



STEWARDS OF OUR EARTH *All of God's Creation*

Social Justice Committee, Holy Cross Parish, Mt. Airy, September 10, 2023

Our Oceans: Key to Climate Challenges and Climate Solutions

“The oceans of the world are warming up, their average temperatures pushed higher and higher each year by human-caused global warming. Every little bit of warming, however small, has enormous impacts on marine life, storm intensity, and more....

Since the 1970s, the oceans have sopped up more than 90 percent of all the excess heat energy trapped by CO₂.... Most ocean dwellers, from plankton to fish to whales, live in the upper section of the ocean, squarely in the zone where temperatures are increasing quickest.... Scientists predict that warmer oceans will make storms like hurricanes and tropical cyclones more intense in the future.... Warm water takes up more space than cool. As the oceans have heated up, they’ve expanded; as they get bigger, sea levels creep up.” (Excerpted from Alejandra Borunda, *Why are our oceans getting warmer?* Nat’l Geographic, May 1, 2023)

“The world’s oceans are climate regulators, and their health is ultimately connected to that of our own.... About 3 billion people rely on fish as a primary source of protein, and fisheries and their supply chains employ about 800 million people around the globe....

In general, fish are searching for cooler waters, moving away from the tropics and toward the poles, or moving into deeper waters. This has huge impacts on food sources and livelihoods. Climate change is also making the ocean more acidic, which makes it harder for certain animals to thrive and survive.... as well as coral reefs which are tied to the health of fisheries....

For a long time, fishers had little incentive to limit their catches to sustainable levels.... One solution to overfishing is the U.S. **allocation of secure, long-term shares to fishers and communities ... known as fishing rights.** This provides incentives when fishers see that their conservation efforts result in their share of the fishery growing over time.” (Excerpted from Tom Clynes, *Restoring our oceans to abundance*, Interview with Kate Bonzon, vice president for climate resilient fisheries and oceans, Environmental Defense Fund Special Report, Summer 2023)

Marine ecologist, conservationist, and ocean advocate, Eric Sala, is working on **another solution** that gives hope – **“a project** (sponsored by the National Geographic Society) **which has identified dozens of the ocean’s most biodiverse hot spots in an effort to call for their protection.** Already he has managed to get 2.5 million square miles of coastline and ocean set aside in 26 marine protected areas ... where fishing, dumping, mining, and other destructive industries are prohibited.... His research has proved again and again that **given the space to recover undisturbed from human exploitation, nature can bounce back....** Left alone, the resulting abundance will eventually spill over into unprotected zones, stocking new areas with fish that can be harvested for human consumption, while allowing for the evolution of genetic adaptation to a changing climate.” (Excerpted from Aryn Baker, *The Healing Sea*, TIME, September 4, 2023).

As stewards of the earth, we are collaborators in all that God has made. Our wellbeing is interwoven with the wellbeing of the Earth.

Comments on this column may be directed to the Social Justice Committee at socialjustice@holycrossphl.org.