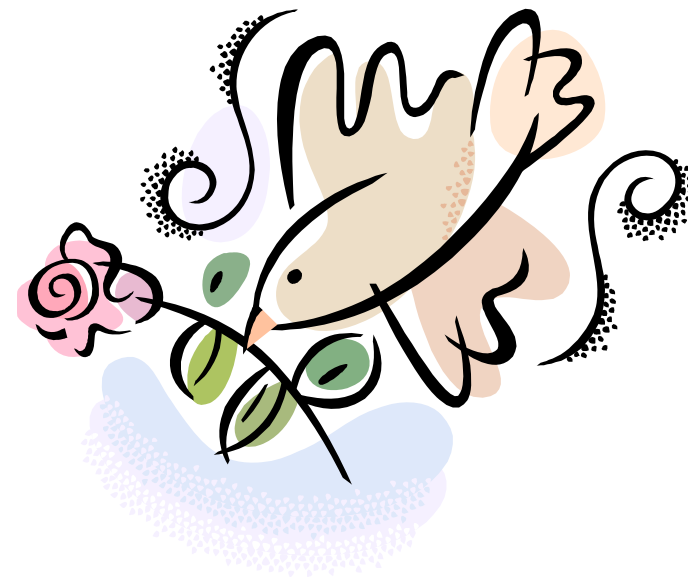




Rooted in Christ, the Commission advises and collaborates with the Bishop of Arlington in promoting evangelization, formation and advocacy in the Diocese for true justice and peace by fostering resolute dedication to the sanctity of life and the dignity of every human person, as expounded by the principles of Catholic social teaching.

www.arlingtondiocese.org/peace



*Arlington Diocese Peace Resources
2010*

providing options for mothers and children. St. Charles Borromeo Catholic Church.
3304 Washington Blvd, Arlington, VA 22201

- **Friday, January 22:** March for Life
- **Thursday, January 28:** Join fellow Catholics from the Arlington and Richmond Dioceses for Virginia's Catholic Advocacy Day in Richmond. A bus will leave the Cathedral of St. Thomas More parking lot at 6:30am. To sign up for the bus, contact Celestine Green (cepersongreen@msn.com). Transportation on the bus costs \$15.

RESOURCE SUGGESTIONS

- U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops Environmental Justice Program
Calls Catholics to a deeper respect for God's creation and engages parishes in activities that deal with environmental problems, particularly as they affect the poor.
Background resources online. <http://www.usccb.org/sdwp/ejp/>
See also *Global Climate Change*, a 2001 statement of the U.S. Bishops, and *Faithful Stewards of God's Creation*, a parish resource based on the statement.
- Catholic Coalition on Climate Change
Helps the USCCB respond to questions of climate change: What are the moral implications of climate change? Who is most impacted? What should the Catholic community do? Launched the Catholic Climate Covenant and the St. Francis Pledge to Care for Creation and the Poor. <http://www.catholicsandclimatechange.org/>
- National Catholic Rural Life Conference
Applies the teachings of Jesus Christ for the betterment of rural America and care of God's creation. Offers weekly emails and resources for reflection. www.ncrlc.org
- National Religious Partnership for the Environment
Association of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, the National Council of Churches U.S.A., the Coalition on the Environment and Jewish Life, and the Evangelical Environmental Network. Offers *universal* vision of protecting our common home. <http://www.nrpe.org/>
- Faith, Economy, and Ecology project of Maryknoll Office of Global Concerns
A call to integrate faith, ecology, and the global economy.
<http://faitheconomyecology.wordpress.com/>

SUGGESTIONS FOR PRAYER

- Genesis 1:1-28 (Creation Story), 2:4-7, 15 (Creation is Good; God Instructed Us to Tend Creation), 9:8-17 (God's Covenant with Noah and All Creation), Leviticus 25:23-24 (The Land is God's), Daniel 3:52-90 (Praise of God; Praise of God's Creation)
- Psalms: 8 (The Majesty of God), 65 (Thanksgiving for God's Blessings), 104 (Praise of God the Creator), 146 (Trust in God Alone), 147 (Zion's Grateful Praise to Her Bountiful Lord), 148 (Hymn of All Creation to the Almighty Creator)
- Matthew 6:25-34 (Trusting in God as Nature Does), John 1:1-5 (In the Beginning Was the Word), Romans 8:18-25 (All Creation Awaits Redemption), Colossians 1:15-23 (All Things Have Their Being in Christ, The Firstborn of Creation), Revelation 21:1-5, 14 (Promise of the New Creation; New Heavens and New Earth)
- Pope Benedict XVI recommends St. Francis of Assisi's "Canticle of the Creatures" prayer, which is the inspiration for the hymn "All Creatures of Our God and King."

SUGGESTIONS FOR ACTION

- Sign up to receive alerts from the Virginia Catholic Conference (www.vacatholic.org). This year's legislative agenda includes a priority to ban the dumping of coal-mining waste from mountain-top removal into nearby streams and to address immigrants' access to public education and health care.
- Sign up with the USCCB's Justice For Immigrants network (<http://www.justiceforimmigrants.org/>) to advocate for comprehensive immigration reform and keep your eyes open for diocesan-level efforts this year.
- Consider leading or participating in a parish-based reflection on one of the JustMatters modules produced by JustFaith Ministries (www.justfaith.org), such as those on climate change or migration.

Sunday, January 17, 7:00pm: Participate in panel discussion with Teresa McDonough, Director of Children's Services for Catholic Charities and Joy Myers, Director of Borromeo Housing, who will speak about practical ways of supporting life and



"The earth is the LORD'S and all it holds, the world and those who live there." Psalm 24:1

The opening of Psalm 24 is a powerful reminder that the world belongs to God. This theme is echoed throughout the Psalms, as in the exhortation to all of Creation to celebrate and praise the Lord in Psalm 98, or in the exaltation of God's Glory through His gifts in Psalm 104.

It often appears that we have forgotten that we must have a *theocentric* rather than *anthropocentric* world view. When we mistakenly believe in a human-centered world, it creates a more challenging world for peace, life, and social justice. As Pope Benedict XVI has noted in his 2010 World Day of Peace message, "...integral human development is closely linked to the obligations which flow from *[humanity's] relationship with the natural environment*. The environment must be seen as God's gift to all people, and the use we make of it entails a shared responsibility for all humanity, especially the poor and future generations." Without the vision of the environment as God's gift to humanity, we forget how we are to care for the rest of Creation.

In his Message for the 44th World Day of Peace on January 1 this year, Pope Benedict XVI instructs us in the title of his message: "If you want to cultivate peace, protect creation." The Pope offers a Scriptural and theological foundation for our responsibility towards creation and shares both principles and concrete suggestions for how individuals, communities, nationals, and international organizations can respond as stewards of the environment. He addresses many of the ecological issues we have become aware of in recent years: drastic changes in climate patterns, rising sea levels which may destroy small island nations; threats to human health from pollution and environmental toxins; the exploitation of natural resources and abuse of the rights of indigenous peoples; violent conflict over scarce resources; mass migration in response to environmental concerns; the particular vulnerability of those least able to respond to changes in the environment. He calls for international and intergenerational solidarity, considers the need for a redistribution of energy resources, and urges conversion to a simpler lifestyle.

In these reflections, we share themes for prayerful consideration in response to the Holy Father's message and in connection with opportunities to act on our faith during this month of January. We reflect on the migration effects of climate change, the disproportionate impact of environmental pollution and degradation on the poor and vulnerable, and the unity of our respect for human life with care for all of creation.

NATIONAL MIGRATION WEEK: JANUARY 3-10

"For thus says the LORD, The creator of the heavens, who is God, The designer and maker of the earth who established it, Not creating it to be a waste, but designing it to be lived in: I am the LORD, and there is no other." Isaiah 45:18



Throughout the South Pacific and Indian Ocean are hundreds of small, low-lying islands, comprising a dozen or so countries (the so-called Small Island States) and territories, most of which are just barely above sea level. As climate change is leading to rising sea levels, the nations are becoming flooded, leaving many people with no homes: a new class of climate refugees. Some smaller nations, such as Tuvalu, are turning to their neighbors. This nation, home to around 11,000 people has made a deal with New Zealand to relocate the population, should it come to that. The displacement of larger populations has the potential for even greater problems, though. Should sea levels rise by a mere one meter, which many scientists consider likely by 2100, parts of Bangladesh, a country of 155 million people, will be entirely underwater. As one of the most densely populated countries in the world, there is not space for internally displaced peoples.

While the image of people being flooded out of their homes is the most dramatic example of environmental refugees, it is hardly the only one. Climate change is altering the weather patterns that many people depend on, making farming more and more difficult for those who live off the land. Melting glaciers and a decrease in rainfall are forcing some people to leave for lack of water. Conflicts over resources, such as timber or arable land, are causing even more people to be uprooted. According to the United Nations, there are 19.2 million "people of concern," who are at a high risk of becoming displaced due to environmental conditions. The Red Cross estimates that currently, more people are displaced because of environmental disasters than war or other violent conflict.

The only way to lower these numbers is to start to put in place better environmental policies. In the meantime, though, we will have growing numbers of people who have been forced from their homes and are in need of assistance. To learn more about refugees and migration in general, and to work towards better, more humane policies, towards this vulnerable group of people, visit <http://www.usccb.org/mrs/nmw/index.shtml>.

CONCLUSION

"When you send forth your breath, they are created, and renew the face of the earth" Psalm 104:30

The threats to peace in our world can be overwhelming. Violent conflict over resources, environmental migration, disrespect for human life and dignity, and our failure to exercise responsible stewardship of creation remind us of our need for the peace of Christ which the world cannot give. God gives us this peace in many ways, including through creation.

In listening to creation, we both discern the path to peace and receive peace: "many people experience peace and tranquility, renewal and reinvigoration, when they come into close contact with the beauty and harmony of nature" (*Message for the 2010 World Day of Peace*, 13). Ever a prophet of hope, Benedict XVI reminds us this year that our stewardship comes from gratitude and love, not guilt or fear: "The ecological problem must be dealt with not only because of the chilling prospects of environmental degradation on the horizon; the real motivation must be the quest for authentic worldwide solidarity inspired by the values of charity, justice and the common good" (10). We find that God honors and blesses us when we fulfill our role in creation: "as we care for creation, we realize that God, through creation, cares for us" (13).

We find both consolation and challenge in recognizing that we and all of creation belong to the Lord, whose will is salvation. Christ came to us to redeem all things in heaven and earth, and to restore us all to a proper relationship with God, with one another, and with all of creation. Just as nothing can separate us from the love of God (see Rom. 8:39), so no challenge is too great for our Creator. All attempts to cultivate peace without God will end in frustration and futility; thankfully, the Lord who made all things is with us. Let us turn to God with trust and gratitude, saying, "When you send forth your breath, they are created, and you renew the face of the earth" (Ps. 104:30). When our attitudes and actions manifest God's sovereignty and our responsibility for His Creation, we share in His power to heal, to restore, and to make all things new. As we join our prayers with those of our Holy Father, may God's Spirit renew us to cultivate peace by protecting creation.



ECOLOGICAL JUSTICE

MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR. DAY, JANUARY 18



They do not say to themselves, "Let us fear the LORD our God, who gives autumn and spring rains in season, who assures us of the regular weeks of harvest." Your wrongdoings have kept these away; your sins have deprived you of good. --Jeremiah 5:24-5

On Martin Luther King, Jr. Day we recognize the life and work of a great man, a crusader for social justice who, while best known for fighting against racism and discrimination, also fought against poverty and war. Sadly, while much progress has been made, much of what Dr. King fought for is still an issue today.

Today we still see too many instances of institutional discrimination, including environmental discrimination. Not only are dangerous environmental occurrences harmful first to the poor and vulnerable, for whom it is more difficult to adapt, but polluting industries are far more likely to be placed in poorer communities—and communities of color—than in middle- or upper-class communities, and workers in low-paying jobs are also at risk of significant environmental hazards. This can be seen in the migrant worker communities, where often the workers are in the fields while pesticides are being sprayed. In Louisiana oil refineries are overwhelmingly found on or near Native American land. Polluting industries congregate together in these poorer communities. One primarily African-American town, Convent, LA, is home to ten chemical plants. The residents there are on average exposed to 4,517 lbs of hazardous chemical releases each year. In the United States, the average is a mere ten pounds. Together, these and other incidents are examples of "environmental racism," a term coined in 1987 by the United Church of Christ, after seeing how minority communities tended to face greater environmental hazards.

This can be extended, however, to environmental discrimination. Communities in Appalachia are the home to large coal mines, which pose great environmental and health risks to the communities. Mountaintop Removal, or Strip, Mining is a procedure in which a mountain peak or ridge is blown up to expose the coal seams, which are then mined. This process kicks hazardous particulates into the air, and the process of coal mining often leaves sludge behind, and heavy metals which leach into the water, leading to high rates of lung, liver and kidney

diseases and risks of birth defects. The poorer an Appalachian county is, the more likely it is to have a mountain top removal mine located within its borders.

Sadly, what we see again and again is that it is the poor and vulnerable who too often suffer. As Catholics, who are called to solidarity with our brothers and sisters, to think first of the poor and vulnerable, and to protect the life and dignity of the human being, we are called to action, and to fight for ecological justice. As we do so, we look forward to a day where respect for all creation and respect for all people finds common cause.

RESPECT FOR LIFE: MARCH FOR LIFE, JANUARY 22

“I beg you, child, to look at the heavens and the earth and see all that is in them; then you will know that God did not make them out of existing things; and in the same way the human race came into existence.” 2 Maccabees 7:28



Pope Benedict XVI focused his *Message for the 2007 World Day of Peace* on the human person as “the heart of peace.” Understanding our place in creation enriches our respect for the human person at every age and stage.

Genesis teaches that God showed special care for man and entrusted man with the privilege and responsibility of special care for the rest of creation: “The Lord God took the man and settled him in the garden of Eden to cultivate and care for it” (Gen. 2:15). As Benedict XVI explains in this year’s message, this privilege “was not a simple conferral of authority, but rather a summons to responsibility” (6). After naming the animals, “none proved to be a suitable partner for the man” (Gen. 2:20), for only a fellow human person shares equal dignity. Similarly, though God surveyed each stage of creation and “saw how good it was” (Gen. 1:10, 12, 18, 25), it was only after creating the human person that God “looked at everything he had made, and he found it very good” (Gen. 1:31).

All of creation bears the imprint of God the Creator: “For from the greatness and the beauty of created things their original author, by analogy, is seen” (Wis. 13:5). The grandeur of the stars prompts the Psalmist to ask God, “What are humans that you are mindful of them, mere mortals that you care for them?” (Ps. 8:5) God entrusts the human person with rule over the works of His hands because “God created man in his image, in the divine image he created

him, male and female he created them” (Gen. 1:27). In intellect, conscience, and call to love, the human person uniquely images God and shares the responsibility of care for creation.

Benedict XVI notes that God “speaks peace” (see Ps. 85:9) through creation: “Peace is an aspect of God’s activity, made manifest both in the creation of an orderly and harmonious universe and also in the redemption of humanity that needs to be rescued from the disorder of sin. Creation and Redemption thus provide a key that helps us begin to understand the meaning of our life on earth” (*Message for the 2007 World Day of Peace*, 3). As a child learns the grammar of human speech through listening, we must listen to creation to learn the “transcendent grammar” of God’s law inscribed on our consciences. For “being itself, our earth speaks to us and we must listen if we want to survive and to decipher this message of the earth” (Meeting with Clergy, July 24, 2007). Furthermore, “if we must be obedient to the voice of the earth, this is even truer for the voice of human life” (ibid). Only when we live “with full respect for this creature of God, this image of God which man is, and with respect for our coexistence on this earth” (ibid) can we live in peace.

In his encyclical of June 2009, *Caritas in Veritate*, Benedict XVI further emphasizes the connection between environmental ecology and human ecology: “*The way humanity treats the environment influences the way it treats itself, and vice versa*” (CV51). As Benedict XVI explains, “If there is a lack of respect for the right to life and to a natural death, if human conception, gestation and birth are made artificial, if human embryos are sacrificed to research, the conscience of society ends up losing the concept of human ecology and, along with it, that of environmental ecology” (CV51). The “hedonism and consumerism” which he cites as destructive to both the environment and the human person is evident in the prevalence of pornography and the manipulation of human reproduction, which cheapens human life and sexuality; these same attitudes in the quest for cheap food and other consumer products have devastating effects on the environment, workers, and consumer health.

The Catholic Church persistently advocates for full legal respect for human life. The Holy Father calls us also to assert our responsibility for creation in the public sphere (see CV51), as does the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB). As we continue peacefully and lovingly to advocate for human life, let us reflect on how our attitudes and actions regarding the rest of creation can better express our unique responsibility for all that God has made. Then may God look upon the human person in the scope of creation and see that we are “very good.”