

10 Guiding Principles for the Environment

From the Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church

1. *The human person is superior to all other creatures on earth.*
 - all creatures must be dealt with responsibly.
 - nature is part of God's plan of creation and redemption in Christ
 - this plan is revealed by Jesus' humanity and Gospel message.
2. *We must not ... i) misuse nature OR ii) make nature more important than people (i.e., human dignity).*
 - these are two fundamental points from Catholic Social Teaching.
3. *The "environment" means the whole planet, shared by all peoples.*
 - ecological responsibility concerns the good of present and future generations.
4. *Science and technology must be used in ways that respect human dignity.*
 - human persons must also treat other creatures with respect.
5. *Nature is God's gift to use wisely – it is not divine itself.*
 - human persons are free to use or modify creation – in intelligent and morally responsible ways.
6. *Economic development must respect creation.*
 - creation's integrity, rhythms and limited resources must be respected.
 - the cost of economic development must include protecting the environment.
7. *Concern for the environment means helping the world's poorest regions develop.*
 - this is the principle of the Universal Destination of Goods:
 - the goods of the earth are God's gift for all to share and use wisely.
8. *Worldwide agreements and laws are needed to protect the environment.*
 - these agreements and laws must be guided by the principle of the Common Good:
 - everyone has a right to all they need to live a fully human life (e.g., food, safety, work, shelter, clean water, education, free association, religious liberty).
9. *Production and lifestyles should be guided by sobriety, temperance and self discipline (not consumerism).*
 - production must satisfy everyone's basic needs and protect the created order.
 - more awareness of our human interdependence will help us escape the consumerist lifestyle.
10. *Environmental questions need a spiritual response.*
 - creation is God's gift to use responsibly, with loving care.
 - thankfulness should be our first attitude toward God for the gift of creation
 - our truest, deepest meaning lies in God, Who made and sustains creation & humanity.
 - nature's elements can be rich symbols pointing us to God, their Creator.

Summarized from a presentation by Bishop Giampaolo Crepaldi, Secretary Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace
(See Zenit, [Ten Commandments for the Environment. A Christian View of Man and Nature](#))

The Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church can be accessed at: <http://www.vatican.va>