



Orthodox Ecological Perspectives

The Greening of the Orthodox Parish

The First Steps for Getting Started

We reiterate through this present message the vigorous concern of the Orthodox Church for the right use of the environment.

- HAH Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew

AS CHRISTIANS WE ARE CALLED by Scripture, the saints and our patriarchs to live in harmony with creation. The following guidelines introduce Orthodox creation care practice.

◆ **Recycle**

People are given dominion and commanded to "replenish the earth" (Gen. 1:28). This means we put back what we take from the earth.

◆ **Reduce energy use**

Use less fossil fuels. Seek less polluting, lower cost lighting options for parish or home. This means compact fluorescent or new LED lights. Eliminate incandescent light bulbs.

◆ **Eliminate trash and excess**

Packaging is a major cause of excess and waste. Minimize packaging or anything which is designed to be thrown away after use. Pick up trash and litter.

◆ **Buy carefully and conscientiously**

Purchase products that can be recycled. Seek durable goods and quality products. Do not buy products that contain harmful chemicals. Buy carefully and with an awakened conscience.

◆ **Use clean foods and non-toxic products**

Do not bring harmful chemicals or pesticide-tainted foods into the church or the home. Buy locally and organically. Eat lower on the food chain.

◆ **Minimize possessions**

Own less, use less, and enjoy life more. Americans are 4% of the world's people, but we use one-fourth to one-third of all the world's goods and supplies.

◆ **Respect and conserve water**

Respect the water that you drink and use. Avoid bottled water which is little better than tap water. Purchase a water filter if tap water is not acceptable. Never pour chemical pollutants down the drain, onto the ground or into waterways.

◆ **Study the Issues**

A right relationship to creation requires examination of issues and awareness of solutions. As we participate in the life of Christ, we also participate in His formation of the New Earth.

TO SUSTAIN THESE GOALS, a set of spiritual principles is necessary. These principles should be woven into daily behavior, sermons, and attitudes so that an ecological spirit emerges.

◆ **Cultivate a vision of Christ in all things**

We serve Christ thru His creation. Christ and the Holy Spirit are everywhere present and fill all things. As we respect creation, we remember that in Him we live out our lives.

◆ **Give thanks to God for everything in creation**

Everything that we have is a gift from God, and worthy of appreciation. At meals remember to offer thanksgiving. Be not among the forgetful. For Christians, every day is Thanksgiving.

◆ **Set an example of Christian earth stewardship**

Actions speak louder than words. Without leadership by example, not much change can take place. All of us must set a right example as a witness of our Christianity.

◆ **Pray for help, inspiration, understanding and enthusiasm**

Pray to make changes at home. Pray for the parish and its members. Pray for the community. Pray for its leaders, that they respect creation. Your actions will follow your prayers.

◆ **Embody simplicity, cleanliness and contentment**

Serve God and creation by practicing a disciplined respect for God's presence in creation. As Saint Paul tells us, "Be content with such things as you have."

◆ **Remember that all things belong first to God.**

"The Earth is the Lord's..." Greed and avarice render the world opaque. Love, generosity, and unselfishness render the world transparent, turning all things into a sacrament of communion.

◆ **Practice the virtues and avoid the vices**

The virtues are keys to earth healing. They transform the individual and heal the land. The vices corrupt the earth and the individual. Grow in virtue and rightly steward God's earth.

◆ **Strive for transformation and *theosis***

Seek therefore those things that are above and find the spiritualizing, transforming blessings that are freely given to all who seek the Lord. If you ask, so shall you find.

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These first steps allow a parish to get started with ecological practice. There is nothing new here. These principles are merely the life of the Church extended into the life of the world.

Attention must be given to developing programs of practical application.

- HAH Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew

Each person is morally obliged to refrain from pollution and destruction of the environment.

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