

# World Day of Prayer for Peace



*If You want to cultivate peace, protect creation!*  
*- Pope Benedict XVI*

*1st January 2010*

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**Benedict XVI's message**  
**WORLD DAY OF PEACE**  
**1st January 2010**

[1.]..., *For this XLIII World Day of Peace I have chosen the theme: If You Want to Cultivate Peace, Protect Creation. Respect for creation is of immense consequence, not least because “creation is the beginning and the foundation of all God’s works”...*

[2.] *In my Encyclical [Caritas in Veritate](#), I noted that integral human development is closely linked to the obligations which flow from man’s relationship with the natural environment. The environment must be seen as God’s gift to all people, and the use we make of it entails a shared responsibility for all humanity, especially the poor and future generations..., seeing creation as God’s gift to humanity helps us understand our vocation and worth as human beings.*

[3.] *Twenty years ago, [Pope John Paul II](#) devoted his [Message for the World Day of Peace](#) to the theme: Peace with God the Creator, Peace with All of Creation. He emphasized ... “ecological awareness, rather than being downplayed, needs to be helped to develop and mature, and find fitting expression in concrete programmes and initiatives”.... In 1971, for example, on the eightieth anniversary of [Leo XIII](#)’s Encyclical [Rerum Novarum](#), [Paul VI](#) pointed out that “by an ill-considered exploitation of nature (man) risks destroying it and becoming in his turn the victim of this degradation”.*

[4.] .... *In 1990 [John Paul II](#) had spoken of an “ecological crisis” and, in highlighting its primarily ethical character, pointed to the “urgent moral need for a new solidarity”. His appeal is all the more pressing today, in the face of signs of a growing crisis which it would be irresponsible not to take seriously. Can we remain indifferent before the problems associated with such realities as climate change, desertification, the deterioration and loss of productivity in vast agricultural areas, the pollution of rivers and aquifers, the loss of biodiversity, the increase of natural catastrophes*

*and the deforestation of equatorial and tropical regions? Can we disregard the growing phenomenon of “environmental refugees”, people who are forced by the degradation of their natural habitat to forsake it – and often their possessions as well – in order to face the dangers and uncertainties of forced displacement? Can we remain impassive in the face of actual and potential conflicts involving access to natural resources? All these are issues with a profound impact on the exercise of human rights, such as the right to life, food, health and development.*

*[5.] It should be evident that the ecological crisis cannot be viewed in isolation from other related questions, since it is closely linked to the notion of development itself and our understanding of man in his relationship to others and to the rest of creation. Prudence would thus dictate a profound, long-term review of our model of development, one which would take into consideration the meaning of the economy and its goals with an eye to correcting its malfunctions and misapplications. The ecological health of the planet calls for this, but it is also demanded by the cultural and moral crisis of humanity whose symptoms have for some time been evident in every part of the world. Humanity needs a profound cultural renewal; it needs to rediscover those values which can serve as the solid basis for building a brighter future for all. Our present crises – be they economic, food-related, environmental or social – are ultimately also moral crises, and all of them are interrelated. They require us to rethink the path which we are travelling together. Specifically, they call for a lifestyle marked by sobriety and solidarity, with new rules and forms of engagement, one which focuses confidently and courageously on strategies that actually work, while decisively rejecting those that have failed....*

*[6.] Is it not true that what we call “nature” in a cosmic sense has its origin in “a plan of love and truth”? The world “is not the product of any necessity whatsoever, nor of blind fate or chance... The world proceeds from the free will of God; he wanted to make his creatures share in his being, in his intelligence, and in his goodness”.... But the true meaning of God’s original command, as the Book of Genesis clearly shows, was not a simple conferral of authority, but rather a summons to responsibility. The wisdom of the ancients had recognized that nature is not at our disposal as*

*“a heap of scattered refuse”....*

*[7.] .... Yet the current pace of environmental exploitation is seriously endangering the supply of certain natural resources not only for the present generation, but above all for generations yet to come.... economic activity needs to consider the fact that “every economic decision has a moral consequence” and thus show increased respect for the environment. When making use of natural resources, we should be concerned for their protection and consider the cost entailed – environmentally and socially – as an essential part of the overall expenses incurred. The international community and national governments are responsible for sending the right signals in order to combat effectively the misuse of the environment.*

*[8.] A greater sense of intergenerational solidarity is urgently needed.... Natural resources should be used in such a way that immediate benefits do not have a negative impact on living creatures, human and not, present and future; that the protection of private property does not conflict with the universal destination of goods; that human activity does not compromise the fruitfulness of the earth, for the benefit of people now and in the future.... there is also an urgent moral need for a renewed sense of intragenerational solidarity, especially in relationships between developing countries and highly industrialized countries:... for the duty of gradually adopting effective environmental measures and policies is incumbent upon all. This would be accomplished more easily if self-interest played a lesser role in the granting of aid and the sharing of knowledge and cleaner technologies.*

*[9.] ..., among the basic problems which the international community has to address is that of energy resources and the development of joint and sustainable strategies to satisfy the energy needs of the present and future generations. This means that technologically advanced societies must be prepared to encourage more sober lifestyles, while reducing their energy consumption and improving its efficiency. At the same time there is a need to encourage research into, and utilization of, forms of energy with lower impact on the environment and “a world-wide redistribution of energy resources, so that countries lacking those resources can have access to them”. The ecological crisis offers an historic opportunity to develop a*

*common plan of action aimed at orienting the model of global development towards greater respect for creation and for an integral human development inspired by the values proper to charity in truth. I would advocate the adoption of a model of development based on the centrality of the human person, on the promotion and sharing of the common good, on responsibility, on a realization of our need for a changed life-style, and on prudence, the virtue which tells us what needs to be done today in view of what might happen tomorrow.*

*[10.]... there is an increasingly clear link between combatting environmental degradation and promoting an integral human development. These two realities are inseparable, since “the integral development of individuals necessarily entails a joint effort for the development of humanity as a whole”. .... Encouragement needs to be given, for example, to research into effective ways of exploiting the immense potential of solar energy. Similar attention also needs to be paid to the world-wide problem of water and to the global water cycle system, which is of prime importance for life on earth and whose stability could be seriously jeopardized by climate change. Suitable strategies for rural development centred on small farmers and their families should be explored, as well as the implementation of appropriate policies for the management of forests, for waste disposal and for strengthening the linkage between combatting climate change and overcoming poverty. Ambitious national policies are required, together with a necessary international commitment which will offer important benefits especially in the medium and long term. There is a need, in effect, to move beyond a purely consumerist mentality in order to promote forms of agricultural and industrial production capable of respecting creation and satisfying the primary needs of all. The ecological problem must be dealt with not only because of the chilling prospects of environmental degradation on the horizon; the real motivation must be the quest for authentic world-wide solidarity inspired by the values of charity, justice and the common good. For that matter, as I have stated elsewhere, “technology is never merely technology. It reveals man and his aspirations towards development; it expresses the inner tension that impels him gradually to overcome material limitations. Technology in this sense is a response to God’s*

*command to till and keep the land (cf. Gen 2:15) that he has entrusted to humanity, and it must serve to reinforce the covenant between human beings and the environment, a covenant that should mirror God's creative love".*

*[11.] ... Education for peace must increasingly begin with far-reaching decisions on the part of individuals, families, communities and states. We are all responsible for the protection and care of the environment. This responsibility knows no boundaries. In accordance with the principle of subsidiarity it is important for everyone to be committed at his or her proper level, working to overcome the prevalence of particular interests. A special role in raising awareness and in formation belongs to the different groups present in civil society and to the non-governmental organizations which work with determination and generosity for the spread of ecological responsibility, responsibility which should be ever more deeply anchored in respect for "human ecology". ...*

*[12.] The Church has a responsibility towards creation, and she considers it her duty to exercise that responsibility in public life, in order to protect earth, water and air as gifts of God the Creator meant for everyone, and above all to save mankind from the danger of self-destruction. The degradation of nature is closely linked to the cultural models shaping human coexistence: consequently, "when 'human ecology' is respected within society, environmental ecology also benefits".... The book of nature is one and indivisible; it includes not only the environment but also individual, family and social ethics. Our duties towards the environment flow from our duties towards the person, considered both individually and in relation to others. Hence I readily encourage efforts to promote a greater sense of ecological responsibility which, as I indicated in my Encyclical [\*Caritas in Veritate\*](#), would safeguard an authentic "human ecology" and thus forcefully reaffirm the inviolability of human life at every stage and in every condition, the dignity of the person and the unique mission of the family, where one is trained in love of neighbour and respect for nature....*

*[13.] ..., a correct understanding of the relationship between man and the environment will not end by absolutizing nature or by considering it more*

*important than the human person.... The Church,... is concerned that the question be approached in a balanced way, with respect for the “grammar” which the Creator has inscribed in his handiwork by giving man the role of a steward and administrator with responsibility over creation, a role which man must certainly not abuse, but also one which he may not abdicate. In the same way, the opposite position, which would absolutize technology and human power, results in a grave assault not only on nature, but also on human dignity itself.*

*[14.] If you want to cultivate peace, protect creation.... In the light of divine Revelation and in fidelity to the Church’s Tradition, Christians have their own contribution to make. They contemplate the cosmos and its marvels in light of the creative work of the Father and the redemptive work of Christ, who by his death and resurrection has reconciled with God “all things, whether on earth or in heaven” (Col 1:20). Christ, crucified and risen, has bestowed his Spirit of holiness upon mankind, to guide the course of history in anticipation of that day when, with the glorious return of the Saviour, there will be “new heavens and a new earth” (2 Pet 3:13), in which justice and peace will dwell for ever. Protecting the natural environment in order to build a world of peace is thus a duty incumbent upon each and all. It is an urgent challenge, one to be faced with renewed and concerted commitment; it is also a providential opportunity to hand down to coming generations the prospect of a better future for all. May this be clear to world leaders and to those at every level who are concerned for the future of humanity: the protection of creation and peacemaking are profoundly linked! For this reason, I invite all believers to raise a fervent prayer to God, the all-powerful Creator and the Father of mercies, so that all men and women may take to heart the urgent appeal: If you want to cultivate peace, protect creation.*

*From the Vatican, 8 December 2009*

***BENEDICTUS PP. XVI***