

TO TEACH



SUMMER 2004 • PRODUCED BY USCCB PUBLISHING FOR CATHOLIC EDUCATORS

BE STEWARDS OF GOD'S GIFTS

"We are called to protect people and the planet, living our faith in relationship with all of God's creation."

—*Sharing Catholic Social Teaching: Challenges and Directions*

Summer is coming! It's a time of picnics and barbecues, mowing lawns and lazing in hammocks, sunny days and warm evenings.

It's also a perfect time to consider the greatness of God's creation and the part we play, as Christian stewards, in caring for it.

"[Stewardship] is a call to listen to the voice of the Spirit speaking of gratitude and responsibility" (*Stewardship and Young Adults: An Invitation to Help Change the World*, USCCB). Part

of this responsibility is to care for the gifts of God's creation. People around the world feel the need for fresh air, clean water, and adequate food. In this issue of *To Teach*, we'll look at how to respond to the call of stewardship in simple, everyday ways. We'll also look ahead to next fall and talk about promoting stewardship and fostering an appreciation for God's gifts of creation.

CULTIVATE GRATITUDE—ALL SUMMER LONG

There are many possibilities to be caretakers of God's creation during summer. A starting point for such stewardship is the cultivation of **gratitude**. Here is a month-by-month approach that takes this aspect of stewardship to heart.

MAY: Although the summer solstice is still weeks away, for many May is an entrée into summer's warmth and beauty. This month of Mary is often associated with flowers that are brought forth in May processions and given as signs of gratitude and affection on Mother's Day. Make contact with the earth's soil during this month. This can be as expansive as planting a garden or as simple as placing seeds in a flowerpot. Take joy in the feel of fresh soil and in the wonder of watching plants and flowers take root and grow. Use the *St. Francis Prayer Card* and pray "The Canticle of the Sun" as an expression of praise for the God of all creation.

JUNE: Summer brings an abundance of wildlife. Birds, bugs, squirrels, and rabbits fill the earth and sky with signs of life. Take time to notice the sights and sounds they bring and the variety of color and texture contained within their feathers and fur. Even annoying creatures can become sources of

wonder when we consider their placement within the chain of life. Set out birdfeeders and explore humane ways of dealing with pests. Make it a point to expand your knowledge and understanding of local wildlife by visiting a nature center.

JULY: Temperatures can soar to high points at this time of year, resulting in drought-like conditions in some parts of the country. Whether we dwell in an arid or humid environment, all of us can foster a greater appreciation for water's multiple uses. Savor a glass of cool water and consider how refreshing it is on a hot day. Conserve water by turning off the tap when you brush your teeth or wash up. Consider what a gift it is to

Resources on Stewardship and the Environment

- Let the Earth Bless the Lord: God's Creation and Our Responsibility
- Peace with God the Creator, Peace with All Creation (kit)
- Renewing the Earth
- Renewing the Face of the Earth
- St. Francis Prayer Card

See next page for details.

AT A GLANCE



“Stewardship implies that we must both care for creation according to standards that are not of our own making and at the same time be resourceful in finding ways to make the earth flourish.”

—Renewing the Earth

As a principal or school administrator, have you ever wondered, “How can we change the world—or at least, the world of our school environment?”

Here are ways to respond to that question and create a Catholic school environment that seeks to change the world.

START WITH YOUR TEACHING AND ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF.

- Give each of them a copy of *Stewardship and Young Adults* or *To Be a Christian Steward*. Ask them to read it over the summer, discuss it during departmental meetings, or use it as the basis for the first staff meeting in August.
- Schedule a portion of your last or first staff meeting as a brainstorming session on goals for the upcoming school year. Focus on the question, “What is Catholic Stewardship?” and use the responses provided in *Stewardship and Young Adults* as guides for the session.
- Encourage department chairs/heads and key administrators to practice their mentoring skills by reflecting on question four in *Stewardship and Young Adults*.

ENGAGE YOUR PARENT-TEACHER ORGANIZATION.

- Ask the leadership of your PTO or PTA to distribute a copy of *Stewardship and Young Adults* or *To Be a Christian Steward* to each parent. Use this as an opportunity to share with parents that stewardship is a goal for the school—

continued on p. 4

THE BOOKSTORE

HOPE FOR A RENEWED EARTH (VIDEO)

One-hour video, combining documentary and discussion, about major environmental concerns from the Church’s perspective. For use with adults and senior high youth.

No. 5-072, 60 min., \$29.95

LET THE EARTH BLESS THE LORD: GOD’S CREATION AND OUR RESPONSIBILITY

A Catholic Approach to the Environment
A resource kit that includes examples of what parishes and Catholic schools are doing to care for God’s creation as well as prayer services, planning ideas, and resource articles.

No. 5-085, 44 pp., \$4.95

PEACE WITH GOD THE CREATOR, PEACE WITH ALL CREATION (KIT)

An educational packet on environmental justice that includes planning tools, prayers, and reflection activities.

No. 032-X, 53 pp., \$7.95

PRAYER SERVICES AND RETREATS FOR THE CATECHETICAL YEAR

Prayer services and retreat outlines that can be used with faculties and parents, based on the theme of *Stewards of God’s Gifts*.

No. 5-589, 36 pp., \$4.95

RENEWING THE EARTH

An Invitation to Reflection and Action on Environment in Light of Catholic Social Teaching

The statement by the bishops on the link between environmental concerns and the struggle for justice.

No. 468-6, 20 pp., \$3.50

When ordering, use the code “F598” on your order form or give this code to the sales representative. Quantity discounts are available on all publications. Call toll-free 800-235-8722 for more information. To order these resources or to obtain a free catalog of other USCCB titles, call toll-free 800-235-8722. In the Washington metropolitan area or from outside the United States, call 202-722-8716. Visit the bishops’ Internet site located at www.usccb.org. Para pedidos en español, llame al 800-235-8722 y presione 4 para hablar con un representante del servicio al cliente, en español.

RENEWING THE FACE OF THE EARTH

Resource kit with ideas, resources, and prayers that make stewardship of the earth an everyday activity.

No. 766-9, 80 pp., \$6.95

ST. FRANCIS PRAYER CARD

Features “The Canticle of the Sun” with a beautiful image of St. Francis.

No. 5-024, card, 50/\$10.00

FAMILY COMMITMENT PRAYER CARD

No. 5-594, 50/\$7.50

STEWARDSHIP: A DISCIPLE’S RESPONSE

A Pastoral Letter on Stewardship Tenth Anniversary Edition

A pastoral letter on stewardship by the bishops detailing the principles behind stewardship and ways to make it a part of daily life and practice.

English: No. 5-465, 80 pp., \$9.95

Spanish: No. 5-883, 84 pp., \$9.95

New!

STEWARDSHIP AND YOUNG ADULTS

An Invitation to Help Change the World

A statement on stewardship aimed at young adults.

No. 5-525, 8-panel brochure, 25/\$12.00

TO BE A CHRISTIAN STEWARD

A Summary of the U.S. Bishops’ Pastoral Letter on Stewardship

An overview of *Stewardship: A Disciple’s Response*.

English: No. 568-2, 16 pp., 25/\$15.00

Spanish: No. 569-0, 16 pp., 25/\$15.00



TO TEACH

SUMMER 2004

STEWARDING THE GIFTS OF GOD'S CREATIONS

for Principals & School Boards

- View the video *Hope for a Renewed Earth* with the school board and/or faculty. Discuss ways to incorporate stewardship of the environment into the curriculum for next year in a more intentional way.
- Hand out *St. Francis Prayer Cards* as a gift to all teachers and staff. Pray together at an end-of-the-year party or event.
- Review the list of resources in *Sharing Catholic Social Teaching* and order materials to improve a faculty library or resource corner.
- Set aside a date for a teacher retreat in August. Plan to use the retreat outline in *Stewards of God's Gifts—Prayer Services and Retreats for the Catechetical Year*. Explore ways to connect the school faculty with the parish celebration of Catechetical Sunday (September 19).
- Run off the resource articles from *Renewing the Face of the Earth: A Resource for Parishes* and distribute them to faculty and school board members. Encourage them to read the articles over the summer.
- Distribute copies of *To Be a Christian Steward* to parents at an end-of-the-year event. Encourage wise stewardship over the summer.
- Initiate a discussion with the school board about ways to make the school facilities more environmentally friendly. For example, how can you increase recycling efforts or reduce the waste of water, food, or electricity?
- Enlist the help of parents in planting an appreciation garden on the school grounds. Add a flower or plant for each teacher and staff member.
- Distribute copies of *Stewardship and Young Adults* to young parents at a PTO meeting. Use the questions as a starting point for discussion on how the school and parents can work together more to be better stewards of the school's resources.

for Teachers

- Invite students to create a twelve-month plan for cultivating gratitude for the works of creation, similar to the one on the first page of this newsletter. For each month, name a different aspect of the environment and ask students to write something that fosters a greater feeling of appreciation for God's gifts of creation.
- Have students draw their favorite aspect of creation, one they are likely to enjoy over the summer. Make this into a mural and hang it in a school hallway.
- Throughout the summer, incorporate psalms that praise God for the gifts of creation into your individual or family prayer. Here are some to get you started: Psalm 104, Psalm 148.
- Go over the list of organizations that appear on pp. 31-32 of *Let the Earth Bless the Lord*. Commit to learning more about the work of at least one of these over the summer.
- Review the list, "What I Can Do to Help the Environment" in *Renewing the Face of the Earth*. Pick two or three items as a focus over the summer months.
- Make a list of five places you can go this summer to bolster your gratitude for creation. These might include visiting an arboretum, zoo, park, beach, or wildlife preserve.
- Develop your own creative potential over the summer by engaging in an artistic experience—write a story, paint a picture, or make up a song.
- Send a donation to an organization that is committed to environmental justice. Collect information about the organization to share with your students in the fall.

"The aesthetic value of creation cannot be overlooked. Our very contact with nature has a deep restorative power; contemplation of its magnificence imparts peace and serenity. The Bible speaks again and again of the goodness and beauty of creation, which is called to glorify God."

—John Paul II, 1990 *World Day of Peace* message





USCCB PUBLISHING
United States Conference of Catholic Bishops
3211 Fourth Street, NE
Washington, DC 20017-1194

NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATION
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
UNITED STATES CONFERENCE
OF CATHOLIC BISHOPS

For additional copies of
To Teach, e-mail us at
publications@usccb.org.

Here's your **FREE** quarterly subscription of *To Teach*!

FIVE WAYS TO PROMOTE STEWARDSHIP OF THE EARTH

- Review the “Did you know?” questions on pp. 41-42 of *Renewing the Face of the Earth*. Choose four or five to share with your students.
- Talk about possible causes of environmental injustice and brainstorm ways that students can be good stewards of the earth.
- Help students identify ways they can practice the three R's of environmental stewardship: Reduce, Reuse, and Recycle. Incorporate these into your classroom procedures and rules.
- Utilize prayers and prayer services that praise God for the wonder of creation. Send ideas for such prayer home and encourage parents to use them as part of family prayer. Use the booklet *Prayer Services and Retreats for the Catechetical Year* which focuses on the theme “Stewards of God's Gifts” as a source of examples.
- Explain that a central theme of Catholic social teaching is caring for the dignity of each person. Ask students to name ways they can care for others over the summer months.

CULTIVATE GRATITUDE *continued from page 1*

have clean, fresh water available whenever we need it. Not all areas of the world are as fortunate. Check out the work of Catholic Relief Services (www.catholicrelief.org) to help those in developing countries find and maintain clean water.

AUGUST: In the United States, we can view just about every kind of landscape—jagged mountain ranges, vast prairies, sandy

beaches, rocky canyons, desert expanses, and lush rainforests. When traveling to another part of the country or world this summer, notice the landscape and the variety it contains. And don't neglect the beauty that lies close to home.

For more reflections on a year-round approach to gratitude for God's creation, see the “Homily Hints” in *Peace with God the Creator, Peace with All Creation*.

AT A GLANCE *continued from page 2*

- a goal that can and needs to be reinforced at home by parents in as many creative ways as possible.
- Encourage parents to take home copies of the *Family Commitment Prayer Card*, which is one of the resources featuring the annual catechetical theme, “Stewards of God's Gifts.” Invite families to pray using the card throughout the year that they might be good stewards of God's gifts.