

Chapter 8

Christian Life and Environmental Protection



- About a situation where we have to rely on oxygen parlors to breathe clean air?
- About a time when water is costlier than gold and diamond?
- About a situation where future generations must shave their heads to maintain cleanliness?

The saying, 'be as patient as the earth' is losing its meaning, as the earth has begun to retaliate. The earth, which is meant to be a nurturing mother, and the phenomena on earth have assumed a ferocious form due to human actions. Environmental issues are becoming increasingly severe.



The heat continuously radiating from a burning fire in a room will gradually permeate the entire room, and just as that room, steadily intensifying in heat, reaches an extreme state and bursts, the whole earth too will explode under the dominance of excessive heat.

(The Principle of Tipping Point – James Lovelock)

Although one may disagree with James Lovelock's observations, the profound future consequences brought about by climate change that he points to cannot be ignored.

The scientific community unanimously calls for recognizing climate change as humanity's greatest catastrophe and urges us to wake up now and intensify efforts to prevent this disaster. International organizations like UNEP (United Nations Environment Programme) and world nations are making crucial interventions on this issue. Recognizing the importance of environmental protection, the Church is deeply committed to raising awareness among the faithful and taking proactive measures.

"Nature never did
betray the heart that
loved her"

**(William Words
Worth)**



"If God's life-
giving power were
to withdraw from
creation, in the blink of
an eye, all would return
to nothing.

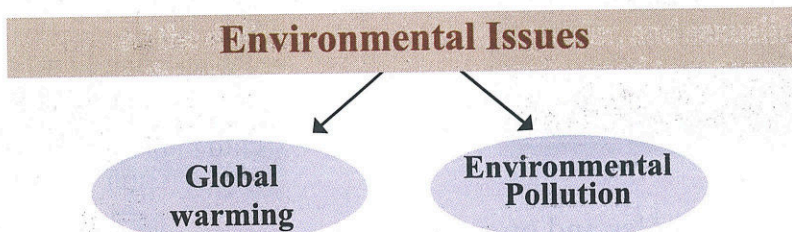
(St. Augustine)

Pope Francis has stated that every believer must see environmental protection as a fundamental duty, just like caring for the sick or feeding the hungry. The significance of this issue is emphasized by Pope Francis' declaration in 2016 that polluting the environment is a sin that must be confessed.

What is the environment? (meaning and concept of environment)

- The term "environment" refers to habitats and surroundings where both living and nonliving elements coexist in harmony.
- An ecological equilibrium is a state in which nature and its living beings exist in mutual dependence.
- God created the universe in such a way that everything is interdependent.
- Through the movement, efficiency, order, beauty, and temporality of the universe, one can come to know God.
- As a being who shares in God's goodness and wisdom, man has the responsibility to preserve the beauty and goodness of creation. Because it is the way for the coming generations as well to experience and know God.
- When man, out of selfishness, fails in his duty to safeguard this divine goodness and beauty, environmental issues arise.

"Question the beauty of the earth; question the beauty of the sea; question the beauty of the air distending and diffusing itself; question the beauty of the sky; they will all answer: 'We are beautiful.' For the One who created us is unchanging and absolute beauty" (CCC 32, St. Augustine).



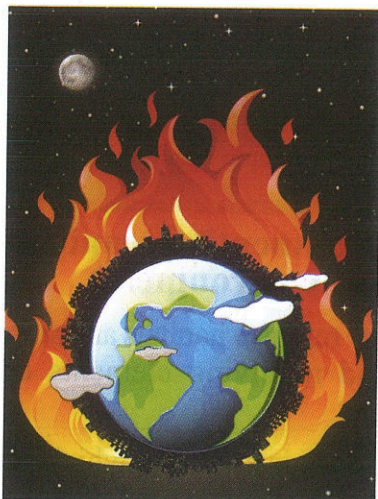
What is the environment?
Clarify the concept.

Greenhouse Gases
Carbon Dioxide
Methane
Chlorofluorocarbon
Nitrous Oxide

Level of carbon dioxide	
Year	Parts Per Million (ppm)
Upto 1850	280 ppm
1957	315 ppm
1990	360 ppm
2004	379 ppm
2014	400 ppm
2023	423 ppm

1. Global Warming

The scientific community asserts that the average temperature of the Earth should not rise more than two degrees Celsius from the conditions that existed before the beginning of the Industrial Revolution (1760-1840). However, due to the excessive use of fossil fuels and similar sources, the greenhouse gases released into the atmosphere remain suspended, causing the sunlight that strikes and reflects off the Earth to be unable to escape and stay within the atmosphere. This increases the Earth's temperature. This is global warming.



The uncontrolled use of fossil fuels, widespread deforestation, and an extravagant lifestyle have paved the way for global warming.

Climate is the result of the interaction between the sun, oceans, land, living organisms, and the atmosphere. When human beings' reckless behavior disrupts this relationship, its consequences will be severe.

The consequences of global warming

• Climate Change

Hurricanes, droughts, floods, volcanic eruptions, tsunamis.



• Rise in Sea Levels

The melting of ice caps at the poles and on mountains.

The issue of ocean warming is severe.

A study published in the Environmental Research Letters journal states that global ocean surface temperature is increasing at a record pace. Calculations show that over the past 40 years, this increase has been more than fourfold. What is the harm in this? Professor Christopher Merchant from the University of Reading, UK, who conducted the study, states that the pace of global warming on Earth is determined by the oceans. In essence, if ocean warming is rapid, climate change will also be rapid. The reason for oceans to heat up is that they absorb 90% of the heat generated by greenhouse gases. Scientists have found that since the late 1980s, the ocean's warming rate has increased from approximately 0.06 degrees Celsius per decade to 0.27 degrees Celsius. The study also indicates that if carbon emissions are not reduced, the temperature increase observed over the past 40 years will be surpassed within the next 20 years. Researchers warn that the resulting climate change could lead to the extinction of one-third of the species on Earth.



What is meant by global warming?

- **Rise in Sea Levels**

The melting of ice caps at the poles and on mountains.

- **Ocean warming**

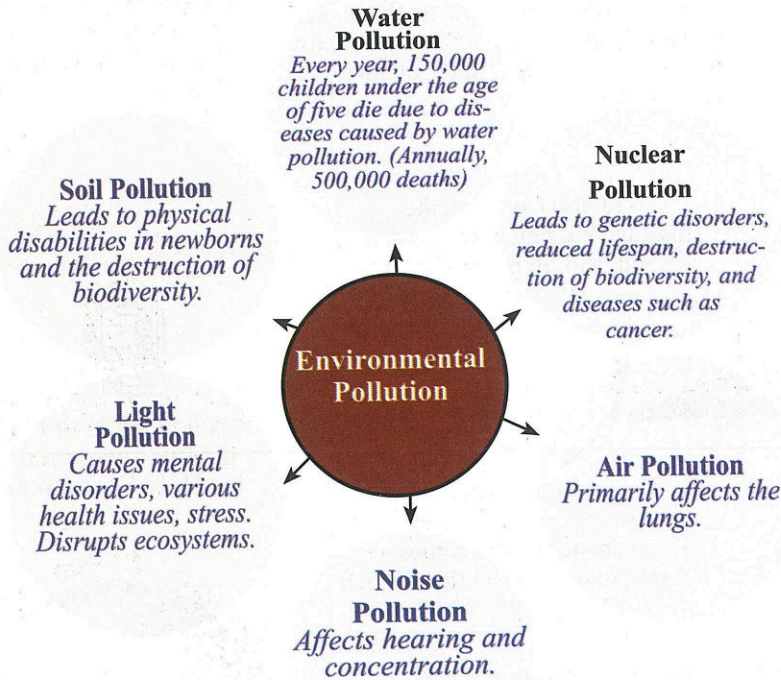
"This is the phenomenon where the sea water heats up due to the absorption of heat caused by greenhouse gases . Studies indicate that this will disrupt the climate."

- **Impact on Ecosystems**

Desertification, scarcity of water and food, competition for natural resources, unemployment, economic crisis, and biodiversity depletion.

2. Environmental Pollution

Environmental pollution is a hazardous condition that arises when waste accumulates beyond the capacity of the environment to absorb, decompose, or reuse it.



Causes of Environmental Problems

- Excessive use of fossil fuels.
- Uncontrolled use of pesticides and chemical fertilizers.



Discuss in the group and present how the consequences of global warming affect our living environment.

"Those responsible for business enterprises are accountable to society for the economic and ecological effects of their operations. They have an obligation to consider the good of persons and not only the increase of profits. Profits are necessary, however, as they make possible the investments that ensure the future of a business and guarantee employment" (CCC 2432).



Prepare a PowerPoint presentation on environmental pollution.



"The earth is the LORD'S and all that is in it, the world, and those who live in it" (Ps 24:1).

- Overexploitation of natural resources.
- Unscientific waste management.
- Unscientific disposal of e-waste, plastic, and biomedical waste.
- Noise from loudspeakers, vehicles, and machinery.
- Excessive use of artificial light.
- Unscientific disposal of nuclear waste.

The Church's perspectives on the environment

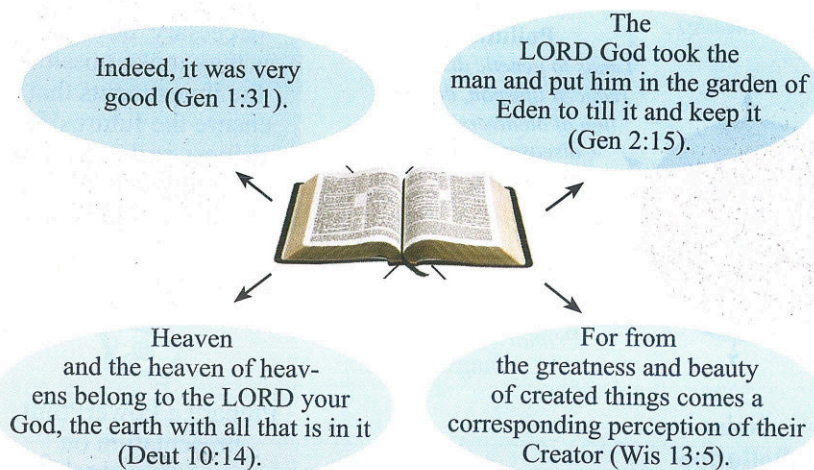
The Church's perspectives on the environment and its protection are based on the Holy Scriptures, the teachings of the Church Fathers, and the Ecclesiastical Exhortations.

Let us examine how it is dealt with.

1. The Biblical vision on the Environment

It signifies the respect that humans must mete out towards all living beings.

Since the earth belongs to the Lord, humans have a duty to protect it for future generations and ensure its fruitfulness.



To till means to care for, to protect, to oversee, and to sustain. It signifies the mutual responsibility between humans and nature.

If all of creation reflects the Creator, then any violation against creation is violation against the Creator Himself.



Experience shows that disregard for the environment always harms human coexistence, and vice versa. It becomes more and more evident that there is an inseparable link between peace with creation and peace among men. Both of these presuppose peace with God.

(Pope Benedict XVI)



Explain the Vision of the Environment in the Holy Scriptures?



"All things have been created through Him and for Him."
(Col 1:16)

Jesus and Nature

Jesus looked upon nature with deep love and wonder. He



had a constant and continuous relationship with nature. The Lord was able to draw others' attention to the beauty of the world because of this. Jesus traveled through various places relentlessly. At all those times, He would contemplate the beauty that His Father had sown in nature. Jesus invited His disciples to open their eyes

and perceive the message that God conveys through creation.

"Look around you, and see how the fields are ripe for harvesting" (Jn 4:35).

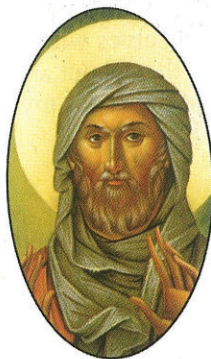
"The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed that someone took and sowed in his field; it is the smallest of all the seeds, but when it has grown it is the greatest of shrubs and becomes a tree" (Mt 13:31-32).

When Jesus spoke to His disciples, He invited them to recognize God's paternal relationship with all creation. He also reminded them that each one of them holds great importance in God's creation.

"Are not five sparrows sold for two pennies? Yet not one of them is forgotten in God's sight" (Lk 12:6).

2. Teachings of the Church Fathers

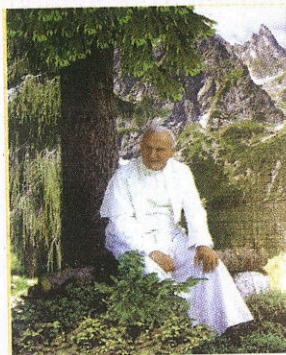
The Church Fathers were those who authoritatively interpreted and taught the Christian faith.



St. Ephrem

St. Ephrem views creation along with the Holy Scriptures as a witness to divine revelation.

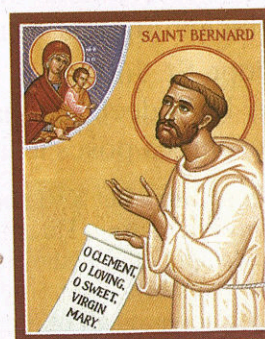
"Your symbols, Lord, are everywhere, yet You are hidden from everywhere. Though Your symbol is on high, it does not perceive that You exist; though Your symbol is in the depth, it does not comprehend who You are;



"When we contemplate with wonder the universe in its grandeur and beauty, we must praise the whole Trinity" (St. John Paul II).



Jesus was a lover of nature. Explain?



"Believe me, you will find more lessons in the woods than in books. Trees and stones will teach you what you cannot learn from masters."

(St. Bernard of Clairvaux, 1090-1153)

though Your symbol is in the sea, You are hidden from the sea; though Your symbol is on dry land, it is not aware what You are. Blessed is the Hidden One shining out"

(St. Ephrem - Hymns on Faith)

Accordingly, all creation serves as a means to lead us toward God. The Holy Scripture writes about God. Nature portrays God. According to St. Ephrem's perspective, this relationship exists on three levels:



St. Irenaeus (130-202)

"Nature is a blessed dwelling given by God for the human race."

St. Augustine (354-430)



"The Most Holy Trinity, which is equal, supreme, and unchanging goodness, has created all things. But these things are neither equal nor supreme, yet each one is good in itself. Their harmony sustains this universe in its marvelous unity and beauty."

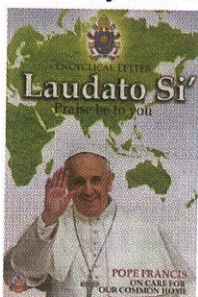
3. Exhortations of the Church

For more than half a century, the Holy Catholic Church has been deeply committed to fostering environmental awareness and promoting the process of conservation. The exhortations of the popes, encyclicals, and guidelines elucidating this vision of the Church.

Pope St. John Paul II in his message on World Day of Peace in 1989 declared that the excessive exploitation of natural resources poses a significant threat to world peace.

Pope Benedict XVI teaches that if you desire to foster peace, protect God's creation. He emphasizes that the environment is a divine gift meant for all, and those entrusted with its management bear a significant responsibility not only towards the poor and future generations but also towards all of humanity (*Caritas in Veritate* 48).

The encyclical *Laudato Si* (Praise Be to You) released in 2015 by Pope Francis gained global attention. The fourth chapter of this encyclical is a comprehensive ecological discourse. The central theme of this ecological vision is the relationship between nature and the communities living within it. The Holy Father sees and teaches that nature is the common home of all humanity. Therefore, protecting this common



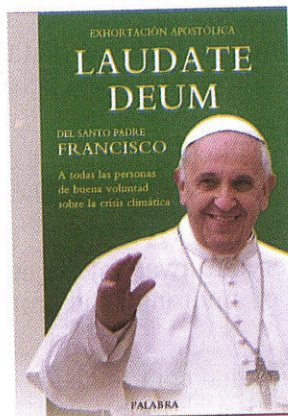
The protection of the environment is the responsibility of the human race. Explain in the light of Church teachings.



"You visit the earth and water it; You greatly enrich it; The river of God is full of water; You provide the people with grain, for so you have prepared it. You water its furrows abundantly; settling its ridges; softening it with showers, and blessing its growth. You crown the year with your bounty; your wagon tracks overflow with richness. The pastures of the wilderness overflow, the hills gird themselves with joy, the meadows clothe themselves with flocks, the valleys deck themselves with grain, they shout and sing together for joy" (Ps 65:9-13).

home is the duty and responsibility of everyone.

Even after eight years since the publication of the encyclical *Laudato Si'*, due to the lack of adequate response, Pope Francis issued an apostolic exhortation in 2023 titled Praise God (*Laudate Deum*) to remind us of the urgency of climate change. The Church teaches that respect for creation is part of the Seventh Commandment. Animals, like plants and inanimate beings, are by nature destined for the common good of past, present, and future humanity. The Church teaches that moral responsibility must be upheld in the use of the earth's mineral, plant, and animal resources (CCC 2415).



Environmental Protection and Morality

The generations that come after us should also be able to live well on the earth. We must seriously safeguard the scientific laws that sustain diverse species, the biodiversity of living beings, and their natural beauty. The earth, with its continually depleting resources, must be carefully preserved. It must be protected as a shared home where various species coexist.

St. John Paul II, through his encyclical *Veritatis Splendor* (The Splendor of Truth), clarifies that Christian morality is the following of the personal life of Jesus. Jesus invites us to admire the beauty of creation and to contemplate the handiwork of God within it. Each creation has its own goodness and wholeness. On each of the six days of creation, God saw that what He had made was good. This same perspective shown by the Father and the Son is what every person should adopt. To corrupt the creation that God observed and declared “very good” is a grave evil. Therefore the principles we adopt to protect the environment are good and acceptable before God. Each and every Christian is responsible to participate in the efforts to ensure the sustainability of creation and the preservation of life.

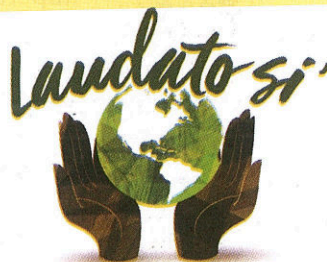
Practical Guidelines for Environmental Protection



Accepting the position that human beings are the stewards and caretakers of the universe and all living beings, adopt a lifestyle that is environmentally friendly.



What does Pope Benedict XVI teach in *Caritas in Veritate* 48?



"You are rightly committed to protecting nature and the environment. But with even greater determination, say 'yes' to human life. Human life holds a position far superior to all visible realities in the hierarchy of creation" (St. John Paul II).

Avoid falling victim to the culture of consumerism and refrain from the temptation to accumulate material possessions.



Practice moderation, realizing that the universe and all within it belong to future generations also.

Avoid the obsession of luxury and share our wealth and life amenities with those in need.



Make everyone aware of the urgent importance of environmental protection.

Refrain from activities that contribute to environmental pollution (e.g., burning plastic, excessive use of pesticides, polluting rivers and lakes).



Limit the use of plastic and promote alternative solutions.

Either dispose of waste scientifically or promote recycling.



Ensure that businesses and industries under our control do not pollute the environment.

Follow green protocol in public spaces and institutions, and plant shade-giving and fruit-bearing trees.



Here are some key aspects we need to consider regarding environmental conservation

The Earth we live in is habitat to countless small and large living beings, including humans. The protection of nature and living beings is essential to maintain the balanced existence of this habitat. Any destruction to our environment or living beings is a prelude to the destruction that is going to happen to the entire planet.

There are millions of plant and animal species on this Earth. Yet the only creature responsible for polluting the planet is human beings. It is humanity's uncontrolled desires that lead to environmental degradation and the exploitation of nature.

Let us distance ourselves from activities that pollute the Earth and our environment. At the same time, let us actively participate



"The land shall not be sold in perpetuity, for the land is mine; with me you are but aliens and tenants"
(Lev 25:23).



Study the pollution in your surroundings and the ways to address it; present a report in the class.



What aspects should we pay attention to regarding environmental protection?

in efforts to protect and sustain the environment, along with the Church and society.

The Canticles of St. Francis

Praised be You, my Lord, with all Your creatures,
especially Sir Brother Sun,
who is the day and through whom You give us light.
And he is beautiful and radiant with great splendor,
and bears a likeness of You, Most High.

Praised be You, my Lord, through Sister Moon and the stars;
in heaven You formed them clear and precious and beautiful.

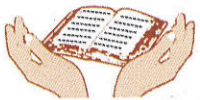
Praised be You, my Lord, through Brother Wind,
and through the air, cloudy and serene, and every kind of
weather, through whom You give sustenance to Your crea-
tures. Praised be You, my Lord, through Sister Water,
who is very useful and humble and precious and chaste.

Praised be You, my Lord, through Brother Fire,
through whom You light the night,
and he is beautiful and playful and robust and strong.

My Convictions



- When the laws of nature are denied, and things are used in a way that contradicts their intrinsic order, the harmony of the environment is disrupted.
- The earth belongs to future generations as well. Protecting it is a responsibility entrusted to me by God.
- I must love nature, which is the handiwork of God.



Let Us Read the Word of God

Acts of the Apostles Chapters 9-12

Let us illuminate our hearts



"Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow;
they neither toil nor spin, yet I tell you, even
Solomon in all his glory was not clothed
like one of these" (Mt 6:28-29).

My Resolution



I love nature because it is the handiwork of
God. I will not engage in any activities that
pollute the environment.



"All creatures of God,
praise the Lord."
(St. Francis of
Assisi)