

Protecting God's Creation • Embracing Gospel Justice • Nurturing Spiritual Fulfillment

# Transportation

*Our Lenten practice this week is to reduce our carbon emissions by exploring alternative ways of getting around.*

*"Climate change is a global problem with grave implications."* —Pope Francis, *Laudato Si*

Earth's climate has always been changing—sometimes slowly, sometimes suddenly. But today's situation is unique. The change is being caused by one of God's creatures.

Humans have become a massive force. As our technological prowess has expanded, we have become more disconnected from the natural world. As our population has increased—over 7 billion of us today, compared to 1.6 billion in 1900—we are putting excessive demands on the planet.

Over the past 150 years we have become dependent on petroleum. We can hardly imagine life without the many products that involve petroleum. The benefits are remarkable, but petroleum residue is toxic to almost all forms of life and fuels climate change. We are now challenged to find clean and renewable energy sources more aligned to the functioning of the planet.

Though comprising less than 5 percent of the world's population, the United States is responsible for about 16 percent of the carbon dioxide being emitted. The per-person carbon footprint in the United States is the eighth highest in the world and composes 67 percent of the national ecological footprint. Minimizing the use of our cars and selecting sustainable means of transportation whenever possible can help curb the trend toward global climate change and save precious petroleum resources for future generations.

During Lent we have been exploring how to be good stewards of Earth's resources and to care for the planet. This week's challenge may be the toughest of all: examining our transportation choices. Since 30 percent of US air pollution (25 percent in Canada) in the form of greenhouse gases comes from transportation, we must reconsider how we get around.



*Driving is the most polluting thing that most of us do. Petroleum is toxic to almost all forms of life and fuels climate change. Explore alternative means of transportation.*

*"God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him."*

—John 3:17

## What the Church Is Saying

### 1. A Call for Ecological Conversion

"It must be said that some committed and prayerful Christians, with the excuse of realism and pragmatism, tend to ridicule expressions of concern for the environment. Others are passive; they choose not to change their habits and thus become inconsistent. So what they all need is an 'ecological conversion,' whereby the effects of their encounter with Jesus Christ become evident in their relationship with the world around them. Living our vocation to be protectors of God's handiwork is essential to a life of virtue; it is not an optional or a secondary aspect of our Christian experience."

—Pope Francis, *Laudato Si*

### 2. Protect the Ecological Balance

"The degradation of the environment is a worrying concern. The Church takes it upon herself to give voice to the true aspirations of humanity in favor of an ecological balance which does not put at risk our earth and the whole creation made by the Creator's hands and given to humanity as the abode of beauty and balance, a gift and basic resource of all human existence."

—World Synod of Bishops

### 3. Global Climate Change Threatens God's Creation

"At its core, global climate change is not about economic theory or political platforms, nor about partisan advantage or interest group pressures. It is about the future of God's creation and the one human family. It is about protecting both 'the human environment' and the natural environment."

—United States Conference of Catholic Bishops

### 4. Easter Message Highlights Global Climate Change

"At a time of world food shortage, of financial turmoil, of old and new forms of poverty, of disturbing climate change, of violence and deprivation which force many to leave their homelands in search of a less precarious form of existence, of the ever-present threat of terrorism, of growing fears over the future, it is urgent to rediscover grounds for hope. Let no one draw back from this peaceful battle that has been launched by Christ's Resurrection."

—Pope Benedict XVI

4.2

Imagine Earth divided equally among all of us. Each person would receive 4.2 acres. Now imagine that everything you need—food, energy, home, clothing, appliances, gadgets—must come from those 4.2 acres. But it takes 17.2 acres per person to maintain the average American lifestyle. Inspired by Pope Francis, Lent 4.2 is a new way of observing Lent that helps us care for God's creation by taking steps toward using only our fair share of its resources. Moving in the direction of 4.2 is essential for anyone walking in the footsteps of Jesus today. Information online at [www.lent42.org](http://www.lent42.org).



*Small changes at the personal level can lay the foundation for change at the national and global levels.*

### Action Steps

Can you imagine taking one step in the direction of less driving? For most of us who depend upon our car to get around, finding alternative means of transportation isn't going to be easy. The typical American household makes 496 shopping trips a year, averaging 7.02 miles per trip. That's 3,482 miles per year, the distance from Florida to Alaska. Set a target to decrease nonessential driving: 10, 20, or 30 percent. This week of Lent, offer Earth a kind of Sabbath—rest your car.

#### If There's Only One Thing You Can Do . . .

**Try abstaining from your car for one day.** Plan ahead so driving won't be necessary that day. Select a day when you can walk, cycle, or take public transit wherever you go. If you can't go car-free, try carpooling and use the most fuel-efficient vehicle possible. Freedom from the car can be life changing . . . for you and the planet.

#### Consider Alternatives

- ☐ Sacrifice. Before getting into the car, ask: Is this trip absolutely necessary? Can I combine errands into one trip? Can I walk or bike?
- ☐ Become familiar with public transportation! If possible, ride public transit at least once this week—to work or any destination.
- ☐ Make at least one trip this week by bike. If shopping, carry a backpack.
- ☐ Skip the elevator, take the stairs—burn calories, not electricity.
- ☐ Reduce air travel. One cross-country roundtrip equals 2,000 pounds of carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) per passenger.
- ☐ Share a ride. Carpooling saves on carbon emissions.

### Did You Know

- The United States is 4.5 percent of the world's population and consumes about 27 percent of the world's petroleum.
- The United States has 30 percent of the world's automobiles.
- American drivers average spending over 600 hours in a car every year.
- American drivers average consuming about 400 gallons of gas every year.
- One gallon of gasoline emits almost 20 pounds of carbon dioxide.
- Riding public transit can save individuals up to \$10,000 annually.

#### Short Trips

- ☐ Forty percent of all urban travel happens within two miles of home, and 90 percent of those trips are by car. This week, give up driving to nearby destinations.
- ☐ Walk to all locations within six blocks of your home.
- ☐ When eating out, choose a nearby restaurant and walk instead of driving across town.
- ☐ Plan ahead—combine numerous small trips into one.

#### School Trips

- ☐ Nearly 30 percent of driving is getting kids to school. Consider options.
- ☐ Select an alternative way to get to school. Walk, bike, or bus this week.
- ☐ Join or start a neighborhood carpool.
- ☐ Stop needless idling. Turn off the engine while waiting to pick up kids.

#### If You Must Drive

Here are some ways to drive more responsibly and lower energy consumption:

- ☐ Drive courteously. Don't tailgate or bully anyone with your vehicle.
- ☐ Don't drive faster than 60 mph. It saves gas and reduces stress.
- ☐ Drive in the extreme right lane. Slow down—fast from speed.
- ☐ Don't warm the engine more than ten seconds—that's enough!
- ☐ Use a hybrid or electric car. Make your next purchase a fuel-efficient model.

### Prayer



*O Giver of Life,  
you called your chosen people  
to journey with you  
and blessed their movement.  
Guide us as we search  
for alternative means  
to fuel our journeys.  
Give us the creativity and courage  
to protect your creation  
and share its resources fairly.  
Amen.*

### Steps Continued

1. Endorse the Catholic Climate Covenant initiative.
2. Find out about your local air quality from the EPA's "My Environment" website.
3. Calculate your carbon trail and discover the true cost of owning a car.
4. Support equitable access to public transportation.

All this and more available online at [www.Lent42.org](http://www.Lent42.org).