FIRST READING
1 KINGS 19:9, 11-13

When Elijah reached Horeb, the mountain of the Lord, he went into the cave and spent the night in it. Then he was told, ‘Go out and stand on the mountain before the Lord.’ Then the Lord himself went by.

There came a mighty wind, so strong it tore the mountains and shattered the rocks before the Lord. But the Lord was not in the wind. After the wind came an earthquake. But the Lord was not in the earthquake. After the earthquake came a fire. But the Lord was not in the fire. And after the fire there came the sound of a gentle breeze. And when Elijah heard this, he covered his face with his cloak and went out and stood at the entrance of the cave.
AIR-CONDITIONED NATION

I like to grow things. At home, I have a small chilli bush growing beside a few lime shoots. They haven’t produced anything edible yet. Nevertheless, I dream of one day growing a plot of herbs, vegetables, and fruits to put on the table. But that remains unlikely as long as I live in a concrete box.

Environmental consciousness seems to be growing amongst Singaporeans, who applauded the National Development Minister’s assurance that the recently discontinued and disused KTM railway line will be preserved as a green corridor for public use after the tracks are dismantled. Indeed, Singaporeans today are more mindful about sustainable development. Given the physical limitations of Singapore, it is in our own interests that we preserve our habitat.

Yet, despite these concerns, Singapore remains an air-conditioned nation. The attitude of conspicuous consumerism and materialism lies dormant within the heart of every Singaporean, waiting for the next sale to erupt. Waste piles up while recycling rates remain low. Before we begin looking at the facts and figures surrounding global warming and climate change, we need to tackle the human element first.

Reflect:
What environmental issues are causes of concern for you? Why?
How have your concrete actions aggravated these environmental concerns?
How have your concrete actions alleviated these environmental concerns?

CARE FOR CREATION

Environmental protection and conservation, sustainable development, and the whole green movement are simply modern echoes of our age-old Christian calling to care for creation. Our faith teaches us that creation is holy because God created it and left it to us to steward. The task of stewardship entails an attitude of care and concern for creation. In that sense, all Christians are environmentalists – at least, we should be.

It is in and through our created world – our environment and habitat – that we run into and relate to God everyday. We might encounter God in a fiery sunset or a foaming wave. We might even encounter God through the whisper of a gentle breeze as Elijah did, as last Sunday’s reading recounts to us. However, with eyes focused upon profit, gain, or extravagance, many of us have blindly and unthinkingly used and abused creation for own ends.

Reflect:
How are you, as a Christian, leading the struggle to care for creation in your daily life?
What can you concretely do in your family and community to nurture a concern for creation?
Is the Church, as a whole, and your parish doing enough to care for creation? What more can be done and how can you contribute to this effort?

LIVING TRADITION

“Equally worrying is the ecological question which accompanies the problem of consumerism and which is closely connected to it. In [our] desire to have and to enjoy rather than to be and to grow, [we consume] the resources of the earth and [our] own life in an excessive and disorderly way.”

- Pope John Paul II,
Centesimus Annus: The 100th Anniversary of Rerum Novarum, paragraph 37.

Attributed to Darcy Zhou on Flickr

LIVING TRADITION

“[Humanity] thinks that [it] can make arbitrary use of the earth, subjecting it without restraint to [its] will…Instead of carrying out [its] role as a co-operator with God in the work of creation, [humanity] sets [itself] up in place of God and thus ends up provoking a rebellion on the part of nature, which is more tyrannised than governed by [people]…In this regard, humanity today must be conscious of its duties and obligations towards future generations.”

- Pope John Paul II,
Centesimus Annus: The 100th Anniversary of Rerum Novarum, paragraph 37.
INCONVENIENT TRUTHS

A documentary about climate change transformed me into a Christian environmentalist. Entitled “An Inconvenient Truth”, the former American vice-president, Al Gore, presented a 90 minute lecture on the causes and consequences of climate change. He didn’t have to sell the idea much. The inconvenient truths spoke for themselves, far outweighing the inconveniences I have incurred since to make a concrete change.

Yet, although environmental concerns are reported in the news everyday, many in society continue to pay lip service. Round the clock connectivity on mobile devices unnecessarily drains energy. Tonnes of junk-mail hawking products and services nobody really needs continue to be printed, distributed, and discarded everyday in my neighbourhood. On a yearly basis, cars are scrapped and furniture dumped. Businesses tell lies about going green to attract public support and profit. Lest we become an endangered species, I have become more discerning about my needs and wants. In a world where, unfortunately, money talks, I use my dollar to express my values in the marketplace.

Reflect:
What products or services do you utilise that unnecessarily contribute to waste?
What can you do to eliminate or minimise this impact on creation?

What power does the consumer or customer have in reducing or increasing waste? How can altering your purchasing or spending habits contribute towards caring for creation?

What is your attitude towards conserving and recycling resources? What concrete steps can you take to care for creation at home, at work, and in the marketplace?

LIVING TRADITION

“It is not wrong to want to live better; what is wrong is a style of life which is presumed to be better when it is directed towards “having” rather than “being”, and which wants to have more, not in order to be more but in order to spend life in enjoyment as an end in itself.”

- Pope John XXIII, Centesimus Annus: The 100th Anniversary of Rerum Novarum, paragraph 36.