



Environmental Health and the Mission of Catholic Health Care

The mission of Catholic health care is to continue Jesus' mission of love and healing today, bringing alive the Gospel vision of justice and peace. Our mission guides us to act responsibly toward the environment in order to show our respect for all creation and to promote the health of our communities and the world.

WE RECOGNIZE THAT:

- God's creation is a gift to us and deserves our reverence and protection.
- Concern for the earth is a moral issue.
- Humans and all of the earth are linked and dependent on each other.
- The gospel message requires concern for the most vulnerable – those who are poor, young or frail, who are often most hurt by environmental hazards.
- The Church's social tradition calls us to promote and defend the dignity, and therefore the health, of all persons at every stage of life.

The following resources help to develop a mosaic of the mission basis for Catholic health care's concern for the environment. These resources can be used by mission leaders and others to describe the relationship between mission and environmental sustainability. They could be used in new employee orientation, staff in-service education, for board meetings and for sharing with community members our moral commitment to be good stewards of the earth.

1. A THEOLOGY OF ECOLOGICAL STEWARDSHIP POWERPOINT BY SR. CATHERINE O'CONNOR CBS, PH.D. www.chausa.org/Stewardship_Oconnor

"God looked at everything he had made, and he found it very good.... Such is the story of the heavens and the earth at their creation. (Genesis 1:27-31; 2:4)"

In this presentation, Sr. Catherine presents Biblical sources and Catholic social teaching to describe how environmental stewardship is a moral imperative.

2. RENEWING THE EARTH: AN INVITATION TO REFLECTION AND ACTION ON ENVIRONMENT IN LIGHT OF CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHING. PASTORAL LETTER, USCCB, 1991 www.usccb.org/sdwp/ejp/bpstatements.shtml

"At its core, the environmental crisis is a moral challenge. It calls on us to examine how we use and share the goods of the earth...The whole human race suffers as the result of environmental blight, and generations unborn will bear the cost for our failure to act today."

"It is the poor and the powerless who most directly bear the burden of current environmental carelessness. Their lands and neighborhoods are more likely to be polluted or host toxic waste dumps, their water to be undrinkable, their children to be harmed."

**3. CATHOLIC HEALTH CARE MINISTRY:
ENVIRONMENTAL RESPONSIBILITY**

www.chausa.org/MinistryEnvironmentalResponsibility

“Our rich tradition of social teaching calls on us to care for the sick and vulnerable, the unborn, and all of creation.”

**4. CLIMATE CHANGE AND CATHOLIC
HEALTH CARE, CHA 2009**

www.chausa.org/ClimateBrochure

“Climate Change can be viewed through the prism of Catholic health care’s values:

DIGNITY OF THE PERSON: *We hold that all life is sacred. The warming of the Earth poses a threat to people worldwide who are at risk of losing their homes, their livelihoods, their health and even their lives.*

SPECIAL CONCERN FOR THE POOR: *While climate change is dangerous to all of us, poor persons – who have contributed the least to the problem – will bear the greatest burden. People in the United States and across the globe will be less able to adapt to and avoid the harshest consequences of climate change. Recent history in our own hemisphere shows that when disaster strikes, the poor too often are left behind.*

COMMON GOOD: *The universal nature of climate change reminds us that we are all in this together. We hold the Earth in common and must act together to help our brothers, our sisters and ourselves.*

STEWARDSHIP: *As a health ministry we have an obligation to care for all creation and to be good stewards of the Earth. How we treat the atmosphere not only impacts us today, but our grandchildren and their grandchildren.”*

**5. CARITAS IN VERITATE IN LIGHT OF THE CATHOLIC
HEALTH MINISTRY AND ENVIRONMENTAL
RESPONSIBILITY JULY 7, 2009, POPE BENEDICT XVI**

www.chausa.org/CaritasInVeritate

“[t]he environment is God’s gift to everyone, and in our use of it we have a responsibility towards the poor, towards future generations, and towards humanity as a whole.”

This document summarizes environmental implications of Pope Benedict’s message.

**6. IF YOU WANT TO CULTIVATE PEACE, PROTECT
CREATION. POPE BENEDICT’S 2010 WORLD DAY
OF PEACE MESSAGE**

www.usccb.org/sdwp/international/worlddayofpeacewebsite.shtml

“The quest for peace by people of good will surely would become easier if all acknowledge the indivisible relationship between God, human beings and the whole of creation.”

7. FROM HEALTH PROGRESS, NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 2003

**“A GROWING UNDERSTANDING” BY SR. MARY ELLEN
LECIEJEWSKI, OP**

www.chausa.org/HP03NovDec_Leciejewski

“All parts of creation communicate some aspect of the Divine Mystery, and must be vital and functioning for every other part to be vital and functioning. Making this connection is key to our survival.”

**“CLEANING UP OUR ‘ENVIRONMENTAL FOOTPRINTS’”
BY JAYNE MARDOCK**

www.chausa.org/HP03NovDec_Mardock

“Concern for the environment issues grows out of Catholic social teaching to promote and defend human dignity at every stage of life, as well as a special commitment to care for vulnerable persons. Environmental hazards are particularly harmful to developing children – both before and after birth – and to poor, frail, and sick persons.....”

**“THE EARTH IS OUR ‘HOUSEHOLD’”
BY SR. SHARON ZAYAC, OP**

www.chausa.org/HP03NovDec_Zayac

“Eco comes from the Greek word aikos, which means “household.” It means “home.” And home refers to the entire house – the whole planet Earth.”