



Where Justice and Truth Meet

May 2012

Faithful Citizenship

"Responsible citizenship is a virtue, and participation in political life is a moral obligation." -- Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship: A Call to Political Responsibility from the Catholic Bishops of the U.S.



The U.S. Bishops begin their pastoral letter on faithful citizenship reminding us of the broad range of issues we need to consider to promote life in our nation and our world. "We are a nation founded on 'life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness,' but the right to life itself is not fully protected, especially for unborn children, the most vulnerable members of the American family. We are called to be peacemakers in a nation at war. We are a country pledged to pursue 'liberty and justice for all,' but we are too often divided across lines of race, ethnicity, and economic inequality. We are a nation of immigrants, struggling to address the challenges of many new immigrants in our midst.... We are an affluent society where too many live in poverty and lack health care and other necessities of life. We are part of a global community facing urgent threats to the environment that must sustain us. These challenges are at the heart of public life and at the center of the pursuit of the common good." Read more at: www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/faithful-citizenship/

Voter Discernment: A Network of Mutuality

The many and complex issues facing voters call for discernment and theological reflection. One method of doing that theological reflection is *See-Judge-Act*. The link below offers a chart with stories of personal experience, insights from Christian and other faith traditions, and questions for reflection and discernment on the issues of economics, environment, health care, immigration, life and human dignity, and peace.

Many thanks to the *Intercommunity Peace and Justice Center* who prepared this material!

[Network of Mutuality: Voter Discernment Chart](#)

Reports from Earth Day 2012

More than one billion people in 192 countries took part in the 42nd Anniversary of Earth Day. Around the world people stood united in efforts to promote the dignity of Earth through sustainable living.

Earth Day Network notes that "together we reached A Billion Acts of Green® and demonstrated the breadth of support for strong, coordinated action to deal with our most pressing environmental challenges.

You can still join the movement and pledge an *Act of Green* at www.earthday.org/2012

On a communal level, we will have the opportunity to join in our own "Act of Green" at General Assembly in June, voting on the corporate stance on Global Climate Change proposed by the JPIC committee.

Proposed Corporate Stance on Global Climate Change



We stand at a critical moment in Earth's history, a time when humanity must choose its future. As the world becomes increasingly interdependent and fragile, the future at once holds great peril and great promise. To move forward we must recognize that in the midst of a magnificent diversity of cultures and life forms we are one human family and one Earth community with a common destiny. (Adapted from *Earth Charter Preamble*)

We, the Dominican Sisters of Springfield, Illinois, recognize the reality of Global Climate Change and its impact on the whole Earth community, particularly on poor and vulnerable persons. We commit to lending our individual and collective voice to those efforts, consistent with our Catholic faith and the Dominican search for truth, that seek to mitigate the effects of Climate Change.

Toward a Consistent Ethic of Life:

Respect for life extends to Earth



Continuing our series of reflections moving us toward a deeper understanding of the implications of a consistent ethic of life, today we review two documents. The first is Pope John Paul II's message for New Year's Day, 1990. In the second, Sr. Elizabeth Johnson reflects on the implications of John Paul's statement.

In Peace with God the Creator, Peace with All of Creation, Pope John Paul II writes:

The ecological crisis is a moral issue... No peaceful society can afford to neglect either respect for life or the fact that there is an integrity to creation... There is an order in the universe which must be respected, and the human person, endowed with the capability of choosing freely, has a grave responsibility to preserve this order for the well-being of future generations...

Many ethical values, fundamental to the development of a *peaceful society*, are particularly relevant to the ecological question. The fact that many challenges facing the world today are interdependent confirms the need for carefully coordinated solutions based on a morally coherent world view... 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, to examine it with due care and to make use of it while safeguarding its integrity.

Recognizing that the ecological problem is a moral issue, John Paul proposes a series of righteous actions: be converted from a consumerist lifestyle, address poverty, avoid war and its devastating ecological effects, promote education in ecological responsibility starting with the family and appreciate the beauty of nature, which tells of the glory of God... Grounding these steps is the principle: *"Respect for life and for the dignity of the human person extends also to the rest of creation."*

In *God's Beloved Creation* (*America* magazine, April 16, 2001) Elizabeth Johnson reminds us that "religiously, respect for life cannot be divided; not only human life but the whole living Earth is God's beloved creation, deserving of care. Our response, she says, can take at least three forms: contemplative, ascetic and prophetic.

The contemplative response gazes on the world with eyes of love rather than with an arrogant, utilitarian stare. It learns to appreciate the astonishing beauty of nature, to take delight in its intricate and powerful workings and to stand in awe of the never-ending mystery of life and death played out in the predator-prey relationship.

The ascetic response practices discipline in using the things of Earth. The true purpose of asceticism has always been to make persons fully alive to the movement of grace in their lives. It does so by sacrificial acts of doing or abstaining that remove what blocks sensitivity to the presence of the Spirit.

The prophetic response moves us to action on behalf of justice for Earth. If the earth is indeed creation, a sacrament of the glory of God with its own intrinsic value, then for Christians ongoing destruction of earth bears the marks of deep sinfulness. Realizing this, we experience a moral imperative to act in favor of care, protection and restoration.

She continues, quoting John Paul: "Respect for life and for the dignity of the human person extends to the rest of creation." If nature is the new poor, then the Christian mandate of option for the poor and oppressed now includes the natural world. If we are to love our neighbor as ourselves, then the range of neighbors now includes the whale, the monarch butterfly, the local lake—the entire community of life. If the common good requires solidarity with all who suffer, then our compassion extends to suffering human beings and other species caught in patterns of extinction. "Save the rain forest" becomes a concrete moral application of the commandment "Thou shalt not kill."

This in turn requires us to realize the deep connections between social injustice and ecological devastation... We all share the status of creaturehood; we are all kin in the evolving community of life now under siege. A vision of justice as cosmic justice is the only adequate option. The practical aim is to establish and protect healthy ecosystems where all living creatures can flourish. The moral goal is to ensure vibrant life in community for all.

Read the complete documents:

[World Day of Peace 1990](#)

[God's Beloved Creation](#)