



**Friday of Respect Life Week
Caring for Creation
Grades 7-8**

Theme: Appreciating God's Gift of Our World

Goal: God has given us a beautiful gift in the creation of the entire world around us. Students will explore creation and see that it is our responsibility to respect and care for the earth.

Materials: *Care for God's Creation* ([video link](#))
Where Does Our Trash Go? ([video link](#))

Lesson: Care for creation, while long a social issue, has only in recent years become an issue of great concern for the Church as an expression of our faith. Pope Francis, in *Laudato Si*, reminds us that we are called to care for creation not only as an end in itself but because creation is at the service of persons, and the dignity of persons must be respected above everything else. In this lesson, we will explore the topic of trash and how the small decisions we make every day, when multiplied through a community, can become huge problems. The goal for the lesson is to encourage awareness of the need to reduce consumption, reuse items, and invite others to do so—not only so that we have cleaner cities, but because our small actions have a global effect and will help improve living conditions for people all around the world.

Video: *Care for God's Creation* ([video link](#))

Questions for Discussion

What is the underlying reason that people ought to care for creation?
How is caring for creation part of our faith?
Who is most adversely affected by environmental damage? Why?
What role does caring for the environment play in peace?

Read: The following excerpts from *Laudato Si* and discuss:

Nature is usually seen as a system which can be studied, understood and controlled, whereas creation can only be understood as a gift from the outstretched hand of Father of all, and as a reality illuminated by a love which calls us together into universal communion. (76)

Question to Discuss

How does seeing nature as a gift from God change how we treat creation?

The entire material universe speaks of God's love, his boundless affection for us. Soil, water, mountains – everything is, as it were, a caress of God. (84)

Question to Discuss

What are your favorite parts of nature?
How does the beauty of nature show us that God loves us?

A fragile world, entrusted by God to human care, challenges us to devise intelligent ways of directing, developing, and limiting our power. (78)

Question to Discuss

What is the responsibility to which God entrusts us?
Why are we called to “limit our power” over creation rather than just use and control it as much as we can?

Video: Where Does Our Trash Go? ([video link](#))

Questions for Discussion

What are our obligations to keep our city clean?
Does this have anything to do with faith?
What do we learn about the jobs of people who work to keep cities clean and trash-free?
Is it more complex than you had originally thought?
What can you do to reduce your trash production?
What can you do to reduce the trash production of your neighborhood or city?

Activity: Put up a poster of the earth. Each time the students do something to care for creation (in school or out of school) have them write what they did on the small slip of paper. Have them put the paper on the poster. Once the class has covered the entire poster, celebrate the accomplishments in some way!

Prayer: *A Prayer for our Earth*

All-powerful God, you are present in the whole universe and in the smallest of your creatures.

You embrace with your tenderness all that exists.

Pour out upon us the power of your love, that we may protect life and beauty. Fill us with peace, that we may live as brothers and sisters, harming no one.

O God of the poor, help us to rescue the abandoned and forgotten of this earth, so precious in your eyes.

Bring healing to our lives, that we may protect the world, and we may sow beauty, not pollution and destruction.

Touch the hearts of those who look only for gain at the expense of the poor and the earth. Teach us to discover the worth of each thing, to be filled with awe and contemplation, to recognize that we are profoundly united with every creature.

Be with us, we pray, in our struggle for justice, love and peace.

Amen.

Lesson adapted from the plans on the Archdiocese of Los Angeles Office of Life, Justice and Peace website.