

INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIAL: A CATECHESIS ON STEWARDSHIP

(HCDC Diamond Jubilee Year - 2010 September 2011
and 2nd year of InSteP)

OBJECTIVES: (At the end of at least 3 sessions), the members of the HCDC community, personnel and students, would be able to:

1. understand stewardship as our fundamental Christian calling to care for life and God's creation;
2. appreciate our interdependence and communion with the whole of God's beautiful creation;
3. imbibe and advocate a consistent ethic of life in our practice of the InSteP and involvement in the CES programs.

BIBLICAL FOUNDATION:

Our faith in the mysteries of the “beginning”

- In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth (Gen. 1:1). God is the Creator of all that is, seen and unseen (*Nicene Creed*).
- Because creation comes forth from God's goodness, by and through His Eternal WORD, it shares in that goodness. God looked at everything He had made, and He found it good...very good (Gen. 1:31). Everything was made for the Glory of God!
- Man is the summit of the Creator's work...and God willed creation as a gift addressed to man, an inheritance destined for and entrusted to him (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*).



A REFLECTIVE READING OF THE WORD OF GOD:

First Three Chapters of Genesis

Read in the light of Christ, within the unity of Sacred Scripture and in the living Tradition of the Church, these texts remain the principal sources for catechesis on the mysteries of the “beginning”: creation, fall, and promise of salvation (CCC 289).



Years of Evangelization with Gratitude and Hope

THE MYSTERY OF LIFE AND OF COMMUNION

"All things are connected. Whatever befalls the earth, befalls the children of the earth. We did not weave the web of life. We are merely strands in it. Whatever we do to the web, we do to ourselves." (Chief Seattle of the Duwamish tribe of Oregon)

The issue of environmental degradation:

A challenge to examine our lifestyles

The United Nations proclaimed 2010 the International Year of Biodiversity. Our Philippine government, through Proclamation no. 178 has declared 2011 to 2020 the National decade on Biodiversity. The reasons for these proclamations are obvious and need no further elaboration. The motto of UN says it all: **Biodiversity is life: Biodiversity is our life.**



Our country's ecosystems, to take an example from home, provide the essentials of life for millions of Filipinos. But, sad to say, these life support systems are on the verge of extinction. The Philippine biodiversity is endangered. And widespread destruction of natural habitats, which is one of the main reasons of rapid diversity loss, continues...

Not only the Philippines, but our planet, humankind, and every other creature are facing very serious ecological crises – climate change and the destruction of global biological diversity, in theological language, the irreversible destruction of God's creation. We know it, we experience it. This, according to the late John Paul II (now Blessed), calls for an "ecological conversion" for everyone (*JP II's address on January 17, 2001*).

In Peace with God the Creator, Peace with All Creation (no.13), the late Pope wrote: "Modern society will find no solution to the ecological problem unless it takes a serious look at its lifestyle. In many parts of the world, society is given to instant gratification and consumerism while remaining indifferent to the damage which these cause. ...Simplicity, moderation and discipline, as well as a spirit of sacrifice, must become a part of everyday life, lest all suffer the negative consequences of the careless habits of a few." Pope Benedict in *If You Want Peace, Protect Creation*, repeats the same message. In no. 09, he writes: "technologically-advanced societies must be prepared to encourage more sober lifestyle."

Spirituality of stewardship:

An option for a simple way of life

In November of 2009, the Holy Cross of Davao College institutionalized the stewardship program (InSteP)¹. Anchored on the theological framework that everything belongs to God, this program...is meant to be permanently an important program of this catholic college (*Melliza and Giron, 2009*).



The new President of the school, during his Inauguration, reiterated the call to support this worthwhile initiative: "Along with our thrust for excellence, we shall strengthen, too, our resolve to heed the call to stewardship, and sustain it by opting for a way of life that is simple and capable of checking excesses and unbridled wastes in our personal and institutional life" (*President's Inaugural Speech, 2010*).

After more than a year, InSteP remains a major challenge to the HCDC community. While there are already indicators that the program is making headways in the practices of some offices, stewardship as a way of life still has a long way to take root in the minds and hearts of our people in school. A continuing institution-wide catechesis is imperative. It is hoped that the Diamond Jubilee beckons all Holy Crossians to take the challenge seriously...with gratitude and joy!

Imbibing a consistent ethic of life:
Fundamental in addressing consumerism

Today, consumerism has taken a hold around the world... [It] is like a tsunami which has engulfed human cultures and is degrading the earth's ecosystems. Left unaddressed, we risk global disaster (*Worldwatch Institute Report, 2010*). Not only does it destroy our ecosystems, consumerism pollutes our moral value system and erodes the quality of our life. Given to consumerism and instant gratification, we have developed a "throw-away/disposal" culture (in which everything is replaced or discarded in an ever-increasing rate) and acquired an unsustainable lifestyle. Even life itself becomes disposal.



As "stewards of life...and of God's creation" (CCC no.372-373), we have not consistently acted as such. While we verbally profess that we care about our environment and that we are pro-life, our actions and attitudes do not confirm and, at times, even run contrary to what we say. **Our reverence for life is not always consistent.** It will not do to be pro-life only in some aspects but be anti-life in other aspects; to be for life but not care for the environment; or to be so concerned about the environment but have an anti-life stance in some issues about life. We are to promote a consistent ethic of life (*Bp Bacani, Catholics and the RH Bill, 2008*).

The Office of the President comes up with this catechetical material to help in the understanding and appreciation of our call to stewardship.

The objective is to imbibe and advocate a consistent ethic of life in our practice of InSteP and involvement in the CES programs.

From the Church's documents and from the Scriptures, we draw the following basic principles and requirements of a consistent ethic of life for our internalization:

- Made in the image of God (*Gen 1:27*), the first man was not only created good but was established in friendship with the Creator and with creation around him...Adam and Eve were constituted in an original "state of holiness and justice." The grace of original holiness is to share in God's divine life....The inner harmony of the human person, the harmony between man and woman, and the harmony between the first couple and all creation, comprised the state called original justice (CCC 374-376).
- God did not make death, and he does not delight in the death of the living (CCC 413).
- Sin destroys the original harmony (CCC 400). Because of man, creation is now subject "to its decay" (*Rom 8:21*). Death enters into human history (*Rom 5:12*).



- **Life is sacred. It comes from God** (*Gen 2:7*). It is God's property. Whatever belongs to God is not ours to violate. We have no options on it but to respect it. We can only understand the seriousness of the fifth commandment, *You shall not kill* (*Ex 20:13*), when we appreciate the sanctity of life. A consistent ethic of life respects, protects and promotes human life from the moment of conception to its natural end.

- Because of this high appreciation of the value of every human life, a consistent ethic of life forbids the direct killing or injuring of human being: Direct abortion, infanticide, capital punishment, euthanasia, physician-assisted suicide, and all forms of killings (except killing in self-defense) are all excluded by a consistent ethic of life. Pro-lifers oppose these death-dealing practices because they usurp a divine prerogative and violate divine rights.

On the macro level, Bishop Bacani, in *Catholics and the RH Bill*, considered the following elements of this ethic of life (p. 79):

- A consistent ethic of life will reject and condemn any war of aggression and will allow only a defensive war.

- A pro-life mentality and spirituality will also reject professional boxing and similar sports where the protagonists seek directly to hurt the opponent or even to knock him unconscious.



Similarly, truly pro-life people will eschew the display of excessive violence in the movies, television [and in the internet] that causes viewers to be desensitized to the violence in real life.

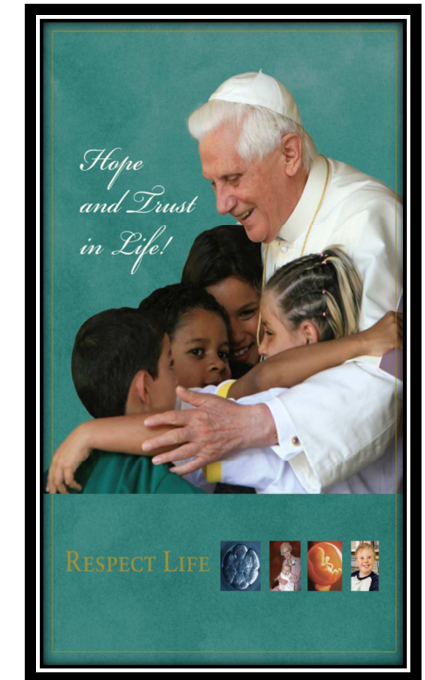
- A consistent ethic of life requires that we struggle to eliminate or at least diminish to the greatest extent dehumanizing poverty and the social structures (ways of behaving, systems of relationships,

and laws) which prevent persons from living a decent human life (pp. 77-78).

- And because we now realize the interconnectedness of all creatures in our planet and in the universe, a consistent pro-life ethic will work for a healthy environment and sustainable development.

From the Gospel of Life, we hear our Lord saying: I have come that they may have life and have it to the full (Jn 10:10). Jesus is the fullness of life. His gift is eternal life (Jn 10:28).

- In the Christian consistent ethic of life, all work for protection, defense, and promotion of life will have as its ultimate horizon and goal not only life in this world but eternal life as well. A consistent ethic of life safeguards the humanity of every living human being from conception, through death, to eternity.
- All our actions [and advocacies] for living beings will be truly pro-life only if carried out in love and for love. For in the end, it is love which is life-giving, and all true life can thrive only in love.



Spirituality of STEWARDSHIP¹

GOD IS THE OWNER OF EVERYTHING
"Everything is a Gift"

Human Person is . . .

- Image and Likeness of God (Gen. 1:26-27)
- Intimate with God (Breath of God) (Gen. 2:27)
- To till and to care (Gen. 2:15)
- Disciple of Jesus Christ (faith and conversion)

STEWARD

A faithful Manager of what belongs to another or who is accountable to the owner

Stewardship

. . . A WAY OF LIFE

. . . A CALL TO A HOLY LIFE

. . . A MATURE DISCIPLESHIP

(A life style that reflects who we are and what we believe)

- Is an expression of discipleship with the power to change how we understand and live out our lives
- Is not a noun, Stewardship is an action word

CONSERVATION

- Maximum utilization of resources (human/material)
- Budget optimization
- Minimization of Expenses (operational definition)
- Energy/Water conservation

SIMPLE LIFESTYLE

- Live simply
- Option for simple living
- Financial management
- Culture of saving

TOTAL WASTE MANAGEMENT

- Segregation
- Zero Waste
- Re-cycling
- Ecological advocacy

OTHER CONCRETE ACTIONS

Co-responsibility

- Respecting Life
- Fraternal Correction
- Shepherding
- Peacemaking

SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINE

- Power to change how we live (paradigm shift)
- Taking and giving
- Social responsibility
- A lifestyle of sharing of time, talent, treasure
- Values Re-Orientation to God's Plan
- Formed commitment
- Conscious decision
- Prayerful life

Communal prayer: Vision of the cosmos
(From *Earthsongs, Praying with nature*)

Opening

Creator of all life, help us to understand that we are not self-sufficient but live in a world created by You...a world of participants in your creative love. Help us to realize that no matter how remote or indifferent we might feel, we are intimately related to the entirety of creation.

O God, we pray for a vision that embraces earth, sky, galaxies, countless constellations, the entire luminous universe in you.

Psalm

Yahweh, You are good to all and have compassion on all your works. All your works give you thanks, O God, and all your faithful ones bless you. They discourse on the glory of your reign and speak of your might....

The eyes of all look hopefully to you, and you give them bread in due season. You open your hand and satisfy the desire of every living thing. Yahweh, you are just in all your ways and loving in all your works. (*Psalms 145: 9-17*)



Reading

For me, my God, all joy and all achievement, the very purpose of my being and all my love of life, all depend on this one basic vision of the union between yourself and the universe. Let others, fulfilling a function more august than mine, proclaim your splendours as

pure Spirit; as for me, dominated as I am by a vocation which springs from the inmost fibres of my being, I have no desire, I have no ability, to proclaim anything except the innumerable prolongations of your incarnate Being in the world of matter. (*Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, Hymn of the Universe*)

Hymn

The earth is my mother, she will always be near.
The Sun, my father, I have nothing to fear.
The moon is my sister, standing with me at night.
The stars are my cousins who guide in me in flight.
The Great Spirit is my God of life and of love.

Closing

God of hope, may a planetary consciousness help us to realize our responsibility to meet you at the center of the world and to work to protect the environment through a new set of values, a new ethic that moves us beyond self-interest. Amen

Institutional fast: An invitation
(From *With heart on fire*)

This short reflection serves as an invitation to rediscover and experience the benefits of the ancient and traditional practice of fasting.

.....All kinds of people are again fasting. Athletes, boxers, musicians, dancers, astronauts, medical professionals, religious, students, teachers, designers, writers, secretaries, bus drivers, store managers, homemakers, people from all backgrounds and in all professions are doing it.

We are surrounded by people who stopped smoking, restrained their drinking, or became vegetarians, people who overcame their addiction to caffeine, sugar, chocolate, alcohol, nicotine and drugs.

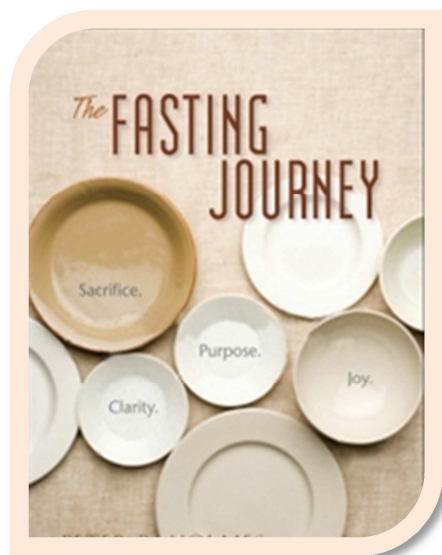
They shop in health shops, drink soya milk, eat lean food, and watch their weight and calories. These changes in their lifestyle have something to do with what one might call body-ecology.

For almost all of these people fasting is a conscious option for a healthier life and a clearer mind. Even for those whose religious faith can't motivate them to do it, fasting seems worth doing.

Others don't fast only for their own sake. They do it also for the sake of others, for the sake of the earth, and for God's sake. They restrict their over-consumption so they can support others who haven't enough to consume and to live with. They do it opting for life – their own life and the lives of others. (Fr. Thomas Ryan (1981). *Fasting rediscovered: A guide to health and wholeness for your body-spirit*)

The essence of fasting is “self-control” for a higher cause. Hence, examine: What higher cause are you working and living for? What discipline and self-control could you embrace so as to open yourself more to this higher cause?

Think what might happen if we, individually and as institution, resolve to fast once a week, preferably on a Friday, or simply skip one meal during the week...**for the sake of a higher cause!**



[A note: On the Church's law on fasting]

All adults are bound by the law of fast up to the beginning of their sixtieth year. Before the reforms of Vatican II (1963-1965), Lent used to be a season for daily fasting except on Sundays. Now our lifestyle has swung to the opposite end of the ritual pendulum. We have only two official and mandatory fasting days: Ash Wednesday and Good Friday. We have gone from the old culture of fasting to fastfoods.



Recommended reading: For personal reflection
(From *A Pilgrim's Almanac, The web of life*)

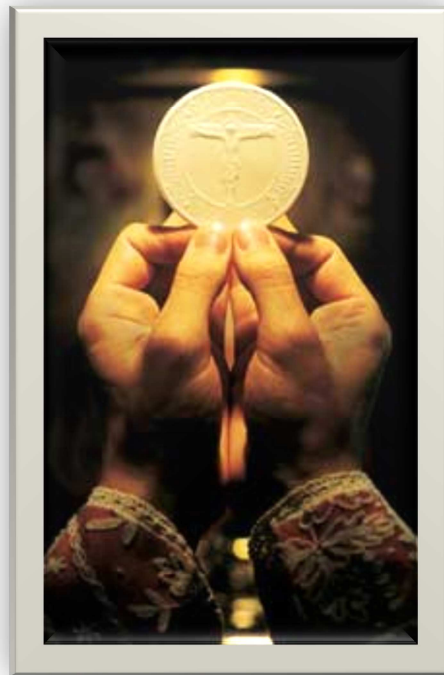
All of creation – women, men, plants, animals and all the earth – intertwined and interdependent as are the numerous strands of a spider's web. Not only is all creation connected, it is in communion. Since God created it and shares the divine life with it, the web is holy. To live in an awareness of that communion is to believe in these words of St. Paul: “As the human body which has many parts is a unity, and those parts, despite their multiplicity, constitute one single body, so it is with Christ. God has harmonized the whole body...that the body should work together as a whole with all the members in a sympathetic relationship with one another” (1 Cor. 12: 24-26).

Holy communion is not simply a religious ritual, it is a way of life that expresses a belief in the holiness of the body, the entire body of Christ. The ancient ritual of going to Holy Communion not only places us at the very heart of the web, it is meant to lead to a life lived in communion with all the various strands of the web of life.

Jesus also spoke of this central mystery of our interdependence with one another and with him, of the mystery of our intercommunion: "I am the vine and you are the branches. Abide in me, as I do in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it remains on the vine, so neither can you unless you abide in me" (*Jn. 15: 4-5*). The branches of the vine, the strands of the spider's web and the interconnection of the various parts of the human body all speak of the same divine truth.

As followers of Christ we are to "love our enemies" (*Mt. 5: 44*), for even our enemies are part of the web. If we hate anyone, then we ultimately hate ourselves and even God. Holy Communion is not simply oneness with the good and the beautiful, it is also harmony between the rich and the poor, friends and enemies, sick and healthy, old and young – for all peoples are part of the web of life.

Our communion with God must also extend to all of life. Sky and earth, oceans and flowers, birds and animals, the planets and stars are all parts of the holy web. As we struggle with the problems of our



pollution of the earth, of its water and air, we begin to see more clearly the mystery of which Chief Seattle, Paul and Jesus spoke: that whatever we do to the web of life, we do to ourselves.

St. Paul was concerned about the proper preparation of those who were about to receive Holy Communion. "One must test oneself before eating one's share of the bread and drinking from the cup. For they who eat and drink, eat and drink judgment on themselves if they do not discern the Body" (*1 Cor. 12: 28-29*). To discern the body is to recognize Christ throughout the web of life. A reverence for the Body of Christ in Holy Communion must include a reverence for the various strands of the web of life, a reverence for earth, rivers, trees and the air that we and all the rest of creation breathe. That communion may be as simple as sitting by a potted plant on a window sill, reverencing the earth we walk on, the clouds that float overhead or the trees we pass on our walk. We prepare for Holy Communion each time we are in communion with the rain or snow as well as with the poor or imprisoned.

We also prepare to go to Holy Communion by taking time to be in communion within ourselves. As we take time to pray, being alone to listen to our needs and inner struggles, our awareness expands to embrace the struggles of all the members of Christ's body.

We test our state of preparation by our ability to see God in the children and the aged, in people who are like us and those who are very different. When we reverence the presence of the holy in the suffering, the sick and dying as well as in the members of our own families, then we live in Christ and experience the fullness of life itself. For Jesus said that all who abide in him would bear fruit, and that fruit is indeed life!

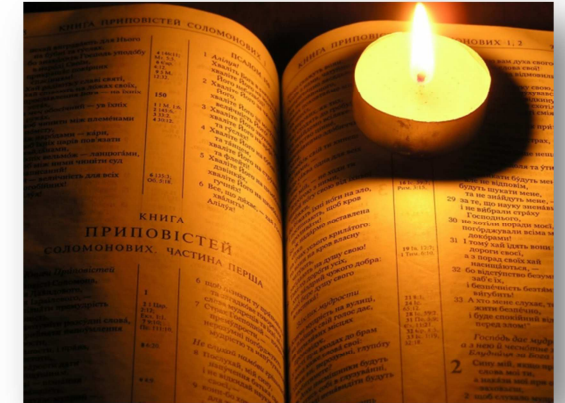
A thought about the
life St. Francis of
Assisi: Patron of
ecology

St. Francis, the poor man of Assisi, offers Christians an example of genuine and deep respect for integrity of creation. For him, all things reflect the love and wisdom of their Creator and are thus due reverence and wonder....He gives us striking witness that when we are at peace with God we are better able to devote ourselves to building up that peace with all creation which is inseparable from peace among peoples (JP II *In peace with God the Creator, peace with all creation*, no.16). In this spirit Francis composed his famous "*Cantico delle Creature*," singing the praises of Brother Sun and Sister Moon.

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Years of Evangelization with Gratitude and Hope

THE CANTICLE OF THE CREATURES²

Most High, all-powerful, all-good Lord,
All praise is Yours, all glory, honor and blessings. To you alone,
Most High, do they belong; no mortal lips are worthy to
pronounce Your Name.

We praise You, Lord, for all Your creatures,
especially for Brother Sun,
who is the day through whom You give us light. And he is
beautiful and radiant with great splendor, of You Most High, he
bears your likeness.

We praise You, Lord, for Sister Moon and the stars,
in the heavens you have made them bright, precious and fair.

We praise You, Lord, for Brothers Wind and Air,
fair and stormy, all weather's moods, by which You cherish all
that You have made.

We praise You, Lord, for Sister Water,
so useful, humble, precious and pure.

We praise You, Lord, for Brother Fire,
through whom You light the night. He is beautiful, playful, robust,
and strong.

We praise You, Lord, for Sister Earth,
who sustains us with her fruits, colored flowers, and herbs.

We praise You, Lord, for those who pardon,
for love of You bear sickness and trial. Blessed are those who
endure in peace, by You Most High, they will be crowned.

We praise You, Lord, for Sister Death,
from whom no-one living can escape. Woe to those who die in
their sins! Blessed are those that She finds doing Your Will.
No second death can do them harm.

We praise and bless You, Lord, and give You thanks,
and serve You in all humility. Amen.