change treaty to stop and if possible, reverse the environmental degradation that is more and more visible around the world. It is time for citizens and organizations to divest from fossil fuel-driven production and fund renewable energy sources. It is time we ensure that all God's children live in healthy and secure environments, as Pope Francis has declared.



We are called  
to see the beauty  
of God in all  
of His Creation  
and to ensure  
all His children  
live in healthy  
and secure  
environments.  
~ Pope Francis

## FAITH IN ACTION

The Earth Day website has information, advocacy advice, etc. see: <http://www.earthday.org/>

For specific educational resources on the Earth Day website, go to: <http://www.earthday.org/earthday2013/resources.html#education>

The Catholic Climate Covenant website offers information and online advocacy, asking people of faith to take the St. Francis Pledge to care for Creation and for the poor; see: <http://www.catholicclimatecovenant.org>

The Education for Justice Network has many resources on environmental justice and the Church's teaching on these issues: <http://www.educationforjustice.org>

## PRAYER

Creator God, we ask for the grace  
To work together  
For an environment that is safe,  
That is green and growing,  
That will shelter all in justice  
And peace.

Help us to see that,  
in working together,  
We will be able to transform  
This earth, this sacred garden,  
This generous gift.

On this Earth Day,  
We envision a planet  
Where all life can flourish,  
So we will raise our voices  
In community and solidarity:  
May our leaders hear us, O Lord,  
As you hear our cries.  
Amen.

"Let us be protectors of Creation,  
protectors of God's plan inscribed  
in nature, protectors of one another  
and of the environment we share."

~ Pope Francis

