

# TIMELY TOPICS



DIocese of Columbus, Office of Religious Education and Catechesis

## Earth Day

**A**pril 22 is celebrated around the world as Earth Day.

Why do we observe Earth Day? When did it start? What is its purpose?

When the first astronauts saw the entire Earth from above, they were astonished by the view. In a historical moment, they provided us with the best picture of our **HOME** called “the Earth.” That first image made us realize that we can no longer confine ourselves to geographical boundaries; we are united in a common biosphere. We all live in what some call the “global village.” This enclosed planet called Earth is the third in our solar system within a galaxy called the Milky Way, all of which is part of the sacred community of the universe.

God carefully and lovingly created the universe. Every detail was carefully crafted, all was created to be interrelated and connected. In God’s immense wisdom and creativity, He saw that “it was good, indeed very good.” Life was created to generate more life, to replenish the universe.

*“And God saw that it was good”*  
*Genesis 1:1-31*

Living in this universe, we realize that we are elbow-to-elbow with one another, intertwined with all that is created, immersed in the very essence of creation. We all share the same elements of life. What we do, or do not do, affects all of us and everything around us. As part of this universe, we come to realize that **it is all about relationships!** Creation is relationship! Creation is the first revelation of our relational God!

The relationships of the living and nonliving systems among themselves and their environment, is called Ecology. Ecology is relationships, interconnections, interdependencies, and exchanges of all with all, at

all points, and at all moments. All of this helps us to recognize the *Divine Presence* in all and with all.

This calls us to an ethical concern, a responsibility, toward creation. The seven themes of Catholic Social Teaching embrace deeply this responsibility we have for each other and the environment that surrounds us. We are not in isolation. There is a global connection. If it’s all about relationships, and our responsibility with all and in all, we are called to an “ecological conversion” ...

We are invited to contemplate the *Divine Presence* with all our heart, mind and psyche, with all the unity of our being. In the Incarnation (Jn 1:1) the mystery of the Mystical Body of the Cosmic Christ is revealed to us. Through the Son the entire universe is somehow taken up into the mystery of the Trinity itself. Just as Jesus “becomes flesh”, so the Holy Spirit “pitches its tent” among us and “sets its dwelling” in the universe.

The whole universe has a sacramental dimension. We feel, love and think as Earth. Earth Day is not one day, it is every day! It must be celebrated every minute of our existence, acknowledging that we are holy and that we **dwel on sacred ground**. Our Catholic tradition has a long history of love and respect for creation. One who took it to heart was St. Francis of Assisi, patron saint of ecology and of animals. His profound respect and

*(Continued on page 2)*

### Inside this issue

|   |   |
|---|---|
| Ideas for Lesson Plans or In-Service                                | 2 |
| Correlation to Certification Standards & the Graded Course of Study | 3 |
| Resources   | 3 |

(Continued from page 1)

appreciation for creation always led him to the Creator. Likewise, closer to our time, Bl. Kateri Tekakwitha, the “Lily of the Mohawks,” exemplified a blending of Catholic tradition with her Native American spirituality, which was so deeply imbued with love and respect for, and appreciation of, nature and all creation.

Our Holy Father, Pope Benedict XVI, is another champion and model of ecology:

“The family needs a home, a fit environment in which to develop its proper relationships. For the human family, this home is the Earth, the environment that God the Creator has given us to inhabit with creativity and responsibility. We need to care for the environment: it has been entrusted to men and women to be protected and cultivated with responsible freedom, with the good of all as a constant guiding criterion.”

**We are called to be STEWARDS of God’s creation -- and it starts with ME!**

**Reflection**

**If it is all about relationships, what is the “sustainable” response?**

How do I treat/care for myself?

How do I treat/care for others? Parents, friends, family, teachers, co-workers, etc.

How do I treat/care for my environment? My room, home, city, country, nature, animals, world?

**Prayer**

Psalm 104 [http://conservation.catholic.org/psalm\\_104.htm](http://conservation.catholic.org/psalm_104.htm) ✨



**Ideas for Lesson Plans or In-Service**

**Click on the title of each resource to open a link to the material.**

[Powering Down: A Less is more Proposal](#) from Iowa Interfaith Power & Light and Catholic Committee of Appalachia

[Five-day Unit to Celebrate Earth Day](#)

[Teaching Creation](#)

[USCCB Prayers Celebrating God’s creation](#)

[Going Green = Good Stewardship](#)

[The Earth Charter](#)

## Correlation to Certification Standards & the Graded Course of Study

### Religion Graded Course of Study

#### Standard IV

Discover and recognize the development of the Christian person and experience the baptismal call to dignity, relationship, moral decision making and service.

**B.** Recognize that one responds to the love of God by growing in relationship to God, others, self and all creation

**F.** Describe the Kingdom of God as the presence of God's love, peace and justice in the world

### National Certification Standards for Lay Ecclesial Ministers

**Standard I:** *Personal and Spiritual Maturity* -- 1.4, Discern and address current realities in the church and in the world in light of the Gospel

**Standard 3:** *Catholic Theology* – 3.1, Know and integrate into ministerial practice a theology of revelation as embodied in Scripture, tradition, and creation . . .

**Standard 4:** *Praxis* – 4.16PCL, Integrate Catholic social teachings into all faith formation

### The Six Tasks of Catechesis

#### III. Moral Formation

Conversion to Jesus Christ implies walking in his footsteps . . .

Evangelization . . . offers not only the proclaimed word but the lived Word too. This moral testimony, which is prepared for by catechesis, must always demonstrate the social consequences of the demands of the Gospel.

## Resources

#### List of Green Resources

#### List of Resources on Catholic Social Teachings

<http://www.earthday.org/earth-day-2011>

<http://catechistsjourney.loyolapress.com/2009/04/22/10-catholic-ways-to-celebrate-earth-day/>

DVD "The Awakening Universe" [www.pachamama.org](http://www.pachamama.org)

DVD "Home" by Yann Arthus-Bertrand [www.homethemovie.org](http://www.homethemovie.org)

DVD "The Great Chain of Being: Simplifying Our Lives" Rohr, Richard, *et al.* Albuquerque, NM: Center for Action and Contemplation, 2007

Boff, Leonardo. *Cry of the Earth, Cry of the Poor.* Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1997

Gottlieb, Roger S., ed. *This Sacred Earth: Religion, Nature, Environment, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed.* New York, NY: Routledge, 2004

Habel, Norman C., ed. *The Earth Story in the Psalms and Prophets; The Earth Bible, vol. 4.* Cleveland, OH: The Pilgrim Press, 2001

Habel, Norman C. & Shirley Wurst, ed. *The Earth Story in Wisdom Traditions; The Earth Bible, vol. 3.* Cleveland, OH: The Pilgrim Press, 2001

Walker-Jones, Arthur. *The Green Psalter: Resources for an Ecological Spirituality.* Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2009

#### **Videos available in Diocesan media center**

VTE 1122 The Creation

VTE 1404 Sacred Heart Kid's Club "Creation"

VTE 1740/DVD 1166 Brother Sun, Sister Moon

VTE 1750 Kateri Tekakwitha

VTE 1951 The Miracle of Life

VTE 1956 The Wonders of God's Creation: Planet Earth

VTE 1957 The Wonders of God's Creation: Animal Kingdom

VTE 1958 The Wonders of God's Creation: Human Life

VTE 1959 The Creation

VTE 1960 Life, From the Beginning, is Sacred

VTE 2072 Universe Drama in Three Acts

VTE 2070 The Gospel and the Environment

VTE 2413 In the Footsteps of Jesus