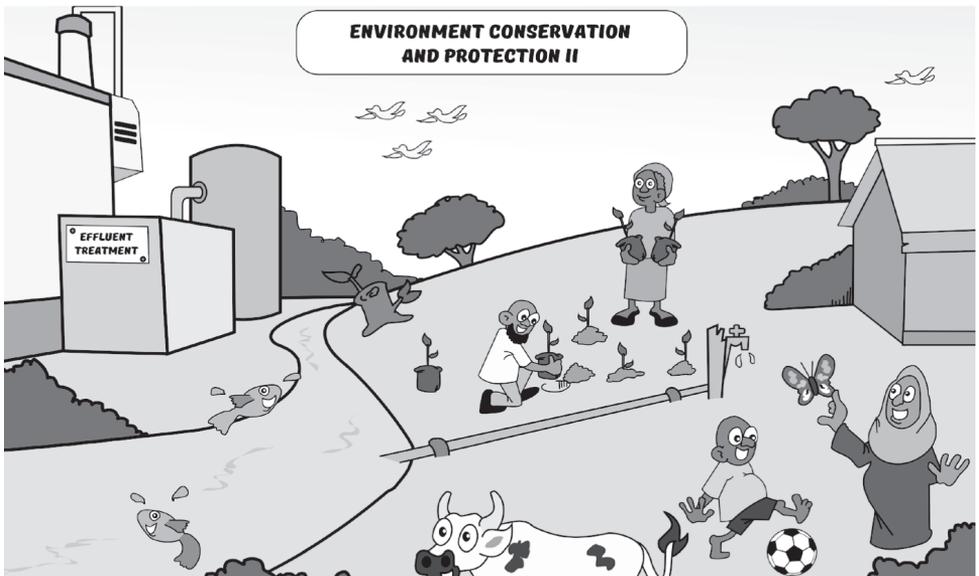


Week One

Environmental Conservation and Protection



Environmental Conservation and Protection

See: Story

Sikujua, one of the villages in Kwetu County, was endowed with mountains and natural forests. The mountains were the source of streams of freshwater and home for various bird and animal species. The villagers always had enough to eat as the soils were fertile.

As years went by, the village population grew. Human activities like farming, setting up of industries and demand for land increased. People moved into the forests and destroyed the water source and natural habitat for animals. Forests became bare and rivers dried up.

The situation was worsened by industries which dumped waste chemicals into rivers and lakes, affecting marine life. These activities affected the ecosystem, causing low yield in food production. Sikujua village was ravaged by severe hunger, malnutrition, strange diseases, prolonged droughts, floods and landslides. All these were caused by the destruction of the environment.

The increased environmental problems and calamities became a major source of concern to the community, which came together to discuss the predicament. Local religious and political leaders, the government's environmental agencies and other stakeholders in environmental conservation and preservation were invited to advice and help to advocate for the protection and restoration of the environment. They resolved to raise awareness within the community on tree planting, good farming practices including the use of organic fertilizers, crop rotation, agroforestry and protection of wetlands. They proposed ways of improving waste management and reached out to local industries to adopt environmentally friendly waste disposal. As a result, the society enjoyed the benefits of a clean and healthy environment for all.

Judge: Situation analysis

Pope Francis (*Laudato Si*, 2016) poses an urgent challenge to protect our common home ... to bring the whole human family together to seek a sustainable and integral development, which resonates with the Catholic Social Teaching. We are damaging our relationship with our "common home" as we harm the environment. In so doing, we are damaging our relationship with other humans, particularly the vulnerable, the poor and future generations. We are forgetting our interconnectedness with the earth and humanity who depend on our good stewardship of the gift of creation. (No.13)

The state of our common home is scaring: climate change is the greatest life threat our earth has ever seen. It is caused by humans and has led to the depletion of freshwater and loss of biodiversity, global warming, negative impact of carbon-intensive economies on the natural world and human life, social and environmental impacts of mining. In our society today, the environment is threatened by human activities that have caused environmental degradation, global warming and climate change. These effects have reached levels that threaten human security and the ecosystem in general. We have witnessed deforestation, poor farming practices, improper waste disposal and management that are leading to depletion of the natural resources like air, water and soil; destruction of the ecosystem and habitats; extinction of wildlife and pollution. (UNEP). We have experienced long spells of droughts, flooding and unpredictable weather patterns due to climate change that can be directly linked to poor decisions on our ecosystems, energy, natural resources, urban expansion, infrastructure, production, consumption and waste management.

Pope Francis is inviting us to embrace the “Gospel of Creation”, that considers the world the way that God intended it. He warns us of consumerist and profit-driven economic ideologies of exploitation, and a throwaway attitude towards nature and human life itself. He advises us to slow down and look at reality in a different way. We are called to solidarity as one human family with shared responsibility for others and for creation. There is need for international collective actions: (to switch from fossil fuels to renewables), and international agreements and legislation not only in relation to climate change but also biodiversity and the oceans. It is time to act, change our lifestyle and consumption. Believers and nonbelievers, families and communities are invited to make a difference in small but tangible ways. A deeper spiritual “ecological conversion may be attained through consumer choices, education and cultivation of ecological virtues such as reducing wastefulness and environmental awareness creation for all”.

Prof Wangari Maathai (2004) reminded us that: “Protecting and restoring the environment contributes to peace; it is peace work ... I always felt that our work was not simply about planting trees. It was about inspiring people to take charge of their environment, the system that governed them, their lives and their future.”

Pope Francis insists that injustice is not invincible (*Laudato Si no. 74*) and we believe that we seek to live out God’s vision of renewed relationships with Him, ourselves, one another and creation.

Readings

Deuteronomy 26:1-11

Romans 10:8-13

Luke 4:1-13

Spiritual reflection

The theme of this Sunday is the temptation of Jesus. God gave us the governance of creation. He expects us to be good stewards of the creation. But now and then we are tempted to violate the creation through our selfishness and greed. Just as Jesus was challenged to remain faithful to the Father, we have the same challenge. God wants us to profess that he is in control and we should never doubt his love. The second reading reminds us that our trust of God must be manifested in our lives and proclaimed by our words.

Act: Reflection questions

1. What are some of the major environmental concerns we are facing as a community?
2. What are some of the negative effects of climate change and what can I or we, as Small Christian Communities (SCC), do about it?
3. What are some of the practical actions that I or we, as Small Christian Community, can take to address these concerns?
4. How do I/we as SCC take care of my/our surrounding?

Examination of conscience

Have I disposed garbage in undesignated areas?

Have I polluted the environment?

Action plan

1. Tree planting.
2. Garbage collection and cleaning.
3. Proper use of water and paper, especially at places of work.
4. Involvement of experts on environment to advise on environmental preservation and conservation.