

“The Lord God then took the man
and settled him in the garden of Eden,
to cultivate and care for it.”

Genesis 2:15

Care for Creation

One Church, Encountering Jesus,
Equipping Disciples, and **Living Mercy**



Week One: Cultivation and Care

Daniel 3:75-76, 78, 81

¶ Give glory and eternal praise to him!

Mountains and hills, bless the Lord; praise and exalt him above all forever. **¶**

Everything growing from the earth, bless the Lord; praise and exalt him above all forever. **¶**

Seas and rivers, bless the Lord; praise and exalt him above all forever. **¶**

All you beasts, wild and tame, bless the Lord; praise and exalt him above all forever. **¶**

Conversation Starter

1. What is one place in nature where you feel at peace or close to God?
2. What is a favorite outdoor activity from your childhood?



Russian Orthodox mosaic, Christ creating the cosmos

Week One:
Cultivation and Care

WRAP* with Scripture - Genesis 2:4-9, 15

When the Lord God made the earth and the heavens, there was no field shrub on earth and no grass of the field had sprouted, for the Lord God had sent no rain upon the earth and there was no man to till the ground, but a stream was welling up out of the earth and watering all the surface of the ground. Then the Lord God formed the man out of the dust of the ground and blew into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being.

The Lord God planted a garden in Eden, in the east, and placed there the man whom he had formed. Out of the ground the Lord God made grow every tree that was delightful to look at and good for food, with the tree of life in the middle of the garden and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. [...] The Lord God then took the man and settled him in the garden of Eden, to cultivate and care for it.

Write

Reflect

Apply

Pray

*WRAP is an acronym and method for Lectio Divina from the book WRAP Yourself In Scripture © by Karen & Lawrence Dwyer published by The Institute for Priestly Formation (2011, 2018). The WRAP Method involves four steps: Write, Reflect, Apply, and Pray with Scripture.

Week One: Cultivation and Care

Going Deeper Questions

1. Think of something you have “cultivated” and “cared for.” What did that involve?
2. How is the call to “cultivate” and “care for” creation different from exploitation?

The Bottom Line

Pope Benedict XVI has linked the original sin of pride in the garden of Eden directly to ecological degradation (*If You Want to Cultivate Peace, Protect Creation*, nos. 6-7). Individual sins of human selfishness can become “structural sins” which are “social situations and institutions that are contrary to the divine goodness” (*Catechism*, no. 1869; cf. St. John Paul II, *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, nos. 36-37). This means that systems of environmental destruction become hardwired into our daily life.

What are some specific “structural sins” that cause and exacerbate ecological degradation?

Daniel 3:75-76, 78, 81

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 All you beasts, wild and tame, bless the Lord; praise and exalt him above all forever. ℟

Week Two: Everything is Connected

Psalm 104:1, 24, 29-30

¶ Lord, send out your Spirit, and renew the face of the earth.

Bless the Lord, O my soul! O Lord, my God, you are great indeed!
How manifold are your works, O Lord! The earth is full of your creatures. ¶

If you take away their breath, they perish and return to their dust.
When you send forth your spirit, they are created, and you renew the face of the earth. ¶

Conversation Starter

1. If you could preserve one specific landscape or natural feature forever, what would it be?
2. What are some changes you have noticed in the local environment (e.g., weather patterns, wildlife, green spaces, etc) since you were a child?



The Oxbow, 1836 (Thomas Cole)

Week Two:
Everything is Connected

WRAP with Scripture - Colossians 1:13-20

[The Father] delivered us from the power of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins. He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For in him were created all things in heaven and on earth, the visible and the invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers; all things were created through him and for him.

He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. He is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things he himself might be preeminent. For in him all the fullness was pleased to dwell, and through him to reconcile all things for him, making peace by the blood of his cross [through him], whether those on earth or those in heaven.

Write

Reflect

Apply

Pray

Week Two: Everything is Connected

Going Deeper Questions

1. In 1990, Saint John Paul II wrote, “Christians, in particular, realize that their responsibility within creation and their duty towards nature and the Creator are an essential part of their faith” (*Peace with God the Creator, Peace with All Creation*, no. 15). **In your experience, how has the Church emphasized that care for God’s creation is essential to our faith?**
2. In *Laudato Si'*, Pope Francis stressed that since everything is connected, “We are faced [...] with one complex crisis which is both social and environmental. Strategies for a solution demand an integrated approach to combating poverty, restoring dignity to the excluded, and at the same time protecting nature” (no. 139). **What social issues seem most connected to care for creation?**

The Bottom Line

In 1990, Saint John Paul II observed:

“We cannot interfere in one area of the ecosystem without paying due attention both to the consequences of such interference in other areas and to the well-being of future generations. The gradual depletion of the ozone layer and the related ‘greenhouse effect’ has now reached crisis proportions as a consequence of industrial growth, massive urban concentrations and vastly increased energy needs. Industrial waste, the burning of fossil fuels, unrestricted deforestation, the use of certain types of herbicides, coolants and propellants: all of these are known to harm the atmosphere and environment. The resulting meteorological and atmospheric changes range from damage to health to the possible future submersion of low-lying lands (*Peace with God the Creator, Peace with All Creation*, no. 6).”

What prevents us from seeing how humans, social structures, and non-human creation are interconnected?

Psalm 104:1, 24, 29-30

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Bless the Lord, O my soul! O Lord, my God, you are great indeed!
How manifold are your works, O Lord! The earth is full of your creatures. **R**

If you take away their breath, they perish and return to their dust.
When you send forth your spirit, they are created, and you renew the face of the earth. **R**

Week Three: Our Common Home

Psalm 67:2-3, 5

℟ O God, let all the nations praise you!

May God have pity on us and bless us; may he let his face shine upon us.
So may your way be known upon earth; among all nations, your salvation. ℟

May the nations be glad and exult because you rule the peoples in equity;
the nations on earth you guide. ℟

Conversation Starter

1. What is one place in the world you have always wanted to visit?
2. What is one thing that saddens you about how the Earth (our common home) is treated?



The Tower of Babel, 1563 (Pieter Bruegel the Elder)

Week Three: **Our Common Home**

WRAP with Scripture - Leviticus 25:1-7

The Lord said to Moses on Mount Sinai: Speak to the Israelites and tell them: When you enter the land that I am giving you, let the land, too, keep a sabbath for the Lord. For six years you may sow your field, and for six years prune your vineyard, gathering in their produce. But during the seventh year the land shall have a sabbath of complete rest, a sabbath for the Lord, when you may neither sow your field nor prune your vineyard. The aftergrowth of your harvest you shall not reap, nor shall you pick the grapes of your untrimmed vines. It shall be a year of rest for the land. While the land has its sabbath, all its produce will be food to eat for you yourself and for your male and female slave, for your laborer and the tenant who live with you, and likewise for your livestock and for the wild animals on your land.

Write

Reflect

Apply

Pray

Week Three: Our Common Home

Going Deeper Questions

1. Reflecting on the common use of creation, the Church stresses, “God destined the earth and all it contains for all men and all peoples so that all created things would be shared fairly by all mankind under the guidance of justice tempered by charity” (*Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, no. 171). **Where do you see this ideal achieved in society – and where do you not?**
2. How does the concept of “home” invite us to think about God’s creation?

The Bottom Line

At the end of his pontificate, Pope Francis lamented:

“Eight years have passed since I published the Encyclical Letter *Laudato Si'*, when I wanted to share with all of you, my brothers and sisters of our suffering planet, my heartfelt concerns about the care of our common home. Yet, with the passage of time, I have realized that our responses have not been adequate, while the world in which we live is collapsing and may be nearing the breaking point (*Laudate Deum*, no. 2).”

Why have society and the Church failed to adequately respond to recent popes’ calls to care for our common home? How could you facilitate awareness and action?

Psalm 67:2-3, 5

¶ O God, let all the nations praise you!

May God have pity on us and bless us; may he let his face shine upon us.
So may your way be known upon earth; among all nations, your salvation. **¶**

May the nations be glad and exult because you rule the peoples in equity;
the nations on earth you guide. **¶**

Week Four: The Cry of the Poor

Psalm 34:7-8, 10-11

¶ The Lord hears the cry of the poor.

When the poor one called out, the Lord heard, and from all his distress he saved him. The angel of the Lord encamps around those who fear him, and delivers them. ¶

Fear the Lord, you his holy ones, for nothing is lacking to those who fear him. The great grow poor and hungry, but those who seek the Lord want for no good thing. ¶

Conversation Starter

1. What is a “comfort food” you love that comes directly from the Earth?
2. What is a shared experience that turned a complete stranger into your friend?



The Labourer, 1860 (Jean-François Millet)

Week Four:
The Cry of the Poor

WRAP with Scripture – Isaiah 58:5-10

Is this the manner of fasting I would choose, a day to afflict oneself? To bow one's head like a reed, and lie upon sackcloth and ashes? Is this what you call a fast, a day acceptable to the Lord? Is this not, rather, the fast that I choose: releasing those bound unjustly, untying the thongs of the yoke; setting free the oppressed, breaking off every yoke?

Is it not sharing your bread with the hungry, bringing the afflicted and the homeless into your house; clothing the naked when you see them, and not turning your back on your own flesh? Then your light shall break forth like the dawn, and your wound shall quickly be healed; your vindication shall go before you, and the glory of the Lord shall be your rear guard. Then you shall call, and the Lord will answer, you shall cry for help, and he will say: "Here I am! If you remove the yoke from among you, the accusing finger, and malicious speech; if you lavish your food on the hungry and satisfy the afflicted; then your light shall rise in the darkness, and your gloom shall become like midday.

Write

Reflect

Apply

Pray

Week Four: The Cry of the Poor

Going Deeper Questions

1. What does it mean, as Pope Francis said in *Laudato Si'*, to “hear both the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor” (no. 49)?
2. Pope Leo XIV noted that “environmental justice – implicitly proclaimed by the prophets – can no longer be regarded as an abstract concept or a distant goal. It is an urgent need that involves much more than simply protecting the environment. For it is a matter of justice – social, economic and human. For believers it is also a duty born of faith” (*Message for the 10th World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation 2025*). **How does “environmental justice” address both human poverty and care for God’s creation?**

The Bottom Line

In 1991, the U.S. bishops observed: “The whole human race suffers as a result of environmental blight, and generations yet unborn will bear the cost for our failure to act today. But in most countries today, including our own, it is the poor and the powerless who most directly bear the burden of current environmental carelessness” (*Renewing the Earth*, USCCB).

What are three examples in Omaha of how environmental degradation disproportionately harms the poor, vulnerable, and marginalized?

Psalm 34:7-8, 10-11

¶ The Lord hears the cry of the poor.

When the poor one called out, the Lord heard, and from all his distress he saved him. The angel of the Lord encamps around those who fear him, and delivers them. ¶

Fear the Lord, you his holy ones, for nothing is lacking to those who fear him. The great grow poor and hungry, but those who seek the Lord want for no good thing. ¶

Week Five: God Reigns over Creation

Psalm 33:6-9

R By the word of the Lord the heavens were made.

By the word of the Lord the heavens were made; by the breath of his mouth all their host. He gathers the waters of the sea as in a flask; in cellars he confines the deep. **R**

Let all the earth fear the Lord; let all who dwell in the world revere him. For he spoke, and it was made; he commanded, and it stood forth. **R**

Conversation Starter

1. What specific detail in nature (like a leaf's veins or a sunset's colors) makes you think, "Someone really thought this through"?
2. When have you experienced fear in the face of a storm or other natural disaster?



The Great Wave off Kanagawa, c. 1831 (Katsushika Hokusai)

Week Five:
God Reigns over Creation

WRAP with the Gospel - Isaiah 40:21-24, 28-31

Do you not know? Have you not heard? Was it not told you from the beginning? Have you not understood from the founding of the earth? The one who is enthroned above the vault of the earth, its inhabitants like grasshoppers, who stretches out the heavens like a veil and spreads them out like a tent to dwell in, who brings princes to nothing and makes the rulers of the earth as nothing. Scarcely are they planted, scarcely sown, scarcely their stem rooted in the earth, when he breathes upon them and they wither, and the stormwind carries them away like straw.

Do you not know? Have you not heard? The Lord is God from of old, creator of the ends of the earth. He does not faint or grow weary, and his knowledge is beyond scrutiny. He gives power to the faint, abundant strength to the weak. Though young men faint and grow weary, and youths stagger and fall, They that hope in the Lord will renew their strength, they will soar on eagles' wings; They will run and not grow weary, walk and not grow faint.

Write

Reflect

Apply

Pray

Week Five: God Reigns over Creation

Going Deeper Questions

1. What does it look like for Christians to live as authentic “co-creators” with God who reigns over creation (USCCB, *Renewing the Earth*, V)?
2. Faith is an “adequate response” to God’s love that requires trust in God’s providence and action to advance God’s kingdom (*Catechism*, no. 142). **How can you better live in the tension of both trusting in God’s providence while laboring as God’s “co-creator?”**

The Bottom Line

The mission of the Church is to build up on earth God’s “kingdom of truth and life, a kingdom of holiness and grace, a kingdom of justice, love and peace” (*Lumen gentium*, no. 36). In particular, Pope Benedict XVI stressed, “The Church has a responsibility towards creation” (*If You Want to Cultivate Peace, Protect Creation*, no. 12)

How can you encourage fellow believers in Christ to take seriously the responsibility of the Church towards creation?

Psalm 33:6-9

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Let all the earth fear the Lord; let all who dwell in the world revere him. For he spoke, and it was made; he commanded, and it stood forth. **¶**

Week Six: Ecological Conversion

Psalm 65:10, 12-13

¶ The seed that falls on good ground will yield a fruitful harvest.

You have visited the land and watered it; greatly you have enriched it.
God's watercourses are filled; you have prepared the grain. ¶

You have crowned the year with your bounty, and your paths overflow with a rich harvest.
the untilled meadows overflow with it and the hills are clothed with rejoicing. ¶

Conversation Starter

1. When was a time when you had *less* "stuff" but felt *more* content?
2. What is one small thing you started doing recently that makes you feel more connected to the Earth?



Kern's River Valley, California, 1871 (Albert Bierstadt)

Week Six: Ecological Conversion

WRAP with Scripture - Joel 2:12-13, 18-19, 21-23

Yet even now, says the Lord, return to me with your whole heart, with fasting, weeping, and mourning. Rend your hearts, not your garments, and return to the Lord, your God, for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, abounding in steadfast love, and relenting in punishment. [...]

Then the Lord grew jealous for his land and took pity on his people. In response the Lord said to his people: I am sending you grain, new wine, and oil, and you will be satisfied by them: never again will I make you a disgrace among the nations. [...]

Do not fear, O land! delight and rejoice, for the Lord has done great things! Do not fear, you animals in the wild, for the wilderness pastures sprout green grass. The trees bear fruit, the fig tree and the vine produce their harvest. Children of Zion, delight and rejoice in the Lord, your God!

Write

Reflect

Apply

Pray

Week Six: Ecological Conversion

Going Deeper Questions

1. What steps could you take in your personal life to better care for God's creation as a disciple of Christ?
2. Communities can undergo a shared ecological conversion that inspires people to reform their institutional policies and practices. **What could inspire communities like parishes and schools to experience a shared ecological conversion?**

The Bottom Line

At his installation Mass, Pope Benedict XVI observed, "The external deserts in the world are growing, because the internal deserts have become so vast." He means that the ecological degradation of the Earth is proof of the incompleteness of the world's conversion to Christ, which includes ecological conversion.

In what ways are you both experiencing and still desiring a deeper ecological conversion through this study?

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Archdiocese of Omaha

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