

Mission Intention

SEPTEMBER

2019 - 2020

Education for
Community Life

Area Focus: Gulf of Mexico

Pope's September Prayer Intention

That government and business leaders, and scientists, work together to protect the world's oceans.

In his encyclical, *Laudato Si'*, Pope Francis reminds us that one way to live in relationship with God is to live in praise of what God has given us. We honor God when we care for God's creation.

This month, the Holy Father asks us to remember in a special way the world's oceans, and how they have been negatively affected by human activity. The Gulf of Mexico is an example of how human behavior can harm creation.

The Gulf of Mexico is thought to be the second most polluted body of water in the world. Each year, rains carry runoff from fertilizers and sewage into the Mississippi River, where they are then carried to the Gulf of Mexico. Once in the Gulf of Mexico, these pollutants cause an increase in algae

growth. The algae uses up all the oxygen in the water, making it impossible for any other ocean life to live. Scientists refer to this as a "dead zone," an area where there is not enough oxygen in the water to sustain sea life.

The Church teaches that Catholics are required to care for God's creation. When we all do our part to care for the Earth, we make the world a better place for future generations.



Martyr of the Amazon: Sister Dorothy Stang, S.N.D.



Sister Dorothy Stang always understood the importance of caring for creation. Born on a farm in Dayton, Ohio, Dorothy learned how to respect and live from the land at an early age. She would later use this knowledge and understanding in her ministry to poor farmers in Brazil.

Dorothy also knew from an early age that she wanted to enter religious life. She joined the Sisters of Notre Dame one month after she turned 17, the absolute earliest the congregation would accept her. In 1966, she began her missionary work in Brazil.

During the 1970's, the Brazilian government began offering property in the Amazon to farmers if they agreed to work the land. Sister Dorothy taught them about sustainable farming and helped them to teach others how to work the land without using up its natural resources. But soon, rich property owners and loggers, who wanted the land for their own use, began attacking the farmers. Sister Dorothy asked the government to stop the attacks, but they continued. On February 12, 2005, Sister Dorothy was martyred by hired gunmen because of her support for the farmers and her commitment to protecting the Amazon rain forest. But her death did not end her work. Sister Dorothy has become a symbol for those who care for the Earth. Her life has inspired many to carry on her mission. You can carry on Sister Dorothy's mission by living in a way that shows respect for God's creation.

Promoting Knowledge
of Faith

God's Word for Mission

"The dominion granted to [humankind] by the Creator is not an absolute power... The limitation imposed from the beginning by the Creator himself and expressed symbolically by the prohibition not to 'eat of the fruit of the tree' shows clearly enough that, when it comes to the natural world, we are subject not only to biological laws but also to moral ones, which cannot be violated with impunity."

(St. John Paul II., *On Social Concern, [Sollicitudo rei Socialis]* no. 34)

Care for Creation



Creation is God's gift to everyone. In God's creation we find the resources we need to live happy and healthy lives. Within creation, God has provided us with water, the means to produce food and medicine, and the beauty of nature for us to enjoy.

When we use these gifts of creation, we are called to do so in a way that is respectful of others who also rely on them. This means that we must consider how our usage affects our brothers and sisters who are currently living and those who will be born sometime in the future.

Caring for creation is a requirement of our faith. The Church teaches that being given dominion of the Earth does not mean we can use its resources any way we please. As St. John Paul

II says in *Sollicitudo rei Socialis* (On Social Concerns), we must remember that the Earth has its own needs and God-given purpose, and we must act in a way that cooperates with God's plan for creation, not in a way that interferes with it or harms it.

Humans have not done a good job taking care of our oceans. For too long, we have taken them for granted, using them as a dumping place for trash and plastics, polluting them with chemicals and overfishing. The decisions we make every day have an affect on our oceans, no matter where we live. In this month's video, you'll learn about different ways you can care for the oceans. As you watch the video, prayerfully reflect on how God is calling you to be a better steward of our oceans.

How to Care for the Ocean: [Click Here](#)➤

1. What are some changes you can make in your daily life to help protect our oceans?
2. What did Saint John Paul II mean when he said that the Earth has its own needs and God-given purpose, and we must act in a way that cooperates with God's plan for creation?
3. How are the Church's teachings on caring for creation and the right to life related?



Mission Petitions

- ✚ Let us pray for the understanding that caring for creation is not an optional part of our Catholic faith.
- ✚ Let us pray for the will to make the necessary changes so that those who suffer because of climate change will be protected.
- ✚ Let us pray that God will help us use technology to stop the damage being done to the Earth and guard the gift of creation.
- ✚ Let us pray for our oceans and all sea life, that we may protect both from further damage.

Good and Gracious God,

Blessed are you, Holy Creator, source of all that is good. We ask that you change the hearts of those who mistreat the gift of your creation and that you help us to be good stewards of the world you gave us. We pray this through Christ our Lord. Amen.