

# CARE FOR CREATION K-5

## EVERYTHING IS CONNECTED

Vol. 6, No. 1 - Fall 2022/Ordinary Time

### OBJECTIVE:

Students will learn about the connectedness of all creation through scripture, church teaching, a story, and related activities.

There are several words used that may need defining. See “Words to Know”. The defined words are marked in bold the first time they are used in the lesson.

### STEP 1: PRAY

An adult should lead the prayer and prompt children to respond with words and actions. For these actions: use your hand to shade your eyes for “look”; put your hand behind your ear, slightly pushing it forward for “listen”; and cross your hands and place them on your heart for “love.”

#### LEADER:

God of Heaven and Earth,  
Please help me look and listen for all you have created.  
Help me see the golds and reds and browns of the changing leaves  
and the flash of bright color on a blackbird’s wing.  
ALL: God help me look and listen and love.

#### LEADER:

God of Heaven and Earth,  
Help me hear the pattering of rain falling on leaves  
And the gentle call of the mourning dove.  
ALL: God help me look and listen and love.

#### LEADER:

God of Heaven and Earth,  
Please help me see that many people need help.  
Teach me also to see how our earth needs help.  
Help me understand how I might either help or hurt our earth.  
ALL: God help me look and listen and love.

#### LEADER:

God of Heaven and Earth,  
Please show all people how to work together to help our earth  
and to live with peace and kindness.

ALL: God help me look and listen and love.

#### In closing, watch this video:

For grades K-2 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K0gF2Kgel6k>

For grades 3-5: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TFCX08tD58>



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## STEP 2: MAKE PERSONAL CONNECTION

### Introduction for Adults:

Maryknoll Lay Missioner Peg Vamosy works in El Salvador, helping people in her parish address problems around climate change, migrants and refugees, pollution, and plastic waste. As many farmers and gardeners rely on chemical fertilizers, Peg's community field garden is showing them alternative agricultural methods for growing food sustainably. At times some of these problems feel overwhelming and must be dealt with as individual issues. However, Peg always maintains that the issues-- as well as all life-- are interconnected and it is imperative that we recognize this all the time.

Peg also works with children, teaching them the wonders and challenges of interconnectedness. Gardening with her 10-year-old neighbor David, gives her not only a teaching opportunity, but also much joy.

### [Story]

"Oh no!" David cried out. At his feet lay a dead tomato plant. Months ago, he had planted the seed for that plant. He had taken great care of the seedling. When it was big enough, he dug a hole in the garden, filled it with compost and gently tucked the plant into this soil. That was followed by weeks of pulling weeds and watering the plant. As he had waited for it to grow, he thought of all the foods his abuela, his grandmother, would make with the ripe tomatoes from his plants.

Before he started to garden with his neighbor, Maryknoll Missioner Peg Vamosy, David had thought all food came from a store. Now he understood that many people worked very hard so that others had food to buy.

But now, one of his tomato plants was dead. Peg put down her hoe and came over to see the plant. "Oh dear," she sighed. "It's good that we planted lots of other tomato plants! See that hole? I think an armadillo's digging caused this."

Angrily, David stamped his foot. "Why?"

"The armadillo was probably hungry, and it was digging for worms to eat."

"That's not fair!" David said.

Peg led David to a bench near the garden. When they sat down, Peg explained, "Everything is **interconnected**. When something happens, it affects many other things."

"Like what?"

"Well, look at our compost pile. We have been putting things onto it that came to us through the earth. You ate some bananas and put the peels onto the pile. Last year when the bean plants were done making beans, I pulled up the vines and put those on the pile."

David said, "And we added eggshells, avocado pits, coffee grounds and the weeds we pulled."

"Yes. They were all together in the pile. Then the rains soaked it with water, and the sun warmed it, helping it to **decompose**. Earthworms and insects got to work on it too, and so did microorganisms."

"What are those?"

"Have you heard of **bacteria** and **fungi**?" Peg asked and David nodded. "So, when the pile decomposes, we call it compost, a rich kind of fertilizer, which we put into the soil with our seeds and plants. And later we eat the food from the garden and put the vegetable waste into the compost pile. Do you see how that is all interconnected?"

David slowly nodded. "In a way, it's like a circle. But what about the armadillo?"

"It was just grocery shopping for food, like you and I do," Peg said. "But its actions affected us too because everything is interconnected. And

of course, the armadillo may have helped us too. Maybe it has eaten some insects that would have destroyed our plants. That is what being interconnected means.”

“Is this an interconnection too? It is good to be with my papa. I love him and he loves me. We are connected. But now he had to go to the United States to find a job, so he is far away. I miss him.”

“Yes, that is a good example of interconnection too. Being interconnected is usually good, can be tricky sometimes, and it is always important.”

For a moment they sat quietly. Then David asked, “The rain is interconnected with the plants? And to the lake?”

“Yes, and to the rivers and oceans, plus animals and trees.”

“What about wind? And air?”

Peg nodded. “And the changing seasons—everything affects everything else. Do you know about the azacuanes?”

David shook his head, so Peg explained, “That is another example of interconnectedness. Twice a year, a huge group of birds, but many different kinds, fly together from North America to Central America. When we see that, we can expect the weather to change. We need to know about when our season will change, as we plant different crops at different times of the year, so the birds help us know when to start different plantings. When they come next time, in October or November, we know the dry season will begin soon. The birds just seem to understand when the season will change and it is time to fly. They fly up to North America, and when it is the right season, they fly south, to El Salvador and other countries near us. And they fly together. But this is really interesting: these are not birds that are usually a flock. They don’t live together except for this trip. We don’t know how they help each other during their big flight.”

Again they were silent until David said, “My red beans are growing well up that trellis. I like vining plants, don’t you? And the corn looks good. We should get a lot of corn, beans and tomatoes from this garden this year.” Peg smiled, appreciating David’s gardening confidence.

“Let’s watch the sunset,” David suggested. Looking up at the sky and then at the garden again, he added, “Everything in nature is interconnected, so that means it is all connected with God.”

Peg nodded. She said quietly, “The God of Heaven and Earth.”

Then they both looked towards the horizon where the sky was becoming pink and gold.

### **Words to Know for this Lesson**

**Bacteria:** tiny organisms that are so small we can’t see them without a microscope; they are everywhere around us: in the air, on our skin, in our bodies, in the ground, and all throughout nature. Most won’t hurt you, but the ones called pathogens can make you sick.

**Creature:** something that is created or made; that is, every being except God the Creator. The sun, the moon, and stars; the earth, all animals which includes humans, plants, light, darkness, air, water, etc. are created by God, so are the creatures of God.

**Decompose:** to break down into simpler parts especially by the action of living things like bacteria and fungi; when a collection of leaves, fruit peels, grass clipping, etc. decomposes, it looks like soil. This is often called compost and is a natural fertilizer.

**Depend:** to need and receive help from another person or nature in order to live, or to be able to do something; to count on or trust someone.

**Fungi:** part of a large group of living things that seem like plants, but they cannot make their own food using sunlight as plants do. Fungi consume living matter, so they help decompose dead plants and animals.

**Interconnectedness:** a way in which people, nature and objects work together to create one whole system.

**Interrelated:** to be connected in a way that each thing affects the other, If you build a block tower, each block holds up the others or makes the tower taller, so each block is “related” to the others.

**Steward:** A person who takes care and manages something for an owner, such as a farm. In the bible, **stewardship** is the word for taking care of God's creation. Pope Francis explains that we must be good stewards of everything that is God's creation.

### **Just for fun: Learn about the azacuanes.**

Below is a list of some of the kinds of birds that make up the azacuanes, and some videos that will help children appreciate this phenomenon.

- turkey vulture
- osprey
- hook-billed kite
- northern harrier
- sharp-shinned hawk
- coopers hawk
- short-tailed hawk
- peregrine falcon

many more that are unidentified.

- Raptor migration: <https://donnalong.com/bird-of-prey-migration/>
- Making paper airplanes that fly like specific birds such as a turkey vulture, peregrine falcon and a crow. <https://www.audubon.org/news/these-paper-airplanes-fly-birds>

<https://vozdeladiasporanews.com/en/la-migracion-de-los-azacuanes/> (in Spanish, but you can add the English subtitles)

### **SIDEBAR:**

#### **Creating Sustainable Agriculture in El Salvador**

Peg Vamosy explains and shows her groups' work in El Salvador; it is appropriate for all ages, but best for grades 3 and up. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l3\\_EeL5tKJA](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l3_EeL5tKJA)

#### **A little information from El Salvador:**

**Family:** Daniel's family include his grandmother, father, mother, aunt, uncle, and several cousins. His father has had to leave the family for the time being to find work in the United States. His mother works four days a week, staying overnight, returning for three days.

**School:** The year begins in late January or early February and ends in November. There are two sessions each school day for grades pre-kindergarten through ninth grade. Half the students attend morning classes, the other half attend in the afternoon. This year, Daniel goes to school in the afternoons. There are no school buses. Children usually walk or take city buses to school.

Education is compulsory through ninth grade. Some students continue for 3 more years of high school, and some high schools specialize in certain areas.

**Nature and Food:** El Salvador does not have the four seasons of spring, summer, fall and winter. Instead, there is the rainy season from May through October and the dry season, from November through April. Food is grown all year, with the staple crops of corn and beans grown during the rainy season. During the dry season, vegetables are grown, such as chayote or guisquil, a kind of squash. There are many kinds of fruit trees, including mango, avocados, bananas, oranges, limes, guacas, and tangerines. They also eat flowers, such as squash blossoms, izote, pito and pacaya.

## **STEP 3: EXPLORE SCRIPTURE AND TRADITION**

**Old Testament:** Psalm 148:1-14, paraphrased  
Altogether, let us praise God the Creator!  
Angels, praise our Creator God!

Lightning, clouds, hail, rain and snow, praise God!  
Whales, sharks, dolphins, all fish  
And the deep waters of oceans, seas and rivers, praise God the Creator!  
Mountains and hills, praise our Creator God!  
Fruits trees, oak trees and all trees, praise our God!

All you animals,  
Wild and tame,  
Those that crawl, those that fly, and those that run,  
Praise God the Creator!  
All peoples,  
Young and old, kings and presidents, girls and boys, praise our God!  
Altogether, let us all praise our God the Creator!

### **Read the paraphrased psalm with children and choose a way to pray it:**

- For grades 2-5: Go for a walk to look for some aspects of nature found in the psalm. Take pictures or draw them and share with others.
- For grade K-1: Read the psalm again and have children mime the different aspects (e.g., sun and moon, deep waters, flying animals).

### **Life of Jesus:** Luke 10: 1-9

Jesus chose 72 people to travel to different places to speak of his work and teachings. They went in groups of two, bringing no money or sandals. They were told, “When you enter a house, say, ‘peace to this household.’ Stay in the same house and eat whatever food they offer you. Care for the sick of that town, And, tell all of them that the time is here to completely love God and each other.

When Jesus’ disciples traveled to teach others about Jesus, they had to depend on each other and on other people to feed and house them.

- Can you imagine more ways they might have had to depend on others?
- Who do you depend on?
- Do you give the people you depend on help in return? In what ways?

### **Christian Living:** 1 Corinthians 12:12-27

St. Paul says, “As a body is one though it has many parts, and all the parts of the body, though many are one body, so also Christ.”

He is suggesting we think about how our bodies work. We each have many parts, such as eyes, toes, heart, and bones. Each part does a certain job—ears hear, lungs breathe, etc. All these parts come together in one body and each part makes it possible for a person to live.

St. Paul used this example to show how our Church should be. Every person is important, just as each part of our body is important. Each person does something well which can help the whole church community, so we all must work together. That is called interconnectedness.

- **Read** the definition of “interconnectedness.” Then name ways that we as a class or family are interconnected.
- Discuss how we can also use St. Paul’s idea to explain the interconnectedness of humans and nature.

## **WHAT DOES THE CHURCH SAY?**

In God’s eyes, all **creatures** of the earth are **interrelated**, and all creatures need loving care.

Pope Francis tells us we must always remember our interconnectedness and our relationship with all the creatures on the earth. We must remember that there will be other creatures who will need the earth in the future too. Every creature living now and those in the future, depend on us to be good **stewards** of God's gift of creation.

- *paraphrased* from the 14th General Chapter Maryknoll Fathers and Brothers

• From September 1-October 4, we celebrate the ecumenical Season of Creation. This year's theme is "Listen to the Voice of Creation." Lead a brainstorming session to create a word list. This list is for encouraging listening for creation. Here are some suggestions:

Water is a very important gift from God. Let's think of three ways you hear water (e.g. bath water draining out of a tub, small waves at the edge of a lake, the patter of rain on large leaves).

Name different birds and other animals that you hear. Consider sharing an audio of bird sounds.

Post this list where others in your parish can see it, with information about the Season of Creation and listening for the sounds of creation.

SIDEBAR: [https://laudatosimovement.org/news/season-of-creation-2022-launch/#:~:text=The%20theme%20for%202022%20is,3%20pm%20\(Rome%20time\).](https://laudatosimovement.org/news/season-of-creation-2022-launch/#:~:text=The%20theme%20for%202022%20is,3%20pm%20(Rome%20time).)

## STEP 4: TAKE ACTION

As part of God's creation, we humans are all interconnected with each other and the rest of nature. Peg Vamosy has arranged for your children to experience this by communicating with teachers and students in El Salvador. Ideas for ways to share are listed in RAISE YOUR VOICE and ENGAGE YOUR FAMILY.

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## RAISE YOUR VOICE & ENGAGE YOUR FAMILY

Here are two projects for children in El Salvador and the United States to do and discuss through email.

### PLASTIC USE:

Pope Francis urges all people to develop a concern for the world's environment. One imperative topic that children can understand is the problem of garbage.

Children in El Salvador and the United States can each:

1) Do an online search for “images of children and garbage worldwide.” Send emails to each other to share these images.

2) Each group should learn the definitions for these phrases:

- a. Waste picker
- b. Landfill
- c. Single use plastic pollution

3) Teachers or parents help children do surveys on plastic use to help them become aware of how widespread is the use of plastic. Have a discussion to list at least five ways we use plastic for these categories:

- In toys
- Phones, other screens
- Toothbrushes, toothpaste, shampoo and other liquid soaps
- Containers for foods and drinks and for home food preparation
- Plastic bags (e.g., buying bread, fruits, vegetables, cookies, candy, etc. or for storage at home.)
- Take-out containers, straws, cups and plasticware
- Cars, busses, etc.
- Delivering packages
- Refrigerators, fans, lamps, furniture

4) With your group, recognize that some plastic use will be very difficult to replace (e.g., medical equipment) other uses will be easier (e.g., plastic bags in grocery stores). Then together list five ways they could avoid using plastic 1) when grocery shopping and 2) at home. Share these lists with your friends in the other country.

5) Have children draw pictures of the garbage problem or of the lists of how they can avoid plastic use. Take pictures of these and send by email to the other school.

6) Together, the schools could create a pledge to work towards less use of plastic. They can make posters in their school, writing the pledge in both Spanish and English. Have the children's first names on the pledge from both schools.

Additional resources on this topic for students in grade 3-5:

[https://www.diveagainstdelbris.org/publication/kids-conservation-zone?gclid=Cj0KCQjwIK-WBhDjARIsAQ2sErQyNdBBEJ0lthq-Tjq9\\_UjqBojfMhIrtzVs930XPKL\\_qyIRyryyTElaAsnfEALw\\_wcB](https://www.diveagainstdelbris.org/publication/kids-conservation-zone?gclid=Cj0KCQjwIK-WBhDjARIsAQ2sErQyNdBBEJ0lthq-Tjq9_UjqBojfMhIrtzVs930XPKL_qyIRyryyTElaAsnfEALw_wcB)

<https://www.nationalgeographic.co.uk/2018/05/we-made-plastic-we-depend-on-it-now-were-drowning-in-it>

### **ENVIRONMENTAL SURVEY:**

Children in both countries can count how many kinds of trees there are in an area and compare the variety and kinds of trees, etc. Also name mammals, birds, and other creatures. All these are an integral part of all creation. Recognizing the differences among trees and other creatures and appreciating them is the goal of this project.

- Choose an area such as a school or church grounds, a nearby park, or a backyard. It does not matter if the sizes of your groups' areas are not similar.
- Learn the names of the different trees in your area. List them and draw or do a crayon rubbing of the different kinds of leaves. Describe the different kinds of bark, using color and texture words. Do some of these trees produce flowers, fruit or nuts? Do some have a distinctive smell? Do some trees change when the seasons change?
- In a group discussion, make lists of these creatures commonly found where you live. Name kinds of:
  - Invertebrates
  - Fish
  - Amphibians
  - Reptiles
  - Birds
  - Mammals

For basic information, go to: <https://www.thoughtco.com/the-six-basic-animal-groups-4096604>

- Look for at least five different kinds of insects. How do each kind move (e.g., fly, crawl, scurry) What colors are they?
- Compare: How many on your lists live in both El Salvador and the United States?
- Speak with the children about these creatures as gifts from God that we must care for.
- Introduce the concept of stewardship. Encourage children to become good stewards.

## **BE A GLOBAL NEIGHBOR**

“With over a 100 years experience in joining our lives with communities and people throughout the world, Maryknoll missionaries discovered one humanity interconnected with all of creation. We are challenged now to act quickly to rescue Earth and its inhabitants from destruction and extinction. At the heart Maryknoll missionaries have witnessed a critical diminishment in the quality of life in many isolated and marginalized communities. We encourage all to see Earth as a whole and to respect the dignity of all people and Earth.” (Maryknoll Statement on the Global Economy and the Earth) You can support. Maryknoll Fathers & Brothers Global work by visiting <https://maryknollsociety.org/how-support/> and donating to the ongoing work of the missionaries.

If you want to learn more about vocations with Maryknoll, contact Dn. Kevin at [kmccarthy@maryknoll.org](mailto:kmccarthy@maryknoll.org)

NEXT ISSUE COMING ON MIGRATION COMING NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 2022