

Justice, Peace and Life

October 2013

God's Gift to Everyone

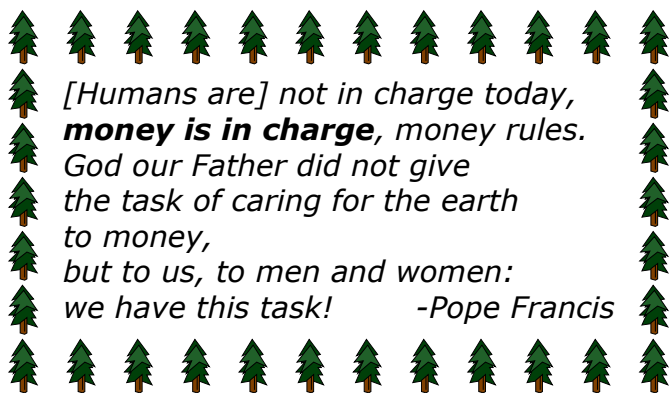
"The environment is God's gift to everyone, and in our use of it we have a responsibility towards the poor, towards future generations and towards humanity as a whole."

-Pope Benedict XVI, Encyclical Letter *Caritas in Veritate*

We might be tempted to think that harming the environment is bad primarily because it turns the clear lakes foul and the lovely forests ugly. When we destroy nature, we also destroy the revelation of the power and glory of God that we glimpse through God's creation. And that is bad. However, that isn't the only reason we should take care of the Earth.

We should remember that destruction of the planet also means destruction of other people, especially poor and vulnerable people. Asthma rates among inner city kids have skyrocketed due to smog. Hazardous waste is dumped where powerless people live, not near mansions. Extreme weather caused by climate change destroys homes and businesses of rich and poor alike, but poor people don't have the insurance or means to rebuild. Drought in Africa and flooding in Pacific Island nations due to climate change have already begun destroying agriculture, and fishing.

The vast majority of scientists agree that human activity is the main factor in global warming, which is causing our climate to change. If we continue to adversely affect the planet in this way, we could see disastrous consequences on people's ability to grow food and access water.



At the inaugural Mass of his papacy, held on the feast of St. Joseph, Pope Francis called on all people to be "protectors", just as St. Joseph was protector of the Holy Family. He preached:

"Please, I would like to ask all those who have positions of responsibility in economic, political and social life, and all men and women of goodwill: let us be "protectors" of creation, protectors of God's plan inscribed in nature, protectors of one another and of the environment."

The Pope was echoing many years of Church teaching on the moral imperative to care for God's Creation. This is not a task for a few tree-hugging nature lovers. This is a requirement for all of us.



Catholic Climate Covenantsm
Care for Creation. Care for the Poor.

In the U.S., the Catholic Bishops have joined with Catholic Charities USA, Catholic Relief Services and many Catholic religious orders to promote the Catholic Climate Covenant. They invite individuals, parishes and schools to take **the St. Francis Pledge** to care for creation and the poor by praying, learning about climate change, assessing how we contribute to climate change, acting to change our behaviors, and advocating. To learn more see www.catholicclimatecovenant.org/the-st-francis-pledge/

Our Diocesan Public Policy Committee is also promoting awareness and action on this issue. See <http://www.dor.org/index.cfm/catholic-charities/public-policy/energy-global-climate-change/>

Learn more on the next page too! Then *do something*, because the earth is God's gift to *everyone*.

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Be a Protector of God's Creation

Put some conscious effort in to small changes:

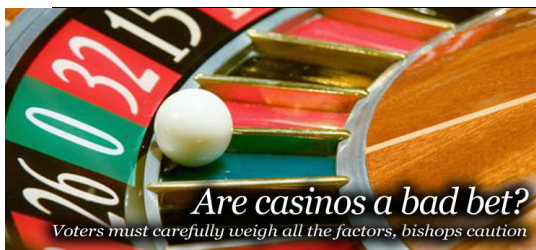
- Turn off lights when you leave the room.
- Unplug your cell phone as soon as it is charged.
- Replace incandescent light bulbs with energy-efficient bulbs.
- Turn off water when shaving and brushing your teeth, and take shorter showers.
- Ride a bike, walk, carpool, or use public transportation whenever possible.
- Bring reusable cloth bags when shopping instead of using disposable plastic bags.
- Dry your clothes outdoors instead of in the dryer.

Consume differently:

- Buy local, organic produce, Fair Trade coffee, and recycled products
- Plant a garden and start a compost pile.
- Eat less meat: the livestock sector is one of the most significant contributors to climate change
- Consider the social and environmental cost of goods and service: Who is making this product? How and where is this made? Using what resources? How long will it last?
- Simplify your life: What are your needs vs. wants? How might you reduce the amount of resources you consume?

Learn and Act:

- Get a free energy assessment of your home or church to learn how to use less electricity and heating fuel. Subsidies and low interest financing are available for water heaters, furnaces, insulation, appliances etc. See www.nyserda.ny.gov/Energy-Efficiency-and-Renewable-Programs/Residential/Programs/Existing-Home-Renovations.aspx for homes and <http://www.nyserda.ny.gov/small-commercial-energy-assessment> for churches.
- Read Up and Speak Out on public policies affecting the environment: fracking, public transportation, solar & wind power, toxic clean-ups etc.



From the Sept. 30 statement of the Catholic Bishops of New York State:

On November 5, New Yorkers will have the opportunity to decide an important matter affecting our communities. A statewide referendum of the people will be the final say on whether or not to amend the state's Constitution to authorize casino gambling. As pastors and as citizens, we call on all voters to very carefully consider this measure and all of its potential implications....

When gambling as a revenue stream becomes overly prevalent in a society, the risks associated with problem gambling multiply. With their flashing lights, free-flowing alcoholic drinks, all-night hours and gen-

Speaking of "money being in charge".... Will More Gambling in NYS Serve the Common Good?

erally intoxicating atmosphere, casinos are more likely than other gambling options to lead to bad decisions and catastrophic losses for patrons, particularly those prone to problem or compulsive gambling. Interestingly, a study by the National Opinion Research Center at the University of Chicago showed the availability of a casino within 50 miles is associated with double the prevalence of problem or pathological gamblers.

Personal bankruptcies in areas where the state's two Indian casinos are located were more than 10 percent higher than the national norm in seven of the 10 years after the casinos were built. ...

[W]hile some will argue the casinos will bring employment, the jobs that casinos create tend to be of the low-paying service variety, rather than

good-paying, upwardly mobile careers that are so desperately needed upstate.

When looking at potential sources for new revenue, it is the responsibility of government and the voting public to consider all of the consequences, both positive and negative. While the language on the ballot cites the hoped-for economic benefits, we feel obligated to ask for a more definitive statement as to how and where the money generated by these casinos will be spent.

We pray for the good judgment of New Yorkers in weighing *all* factors before deciding how they will vote on the widespread expansion of casino gambling across our beloved Empire State.

Read the full statement at <http://www.nyscatholic.org/2013/09/a-statement-on-casino-gambling-by-the-catholic-bishops-of-new-york-state/>