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'The land is God's. People are God's stewards on the land.'

by Rich Heffern

Eco Catholic

There's a superb article, "Sustainable Agriculture: Balancing agricultural production with resource conservation, environmental quality, & compassion," by Prof. Matt Liebman on the National Catholic Rural Life Conference's Web site. It appeared in *Catholic Rural Life* magazine.

Matt Liebman is the Henry A. Wallace Endowed Chair for Sustainable Agriculture and professor of agronomy at Iowa State University.

Amidst the other good information and exposition about sustainable land management in the article is this:

'You who live in the heartland of America have been entrusted with some of the earth's best land. Therefore conserve the land well.' This was a key part of Pope John Paul II message to all of us when he visited Iowa 30 years ago. We also need to remember what else grew out of the papal visit. That is the document *Strangers and Guests* (May 1980) which was the regional Catholic Bishops statement on land issues. It is important that its guiding principles be restated again:

1. The land is God's.
2. People are God's stewards on the land.
3. The land's benefits are for everyone.
4. The land should be distributed equitably.
5. The land should be conserved and restored.
6. Land use planning must consider social and environmental impact.
7. Land use should be appropriate to land quality.

8. The land should provide a moderate livelihood.
9. The land's workers should be able to become the land's owners.
10. The land's mineral wealth should be shared.

NCR's Eco Catholic Blog

Eco Catholic is an exploration of the green Catholic imagination and ecological spirituality. Contributors include Rich Heffern, *NCR* staff writer, columnist and author, and Carol Meyer, executive director of the Sustainable Sanctuary Coalition.

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