

CHAPTER 7

CARE FOR CREATION



“The Catholic tradition insists that we show our respect for the Creator by our stewardship of creation. Care for the earth . . . is a requirement of our faith (*Sharing Catholic Social Teaching: Challenges and Directions* 6).”

Opportunities for caring for creation are as abundant and various as God’s creations themselves. Whether you are looking for a large or small, local or global, long-term or short-term project, there is a stewardship project to suit your group.

 **Caring for Creation** 

Our local school district adopted a section of highway. Since school is not in session throughout the summer, area youth groups pitch in and take care of the highway for a few months.



Our local nature center offers a variety of volunteer opportunities for youth. Sometimes we replenish the supply of wood chips on the trails and pick up litter. Other times we plant trees or help with groups of small children.



Our youth help tend gardens in the city parks. When we work together, we can quickly weed a large area. We enjoy chatting while we work. Time flies and suddenly gardening is no longer a back-breaking chore.

Ways to Care for Creation

1. Arrange to spend a weekend at a co-op or organic farm. Plan to help with chores as well as take time to learn about the environmental benefits of co-op and organic farming.
2. Encourage car pools for parish and school youth activities. Set up a carpool database to facilitate carpooling in neighborhoods. Invite young people to keep track of the results of the carpools, such as gallons of gas saved and the effect on the environment. Print the results on the parish or school Web site or in the parish or school newsletter.
3. Research and write articles for the parish and school Web sites and newsletters about how to protect the environment. Be sure to find out article length and article deadlines well in advance.
4. Arrange to plant bulbs or flowers at church, at school, at a cemetery, or elsewhere in the community. Ask a local nursery to donate plants or provide them at a reduced cost. Be sure to maintain the flowers throughout the season.
5. Arrange to plant trees. Schools, parks, churches, and other nonprofit organizations could benefit from this project.

6. Organize a recycling program in your parish. Provide containers and label them. Also be sure to arrange regular collection times.
7. Pick up litter at area parks, schools, playgrounds, and other public areas.
8. Offer a pet-care class at church for young children. Older children can share their expertise. You might consider inviting a veterinarian or Humane Society volunteer to lead the class.
9. Arrange to host a Blessing of Animals in your parish. Invite people of all ages to bring their pets to be blessed on the Feast of Saint Francis of Assisi on October 4.
10. Offer to play with a pet in your neighborhood. Pets need exercise and attention to thrive. Find out if there is a pet in your neighborhood who could benefit from a walk or some extra attention.
11. Offer to help with animal migration. As we develop more and more of our land and pollute our waters, we can inhibit animal migratory patterns. Contact your local or state parks and recreation department to learn about volunteer opportunities.

12. Garden for a neighbor. Plant and care for a flower garden for an elderly or single-parent neighbor. Your kindness will bring cheer to them every day!
13. Organize a Christmas tree recycling program. Contact your local recycling center or city parks and recreation department for information.
14. Contact your local parks department or school principal to inquire about the need for trash cans or recycling containers. Host a fundraiser and use the monies to donate these items to your school or local parks department.
15. Plant and tend flower gardens at a nursing home. The residents will enjoy the flowers when they sit outside.
16. Offer to help at a nature center. Most nature centers rely on volunteers to greet guests, maintain trails, and keep grounds clean.
17. Volunteer at a wildlife refuge. Learn about animals while you work to protect them.
18. Research volunteer opportunities at your local Humane Society. Learn more about their work at humanesociety.org.

19. Participate in Earth Day, a national day set aside for cleaning up and caring for creation. Choose Earth Day, April 24, to carry out stewardship projects.
20. Adopt a highway. Take responsibility for maintaining a section of highway in your community. For more information contact your State Department of Transportation.
21. Adopt a rainforest. One way we can save the rainforests is to purchase rain forest lands an acre at a time. To learn more about the rainforest or to purchase an acre go to rainforest-alliance.org.
22. Take responsibility for keeping a section of a river clean. Ask local disposal companies to remove the trash you collect for free. For more information on saving our rivers, visit the Web site of National River Cleanup at americanrivers.org.
23. Adopt a whale. You will receive the name and a picture of your whale immediately. As your whale is sighted over the years, you will receive updates. For more information, contact the Pacific Whale Foundation Web site at pacificwhale.org.