News
EarthBeat



(NASA)

by Fr. Emmet Farrell

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Editor's note: *In his Lenten "Reflections on the Care of Creation," Fr. Emmet Farrell examines our impact on the planet and our responsibility, as people of faith, for our common home. You can sign up here to receive Fr. Farrell's reflections in your inbox every Monday, Wednesday and Friday from Feb. 17 to April 2, and you can view the entire series here.*

See:

Increasingly, people of faith are seeing humans' abuse of the planet as "ecological sin."

Patriarch Bartholomew of the Eastern Orthodox Church has stated:

To commit a crime against the natural world is a sin. For human beings to cause species to become extinct and to destroy the biological diversity of God's creation; for human beings to degrade the integrity of the earth by causing changes in its climate, by stripping the earth of its natural forests, or by destroying its wetlands; for human beings to injure other human beings with disease by contaminating the earth's waters, its land, its air, and its life, with poisonous substances — all of these are sins.

Pope Francis calls this contamination a form of "self-idolatry" (a worship of humanity), paraphrasing the Book of Revelations 11:18. He says: 'If we destroy creation, creation will destroy us. Don't ever forget this!"

Because climate change is caused by humans, it is not just a scientific reality; it is also a moral and spiritual problem. Abuse begins when we no longer recognize a higher instance than ourselves. This happens when profit becomes the primary or sole motive of human activity. The environment and all that is in it become "resources" to be used, and contamination begins.

The common good is also forgotten or sacrificed for individual and national interests. Pope Francis calls this the "globalization of indifference."

Many of us become like the priest and the Levite in the parable of the Good Samaritan — we "pass on by." When Pope John Paul II spoke in Yankee Stadium in 1979, he said, "We cannot stand idly by, enjoying our own riches and freedom, if, in any place, the Lazarus of the twentieth century stands at our doors."

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Judge:

> As the United States bishops have said, greater attention must be given to 'the needs of the poor, the weak and the vulnerable, in a debate often dominated by more powerful interests.' We need to strengthen the conviction that we are one single human family. There are no frontiers or barriers, political or social, behind which we can hide, still less is there room for the globalization of indifference. (*Laudato Si*', 52)
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> Coming to grips with the environmental crisis may rekindle a deeper vision of who we are and where we live. (The Rev. Charles Redfern)

Act:

- Ask a pastor or community leader why they see no urgency about climate change.
- View this video from the Pontifical Academy of Sciences, in which climate scientist Veerabhadran Ramanathan speaks about a new alliance among science, religion and policy, and discuss it with others.
- Eat a healthy diet; buy organic produce and purchase locally grown products to cut down on transportation emissions.

This story appears in the **Reflections on the Care of Creation** feature series. View the full series.