

INTERNATIONAL CATHOLIC STEWARDSHIP COUNCIL

CATHOLIC STEWARDSHIP

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A PRAYER FOR OUR EARTH

All-powerful God,
you are present in the whole universe
and in the smallest of your creatures.
You embrace with your tenderness
all that exists.
Pour out upon us the power of your love,
that we may protect life and beauty.
Fill us with peace, that we may live
as brothers and sisters, harming no one.
O God of the poor,
help us to rescue
the abandoned and forgotten of this earth,
so precious in your eyes.
Bring healing to our lives,
that we may protect the world
and not prey on it,
that we may sow beauty,
not pollution and destruction.
Touch the hearts
of those who look only for gain
at the expense of the poor and the earth.
Teach us to discover the worth of each thing,
to be filled with awe and contemplation,
to recognize that we are profoundly united
with every creature
as we journey towards your infinite light.
We thank you for being with us each day.
Encourage us, we pray, in our struggle
for justice, love and peace.
Amen

~By Pope Francis

Being Good Stewards of Our Common Home: The Pope's Encyclical

Seldom has a papal encyclical been anticipated with so much noise and discussion and even premature criticism and fear as our Holy Father, Pope Francis' *Laudato si* ("Praise Be to You"); with a beautiful subtitle "On Care for Our Common Home." This is the pope's encyclical on the environment – easily found on Google—but most of us will admit encyclicals aren't as engrossing as our favorite summer reading. Nevertheless, it deserves our prayerful attention; not just the commentary that journalists, pundits, radio hosts and television analysts provide.



The letter urges us to examine our lifestyles and invites us to prayerfully consider a significant shift in our own practices and habits.

Each of us, as Christian stewards, will find something that inspires and challenges us from Pope Francis' prescription for a healthy planet. For many readers, the challenge might come particularly in the pope's warnings about "extreme and selective consumerism." In our culture, we're taught that more is better – more production, more growth, more profits, more spending. But can the earth sustain this kind of economic dogma? Pope Francis echoes the Catholic teaching tradition that we should "replace consumption with sacrifice, greed with generosity, wastefulness with a spirit of sharing."

The letter urges us to examine our lifestyles and invites us to prayerfully consider a significant shift in our own practices and habits. For example, one question we should ask ourselves: Can we live with less? A visit to our closets is a good place to start, and while committing to buy less, we might ruminate on the mistaken values of our con-

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Again, our own kitchens present evidence of our complicity in this wastefulness.

sumer economy and culture. Our pontiff points out that one-third of food that is produced is discarded. Again, our own kitchens present evidence of our complicity in this wastefulness.

The poor suffer the most from changes in the earth's complex ecosystem, and that is readily evidenced by their struggle simply to find clean water. The pope also reminds us as Christians called to exercise good stewardship of the planet to consider what in our own life comprises "need" and what is "greed."

Pope Francis urgently calls us to a renewed commitment to the Eucharist as well – something many commentators fail to mention – and asks us to rediscover our common bond within this "act of cosmic love." For the Christian steward, improving the environment must be a topic of prayer, a chance to call our politicians to action, and a time to renew our commitment to that wonderful Catholic principle of the common good.

Christian Stewardship and the Need for Recreation

Is there such a thing as a stewardship of recreation? Some people might dismiss the thought. But they'd be wrong.

In his book, *The Gift of the Jews*, author Thomas Cahill observes that, in receiving the Ten Commandments, the ancient Hebrews did something no other ancient society had ever done: they established a day of rest. "The God who made the universe and rested bids us to do the same, calling us to a weekly restoration of prayer, study, and recreation (or re-creation)."

For those of us in the Northern Hemisphere at least, probably no other month bids us to relax as the month of July does. Backyard barbecues, days at the pool or the beach, a recreational outing or simply the lazy idleness of a mid-year Sunday afternoon invite us to slow down. And this invitation should be heeded. Sometimes, our society induces in us a sense of guilt if we're not



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"doing." But turning off the computer and the phone and spending quality time with those around us, or finding time for our own interior lives, is stewardship of our time which leads to the place where God dwells. It's a good example for our kids as well: July presents a wonderful time to "rest" from all the electronic screens and busyness that dominate their young lives.

July is also the month when U.S. citizens celebrate the proclamation of their freedom. When the Hebrew people first received the Ten Commandments, they too had just received their freedom from the Egyptians after a sojourn in the wilderness. Cahill thinks it's no coincidence that a people recently liberated were in need of a directive to rest and reflect. "Leisure," he writes, "is the necessary ground of creativity, and a free people are free to imitate the creativity of God."

So, the next time you feel guilty about a quiet, reflective time of doing "nothing" remember that recreation also means "re-creation" and that to be a truly creative person, a steward of our interior resources, we must honor our need to rest, relax, be with others, read and play.