

## A Special Edition on Caring for Our Common Home

# STEWARDS OF THE EARTH



by FR DAVID GARCIA, OP

Our Earth is heating up, glaciers in the poles are melting, and plastics have flooded the seas and found their way into our ecosystem. **So, what is our role as Catholics?**

It may appear that the Church is simply adding to the many distressing calls for environmental responsibility and action. Is this the only thing our Catholic faith has to offer? Just another voice, too soft, too late, shouting to care for our Mother Earth? No, not at all.

“*Our Earth is talking to us, and we must listen to it and decipher its message if we want to survive.*”

Pope Benedict XVI, 24 July 2007.

Pope Francis made headlines in 2015 when he devoted his second encyclical *Laudato Si'* to this concern. The call has always been there... but we have been slow to hear it. And so, our actions on this climate crisis have been accidental at best. Many have not taken this urgent duty as one of their Catholic duties. Instead, they view this crisis as an ethical concern, one which is disconnected from their faith.

Those involved in environmentalism also risk considering nature as an untouchable taboo totally separate from Man, who appears to be the villain in this narrative. But we should take a step back and discern how to ignite action through the community because **we are not outside nature, but part of it.** We are the only part of the Earth that has free will and can exert responsibility.

**We are the only stewards of the Earth.** We must take responsibility for the Earth not because the Earth or the animals have rights, but because **we have responsibilities and duties** toward other people in poorer countries who suffer even more the devastating consequences of climate crisis, and the future generations.

Moreover, this Earth, this nature is God's creation. Every seed that grows and every baby



born is an act of God's creation. **Nature is not simply a given state of affairs but it has the hand of God in it.** This not simply a given state of existence; but **a divine gift shaped by the hand of God.**

We are entrusted with a talent, a golden coin, not only to preserve it but to care for it making it even more beautiful and more of a gift to everyone. Burying this talent in the ground (cf. Matthew 25:14), untouched, in fear of taking responsibility for it, will result in the very gift being snatched from us: “The time has come for judging the dead, and for rewarding your servants... and for destroying those who destroyed the Earth” (Revelation 11:18). On the contrary, for those who showed concern and care for the temporal gift of the Earth, a new earth and new heaven freed from all corruption is promised.

We should then initiate concrete steps to remedy the climate crisis. We are called to a frugal lifestyle, effective forms of recycling, and a more responsible and sustainable use of our resources. The reflections of the late Popes go beyond pure activism and appeal to a critical reflection on how the “ecological” message is preached today.

**The Church calls for a re-understanding of the environment and man's fundamental attitude towards it.** Yes, although Man is part of the problem, we are also the **only** part of the solution. The hope of environmental action lies in the **critical exercise of our stewardship towards the Earth**, and by extension, all the living things that depend on it. ✿

*This article is an excerpt of Fr David's write up. Its full version can be found here: [caritas-singapore.org/frdavid-sharing](http://caritas-singapore.org/frdavid-sharing)*



# WE CAN DO MORE

Singapore's Current Statistics

Temperature rising at double the global average at **0.25°C** per decade <sup>1</sup>

Extreme heat can cause heat stroke, leading to organ damage and even death.

**1.76 billion**

plastic bags, bottles, and disposables are used each year <sup>3</sup>

Slow to degrade, plastics pollute land and oceans, negatively affecting our human population, wildlife, and their habitats. <sup>4</sup>

**763.1 million**

kilograms of food waste in 2018 <sup>2</sup>

Rotting food produces methane, a greenhouse gas that traps heat in the atmosphere, also contributing to global warming.

**219.8 million**

kilograms of textile / leather waste in 2018 <sup>5</sup>

Decomposing and incinerating textile waste produce methane and carbon dioxide respectively—potent greenhouse gases.

# ARE YOU GREEN?

Take this short quiz and add up your scores at the end.

Rarely / Never 0    Occasionally 1    Frequently 2    Almost always 3

**1** I buy new items (e.g., clothes).  
-----  
0 1 2 3

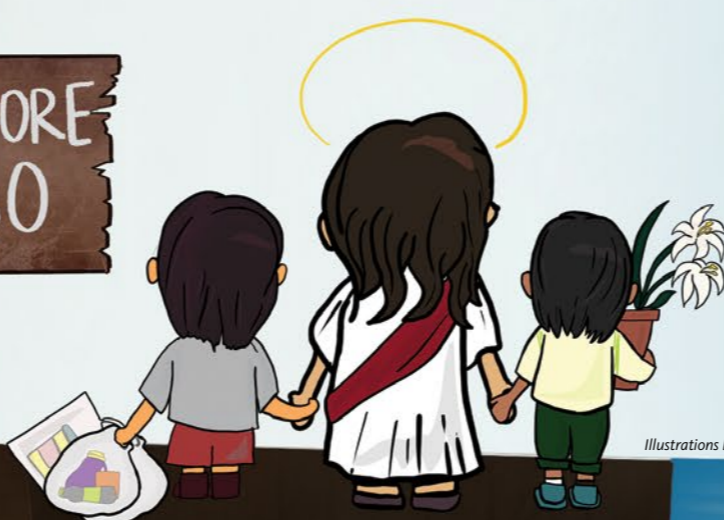
**2** I throw out old, unwanted or damaged items (e.g., clothes).  
-----  
0 1 2 3

**3** I take a new plastic bag each time I make a purchase.  
-----  
0 1 2 3

**4** I do not finish my food.  
-----  
0 1 2 3

**5** I use disposables (e.g., for takeaways or buffet set-ups at events).  
-----  
0 1 2 3

SINGAPORE 2030



Illustrations by Corinne Sim for Caritas Singapore

**0 points:** Keep up the good work! The Earth can be saved thanks to your efforts.  
**1 to 5 points:** You can do more to reduce your carbon footprint. Remember, every act counts!  
**9 to 15 points:** Yikes! If everybody continues this high-resource-consuming and high-greenhouse-gas-emitting lifestyle, global warming is likely to reach 1.5°C between 2030 and 2052, posing "risks to health, livelihoods, food security, water supply, human security, and economic growth". <sup>6</sup> By 2030, the damage will be irreversible. <sup>7</sup>

# SAVE OUR PLANET

Join our local communities in taking climate action.

**1 BUY LESS**  
Upcycle or repurpose unwanted items; repair damaged items.

**2 EAT SMART**  
Cook or order only what you can finish.

**3 SHARE**  
Gift old items in good condition.

**4 CONSUME WISELY**  
Buy eco-friendly products; buy only what you need.

**5 USE ELECTRICITY WISELY**  
Turn off electronic equipment when not in use. Don't leave appliances on standby mode.

**6 TRAVEL GREEN**  
Take public transport, ride a bike, car-share, or carpool.

**7 REUSE**  
Carry reusable shopping bags. Bring reusable lunchboxes and cups for takeaways.



# RESOURCES TO CARE FOR OUR COMMON HOME



## Reduce Food Waste

Clean & Green Singapore

W [cgs.sg/programmes/food-waste-reduction-programme](https://cgs.sg/programmes/food-waste-reduction-programme)

T 1800-CALL NEA (1800-2255 632)

## Upcycle or Repurpose

Crafting A Green World

W [craftingagreenworld.com](https://craftingagreenworld.com)

## Conserve Water

Public Utilities Board

W [pub.gov.sg/savewater/athome/watersavinghabits](https://pub.gov.sg/savewater/athome/watersavinghabits)

T 6731 9000

## Repair

Zero Waste SG

W [zerowastesg.com/2008/12/08/send-it-for-repair-or-fix-it-yourself](https://zerowastesg.com/2008/12/08/send-it-for-repair-or-fix-it-yourself)

Repair Kopitiam

W [repairkopitiam.sg](https://repairkopitiam.sg)

T 9466 1315

## Save Energy

Energy Efficient Singapore

W [ezsingapore.gov.sg/households/saving-energy-at-home/energy-saving-tips](https://ezsingapore.gov.sg/households/saving-energy-at-home/energy-saving-tips)

T 1800-CALL NEA (1800-2255 632)

## Recycle

Zero Waste SG

W [zerowastesg.com/recycle](https://zerowastesg.com/recycle)



<sup>1</sup>Ng, D., & Tang, H. (2019, January 13). Why Singapore is heating up twice as fast as the rest of the world. *Channel NewsAsia*. Retrieved from [www.channelnewsasia.com/news/cnainsider/singapore-hot-weather-urban-heat-effect-temperature-humidity-11115384](https://www.channelnewsasia.com/news/cnainsider/singapore-hot-weather-urban-heat-effect-temperature-humidity-11115384)

<sup>2</sup>National Environment Agency. (2019, June 10). Food Waste Management. Retrieved from [www.nea.gov.sg/our-services/waste-management/3r-programmes-and-resources/food-waste-management](https://www.nea.gov.sg/our-services/waste-management/3r-programmes-and-resources/food-waste-management)

<sup>3</sup>Singapore Environment Council. (2018). *Consumer Plastic and Plastic Resource Ecosystem in Singapore: A Position Paper by the Singapore Environment Council*. Retrieved from [http://sec.org.sg/seaa/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/SEC-Plastic-Resource-Study-Paper\\_Final1.pdf](http://sec.org.sg/seaa/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/SEC-Plastic-Resource-Study-Paper_Final1.pdf)

<sup>4</sup>Parker, L. (2019, June 7). The world's plastic pollution crisis explained. *National Geographic*. Retrieved from [www.nationalgeographic.com/environment/habitats/plastic-pollution/](https://www.nationalgeographic.com/environment/habitats/plastic-pollution/)

<sup>5</sup>National Environment Agency. (2019, June 24). Waste Statistics and Overall Recycling. Retrieved from [www.nea.gov.sg/our-services/waste-management/waste-statistics-and-overall-recycling](https://www.nea.gov.sg/our-services/waste-management/waste-statistics-and-overall-recycling)

<sup>6</sup>Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. (2018). *Special Report - Global Warming of 1.5 °C: Summary for Policymakers*. Retrieved from [www.ipcc.ch/site/assets/uploads/sites/2/2019/05/SR15\\_SPM\\_version\\_report\\_LR.pdf](https://www.ipcc.ch/site/assets/uploads/sites/2/2019/05/SR15_SPM_version_report_LR.pdf)

<sup>7</sup>United Nations. (2019, March 28). *Only 11 Years Left to Prevent Irreversible Damage from Climate Change, Speakers Warn during General Assembly High-Level Meeting*. Retrieved from [www.un.org/press/en/2019/ga12131.doc.htm](https://www.un.org/press/en/2019/ga12131.doc.htm)

## EVENTS

13  
SEPT

### PERSONAL MORAL COMPASS 2019 (EVERY FRIDAY)

**Module 5** (Social Justice) – 7 sessions

Covering topics on human dignity and the common good amongst others, this module touches on the application of Catholic Social Teaching (CST) principles in living our faith in society.

**Module 6** (Stewards of Life) – 6 sessions

This module explores Christian Ethics in medical issues concerning the human person. Topics include the handling of human embryos, organ donation, and euthanasia.

🕒 7.30pm to 9.30pm

📍 Catholic Centre, 55 Waterloo Street, Level 3, S187954

📝 Register

✉ formation@caritas-singapore.org

SEPT  
- NOV

### AGAPE EXPERIENCE

Through prayer, experiential learning, and engaging activities, this programme helps youth preparing for the Sacrament of Confirmation to learn about the Catholic Church's social mission and how the Sacrament of Confirmation relates to Catholic Social Teaching. It is also available for Catechumens and Candidates preparing for baptism or reception into the Catholic Church through the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA).

📍 21 Sept St Anne's Church

📍 2 Nov Church of the Holy Trinity, Church of St Teresa  
Church of Divine Mercy (RCIA), Church of St Anthony (RCIA)

📍 9 Nov Church of the Immaculate Heart of Mary,  
Church of Our Lady Star of the Sea (RCIA)

📍 Agape Village, 7A Lorong 8 Toa Payoh S319264

📝 Enquiries

☎ Thomas at 9027 6244 ✉ thomas@caritas-singapore.org

27  
- 29  
SEPT

### LIVING THE GOSPEL IN THE WORLD

Discover how we are called to live our faith more intentionally in our daily lives.

🕒 Part 1 - 3D2N retreat (stay-in)  
Commences Friday evening

📍 Montfort Centre, 622 Upper Bukit Timah Road, S678117

🕒 Part 2 - 7.30pm to 9.30pm,  
Oct 7, 14, 21

📍 Agape Village, 7A Lorong 8 Toa Payoh, S319264

📝 Register

☎ 6338 3448

✉ formation@caritas-singapore.org

3  
OCT

### YOUNG ADULTS – INTO THE CAVE (GIFT OF SELF: WHO AM I TO YOU?)

A series of reflective sessions for young adults to pray, reflect, and discern the various social issues and concerns in their lives, and put their faith into action.

🕒 7.30pm to 9.30pm

📍 Catholic Centre, 55 Waterloo Street, Level 3, S187954

📝 Register

☎ 6338 3448

✉ youngadults@caritas-singapore.org

🌐 <https://caritas-singapore.org/youngadults-into-the-cave>



### CONNECT WITH US

Wish to receive an e-copy of this newsletter? Write to us at [comms@caritas-singapore.org](mailto:comms@caritas-singapore.org)

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