

Stephanie Clary, of Colchester, is Mission Outreach and Communication Coordinator for the Roman Catholic Diocese of Burlington. She earned a bachelor's degree in communication studies and a bachelor's degree in religious studies from St. Mary's College in Notre Dame, Ind., and is a candidate for a research master's in Systematic Theology from Catholic Theological Union in Chicago.

Why did you agree to serve on this committee?

I appreciate that this committee is comprised of people who are engaged in the ecological justice conversation from varying perspectives. We must work together with each other, and in harmony with the non-human created world, if we hope to bring about peace and justice for all.

What specific concerns do you have about the wellbeing of the earth, "our common home?"

The loss of biodiversity is particularly concerning to me. Each aspect of the world was created to fill a specific space within earth's ecosystems, and each aspect of creation gives glory to God in its own unique way. Allowing the untimely demise of any part of creation disrupts the relationships that exist among the created world and detracts from our experience of creation as it was intended to be experienced. It is our God-given responsibility "to cultivate and care for" creation (Gen. 2:15). The increasing loss of biodiversity on the planet means that we are not appropriately responding to that call—we are knowingly neglecting to do God's will.

What message do you want to convey about care of the earth?

Care of the earth and care for humanity are not mutually exclusive. Rather, they are tightly intertwined initiatives. Hunger, health hazards and homelessness are just a few of the human issues produced as results of ecological injustice. While we may each focus on a different, specific cause, we must recognize the interconnectedness of various issues so that we may work for justice in holistic ways.

How can Vermont Catholics participate in the care of the earth?

Educate, pray, act. Educate yourselves and others about the state of the created world, how the state of non-human creation affects humanity (especially the most vulnerable humans) and what our faith teaches us about our role in seeing to the livelihood and flourishing of all creation. Pray: for unity, understanding, responsibility and courage as we answer the call to care for creation; in solidarity with those suffering the effects of climate change; in wonder and awe of this beautiful world and its web of relationships that God has created and placed us within. Act to right the wronged relationships within the created world and cultivate a more sustainable future for all.

What do you say to people who do not understand/believe the seriousness of the situation of the earth?

If people do not understand, that's an opportunity to engage them in conversation about ecological justice and to educate them or invite them to learn together with you about the state of our common home, how it affects the earth's inhabitants and how the earth's inhabitants affect the earth. If people do not believe that the current situation on planet earth is serious, that's an opportunity to discuss ecological justice not as a response to something wrong, but as a state of existence to strive for because it is how the world was created to be.

What motivates you in your work to protect our earth?

My Catholic faith is my strongest motivator to protect creation. Ecological justice is an often-overlooked, yet foundational aspect of Catholicism. It contributes to so many other situations of injustice in the world. Since my faith motivates me to work for justice and peace in all forms, it is the natural motivator toward pursuing ecological justice as well.