

Crunchy Catholic

Catholic Teaching on the Environment and Environmental Justice

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November 12, 2014

Agenda

- Background
- Catechism of the Catholic Church
 - Creator-Creation
 - Man as Pinnacle of Creation
 - Man as Steward of Creation
- Environmental Justice
- United State Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) on Environmental Ethics
- My work as a Catholic Environmental Engineer
- Question

Disclaimer

- “I believe...” vs. “We (the Church) believe...”
- No political affiliation for the talk
- Want to encourage fair discussion, will have group discussion
- Can't change analogies or paradigms
- Will try to leave you with challenging questions to think about (Jesuit education)

About Me...

Family

- Married to Becky Needham with 3 children John Paul, Clare, and Joshua; and a dog named Bailey.
- Live in Catonsville, MD; grew up in MD and PA.
- 8 years of active duty in the Army serving in Germany, Iraq, and Missouri.

Research

- Research legacy pollutants and remediation in contaminated sediments
- Risk based remediation technologies

Education

- Ph.D. Student in Environmental Engineering, UMBC
- M.S. Environmental Engineering, Missouri S&T
- B.S. Chemistry with minor in Theology, Univ. of Scranton

Hobbies

- Fly Fishing, Hunting, Backpacking, Kayaking/Canoeing, Home Brewing, and Vegetable Gardening

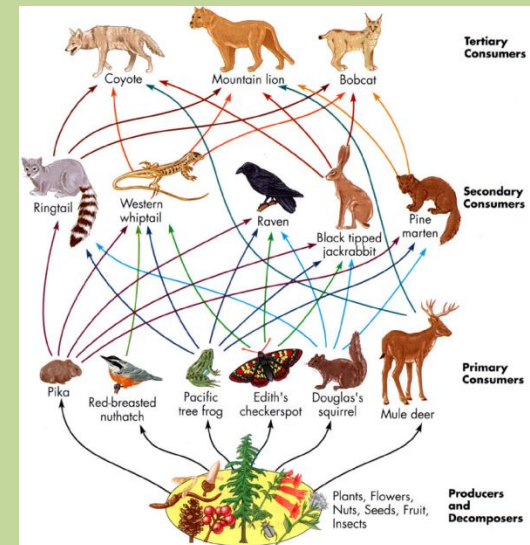


How crunchy are you...

- Do you recycle?
- Do you compost?
- Do you grow your own organic vegetables or secretly harbor a desire to homestead with an eco-friendly farm?
- Do you make your own granola/yogurt/sauerkraut?
- Do you wear socks with sandals?
- Do you have a rescue animal or want a rescue animal?
- Have you ever weighed and categorized your waste production and/or CO₂ foot print?

Biodiversity Paradigm

- “The cure for cancer maybe undiscovered in the rainforest”
- Virologists currently believe HIV’s origins come from a group of chimps in a 10x10 mile section of African rainforest (HIV kills 1-2 million people a year)
- Biodiversity is necessary to sustain healthy eco-systems, low biodiversity is prone to disease and collapse
- Healthy eco-systems have direct benefits to human health



Creator-Creation Relationship

- **God is the Creator of the Universe. “God himself created the visible world in all its richness, diversity, and order” (CCC 323)**
- **God reveals himself to humanity through creation by understanding the Creator through the Creation (CCC 293,295)**
- **Creation is holy and shares in God’s goodness, therefore has dignity and worth (CCC 299)**



Man as Pinnacle

- Man is the highest of God's creation, made in his image and likeness (Gen 1-2, CCC 2319)
- *God thus enables men to be **intelligent** and **free** causes in order to complete the work of creation, to perfect its harmony for their own good and that of their neighbors. (CCC 308)*

Man as Steward of Creation

- Ownership of any property makes its holder a steward of Providence (CCC 2404)
- Man's dominion over inanimate and other living beings granted by the Creator is not absolute; it is limited by concern for the quality of life and his neighbor, including generations to come; it requires a religious respect for the integrity of creation. (CCC 2415)
- Political authority has the right and duty to regulate ownership for the sake of the common good (CCC 2406)

Environmental Justice



- NIMBY: “Not In My Back Yard”
- Poor are often in the most polluted areas
- In undeveloped countries 1 in 5 children die due to poor sanitation and access to clean drinking water
- *Those who hold goods for use and consumption should use them with moderation, reserving the better part for guests, for the sick, and the poor (CCC 2405)*
- Development has environmental impacts
- How do we protect the environment while encouraging sustainable development?

USCCB on Environmental Ethics

- A God-centered and sacramental view of the universe, which grounds human accountability for the fate of the earth
- A consistent respect for human life, which extends to respect for all creation
- A world view affirming the ethical significance of global interdependence and the common good
- An ethics of solidarity promoting cooperation and a just structure of sharing in the world community

- An understanding of the *universal purpose of created things*, which requires equitable use of the earth's resources
- An *option for the poor* which gives passion to the quest for an equitable and sustainable world
- A conception of *authentic development*, which offers a direction for progress that respects human dignity and the limits of material growth

An Invitation to Reflection and Action on Environment in Light of Catholic Social Teaching,
USCCB, 1991

My Work as a Crunchy Catholic

- Engineering remediation of contaminated sediments.
- Cooperating and optimizing the natural systems instead of fighting them.
- Understanding creation to make best choices to increase human health and the environment while decreasing risk.
 - Deal in lifetime cancer risk and toxicological effects
 - 1:4 baseline cancer risk
 - 1:100,000 to 1:1,000,000 threshold limit for risk
 - What is cost of a human life? 361 million people in USA.
- Can not be good stewards with limited knowledge of what you are stewarding.
- Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine 1948 was awarded to Paul Müller for his research on DDT as a pesticide (Nobelprize.org)
 - Today DDT can still be found in sediments, fish, and humans in the environment.

Extinction Paradigm

- a. **Starving in the artic with a gun, you see the last reproducing pair of polar bears in the world, do you shoot them for food?**
- b. **Starving in the artic with your children, you have a gun, you see the last reproducing pair of polar bears in the world, do you shoot them for food?**



<http://www.polarbearsinternational.org/about-polar-bears/essentials>: 11/11/14

Summary

- Humanity encounters the Creator through the Creation
- Creation is endowed with dignity by the Creator
- Mankind is both the pinnacle and steward of creation
- We have the right to use resources but not at the cost of depriving others those same fundamental rights

Questions?