



“Minnesota, Our Common Home” Homily Guides

Message A

Identity: Children of God, Stewards of Creation

1. *Identity is rooted in relationship.* Because we are created in God’s image, we are hard-wired for the communion of love, which can only take place in relationship. Indeed, we only know who we are in and through our relationships. There is no such thing as a solitary human person; from the moment of our conception we are enfolded in relationships. We are, and always will be, dependent upon and connected to others.
2. *Our fundamental identity is a son or daughter of God.* This call to relationship must begin with the most important relationship of all: our relationship with God. Jesus came into our fallen world to teach us how to get back in right relationship with God. But Jesus also revealed something remarkable about God: that He is our Father, and we are His beloved sons and daughters. This relationship—of a son or a daughter with his or her Father—is the core of our identity. Our identity does not come from what we do, what we own, or what we believe about ourselves. It comes from our Heavenly Father.
3. *Our mission as God’s sons and daughters is to be stewards of creation.* When we rightly understand our identity and our inherent dignity as sons and daughters of God, we will see our mission—what we are to *do*—in its proper context. Stewardship is the task of caring for all that our Creator has made and using it in a way that bears fruit for the glory of God and love of neighbor. We are called to fulfill this mission because we are first and foremost God’s children. Knowing our own identity *first* enables us to see stewardship not as a burden imposed on us but as a response to the love and mercy that God has poured into our lives. It inspires us to imitate Christ, putting the good of others and God’s design in creation before our own preferences and even our own benefit.

Message B

The Call to Creation Stewardship

1. *Full Christian stewardship is creation stewardship.* Today, when Catholics hear the word “stewardship,” we probably associate it with financial gifts to our parish or other charitable organizations. Full Catholic stewardship, however, means caring for all of creation: the earth, our neighbor, and even our own bodies. Pope Francis



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- teaches in *Laudato si'* (LS) that our relationship with Christ must impact the way we relate to all of creation.
2. *Creation stewardship requires an ecological spirituality.* Our relationship with God should inspire in us “a more passionate concern for the protection of our world” (LS, 216). Far from dismissing environmental concerns, we should love the earth *more* intensely because of our faith, since care for creation is an integral part of our spirituality. But what distinguishes the Christian steward from the secular environmentalist is the desire to care for the earth *first* out of love and respect for the One who made it, and second to fulfill the commandment to love our neighbors.
 3. *Jesus is the model of ecological spirituality and creation stewardship.* Pope Francis writes in *Laudato si'*: “The Lord was able to invite others to be attentive to the beauty that there is in the world because he himself was in constant touch with nature, lending it an attention full of fondness and wonder” (LS, 97). Think of how many parables Jesus taught that used comparisons to things in nature. As we seek to follow Christ more closely, we should ask Him to teach us to view creation with His own attentive gaze.

Message C

Connecting the Dots: Ecology and Gender Theory

1. *The Pill and the Planet have more to do with one another than one might think.* In 1968, Pope Paul VI wrote *Humanae vitae*, the encyclical that most people remember for its clear position against contraception. But Paul VI was trying to get at something deeper than just the problem of the Pill; he was pointing out that human beings were starting to see themselves more as lords over nature than as servants of God’s design. It’s been 50 years since *Humanae vitae*, but the same theme showed up in *Laudato si'*. Francis, too, warns against the tendency of human beings to manipulate nature for our own purposes. It causes destruction, violence, injustice, and poverty, both material and spiritual.
2. *When we do not steward the body well, the result is deep human suffering.* It is clear that our lack of care for the environment has left a wake of destruction. The same can be said of the human body, which we have not stewarded well in the last fifty years. Rather than ministering to God’s design in the human body, our culture has adopted the belief that the body doesn’t matter and so we can do whatever we want with it: sleep with whomever we want, fill it with chemicals or hormones to prevent children, even mutilate it if we feel it doesn’t reflect our “true self.” The results are widespread sexual abuse and human trafficking, pornography, promiscuity, abortion, and gender ideology. This is not the Eden of human flourishing promised by the sexual revolution.



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3. *Our identity cannot be reduced to our experience; it is a gift from God.* People experience a lot of pain and struggle surrounding their sexuality, especially when they have been wounded, abused, and abandoned by people who were supposed to love and care for them. Our response as Christians to this cultural disease should be the response of Christ to the sick and marginalized. We are called to invite others into a deeper conversation about the truth of their identity, which is not the sum of their experiences—whether sexual, psychological, emotional, or physical—but the unchanging dignity of beloved sons and daughters of God.

Message D

Stewardship in the Land of 10,000 Lakes

1. *The “green movement” is popular here for a reason.* Minnesotans value deep and sincere friendship; we are fiercely loyal and always ready to help a neighbor in need—even in the middle of a blizzard! Like other Midwesterners, we have strong values: family, faith, hard work, honesty, and simple living. Stewardship is a natural fit for us Minnesotans. It resonates with us. Love of home, concern for our neighbor, and gratitude for the simple things in life are woven into the fabric of our nature.
2. *As Minnesota Catholics, we should be part of the ecological conversation.* Care for creation, simplifying our lifestyles, recycling or composting, choosing public transit over driving—all of these things are good and noble when done for the sake of the environment. But when we do them *first* for love of God and out of concern for our neighbor, these actions are sanctifying! They make us more like Jesus and permeate our world with His holiness. Far from being alien to us as Christians, environmental concern should be part of our Gospel witness. It is an opportunity to evangelize; you will probably take some of your “green” friends by surprise when they find out that you care about the earth, too!
3. *Nothing is insignificant to us.* When we look at the ecological crisis at hand, it can be very discouraging. It may seem like there is no way one person can make a change. But as believers we know that nothing we do is insignificant when we do it for God. Every sustainable choice at the grocery store, every locally-sourced meal ordered at a restaurant, every scrap of food that we choose to compost instead of throw away, now speaks a language of love. What looks mundane is transformed into an expression of love for the Creator when we invite Christ into it. As Mother Teresa famously said, “we can do no great things, only small things with great love.”



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