



Archbishop Shelton's Pastoral Reflections

August 2025

Caring for Creation is Good Stewardship

We show our respect for the Creator by our stewardship of creation. We are called to protect people and the planet, living our faith in relationship with all of God's creation. This environmental challenge has fundamental moral and ethical dimensions that cannot be ignored (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops).

My dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

On Wednesday, July 9, Pope Leo XIV celebrated Mass for the Care of Creation in the *Borgo Laudato si'* — the gardens at Castel Gandolfo established by Pope Francis in order to continue the important work of caring for creation and our common home. In his homily (see below), the Holy Father reminded us that we are all called by Jesus Christ to be protectors or guardians of all creation, the beauty of the created world. Another word for protector, guardian, or custodian of all God's gifts is "steward." We are all called to be good stewards of everything God has created.

Stewardship of creation was a consistent theme of Pope Benedict XVI, who earned the nickname "the green pope." In fact, concern for the environment has been expressed by all recent popes, including Pope Leo, and has been explicitly included in the Church's social teaching because abuse of our natural resources has become so serious in modern times. The Church's concern stems from our recognition that all creation is God's gift to humankind—to be cherished, nurtured, developed and used wisely for the good of all and with profound respect for "the beauty of the created world."



Our stewardship responsibility for the world that God has made is clearly referenced in the Book of Genesis. Here a loving God creates everything from nothing and declares all of it to be good. All creation comes from God and is good—the material world, all plants and animals, and especially the first man and woman who are created in His divine image. The stewardship responsibility given to our first parents was to “name” everything, which means to understand and give expression to its nature and purpose (cf. Gn 2:19-20). God also commanded that our first parents “be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth” (Gn 9:1). They were to be the guardians of the earthly paradise that God created out of sheer love and goodness for our benefit. That original paradise was lost—temporarily—as a consequence of sin. Thank God it has been restored by the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ and is now an essential element of Christian hope.

Our stewardship responsibility for all God’s creation begins with our own bodies. As Saint John Paul II taught so beautifully in his theology of the body, reverence and respect for creation begins with a profound appreciation of the gift of life itself. To care for our bodies, to live chaste and healthy lives, and to avoid all forms of abusive behavior, shows a profound respect for the wonderful gift we have been given. Developing our minds, maturing our emotions and respecting our bodies are fundamental aspects of our stewardship responsibility for God’s creation.

But our stewardship must extend beyond ourselves to the world around us. We are called to care for the environment (especially air, water, land and the minerals, plants and animals that make up this wonderful planet and whatever lies beyond). As people of faith, we believe that the entire universe exists as a result of God’s wise and loving design. Nothing that exists is here by accident. Nothing that God made is inherently evil. All creation is good, and everything that exists is our responsibility—to cherish, nurture, cultivate and generously share.

We are challenged to be protectors of all creation, to be stewards of all God’s gifts. We begin to exercise this responsibility when we defend human life—especially the unborn and the vulnerable. When we affirm the sacredness of all human life, we acknowledge God’s plan for each human being, and we work to defend the gift of life from every form of abuse. Similarly, when we affirm that everything God made is good and worthy of our reverence and respect, we look differently on all God’s creation.

Saint Francis of Assisi taught with his whole life the meaning of stewardship of God's creation. He did not regard the sun, moon, or stars as distant objects in outer space. He refused to consider minerals, plants, and animals as things to be used and then

discarded by us. He called everything created by God his sisters and brothers. He embraced all God's creatures with love, friendship, and reverence.

I am pleased that we now have our own Creation Care Team whose mission is “to connect and inform parishes, schools, and Catholic groups as they work to care for creation.” For more information about this important ministry, please see the following The Record article:

<https://therecordnewspaper.org/creation-care-team-launches-network-to-connect-parishes-and-schools/>

As stewards of creation, let us show reverence and respect for every good thing created by our generous and loving God. May we always cherish and protect God's abundant gifts.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Most Reverend Shelton J. Fabre
Archbishop of Louisville

The Creator and Creation

Nature shares in God's goodness, and contemplation of its beauty and richness raises our hearts and minds to God. St. Paul hinted at a theology of creation when he proclaimed to the Athenians, the Creator who "made from one the whole human race to dwell on the entire surface of the earth, and he fixed and ordered the seasons and the boundaries of their regions, so that people might seek God, even perhaps grope for him, though indeed he is not far from any of us" (Acts 17:26-27). Through the centuries, Catholic theologians and philosophers, like St. Paul before them, continue to search for God in reasoning about the created world.

Our Catholic faith continues to affirm the goodness of the natural world. The sacramental life of the Church depends on created goods: water, oil, bread, and wine. Likewise, the Western mystical tradition has taught Christians how to find God dwelling in created things and laboring and loving through them.

Nonetheless, Christian theology also affirms the limits of all God's creatures. God, the Source of all that is, is actively present in all creation, but God also surpasses all created things. We profess the ancient faith of God's people.

An ordered love for creation, therefore, is ecological without being ecocentric. We can and must care for the earth without mistaking it for the ultimate object of our devotion. A Christian love of the natural world, as St. Francis showed us, can restrain grasping and wanton human behavior and help mightily to preserve and nurture all that God has made. We believe that faith in a good and loving God is a compelling source of passionate and enduring care for all creation.

A selection from Renewing the Earth, a statement of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops' Committee on Justice and Peace, 2016.



(CNS photo/Lola Gomez)

A Message from Pope Leo XIV

We are enjoying this fraternal and peaceful moment in the midst of a world that is in flames, as a result of both global warming and armed conflicts. The message of [Pope Francis](#) in his Encyclicals [Laudato Si'](#) and [Fratelli Tutti](#) continues to be timely. We can imagine ourselves in the Gospel we have just heard, as we reflect on the fear of the disciples amid the tempest, a fear shared by a large part of humanity today. At the same time, in the heart of this Jubilee Year, we believe and say over and over again: there is hope! We have encountered that hope in Jesus. He calms the storm. His power does not break down, but builds up. It does not destroy but calls into being and bestows new life. We too should be asking ourselves: "What sort of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey him?" (*Mt 8:27*).

The amazement expressed in this question is the first step towards freedom from fear. Jesus lived and prayed around the Sea of Galilee. That is where he called his first disciples in the setting of their daily lives and work. The parables with which he proclaimed the Kingdom of God reveal his deep connection with that land and those waters, with the rhythm of the seasons and with the life of creatures.

The evangelist Matthew describes the tempest as an upheaval of the earth (the Greek word he uses is *seismos*). Matthew uses the same term for the earthquake that took place at the moment of Jesus' death and at the dawn of his resurrection. Christ rises above this upheaval, his feet firmly planted. Already here, the Gospel enables us to catch a glimpse of the Risen Lord, present in our confused history. Jesus' rebuke to the wind and the sea demonstrates his power to give life and salvation, a power greater than those forces that cause creatures to tremble.

So, we can ask ourselves once more: "What sort of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey him?" (*Mt* 8:27). The hymn from the Letter to the Colossians that we have heard seems to answer this very question: "He is the image of the invisible God, the first-born of all creation; for in him all things were created" (*Col* 1:15-16). Buffeted by the storm that day, his disciples were overcome with fear; they were not yet able to profess this knowledge about Jesus. Today, however, in accordance with the faith handed down to us, we can go further and say: "He is the head of the Body, the Church; he is the beginning, the first-born from the dead, that in everything he might be pre-eminent" (v. 18). Those words, in every age, make us and commit us to be a living Body: the Body of which Christ is the Head. Our mission to care for creation, to foster peace and reconciliation, is Jesus' own mission, the mission that the Lord entrusts to us. We hear the cry of the earth and we hear the cry of the poor, because this plea has reached the heart of God. Our indignation is his indignation; our work is his work.

In this regard, the psalmist's song inspires us: "The voice of the Lord is upon the waters; the God of glory thunders, the Lord, upon many waters. The voice of the Lord is powerful; the voice of the Lord is full of majesty" (*Ps* 29:3-4). That voice commits the Church to speak prophetically, even when it calls for the courage to oppose the destructive power of the princes of this world. The unbreakable covenant between Creator and his creatures inspires our minds and galvanizes our efforts to ensure that evil may turn into good, injustice into justice, and greed to sharing.

With infinite love, God has created all things and given them life. That is why Saint Francis of Assisi could call every creature his brother, his sister and his mother. Only a contemplative gaze can change our relationship with creation and bring us out of the ecological crisis brought on by the breakdown of our relationship with God, with our neighbors and with the earth that is the effect of sin (cf. [*Laudato Si'*](#), 66).

The Eucharist we celebrate sustains and gives meaning to our work. As [Pope Francis](#) wrote, "it is in the Eucharist that all that has been created finds its greatest exaltation. Grace, which tends to manifest itself tangibly, found unsurpassable expression when God himself became man and gave himself as food for his creatures. The Lord, in the

culmination of the mystery of the Incarnation, chose to reach our intimate depths through a fragment of matter. He comes not from above, but from within; he comes that we might find him in this world of ours” ([*Laudato Si'*](#), 236).

A selection from the homily of Pope Leo XIV during Mass for the Care of Creation at Borgo Laudato si' (Castel Gandolfo), on Wednesday, 9 July 2025.

My Prayer for You

Please join me in praying these words of Saint Augustine quoted by Pope Leo XIV:

“Lord, your works praise you, that we may love you; may we love you, that your works may praise you” (Saint Augustine). May this be the harmony that we spread throughout the world. Amen.