



Care for God's Creation *Principle VII*

We conclude our summer series on Catholic Social Teaching by looking at the seventh principle: Care for God's Creation.

In the Book of Genesis, we hear how the Lord God created the first man and placed him in the garden in Eden. Eden is described as a beautiful place, including a river that divides and waters the whole land. There is gold, bdellium, and lazuli in the land (Gn. 2:12).

After placing him in the garden, the Lord God instructs the man to cultivate and care for it (Gn. 2:15). The traditional translation is "to till" and "to keep" the garden. In other words, the man is given the opportunity to share in God's creative activity (work) and the responsibility of keeping (or caring) for the garden. We have looked at the principle of the right and dignity of workers (tilling), now we will look at the principle of caring for God's creation (keeping).

As Catholics, we are formed to have what we could call a "sacramental vision" of reality. That is, through the eyes of faith, we see God's beauty, goodness, and truth inscribed in the created order. Creation "speaks" of God's splendor, His grandeur and His life. If you have ever seen the series *Planet Earth*, you cannot help experience wonder and awe at the amazing beauty and variety of life on our planet. We are called to be good stewards of this planet, a place we call home.

As with the principle of solidarity, this principle is rooted in a couple of assumptions. First, it assumes that our care and concern for the earth is an expression of our love for God. Imagine you created something and someone mishandled it or even destroyed it. You would rightly feel disrespected and hurt. Contempt for creation is nothing short of contempt for our Creator.

Additionally, our care for creation assumes that everything in the world is connected. Just as the whole body suffers when one member suffers in St. Paul's Body of Christ analogy (1 Cor. 12), so the whole human race suffers (especially the poor) when parts of our fragile environment are abused. In short, we are not only connected as a human family (solidarity), but we are connected to the created world.

Furthermore, this principle assumes we are not only connected to the environment and one another today, but we are also connected to the

generations that preceded us and will follow us. The phrase for this is sometimes called “intergenerational solidarity,” i.e., the idea that we are connected to those generations who follow us and will also rely upon the environment for their survival and well-being. Speaking of intergenerational solidarity, the Holy Father says:

Once we start to think about the kind of world we are leaving to future generations, we look at things differently; we realize that the world is a gift which we have freely received and must share with others. Since the world has been given to us, we can no longer view reality in a purely utilitarian way, in which efficiency and productivity are entirely geared to our individual benefit. Intergenerational solidarity is not optional, but rather a basic question of justice, since the world we have received also belongs to those who will follow us (*Laudato Si*, 159)

Practically, what are some actions you can do to help foster greater care for God’s creation? Pope Francis challenges each person to examine his or her lifestyle (*Laudato Si*, 203-208). He warns against “compulsive consumerism” that attempts to relieve the emptiness in the human heart. Along with reducing consumption, the Holy Father mentions putting healthy pressure to bear on those who wield political, economic, and social power. In short, your purchasing decisions and your voice have power to affect real change.

As we conclude our series on Catholic Social Teaching, we cannot help but notice the seamless thread of life that runs through all seven principles. We defend and celebrate the gift of human life at all stages (principle 1), a human life that requires others to reach its full potential (principle 2). Each human life not only has God-given rights, but also responsibilities to others (principle 3). Special care and support is needed when this life is poor and vulnerable (principle 5). And finally, each human life is not only connected to the rest of the human family (principle 6), but also to the created world, a world that requires our constant care (principle 7).

In short, by God’s grace, express your love for Jesus Christ and our beautiful Catholic faith by teaching, celebrating, and living the seven principles of Catholic Social Teaching. In doing so, you will improve our world, glorify God, and God-willing, become a saint!

~St. Thérèse, pray for us!



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