



Human Effect on the Environment

“Then God said: Let us make human beings in our image, after our likeness. Let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, the birds of the air, the tame animals, all the wild animals, and all the creatures that crawl on the earth” – Genesis 1: 26

Introduction

God gave us dominion over the earth, not to dominate, but to care for it. We are called to respect God’s creation, following our Creator’s plan for life and love. Using the principles of Reduce, Reuse, Recycle and Leave Not Trace, along with reflections from our recent Popes Benedict and Francis, we will explore what it means to be good stewards of creation.

Student Performance Objectives

Through participation in this activity students will:

- Describe the flow of energy needed to put food on our tables
- Understand that each choice we make affects the entirety of creation, humans and land alike
- Brainstorm ways to be good stewards of the earth through reducing, reusing, and recycling and Leave No Trace principles
- Identify materials to be recycled, reused, or composted
- Identify rates of decomposition in various household items
- Understand the effect of decomposition rates on the environment
- Discuss the complexity of current “hot topic” environmental issues and how to approach them through a Christocentric lens

Archdiocesan Standards

- 4th Grade Earth and Space Science; Earth and Human Activity 1
- 4th Grade Engineering; Engineering Design 2
- 5th Grade Earth and Space Science; Earth and Human Activity 1
- 5th Grade Engineering; Engineering Design 2
- MS-PS1-3
- MS-LS2-4
- MS-ESS3-3
- MS-ESS3-4
- 4th Grade Religion 7
- 6th Grade Religion 6, 7

Activities

- Ort Activity and Skit
 - Beginning with an interactive skit, students will learn about energy flow and the food chain as we discuss where our food comes from. After the first meal, all food waste will be collected and weighed. As students gain awareness of our individual impact on the environment, they will brainstorm ways to reduce their personal food waste. Goals will be set for decreasing food waste and progress charted throughout the remainder of the retreat.
- Drum Circle
 - Every choice we make in life has an effect on the world and our fellow men, whether we can see it or not. Through the beat (and sometimes clamor!) of instruments, the students will demonstrate how each separate unit affects the whole.
- Trash Timeline
 - Students will be presented with a box of trash and recyclable items and will create a visual “timeline” depicting the relative amount of time it takes for the items to decompose.
- Recycle Relay

- We throw away many items every day. But should they all be thrown away? Students will participate in a relay race determining if items are biodegradable, household hazardous waste, recyclable, or trash.
- Environmental Issues Cards
 - From climate change to resource depletion, environmental issues comprise a substantial amount of our political and social dialogue. Today's students are exposed to a variety of opinions on these issues through the media, family members, etc., but what do they really believe? Using the think, pair, share learning strategy, students are given a safe space to discuss environmental topics that are important to them. No matter what "side" they make take, students are encouraged to understand the complexity of these multifaceted issues and to always approach these discussions with Christ-centered lens.