

Speak to the Earth and It Shall Teach You
On the Christian Vocation to Tend, Guard and Heal

“Not an ideal way of being together, but being together is a hallmark of CWL” said Dr. Cory Andrew Labrecque first speaker in the League’s webinar speakers series, which in this unprecedented time of the COVID-19 pandemic is our annual national convention where we celebrate our beloved League’s 100th anniversary, socially distanced, but together in prayer and sisterhood. Dr. Labrecque had much to say in praise of the Catholic Women’s League work of care for the earth and the marginalized, and at the end of his talk called us role models, congratulating us on our 100 years of service and challenging us to take the words spoken by Jesus in the Agony of the garden, “Rise, let us be on our way” (Mark 14:42) as our guide as we continue our mission for the coming decades and centuries.

The talk, clearly presented, informed, inspired and challenged us to care for the earth. Quotations from Stephen Hawking, the United Nations and *Laudato Si’* (On Care for Our Common Home) describing the “earth groaning in travail” emphasized the urgency of the eco crisis. Dr. Labrecque’s image of the world as a personal house brought home our responsibility with pointed questions such as would we throw garbage around our personal house or allow others to pollute it?

As early as 1967 professor Lynn Townsend White Jr. noted that Christianity is the “most anthropocentric religion in the world”. Believing that the world is only there to serve humanity has contributed to the current crisis. If the roots of the trouble are largely religious, then the solutions must be religious also.

Dr. Labrecque guided us through the two biblical accounts of creation, the lyrical Genesis reading, a key part of the Easter liturgy, and the story of the Garden of Eden. Key themes that emerge are: that God created everything and that ALL is very good, not just humans; care for creation, stewardship, is mandated; and that Sabbath (to cease, stop (rest)) is for all creation. Note, in Jewish tradition if Sabbath is not given, Earth will take Shabbat in desolation. The garden is the main character in the story and humans are created from the earth for the earth, man and woman together side by side. In Daniel 3: 57-82 every part of creation sings a litany of praise to God.

Catholic teaching and tradition recognize God as creator and author, with emphasis on the “very” goodness of creation. They give value to the physical/material as witnessed by God’s connection to creation through the Incarnation and the Eucharist, where common elements underscore the mingling of matter and spirit. Humans made from the dust of earth have a special role as God’s representatives, called to act with justice and compassion, with a penchant for the poor and vulnerable, noting that nature is the new poor. The eco crisis is a question of justice and a civil rights Issue. *Laudato Si’* is our guide to what is awry (compulsive consumerism, tyrannical anthropocentrism, throwaway culture) and to what must be done. For example,

- become aware of the intimate relationship between the poor and the fragility of the planet;
- recognize the earth is burdened and laid waste, and is the most abandoned and maltreated of the poor;
- accept our duty towards nature as an essential part of faith;
- understand Earth is God’s and all that is therein;

- acknowledge integration and interdependence are not weakness but what we are called to;
- check out a video *How Wolves Change Rivers* to see interdependence as good.

Are we ready to answer that call, to examine the challenges and obstacles to active engagement as people of faith, to explore how making reference to the environment as creation impacts the way we approach the issues? Our speaker is confident that we, CWL members, are ready to be models.