

## ***Development of Catholic Social Teaching on Environmental Justice and Care of Creation***

Church teaching on praise to God and care of God's creation, which is essential to care of neighbor, has a long history. Beginning in Scripture and developed by the early Church Fathers, Doctors, and many saints, it was famously given joyous proclamation by St. Francis of Assisi in his *Canticle of the Creatures*, 1226, with the refrain of "Praised be my Lord" -- now the opening words of Pope Francis' encyclical.

Based on Church tradition, theology of creation, sacramental theology, the experiences of the Church around the world [local bishops, missionaries, Catholic Relief Services], and the findings of scientists examined by the Pontifical Academy of Sciences, this teaching has been articulated more directly since Vatican II in prophetic pronouncements and calls to action and responsibility:

**Vatican Council II:** *Lumen Gentium*, 1964, *Gaudium et Spes*, 1965: all creation has value of its own and all will be redeemed; all resources must be shared -- the "universal destination of created goods".

**Pope Paul VI, in Octogesima Adveniens**, 1971, spoke of the risks of environmental pollution, and sent a message to the UN Conference on the Human Environment in Stockholm, 1972.

**St. John Paul II**, in *Redemptor Hominis*, 1979, and *On Social Concerns*, 1987 called for respect for the cycles of nature; and said that the needs of future generations and our responsibility to care for creation are a moral issue in *The Ecological Crisis, a Common Responsibility*, also titled *Peace with God the Creator, Peace with all Creation* in 1990. In *Evangelium Vitae*, 1995, he said that respect for creation stems from respect for human life and dignity, and that respect for life includes attention to ecology and bioethics.

**The Catechism of the Catholic Church**, 1994: #282, 293, 339, 340-344, 353, 373, 401, 668, 2415-18

**Pope Benedict XVI**, came to be called "the green pope" for his many statements linking care of creation to care of the poor, particularly in *Caritas in Veritate*, 2009, and his World Day of Peace message, 2010, *To Cultivate Peace, Protect Creation*.

**Bishops around the world** on environmental destruction affecting creation and the poorest: Alaska, Alberta, Philippines, Australia, Ireland, Jamaica, El Salvador, Haiti, and many US Bishops.

**Pontifical Academy of Sciences**, 2011, *The Fate of Mountain Glaciers in the Anthropocene*, calls for action to avoid risks to a billion people from the effects of climate change on glaciers in Asia. With **Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences**, 2016, *Sustainable Humanity, Sustainable Nature: Our Responsibility*.

**Pope Francis**, since his inaugural homily, has continued to call us to protect creation, now developed in his encyclical, *Laudato Sii*, ("Praised Be"), also titled "On the Care of the Common Home", 2016.