

# MISSION INTENTIONS

SEPTEMBER 2024-2025

Let us pray that we listen with our hearts to Earth's cry and to those who suffer from environmental disasters and the climate crisis. May each of us make a promise to care for the world we live in.

## Country Focus: Republic of the Marshall Islands

About halfway between Hawaii and Australia, just north of the equator, lies the Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI). A country made up of 29 atolls and five islands, RMI is more water than land. Its total area, including the Pacific Ocean, is three times the size of Texas. However, the combined area of just its atolls and islands is about the size of Washington, DC.

Its size and location mean it is under great threat from climate change. Already, Marshallese citizens are noticing an increase in flooding and rising tides. Many have already left their ancestral homeland for safer places. If climate change isn't addressed, many scientists believe this island nation will be underwater in just a few generations.

Pope Francis considers climate change a moral issue. We will learn more about this on the second page of this newsletter.



## Leading to Knowledge of the Faith

Human dignity and care for creation are closely related. To ensure every person is able to live the dignified life God intended for them, we must take care of creation so that natural resources are available for all, both present and future. Pope Francis is always reminding us of this obligation. In his General Audience Address on March 21, 2014, he said, *"Creation is not a property, which we can rule over at will; or, even less, is the property of only a few: Creation is a gift, it is a wonderful gift that God has given us, so that we care for it and we use it for the benefit of all, always with great respect and gratitude."* What can we learn about our relationship with creation from this quote?

## Saint Spotlight

## Saint Hildegard of Bingen

Having received her first vision at three years old, Hildegard of Bingen was seemingly destined to become a Saint. She dedicated her entire life to God. When she was just a child, she began her religious instruction. She was taught by Blessed Jutta of Disibodenberg for 10 years before becoming a Benedictine nun at 18.

During her ministry, Hildegard wrote several important theological books and more than 300 letters to people who had asked for her advice. She composed music, wrote poetry, and became the abbess of the Monastery of Saint Disibodenberg after Blessed Jutta's death.

In many ways, Hildegard was ahead of her time. This was evident in the preaching tours she started in her 60's, by the way she challenged the powerful men of her time when she did not agree with their views, and in her understanding of environmentalism.

Hildegard recognized the harmony of creation through her visions. Seeing humans as "living sparks" of God, coming from God as light comes from the sun, Hildegard saw that humanity and all of creation were connected. She believed humanity was entrusted with ruling over the Earth in a way that was respectful and responsible toward all creation. When humanity failed to be good stewards of God's creation, Hildegard believed that creation became unable to function as God intended, leading to natural disasters; an impressive understanding for a woman who lived from 1098-1179.



Hildegard's theological contributions to the Church led Pope Benedict XVI to name her a Doctor of the Church in 2012, only the fourth female to be given that honor. **Her feast day is September 17.**

## Formation for Life in Christ

Since the beginning of his papacy, Pope Francis has made care for creation a central theme of his papacy, reflected in many of his homilies and written works, perhaps most famously his 2015 encyclical *On Care for our Common Home*, [Laudato Si'](#). But Pope Francis isn't the only pope to speak about the necessity of good stewardship of the Earth. For decades, popes have been instructing the faithful on their moral obligation to care for God's creation.

Saint John Paul II, in his 1987 encyclical *On Social Concerns*, [Sollicitudo rei Socialis](#), explained that when God gave humans dominion over creation, it was "not an absolute power, nor can one speak of a freedom to 'use and misuse,' or to dispose of things as one pleases...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" (no. 34). Being given stewardship of the Earth does not mean we get to do whatever we want with its resources; rather it means we are called to use those resources responsibly.

Pope Benedict XVI described creation as God's gift to all people and equated caring for the environment with caring for one another. His encyclical *Charity in Truth*, [Caritas in Veritate](#), states, "In our use of [creation] we have a responsibility

towards the poor, towards future generations and towards humanity as a whole...Our duties towards the environment are linked to our duties towards the human person..." (nos. 48, 51). We cannot claim to care for one another if we are taking more than our fair share of resources. Caring for others includes making sure all people, both present and future, have access to creation's resources so they may live a dignified life. In addition to his writings, Pope Benedict XVI also approved environmentally friendly changes to the Vatican. Under his pontificate, solar panels were installed on the roof of the Vatican's Paul VI hall, the Vatican's bank began purchasing carbon credits, and the first hybrid Popemobile was commissioned.

The Archdiocese of Saint Paul and Minneapolis is also active in caring for creation. It has a Care for Creation team that creates resources, sponsors events, and advocates for policy changes to protect the environment. For more information on the Care for Creation Team [click here](#).

To learn more about climate change and [Laudato Si'](#), consider watching the movie *The Letter*. You can learn more about this movie and watch the trailer by clicking on the link below.



## Celebrating the Mystery

Many scholars think there is a sacramental quality to creation. Not only is creation where we find the gifts of water, oil, bread and wine God uses in the Sacraments to sanctify us with grace, but creation is one way God communicates Himself to us. It's why many people feel connected to God when in nature: everything in creation is literally designed to lead us to God.

We also have examples throughout Scripture of God working through nature to reveal the plan of salvation. God uses a cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night to lead the Israelites through the desert (Exodus 13:21), God appears as a burning bush to Moses (Exodus 3:1-6), and as a dove at Jesus' baptism, when he reveals Jesus as God's son (Matt 3:16-17). Given the sacred nature of creation, how should we approach our role as its steward?

### Teaching Prayer: Chaplets

A chaplet is a type of prayer that uses beads. Unlike the Rosary, the number of beads used in a chaplet varies depending on the number of prayers in the chaplet. A chaplet is often a prayer to Jesus, Mary, or a saint, but it may also be used to pray for a specific intention.

The Care for Creation team in the Archdiocese of Saint Paul and Minneapolis has created a chaplet to Saint Kateri Tekakwitha. To pray this chaplet, [click here](#).

Watch the trailer for *The Letter* [here](#)

✚ How does caring for creation in our own lifetime help build up the future Church?

✚ How does being good stewards of God's creation help us spread the Good News of God's love?

✚ How are human dignity and care for creation related?