

**Joseph Gainza**, of Marshfield, is the producer and host of "Gathering Peace" on WGDR and WGDH. He earned a bachelor's degree in American History from St. Francis College in Brooklyn and a master's in Systematic Theology from St. Michael's College in Colchester.

**Why did you agree to serve on this committee?**

As chairman of the Peace, Justice and Integrity of Creation Committee of the Vermont Ecumenical Council and Bible Society, I worked with committee members representing several Christian denominations researching and preparing statements on various topics. A 2015 statement is about threats to the environment and economic injustice, how these issues are paired in a dynamic of spiraling destruction and ways Christians might respond. Pope Francis says in "Laudato Si'" that we must "hear both the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor" (49). I hope this new committee will help Vermont Catholics and others understand these connections.

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

I'm concerned that there is a perception, widely held, that to reduce poverty and expand development we must have continuous growth in production and consumption. This is a formula for shredding the web of life that sustains us all. Much research has been done to show that it is possible to have development, even prosperity, without growth. That will take having an economic system which focuses on human and environmental wellbeing rather than the accumulation of fabulous wealth in the hands of the relatively few. The Earth can no longer sustain an economic system that allows 62 people to control as much wealth as half the human race.

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

The same message that Pope Francis conveys in his encyclical: to care for the earth, we must care for the most vulnerable. The earth is "very good" (Gn 1:31) and is a gift; we have done nothing to earn it. We must do everything we can to protect and renew it. We do that by stopping environmental destruction, which includes making sure that everyone, without exception, has the means for a dignified life.

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

Many already are. We can do more by first reading "Laudato Si'" and recognizing that Catholic Social Teaching is a body of work which, in its entirety, lays out a vision of peace, economic and environmental justice. We can then join with others in our parishes and communities to make manifest the Kin(g)dom of God.

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

It is hard to contemplate the destruction of the earth and all that we love. I want to listen deeply to those who respond to this dreadful news with fear and denial and help them see if we join together to create a more sustainable and just society, we could have our best years as a human race in front of us.

**What motivates you in your work to protect our Earth?**

This miracle of creation, so beautiful, such a loving gift from a loving God, motivates me. How can we not do everything to preserve, protect and nurture it? Every creature that exists has something to tell us about our Creator; each one we lose is akin to ripping out pages of scripture, extinguishing candles in a vast cathedral. Our children and their children's children to the last generation deserve to receive this gift from God as much as we did.