

## **Environmental Justice Program United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB)**

The USCCB Environmental Justice Program began in the fall of 1993 as a response to the bishops' call for greater attention to environmental concerns. Specifically, the USCCB Environmental Justice Program seeks to educate and motivate Catholics to a deeper respect for God's creation, and to engage parishes in activities aimed at addressing environmental problems, particularly as they affect the poor. The USCCB Environmental Justice Program offers a distinctively Catholic contribution reflecting the Church's teaching and values. Its foundation lies in [Pope John Paul II's World Day of Peace](#) message and the U.S. Catholic bishops' 1991 statement, [Renewing the Earth](#). The USCCB Environmental Justice Program primarily serves Catholic dioceses, state Catholic conferences, and national Catholic organizations, and through them, parishes around the country.

The Program carries out four primary tasks:

### **SCHOLARSHIP**

The USCCB Environmental Justice Program seeks to apply Catholic social teaching to ecological and environmental concerns by sponsoring Catholic scholars' consultations to stimulate theological research and an exchange of ideas. Past consultation themes have included "Ecology and the Common Good: A Catholic Theological Perspective," and "Creation as God's Song: The Catholic Imagination and the Environment." Papers from USCCB's Environmental Justice Program's consultation, "Ecology and Catholic Theology: Contribution and Challenge", have been assembled into a reader entitled, *And God Saw That It Was Good: Catholic Theology and the Environment*, (see RESOURCES) for use by universities, seminaries and others.

In October 2004, USCCB and the University of St. Thomas sponsored a consultation on Catholic theology and the environment in Owatona, MN. As part of a wider effort to encourage more Catholic academics and universities to explore this topic and to deepen the Catholic intellectual contribution, this consultation explored the themes of the human person in the environment, the common good, and our responsibility to the poor in caring for creation (download *The Person, the Poor and the Common Good* program [here](#)).

### **LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT**

The USCCB Environmental Justice Program encourages and trains Catholic leaders to become familiar with Catholic social teaching, theology and the environment, and to assist their dioceses and parishes in establishing programs. The USCCB Environmental Justice Program encourages dioceses and parishes to sponsor retreats and conferences to help train Catholic leaders. These programs should include an emphasis on the spiritual context for understanding the overall faith effort in addressing environmental concerns and how it fits into the Church's ministry and the

work of the diocese. Participants could include diocesan social action directors, state Catholic Conference directors, and national Catholic organization representatives.

#### PUBLIC POLICY AND ADVOCACY

The USCCB Environmental Justice Program seeks to influence environmental public policy in light of Catholic social teaching. It also promotes an integration of these concerns into diocesan policy networks. The USCCB Environmental Justice Program's legislative agenda includes domestic issues, such as private property and environmental regulation (including "takings" legislation) and brownfields redevelopment (urban sprawl), and international concerns like sustainable development, foreign aid and debt. Recently, the USCCB Environmental Justice Program has launched a new initiative on global climate change. To learn about recent the USCCB Environmental Justice Program legislative and public policy activities, see [USCCB Environmental Justice Program News](#).

#### SPECIAL PROJECTS

Environmental justice, the disproportionate environmental burdens borne by the poor, and children's environmental health are priority issues for the USCCB Environmental Justice Program. The Church's commitment to preserve and enhance family life and its emphasis on protecting the most vulnerable members of society are the foundation of our efforts.

To learn more about the USCCB, including the [Catholic Coalition for Children and a Safe Environment \(CASE\)](#) and its Climate Change Health and Justice Initiative, visit our website at [www.usccb.org/sdwp/ejp](http://www.usccb.org/sdwp/ejp)

#### RESOURCES

*Global Climate Change: A Plea for Dialogue, Prudence and the Common Good*

The bishops open a new avenue of dialogue in the sometimes convoluted discussions about global warming, offering a distinctively religious and moral perspective on the need for environmental protection.

No. 5-431, 28 pp., \$3.50 (also available in Spanish)

*Renewing the Earth*

The U.S. bishops call on Catholics to respond to environmental problems.

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

*St. Francis Prayer Card*

This prayer card reminds all the faithful of a common responsibility and duty toward the Creator and creation in honor of St. Francis.

No. 5-024, 1 package of 50 cards for \$10.00

To place an order, please call the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops Publishing at 1-800-235-8722 (from outside the United States or in the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area, dial 202-722-8716).

