

care for God's creation

COUNTRY SPOTLIGHT: NICARAGUA

LESSON PLANS GRADES 1-8



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background information for session leaders



CARE FOR GOD'S CREATION

Care for God's Creation is one of the seven principles of Catholic social teaching, as outlined by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, or USCCB. We believe that God created the world and all living things. Creation reflects God's glory: "Ever since the creation of the world, his invisible attributes of eternal power and divinity have been able to be understood and perceived in what he has made." (Romans 1:20) We honor God by taking care of what he has created and being good stewards of the earth. By caring for creation, we also help protect people and the planet.



Nancy Bargayo and her family lost everything to Typhoon Haiyan. Today, a CRS-supported program is helping them earn a living growing crops and rearing pigs.
Photo courtesy of Lukasz Cholewiak/Caritas for CRS

CATHOLIC RELIEF SERVICES

Catholic Relief Services is the official international humanitarian agency of the Catholic community in the United States. We are motivated by the example of Jesus Christ to assist poor and suffering people in more than 100 countries on the basis of need, without regard to race, religion or nationality. Founded in 1943, CRS reaches 85 million of the world's poorest people each year with innovative solutions to poverty, hunger, drought, disease and emergencies. CRS works in close partnership with the Catholic Church around the world, and with local, national and international organizations that share our commitment to finding ways to meet immediate needs while empowering communities for the long term.

CARE FOR GOD'S CREATION AND CRS

CRS helps farmers like Melvin Sánchez Ramírez care for creation by teaching them how to preserve their harvests and grow other crops. These crops add nutritious variety to family meals, and ensure vital diversity so the family isn't relying on one crop for their livelihood.

CRS, Keurig Green Mountain Inc. and the Global Water Initiative are working with coffee farmers in Central America to treat wastewater produced from coffee washing.
Photo by Oscar Leiva/Silverlight for CRS



Melvin's story



Melvin Sánchez Ramírez makes his living as a coffee farmer in one of the poorest regions of Nicaragua. For him, his wife and his son, it has always been a challenge, but they've managed to get by. Then came coffee leaf rust. The fungus killed so many of Melvin's plants, he had no coffee to sell. His family struggled to put food on the table. Catholic Relief Services helped teach farmers like Melvin how to protect their plants from leaf rust and how to grow other crops, like plantains and sweet potatoes. Some farmers in the area are even learning to keep bees for honey and raise hens for eggs. Families like Melvin's, who rely on the earth for their food and work, are very aware of how caring for creation directly affects human life.

Top: Rising temperatures in Nicaragua mean farmers' coffee crops have been plagued by coffee leaf rust. CRS is showing them how to plant alternative crops for food and income. Above left: Nicaragua, the largest country in Central America, has a largely agricultural economy. Right: Melvin with his family. Map credit: OCHA. Photos by Oscar Leiva/Silverlight for CRS



CARE FOR GOD'S CREATION

God created every plant, every mountaintop, every animal—everything. And God said that these things are good. We must take care of creation—both for ourselves and for all of our human family.

Care for God's creation

COUNTRY SPOTLIGHT: NICARAGUA

LESSON PLAN GRADES 1-3

45 Minutes

OBJECTIVE

Students will learn about the Catholic social teaching principle Care for God's Creation (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, Seven Themes of Catholic Social Teaching) through the story of Melvin Sánchez Ramírez, a coffee farmer in Nicaragua. They will consider their own role in caring for God's creation by creating a model.

MATERIALS

- Ball of clay or play dough for each student
- Bible
- **Care for God's Creation Activity Sheet, Grades 1-3**
- **Melvin's Story**
- Coloring supplies
- Whiteboard and marker
- World map

DISCUSSION (20 MINUTES)

1. Read Genesis 2:4-7
2. On the board, draw a sun with rays and hills below it. Ask students to name things God created. Write their answers on the hills. Share how our faith invites us to care for all of God's creation.
3. Ask students to name ways they can care for God's creation. Write ideas on the sun rays.
4. Distribute **Care for God's Creation Activity Sheet, Grades 1-3**, and coloring supplies. Allow time for students to share their answers and drawings.

5. Locate Nicaragua on a map and read **Melvin's Story**.
6. Invite students to share examples of how farmers care for God's creation. Write these ideas on the sun diagram on the board.

ACTIVITY (20 MINUTES)

1. Give each child a ball of clay or play dough to make a model of something God created. Allow students time to share their creation with the class.
2. Discuss with students: How would you like other people to treat the thing that you made?
3. Close by reminding students, again, that our faith calls us to care for God's creation.

CLOSING PRAYER (5 MINUTES)

Loving God, we pray for Melvin and his family. You have made our beautiful world. Help us keep it beautiful. Help us take care of the animals, the plants and each other. We do this for ourselves, our neighbors and for Melvin and his family. We do this for you, God. Amen

TAKING IT HOME

Invite students to take their clay models home and share them with their families.

care for God's creation

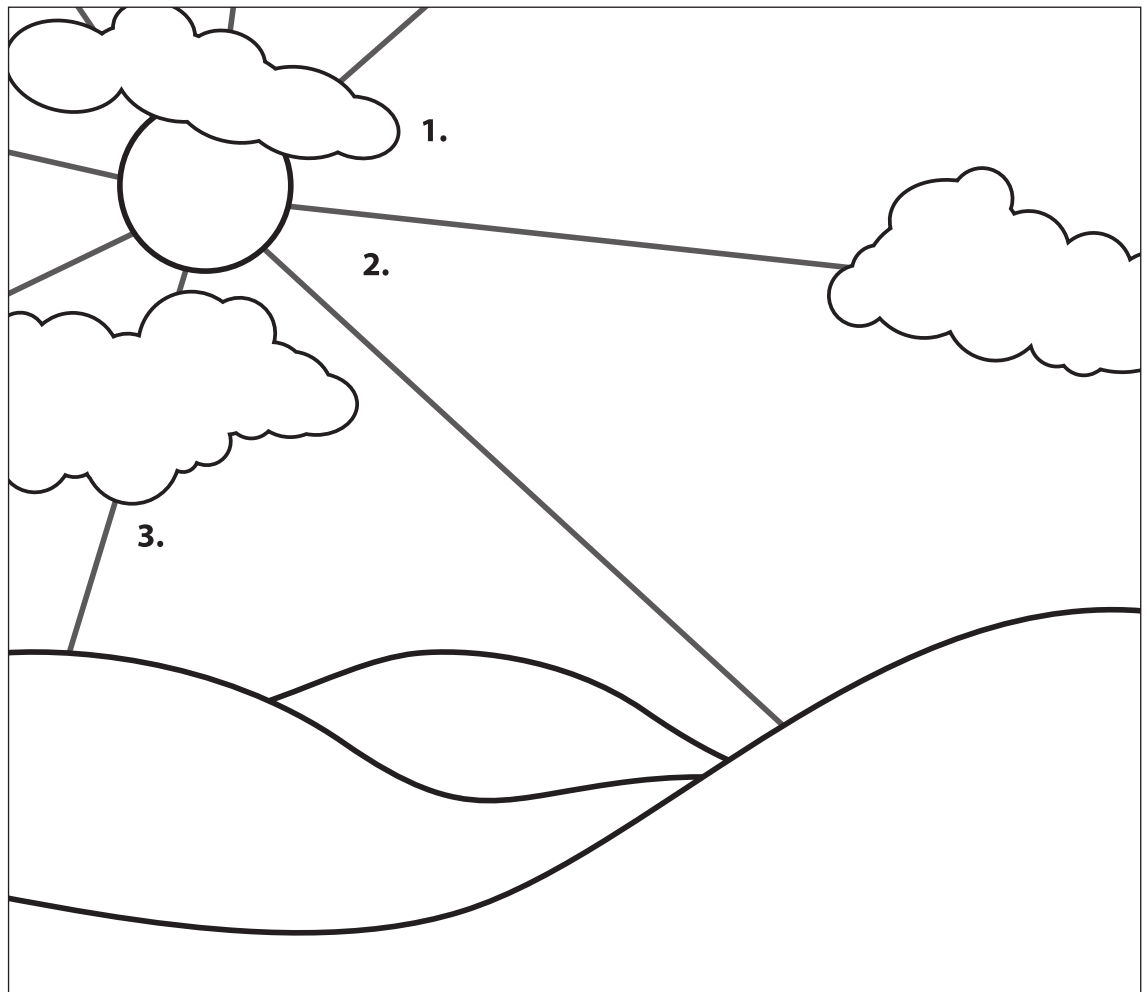
COUNTRY SPOTLIGHT: NICARAGUA

ACTIVITY SHEET GRADES 1-3



Our faith invites us to care for all that God has created.

1. On the hills, draw things that God has created.
2. What can you do to take care of God's gift of creation? Write your answers on the rays of sun.



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COUNTRY SPOTLIGHT: NICARAGUA

LESSON PLAN GRADES 4-6

35 Minutes

OBJECTIVE

Students will learn about the Catholic social teaching principle Care for God's Creation (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, Seven Themes of Catholic Social Teaching) through the story of Melvin Sánchez Ramírez, a coffee farmer in Nicaragua. Students will examine how growing different crops helps farmers.

MATERIALS

- Bible
- **Care for Creation Activity Sheet, Grades 4-6**
- **Melvin's Story**
- Pens or pencils
- Whiteboard and marker
- World map

DISCUSSION (10 MINUTES)

1. Read Genesis 2:15. Describe the Catholic social teaching principle Care for God's creation and emphasize that one reason we care for creation is because it directly affects the well-being of people. Tell students they will learn more about this as they reflect on **Melvin's Story**.
2. Locate Nicaragua on a map.
3. Distribute **Melvin's Story** and read it together.
4. Ask students to call out the different crops that are mentioned in **Melvin's Story**. Write these in one column on the whiteboard. In a second column, ask students to call out the different things that these crops need: water, soil, sunlight, human care, etc. Point out that each crop or animal needs different amounts of these resources.

ACTIVITY (20 MINUTES)

1. Distribute the **Care for God's Creation Activity Sheet, Grades 4-6**, to each student.
2. Follow the instructions on the activity sheet. When you get to Part 2, invite students to look at the photo of coffee leaf rust in **Melvin's Story** and to read the photo caption.
3. Ask them to fill in Part 3 of the activity sheet and to share their answers with the class.
4. Highlight the relationship between creation and people. Emphasize that rural farmers who rely directly on creation for their food and work are especially sensitive to any changes in the environment.

CLOSING PRAYER (5 MINUTES)

Re-read Genesis 2:15

Loving God, we thank you for all of the gifts of the earth, and we pray that we always remember to cultivate and care for your creation. Amen

TAKING IT HOME

Encourage students to ask their families if they can go to the supermarket with them. Ask them to walk through the coffee aisle and to look at the packaging to see where the coffee was made. Tell them to look for labels that say "fair trade" or "organic," which mean creation was respected while the coffee was grown.

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COUNTRY SPOTLIGHT: NICARAGUA

ACTIVITY SHEET GRADES 4-6



You are a farmer in Nicaragua and must make \$100 to feed your family.

PART 1

This is your coffee farm.



PART 2

Your coffee plants have a sickness called coffee leaf rust and 70 percent of your crops have died this year. Cross off seven of your plants on your farm.

How much money will you make from selling your coffee? _____

Is this enough money to feed your family? Yes No

How much money do you still need? _____

PART 3

Pick a combination of the crops on the left to add to your farm. You must choose at least one of each crop. Remember, the total value of your crops, including coffee, needs to add up to at least \$100 to feed your family. Circle the crops you want.

How much money will you make from selling your new crops? _____

Is this enough money to feed your family? Yes No

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COUNTRY SPOTLIGHT: NICARAGUA

LESSON PLAN GRADES 7-8

45 Minutes

OBJECTIVE

Students will learn about the Catholic social teaching principle Care for God's Creation (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, Seven Themes of Catholic Social Teaching) through the story of Melvin Sánchez Ramírez, a coffee farmer in Nicaragua. Students examine how crop diversification helps farmers.

MATERIALS

- Bibles
- Coloring supplies
- Pens or pencils
- **Melvin's Story**
- **Care for God's Creation Activity Sheet, Grades 7-8**
- Whiteboard and marker
- World map

DISCUSSION (20 MINUTES)

1. Describe the Catholic social teaching principle Care for God's Creation and emphasize that one reason we care for creation is because it directly affects the well-being of people. Tell students that they will learn more about this as they reflect on **Melvin's Story**.
2. Locate Nicaragua on a map. Distribute **Melvin's Story** and read it together.
3. Ask students to call out the different crops that are mentioned in **Melvin's Story**. Write these in one column on the whiteboard. In a second column, ask students to call out the different things that these crops need: water, soil, sunlight, human care, etc. Point out that each crop or animal needs different amounts of these resources.

4. Reading aloud each crop or animal product listed, ask students to share if their families have ever purchased any of these items. Make a third column with a tally to show their answers. Explain that all people rely directly on creation for their food, especially rural farmers.

ACTIVITY (20 MINUTES)

1. Distribute the **Care for God's Creation Activity Sheets, Grades 7-8**, and coloring supplies and allow students time to complete them.
2. If time allows, have students discuss their responses to the prompts with the class.

CLOSING PRAYER (5 MINUTES)

Choose a song or suitable verse from the Psalms to pray in solidarity with the farmers in Nicaragua. (Psalms 65:10; 67:7; 85:13; 107:37)

TAKING IT HOME

Encourage students to look at the packaging or labels on their coffee, fruits or vegetables to identify which countries they come from. Ask them to look for labels that say "fair trade" or "organic," which mean that creation was respected while the coffee was grown.

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COUNTRY SPOTLIGHT: NICARAGUA

ACTIVITY SHEET GRADES 7-8



Write the definition of Care for God's Creation in your own words.

Draw a picture that shows how farmers depend on creation.

Care for God's Creation

List practical ways you can care for creation.

Find a Bible verse about caring for God's creation.