chmiowa.org

Down to Humus

A publication of Congregation of the Humility of Mary

"The word 'humble' comes from 'humus' derived from the Latin meaning earth or ground. Humus is matter essential for fertility of the soil. It is integral to the cycle of life; plants need it for growth…Thus it is appropriate that in our mission statement, we commit ourselves to care for the earth itself." -Bernadine Pieper, CHM. Taken from The Humility Woman Booklet, page 3.

January/February 2026

Caring for God's Creation is a Moral Imperative

We have reached a point in the climate crisis where caring for God's creation is no longer optional. This is not simply about aesthetics, scenic beauty or preserving what we find pleasing to the eye. It is about the conditions that sustain life itself. The health of Earth—its land, water, air and living communities—is inseparably connected to human dignity, justice and our responsibility to one another. For people of faith, care for creation is a moral imperative. For the Congregation of the Humility of Mary, care for Earth flows directly from our charism, calling us to live simply, act justly and remain in right relationship with all of God's creation.



Sister Kathleen Henneberry collects recyclables, including toothpaste tubes, for TerraCycle.

Scripture affirms again and again that creation is good, beloved and entrusted to human care. This trust is not ownership but relationship. We are stewards, not masters, invited to tend what has been given so that life may flourish now and for generations to come. When we exploit land, pollute water or treat Earth as disposable, we break this relationship and harm both creation and community.

CHM's charism of humility invites us to recognize our place within creation rather than above it. Humility calls us to listen deeply to the wisdom of Earth, to the voices of those most affected by environmental harm and to the signs of the times. It asks us to acknowledge the limits of endless consumption and the consequences of choices made without regard for long-term impact.

Environmental harm is never isolated. Communities experiencing poverty, displacement or limited access to health care are often the first and most severely affected by polluted air, contaminated water and climate-related disasters. Care of Earth, therefore, is inseparable from care of people. Ecological degradation is a justice issue, and responding to it is a moral responsibility grounded in compassion and solidarity.

Through CHM's Care of Earth initiatives, this understanding takes concrete shape. Whether through advocacy, education, sustainable practices, prayer or community engagement, these efforts recognize that

►



caring for creation requires both reflection and action. They remind us that faith must be lived not only in words but in choices that honor life in all its forms.

Catholic social teaching affirms that the dignity of the human person and the health of our common home are deeply connected. When ecosystems are damaged, the conditions necessary for human flourishing are undermined. Conversely, when land is restored, resources are shared responsibly and biodiversity is protected, the common good is strengthened. Care for creation becomes an expression of love of neighbor, especially those who are most vulnerable.

This moral imperative also invites personal examination. Daily habits related to food, energy use, transportation and waste may seem small, yet they shape the world we are helping to create. Individual actions alone will not solve global challenges, but they form consciences and communities capable of deeper commitment and collective change. Choosing simplicity, reducing waste and supporting sustainable practices become spiritual disciplines rooted in humility and hope.

Prayer and reflection strengthen this work. Spending time in nature, giving thanks for Earth's abundance and marking the rhythms of seasons deepen awareness of our interconnectedness. When we pause to notice beauty, fragility and resilience, we are reminded why care matters. Reverence naturally leads to responsibility.

Even amid environmental challenges, hope remains essential. Signs of renewal are present in communities restoring habitats, farmers embracing regenerative practices, young people advocating for climate justice and faith communities integrating care for creation into worship and daily life. These signs echo CHM's long-standing commitment to justice, peace and the integrity of creation.

Caring for God's creation ultimately asks us to choose relationship over convenience and love over indifference. It invites us to live with moral clarity, guided by faith and sustained by hope. This call is not separate from our spiritual lives. It is one of the most tangible ways we embody humility, justice and compassion in the world.

As we continue CHM's Care of Earth initiatives, may we remain attentive to the sacred trust placed in our hands and faithful in responding to God's call to protect, nurture and cherish all of creation.

Works Cited

Catholic Climate Covenant. Catholic Teachings on Caring for Creation. Catholic Climate Covenant, n.d., www.catholicclimatecovenant.org.

Pope Francis. Evangelii Gaudium. Vatican Publishing House, 2013.

Pope Francis. Laudato Si': On Care for Our Common Home. Vatican Publishing House, 2015.

Kimmerer, Robin Wall. Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge, and the Teachings of Plants. Milkweed Editions, 2013.

United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. Renewing the Earth: An Invitation to Reflection and Action on Environment in Light of Catholic Social Teaching. USCCB Publishing, 1991.

Cabbage is one of the most sustainable vegetables we can choose — inexpensive, hardy, locally grown and often overlooked. Paired with chickpeas and roasted on a single pan, this simple meal nourishes both people and planet while using minimal energy and ingredients.



Roasted Cabbage & Chickpea Sheet-Pan Supper

Honoring humble vegetables and simple choices

Ingredients (makes one 12-16 oz jar):

- 1 medium green or red cabbage, cut into wedges
- 1 (15-oz) can chickpeas, drained and rinsed
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 teaspoon smoked paprika
- ½ teaspoon ground cumin
- ¼ teaspoon garlic powder (or 1 clove fresh, minced)
- Salt and pepper to taste
- Optional: lemon wedges or chopped parsley

Instructions

1. Preheat oven to 425°F.
2. Place cabbage wedges and chickpeas on a large sheet pan.
3. Drizzle with olive oil and sprinkle with paprika, cumin, garlic, salt and pepper.
4. Toss gently and spread into a single layer.
5. Roast for 25–30 minutes, flipping once, until cabbage is tender with crispy edges and chickpeas are golden.
6. Finish with a squeeze of lemon or a sprinkle of parsley if desired.

Serving ideas: Serve over brown rice or farro, tuck into warm pita with hummus and/or add a dollop of yogurt or tahini sauce!

Choosing foods that are simple, plant-based and grown close to home is one way we participate in caring for God's creation — with gratitude and restraint.