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.

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.

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


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
WE CAN DO MORE
Singapore's Current Statistics

- Temperature rising at double the global average of 0.25°C per decade.
- Extreme heat can cause heat stroke, leading to organ damage and even death.
- 1.76 billion plastic bags, bottles, and disposable items are used each year.
- Sinks to degrade, plastics pollute land and water, negatively affecting our human population, wildlife, and their habitats.

ARE YOU GREEN?
Take this short quiz and add up your scores at the end.

- 763.1 million kilograms of food waste in 2018.
- Raising food produces methane, a greenhouse gas that traps heat in the atmosphere, also contributing to global warming.
- 219.8 million kilograms of waste in 2018.
- Decimating and impoverishing wildlife and ecosystems, negatively affecting our human population, wildlife, and their habitats.

SINGAPORE 2030

- O 1 2 3
- I buy new item (e.g., clothes).
- O 0 1 2 3
- I throw out old, unwanted or damaged items (e.g., clothes).
- O 0 1 2 3
- I use disposable (e.g., for takeaways or burnt out lights).
- O 0 1 2 3
- I use new plastic bag each time I make a purchase.
- O 0 1 2 3
- I do not finish my food.
- O 0 1 2 3
- I take new electric or electronic devices.
- O 0 1 2 3

SAVE OUR PLANET
Join our local communities in taking climate action.

- 1. Buy less. Use reusable or remanufactured items; repair damaged items.
- 2. Eat smart. Cook or order only what you can finish.
- 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, carpool, or carpool.

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!
6 to 10 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 2090 and 2021, posing “risks to health, livelihoods, food security, water supply, human security, and economic growth.” By 2030, the damage will be irreversible.
RESOURCES TO CARE FOR OUR COMMON HOME

**Reduce Food Waste**
Clean & Green Singapore

W cgs.sg/programmes/food-waste-reduction-programme
T 1800-CALL NEA (1800-2255 632)

**Conserve Water**
Public Utilities Board

W pub.gov.sg/savewater/athome/watersavinghabits
T 6731 9000

**Save Energy**
Energy Efficient Singapore

W eessingapore.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

**Upcycle or Repurpose**
Crafting A Green World

W craftingagreenworld.com

**Repair**
Zero Waste SG

W zerowastesg.com/2008/12/08/send-it-for-repair-or-fix-it-yourself

Repair Kopitiam

W repairkopitiam.sg
T 9466 1315

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EVENTS

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)

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

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Published by Caritas Singapore Community Council Limited (Caritas Singapore), a company limited by guarantee and a registered charity.
Registration No 200613504D (ACRA)
Charity No UEN 200613504D