

Care for all of Creation:

An Invitation to the People of SJB

A booklet on how our faith calls us to care for creation and a few suggestions on how to begin!



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Introduction

The COVID 19 pandemic has changed the world in ways both tragic and hopeful. It has made obvious the extent of the marginalization of the most vulnerable, be it the elderly in Canada, people of colour in the US and the poor everywhere. It has demonstrated humanity's capacity to adapt, sacrifice and create new ways of doing and being with each other. COVID 19 has brought about what was said could not be done – it forced governments everywhere to prioritize people over profitability. Knowing the impossible is in fact possible, how will this inspire us to act on another crisis, one that a vaccine cannot protect us from? The impacts of climate change have affected millions of people and yet we have had little will to change our ways of living. With the new priorities of PEOPLE and PLANET over profits, we can begin to change our lives in ways that will reduce the suffering of millions of humans and the rest of creation.

This booklet is an invitation to reflect on our relationship with creation and with those who live on the margins and with God; these relationships are interconnected. It is our hope that you will find inspiration and ideas to help in restoring right relationships with creation, our human family, and with God, in the way that our faith calls us to do.



Scripture and creation.

The Old Testament emphasizes God's love of creation. In Genesis, God calls Creation into being and pronounces it "very good" (Gen 1:31). Then God "took the man and put him in the garden to till it and keep it" (Gen 2:15) conferring responsibility for the flourishing of the garden on the [hu]man. We are called, from the beginning, to take care of the garden. After covering the earth with a great flood, God establishes a covenant with Noah "and with every living creature that is with you" (Gen 9:10). The lives of creatures are important to God.

Many of the psalms are filled with the imagery of creation praising God and reflecting God's glory (see especially Psalm 104). God loves creation as well as the human family.

In the New Testament the Gospels reveal how intimately connected Jesus was with the land around him, using parables about seeds, birds, shrubs, weeds and wheat to teach the people. In the prologue to John we read; the "Word became flesh" (John 1:14). These are astounding word for they do not say "the Word became man" or "became human" but flesh. In Jesus, the Spirit of God became united with the matter of creation. Matter matters to God!



Our Popes.

As the impact of humanity's exploitation of the earth and of its most vulnerable citizens, the Popes have become more and more explicit in their message of caring for creation. In 1972 Paul VI warned how "disorderly exploitation" of the planet's resources will affect future generations and declares that the role of "the human race is not to destroy [creation] but to perfect it".

In 1992, John Paul II stated, "Respect for life and for the dignity of the human person extends also to the rest of creation, which is called to join man in praising God." He, too, places responsibility on individual and collective greed, stating they "are contrary to the order of creation, an order that is characterized by mutual interdependence." John Paul II also connects the work of restoring the ecological balance with addressing the causes of structural forms of poverty linking the welfare of creation with the welfare of humanity.

In 2010, Benedict XVI titled his World Day of Peace Message; "If You Want to Cultivate Peace, Protect Creation", and expands on the previous popes' warnings, introduces the concept of "environmental refugees" and links environmental issues with human rights and the right to life.

Laudato Si, Catholic Social Teaching & creation.

In 2015, Pope Francis wrote an extensive but very readable document: “Care for our Common Home” (Laudato Si). In it he states: “Concern for others and the natural environment attunes us to the moral imperative of assessing the impact of our every action and personal decision on the world around us... An awareness of the gravity of today’s cultural and ecological crisis must be translated into new habits”. (#208-209) He repeatedly emphasizes the interconnection between humanity and creation.

Although all the Church’s Social Teachings apply to the care of creation, there four that are key:

Care for Creation: The earth is sacred and has its own intrinsic value. Our responsibility is to protect its ecological diversity, beauty, and life-sustaining properties and to hold it in trust for the future.

Human Dignity: The Church calls for the well-being of each person in every dimension: economic, political, social, ecological, and spiritual.

Common Good: We must prioritize the good of the human family and creation over commercial interests.

Preferential Option for the Poor: The needs of the poor, whether human or part of creation, must be considered in all decisions.

Ten Ways to Care for Creation involving Food

1. **Say grace.** Express gratitude to God for the sun, rain, and soil. For the plants and animals on your plate. For the farmer, the grocer, and the cook. Pray for those who do not have enough.

2. **Reduce Food Waste.** More than half the food produced in Canada (and the US) is wasted. Use what is closest to expiring in your fridge first as the basis of your meal planning.

3. **Reduce Meat Consumption.** Industrial meat production contributes to deforestation and diverts food crops from human consumption to animals. Eating less meat and eating meat that is pasture raised is one of the most effective ways of reducing your carbon footprint.

4. **Eat Local and in Season.** Eating lettuce, strawberries and snow peas in February requires long distance trucking, migrant (ie low paid labour) and often comes from countries experiencing food insecurity. Look for Foodland Ontario and locally sourced food.

5. **Reduce reliance on processed food.** Processed foods require more energy to produce, are less nutritional and come with more packaging.



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Food, cont'd

6. Cook from scratch and with others. Food is more than fuel for our bodies.

Cooking with and for others allows us to nurture both our bodies and our relationships with others.

7. Choose organic when you can. Industrial agriculture depends heavily on chemical inputs derived from and powered by fossil fuels. It reduces biodiversity both in nature and in the food crops we consume. Organic farming can feed the world and mitigate climate change.

8. Grow something. Whether it is a pot of chives or a great big garden, growing something helps connect us to the cycles of life, death and rebirth in the natural world.

9. Choose Fair Trade products when you can. Fair Trade certification for products like coffee, sugar, and bananas assures us that the needs of the earth and the workers are respected. Better than charity, it affirms the dignity of producers in the global South by paying them a living wage for their produce and their care for the earth.

10. Enjoy and celebrate food. Potlucks and community dinners are crucial ways of celebrating the abundance of God's creation and strengthening human relationships.

Household tips for reducing your impact on creation.

Reflect before you buy. Ask: Do I really need it? Can I borrow it? Can I buy it second hand? What is its lifecycle (what will happen to it when I am finished with it?) One of the most pressing problems with “stuff” is plastic which is problematic because it is made from fossil fuels, takes up to a thousand years to break down in landfills and when not responsibly disposed of ends up in our ditches, streams and oceans killing wildlife. Instead, consider:

1. Reusable grocery and produce bags, water bottles, straws, and travel mugs.
2. Metal and glass containers or beeswax wrap to store food or carry lunches.
3. Use reusable coffee pod filters. Try tea balls for loose tea.
4. Replace paper towels and napkins with cloth and tissues with hankies.
5. Try shampoo/conditioner/body wash bars instead of liquid or find refill stores for these.
6. Use earth friendly cleaners, dish soap and laundry soap. These can be replenished at refill stores saving the bottle from the recycling bin and from new ones being manufactured.
7. Do you know about bamboo toothbrushes, band aids, cotton swabs and toilet brushes?

Household Tips cont'd

8. Replace disposable diapers with a diaper service or cloth and tampons/pads for a diva cup.

9. Replace disposable razors with metal ones – single blades are best for your skin!

10. Dry laundry on the line or a rack. Try dryer balls or cloths instead of disposable sheets.

11. Clothing – tonnes and tonnes of textiles are filling our landfills even when you give it to charity. Buy second hand. If buying new, buy from companies with proven corporate social responsibility records to ensure that fair labour practices are being observed.

12. Access to clean water is becoming a growing issue – here and abroad. Reduce your water consumption: in the bathroom by shorter or fewer showers: in appliances by doing only full loads of dishes or laundry: outside by using rain barrels and not watering lawns or washing driveways (and cars only infrequently). Conserving water is an act of solidarity.



Caring for creation as a Catholic community.

When the world slowed down during the first months of the pandemic, surprising changes in the environment were seen. The canals in Venice cleared enough to reveal the fish that lived there. The skies in Mumbai cleared enough for people to see stars at night. And 2.6B metric tons of CO₂, from human activity, were not created!! Our actions make a difference, but they cannot be one-offs but must become the new way of living.

There is much we can do as a parish to contribute to the flourishing of creation and the human family.

- Are you interested in helping us becoming a Fair Trade parish?
- Did you know that SJB has committed to being bottled water free? Are you interested in lobbying for the protection of the right to water?
- Would you like to help make our parish/community greener by [your idea]?

What is one new action that your household will take on to love and protect creation? _____

Bringing our voices together to care for creation amplifies our influence. If you would like to participate, please contact

Heidi Matthews (gsheidim@gmail.com) or

Tammy Barnhart (barnharttammy@gmail.com).

An Invitation to Youth from Youth

God has created a beautiful earth that offers us all the things we need and has given us the responsibility to take of it. Here are some ways that we can love and protect the planet!

- **Go outside** and notice all the beauty! Walk, ride your bike, look at the clouds, water some plants, grow something – and give thanks to God.
- **Set the example** for your family, friends, and community. Remind them gently of the environmentally option and cheer them on when they do choose it.
- **Food** is an easy way to care for the planet: try to reduce your food waste by only taking what you will eat, buy food with little or no packaging, when eating out bring your own containers for leftovers.
- **Clothes:** buying secondhand will reduce your impact on the earth.
- **Plastic** is one of our biggest problems! Replace bottled water with a refillable one. Save your shampoo/conditioner bottles and refill them at a refill or health food store or buy it in a bar form. Remind servers that you don't want a plastic straw or lid or Styrofoam containers.
- **Learn new skills.** Cook from scratch. Make your own body lotion. Repair your bike. Build furniture with wood. Sew. Knit. Garden. Raise chickens.



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A Christian prayer in union with creation

Father, we praise you with all your creatures. They came forth from your all-powerful hand; they are yours, filled with your presence and your tender love.

Praise be to you!

Jesus, through you all things were made. You were formed in the womb of Mary our Mother, you became part of this earth, and you gazed upon this world with human eyes. Today you are alive in every creature in your risen glory. **Praise be to you!**

Holy Spirit, by your light you guide this world towards God's love and accompany creation as it groans in travail. You also dwell in our hearts and you inspire us to do what is good. **Praise be to you!**

Triune Lord, wondrous community of infinite love, teach us to contemplate you in the beauty of the universe, for all things speak of you. Awaken our praise and thankfulness for every being that you have made. Give us the grace to feel profoundly joined to everything that is. **Praise be to you!**

God of love show us our place in this world as channels of your love for all the creatures of this earth, for not one of them is forgotten in your sight. Enlighten those who possess power and money that they may avoid the sin of indifference, that they may love the common good, advance the weak, and care for this world in which we live. **Praise be to you!**

The poor and the earth are crying out. O Lord, seize us with your power and light, help us to protect all life, to prepare for a better future, for the coming of your Kindom of justice, peace, love, and beauty. **Praise be to you! Amen.**