

All Creation Gives God Praise

Protecting Biodiversity in a Time of Climate Crisis



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

Earth Day 2019

PROGRAM GUIDE

Introduction

(Read silently before starting the program)

Catholic Climate Covenant's 2019 Earth Day program calls upon us to live more faithfully and act more justly with all creation. This year, we focus on the issue of protecting biodiversity and saving endangered species.

At a time when we are witnessing the demise of more and more species, how can we ensure the ability of all creation to remain a vibrant chorus of praise to the Creator?

Earth Day

April 22, 2019 marks the 49th anniversary of Earth Day, a secular celebration that many faith communities have incorporated into their annual calendars for awareness and action. Catholic Climate Covenant is joining with the Earth Day Network in its campaign to Protect Our Species, (<https://www.earthday.org/campaigns/endangered-species/earthday2019/>)

Human activity (climate change, deforestation, habitat loss, trafficking and poaching, unsustainable agriculture, pollution and pesticides) is directly linked to the rapid reduction of plant and wildlife populations throughout our common home. We are the main drivers of species loss, but can also be the main protectors of all of God's creation.

In this hour-long program, we invite you to delve into the scriptural and ethical dimensions of our call to be stewards of all of God's creation, examine the importance of biodiversity and species loss, and discuss how we, as Catholics, must respond.

Opening Prayer

Leader: Creator God, we pray for our brothers and sisters of the air: chickadees, cardinals, blue jays, owls, crows, seagulls...

ALL: Give us a sign through them to decrease the pollution in the air we breathe.
Creator God, let us pray.

L: Creator God, we pray for our brothers and sisters of water: shellfish, algae, salmon, trout, frogs...

ALL: Wake our compassion at the sight of their wounds so that we cease polluting the water.
Creator God, let us pray.

L: Creator God, we pray for our brothers and sisters of the earth: squirrels, deer, maples, the pine trees, the tomato plants and the worms...

ALL: May their humility and simplicity inspire us to live according to your will.
Creator God, let us pray.

L: Creator God, we pray for the world's leaders and policymakers, for mayors, governors, and presidents of companies.

ALL: May they hear the call from God through other creatures and make sustainable, wise decisions.

Creator God, let us pray.

L: Creator God, we pray for our community.

ALL: We ask you give us the courage to act regarding our environment and not to succumb to the temptation of wasting.

Creator God, let us pray.

— Adapted from *Prayer by the Green Church Project, Montréal, Canada*

READINGS (5 minutes)

Reading #1

"The world is facing a mass extinction of species. All species of mammals, birds, reptiles, amphibians, arthropods (insects and arachnids), fish, crustaceans, corals and other cnidarians, and plants have declined, in many cases, severely. Human civilization has had a negative impact on most living things. We are amidst the largest period of species extinction in the last 60 million years. Normally, between one and five species will go extinct annually. However, scientists estimate that we are now losing species at 1,000 to 10,000 times the normal rate, with multiple extinctions daily. Habitat destruction, exploitation, and climate change are driving the loss of half of the world's wild animal population."

— [Earth Day Network Global Species Decline Factsheet](#)

Reading #2

"It is not enough, however, to think of different species merely as potential "resources" to be exploited, while overlooking the fact that they have value in themselves. Each year sees the disappearance of thousands of plant and animal species which we will never know, which our children will never see, because they have been lost forever. The great majority become extinct for reasons related to human activity. **Because of us, thousands of species will no longer give glory to God by their very existence, nor convey their message to us. We have no such right.**"

— *Laudato Si' 33*

Reading #3

"Each creature possesses its own particular goodness and perfection. For each one of the works of the "six days" it is said: "And God saw that it was good." "By the very nature of creation, material being is endowed with its own stability, truth and excellence, its own order and laws." Each of the various creatures, willed in its own being, reflects in its own way a ray of God's infinite wisdom and goodness. Man must therefore respect the particular goodness of every creature, to avoid any disordered use of things which would be in contempt of the Creator and would bring disastrous consequences for human beings and their environment.

— *Catechism of the Catholic Church 339*

Reading #4

"The ecological age fosters the deep awareness of the sacred presence within each reality of the universe. There is an awe and reverence due to the seas and the continents; to all living forms of trees and flowers; to the myriad expressions of life in the sea; to the animals of the forests and the birds of the air. **To wantonly destroy a living species is to silence forever a divine voice.**"

— Thomas Berry, *The Dream of the Earth*

Reading #5

"Creation ... is almost like another sacred book whose letters are represented by the multitude of creatures present in the universe."

— Pope John Paul II, *General Audience Jan 30 2002*

Reading #6

"To follow Jesus is to be a wholemaker, essentially to love the world into new being and life."

— Sr. Iliia Delio, **Making All Things New: Catholicity, Cosmology, Consciousness**

Video (13 minutes)

https://youtu.be/_1CED8o7mKI

Group Discussion (15 minutes)

In small groups of 5-7 people discuss the following:

1. Which reading or video segment most impacted you? Why?
2. What are some religious-ethical responsibilities for protecting biodiversity and endangered species?
3. How should we respond to the silencing of divine voices of thousands of species that no longer give glory to God by their very existence, nor convey their message to us?
4. Sr. Iliia Delio tells us that "To follow Jesus is to be a wholemaker, essentially to love the world into new being and life." Do you see your ministry of creation care as part of making the world whole, and bringing the world to new being and new life? How is protecting biodiversity a way to follow Christ?

Group Activity (10–15 minutes)

Follow your group leader's guidance.

Thank you and Closing Prayer (5 minutes)

Closing Prayer

Lord of all Creation, Maker of Heaven and Earth, Good Provider,

Today we come before you in grief, in shame, to lament the loss of beautiful creatures.

We grieve the more than one-in-four flowering plants, the one-in-five mammals, the nearly one-in-three amphibians, and the one-in-eight birds that are vulnerable to being wiped out completely.

We acknowledge that we play a part in this dying by our carelessness, ignorance, and indifference. Forgive us our part in the death of healthy ecosystems and the resulting extinction of your creatures.

Refresh our love for all you have made. Renew our resolve to advocate, fight, nurture and defend our fellow creatures. Thank you for those who care for the earth - the gardeners, the activists, the scientists, the zoologists - sustain them and protect their hearts as they strive and grieve.

We thank you for the magnificent world which you have bestowed upon us. We thank you that you can do more than all we ask or imagine and so we ask for your help - restrain human evil, energize us for service, fill us with courage and hope.

May your world ever be very very good.

Amen

—Prayer from [Common Grace](#)

Thank you for participating in this Earth Day program! This program is a beginning. We hope you and your community will continue to work with us to protect all of God's creation.

— Catholic Climate Covenant

For more information go to: www.CatholicClimateCovenant.org