

The Earth Charter Principles (numbered) and related Catholic Social Thought

I. RESPECT AND CARE FOR THE COMMUNITY OF LIFE

1. Respect Earth and life in all its diversity

*Theology, philosophy, and science all speak of a harmonious universe, of a “cosmos” endowed with its own integrity, its own internal dynamic balance. **This order must be respected.** The human race is called to explore this order... an order which is characterized by mutual interdependence... to examine it with due care and to make use of it while safeguarding its integrity.*

[Pope John Paul II, *Peace with God the Creator, Peace with all of Creation*, 1/01/1990, #8]



2. Care for the community of life with understanding, compassion and love

Today the ecological crisis has assumed such proportions as to be the responsibility of everyone. There is an order in the universe which must be respected, and the human person, endowed with the capabilities of choosing freely, has a grave responsibility to preserve this order, for the well-being of future generations.

[Pope John Paul II, *Peace with God the Creator, Peace with all of Creation*, 1/01/1990, #16]

3. Build democratic societies that are just, participatory, sustainable and peaceful

Those who are rich are bound to accept a less material way of life, with less waste, in order to avoid the destruction of the heritage which they are obliged by absolute justice to share with all other members of the human race.

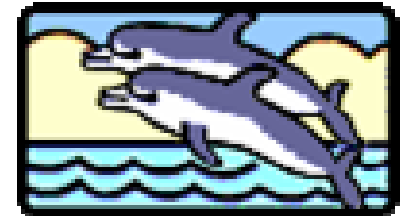
[Synod of Bishops, *Justice in the World*, 1971, #70]

It is the duty of Christians and of all who look to God as the Creator to protect the environment by restoring a sense of reverence for the whole of God's creation.

Ecclesia in Asia, November 1999

4. Secure Earth's bounty and beauty for present and future generations

... the natural beauty of Oceania has not escaped the ravages of human exploitation. The Synod Fathers called upon the governments and peoples of Oceania to protect this precious environment for present and future generations. It is their special responsibility to assume on behalf of all humanity stewardship of the Pacific Ocean, containing over one half of the Earth's total supply of water. The continued health of this and other oceans is crucial for the welfare of peoples not only in Oceania but in every part of the world.



[Pope John Paul II, *Apostolic Exhortation Ecclesia in Oceania*, 23/11/01, #31]

II. ECOLOGICAL INTEGRITY

5. Protect and restore the integrity of Earth's ecological systems, with special concern for biological diversity and the natural processes that sustain life

Delicate ecological balances are upset by the uncontrolled destruction of animal and plant life or by a reckless exploitation of natural resources. It should be pointed out that all of this, even if carried out in the name of progress and well-being, is ultimately to mankind's disadvantage.

[Pope John Paul II, *World Day of Peace*, 1/01/1990, #7]



6. Prevent harm as the best method of environmental protection and, when knowledge is limited, apply a precautionary approach



... local or regional wars, however limited, not only destroy human life and social structures, but also damage the land, ruining crops and vegetation as well as poisoning the soil and water.

[Pope John Paul II, *World Day of Peace*, 1/01/1990, #12]

7. Adopt patterns of production, consumption, and reproduction that safeguard earth's regenerative capacities, human rights, and community well-being

At stake is not only a "physical" ecology that is concerned to safeguard the habitat of the various living beings, but also a "human" ecology which makes the existence of creatures more dignified, by protecting the fundamental good of life in all its manifestations and by preparing for future generations an environment more in conformity with the Creator's plan.

[Pope John Paul II, *General Audience*, 17/01/01, #4]

8. Advance the study of ecological sustainability and promote the open exchange and wide application of the knowledge acquired

What must be brought, therefore, is a system of cooperation freely undertaken, an effective and mutual sharing, carried out with dignity on either side, for the construction of a more human world.

[Pope Paul VI, *On the Development of Peoples*, 26/03/1967, #54]

SOME POINTS FOR REFLECTION

- How did you feel as you read these quotations?
- What did you learn?
- What can you (and others) do to put your new learnings into action? e.g. raising the issue with friends and relations.

III. SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC JUSTICE

9. Eradicate poverty as an ethical, social and environmental imperative

Extreme poverty is perhaps the most pervasive and paralyzing form of violation of human rights in our world ... being forced to live in extreme poverty is an offence against human dignity.



[Vatican Intervention to the UN Commission on Human Rights, Geneva, 10/04/2002]

11. Affirm gender equality and equity as prerequisites to sustainable development and ensure universal access to education, health care and economic opportunity

Recognition of the dignity of the human person, especially women and girls, must be the starting point for fostering authentic human development.... investment in basic social services is the bedrock for women's well-being and economic development.

[Intervention by the Holy See at the UN at the Follow-up to the 4th World Conference on Women, 19/10/2001]

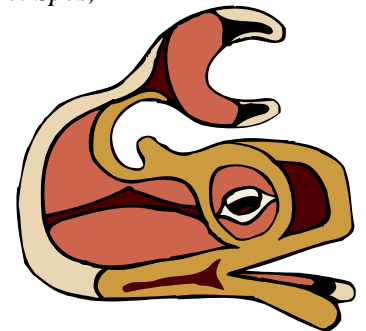
We are all over the world in hard places, for a long time, doing a lot with a little, changing the lives of the people where we are, and when the going gets tough we don't leave and we always come to the table with interests not our own.

- Sr Carol Zinn SSJ, an NGO representative to the UN, at a conference for *Sisters Online*

10. Ensure that economic activities and institutions at all levels promote human development in an equitable and sustainable manner

... the duty most consonant with our times, especially for Christians, is that of working diligently for fundamental decisions to be taken in economic and political affairs, both on the national and international level which will everywhere recognize and satisfy that right of all to a social culture in conformity with the dignity of the human person without any discrimination of race, sex, nation, religion or social condition.

[Pope Paul VI, *Gaudium et Spes*, 07/12/65, #60]



12. Uphold the right of all, without discrimination, to a natural and social environment supportive of human dignity, bodily health and spiritual well-being, with special attention to the rights of indigenous peoples and minorities

Unjust economic policies are especially damaging to indigenous peoples, young nations and their traditional cultures; and it is the Church's task to help indigenous cultures to preserve their identity and maintain their traditions. The Synod encouraged the Holy See to continue its advocacy of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

[Pope John Paul II, *Apostolic Exhortation Ecclesia in Oceania*, 22/11/2001, #28]

IV. DEMOCRACY, NONVIOLENCE AND PEACE



13. Strengthen democratic institutions at all levels, and provide transparency and accountability in governance, inclusive participation in decision-making, and access to justice

The Church considers it to be undoubtedly important to build up structures which are more human, more just, more respectful of the rights of the person and less oppressive and less enslaving ...

[Pope Paul VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 08/12/75, # 36]

(People's) personal dignity involves (their) right to take an active part in public life and to make (their) own contribution to the common welfare of (their) fellow citizens.

[Pope John XXIII, *Peace on Earth*, 11/04/63, #26]

14. Integrate into formal education and life-long learning the knowledge, values and skills needed for a sustainable way of life

An education in ecological responsibility is urgent: responsibility for oneself, for others, and for the earth.... A true education in responsibility entails a genuine conversion in ways of thought and behaviour. Churches and religious bodies, non-governmental organizations, indeed all members of society, have a precise role to play in such education. The first educator, however, is the family, where the child learns to respect his/her neighbour and to love nature.

[Pope John Paul II, *World Day of Peace*, 01/01/1990]

... a human person ... is entitled to legal protection of (their) rights and such protection must be effective, unbiased and strictly just.

[Pope John XXIII, *Peace on Earth*, 11/04/63, #27]

15. Treat all living beings with respect and consideration

The most profound and serious indication of the moral implications underlying the ecological problem is the lack of respect for life evident in many of the patterns of environmental pollution. ... pollution or environmental destruction is the result of an unnatural and reductionist vision which at times leads to a genuine contempt for man. On another level, delicate ecological balances are upset by the uncontrolled destruction of animal and plant life or by a reckless exploitation of natural resources. Respect for life, and above all for the dignity of the human person, is the ultimate guiding norm for any sound economic, industrial or scientific progress.

[Pope John Paul II, *World Day of Peace*, 01/01/1990]



16. Promote a culture of tolerance, nonviolence and peace

*There is a growing awareness that world **peace** is threatened not only by the arms race, regional conflicts and continued injustices among peoples and nations, but also by a lack of due respect for nature, by the plundering of natural resources and by a progressive decline in the quality of life. The sense of precariousness and insecurity that such a situation engenders is a seedbed for collective selfishness, disregard for others and dishonesty.*

[Pope John Paul II, *World Day of Peace*, 01/01/1990]

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