

Today, on this Earth Day, let us reflect on our responsibility as Catholic health ministry to be responsible stewards of God's creation—a call we all share, and one that Pope Francis addressed in his homily during his inauguration mass:

"The vocation of being a 'protector,' however, is not just something involving us Christians alone; it also has a prior dimension which is simply human, involving everyone. It means protecting all creation, the beauty of the created world, as the Book of Genesis tells us and as Saint Francis of Assisi showed us. It means respecting each of God's creatures and respecting the environment in which we live."

The spirit of the Holy Father's message is found in the following reflection adapted from the New Jersey Mercy Justice Circle:

As we are called to see ourselves and each other as earthen vessels that hold God's presence and bring God's gifts to the world, so too, this very world and all that is above, around and within it are earthen vessels - just as easily shattered, just as much in need of our loving attentiveness and support. May our hands align with God's in caressing and shaping these vessels.

For trees, plants, crops, and forests. *Let us pray.*

For water, oceans, rivers, streams and ponds. *Let us pray.*

For air, wind, climate and weather. *Let us pray.*

For sun, clean energy and prevention of global warning. *Let us pray.*

For animals, especially endangered species. *Let us pray.*

For all humankind. *Let us pray.*

For recycling and moderate personal consumption. *Let us pray.*

For proper use of chemicals and disposal of toxic waste. *Let us pray.*

For Earth and unity. *Let us pray.*

Creator God, we thank you for all of creation. We ask your forgiveness where we have failed to be just stewards. And we now ask for your guidance in restoring the face of the earth. May we learn to live in harmony, safety and just sharing of resources among all so that we achieve the kingdom of God.

Peace be to this community.

Peace be to this land.

Peace be to all people.

Amen.

- Adapted from Prayer: Earth Day Novena, New Jersey Mercy Justice Circle,
Sisters of Mercy of the Americas. www.sistersofmercy.org.

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