

# EARTH CHARTER Study Guide

SCHOOL SISTERS OF NOTRE DAME • SHALOM North America  
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## THE WAY FORWARD

As never before in history, common destiny beckons us to seek a new beginning. Such renewal is the promise of these *Earth Charter* principles. To fulfill the promise, we must commit ourselves to adopt and promote the values and objectives of the *Charter*. This requires a change of mind and heart. It requires a new sense of global interdependence and universal responsibility. We must imaginatively develop and apply the vision of a sustainable way of life locally, nationally, regionally, and globally.

Our cultural diversity is a precious heritage and different cultures will find their own distinctive ways to realize the vision. We must deepen and expand the global dialogue that generated the *Earth Charter*, for we have much to learn from the ongoing collaborative search for truth and wisdom.

The *Earth Charter*, "The Way Forward."

by S. Ethel Howley, SSND (WI) & S. Ann Scholz, SSND (SL)

## WHAT KIND OF A WORLD DO WE LIVE IN?



Consider . . .

	World	High Income Countries	Middle Income Countries	Low Income Countries
Population (millions)	6,1148.1	935.9	2,694.8	2,515.0
Population Under 15	29.8%	18.5%	27.1%	36.9%
Life Expectancy at Birth	66.5	78.1	70.7	59.6
GDP per capita (PPP US\$)	\$7,367	\$26,989	\$5,519	\$2,230
Adult Female Literacy Rate	---	---	81.8%	53.9%
Under-Five Mortality (per 1,000 live births)	81	7	38	121
Pop. with Sustainable Access to Improved Water Source	82.0%	---	82.0%	76.0%
Undernourished People	---	---	10%	25%
Total Debt Service (as % of exports)	---	---	15.0%	23.4%
Internet Users (per 100 people)	8	39.7	3.7	.6
Electricity Consumption Per Capita (kilowatt-hours)	2,156	8,651	1,391	352

# THE WAY FORWARD

## What <sup>is</sup> our call ?

### From Scripture

“He heals the broken hearted . . .”

*Psalm 147:3-20*

“That they all be one as you are in me, and I am in you . . .” *John 17:21-23*

### From the Church

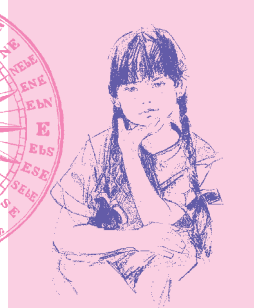
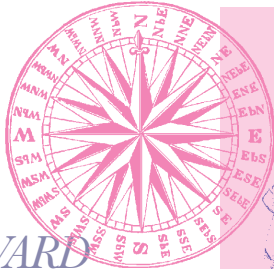
Sincere dialogue between cultures, as between individuals, paves the way for ties of solidarity. Plans proposed for humanity’s betterment will unite all nations in the joint effort to be undertaken, if every citizen—government leader, public official, and simple worker—is motivated by love and is truly anxious to build one universal human civilization that spans the globe. Then we shall see the start of a dialogue about the human person rather than about the products of the soil or of technology.

*On the Development of Peoples (Populorum Progressio), #73, Paul VI, 1967 [language updated].*

### From You Are Sent

“Our community, like every Christian community, is missionary . . .” C 9

“Created for total union with God, we strive to become ever more united with him . . .” C 48



## THE WAY FORWARD

from the *EARTH CHARTER*

**“As never before in history, common destiny beckons us to seek a new beginning. Such renewal is the promise of these *Earth Charter* principles. To fulfill the promise, we must commit ourselves to adopt and promote the values and objectives of the Charter.**

**This requires a change of mind and heart. It requires a new sense of global interdependence and universal responsibility. We must imaginatively develop and apply the vision**



**of a sustainable way of life locally, nationally, regionally, and globally. Our cultural diversity is a precious heritage and different cultures will find their own distinctive ways to realize the vision. We must deepen and expand**

**the global dialogue that generated the *Earth Charter*, for we have much to learn from the ongoing collaborative search for truth and wisdom.**

**Life often involves tensions between important values. This can mean difficult choices. However, we must find ways to harmonize diversity with unity, the exercise of freedom with the common good, short-term objectives with long-term goals. Every individual, family, organization, and community has a vital role to play. The arts, sciences, religions, educational institutions, media, businesses, nongovernmental organizations, and governments are all called to offer creative leadership. The partnership of government, civil society, and business is essential to effective governance.**

**In order to build a sustainable global community, the nations of the world must renew their commitment to the**

### QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION ABOUT OUR CALL.

- How does the *Earth Charter* address Jesus’ prayer “that they all may be one”?
- In the light of our reflections on the *Earth Charter* how can we respond anew as individuals and as a faith community to our call to make one?

consider • reflect • contemplate • pray • discuss • dare • act  
pray • discuss • dare • act • consider • reflect • contemplate

**QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION  
AND DISCUSSION ABOUT WHAT WE WILL DO.**

- What is our responsibility? How can we support sustainable living in our personal and communal living?

In our personal and communal ministry?

# WHAT CAN WE DARE TO DO?

- In light of these reflections what actions can we take:
  - to reawaken a new reverence for life?
  - to achieve sustainability?
  - to struggle for justice and peace, and the joyful celebration of life?



**United Nations, fulfill their obligations under existing international agreements, and support the implementation of *Earth Charter* principles with an international legally binding instrument on environment and development.”**

# What **will** we do ?

**From Scripture**

“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me. . . .”

*Luke 4:18-19*

“As God’s chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion. . . .” *Col 3:12-14*

**From the Church**

Already existing international and regional organizations are certainly well-deserving of the [human race]. These are the first efforts at laying the foundations on an international level for a community of all people to work for the solution to the serious problems of our times, to encourage progress everywhere, and to obviate wars of whatever kind. In all of these activities the Church takes joy in the spirit of true [community] flourishing between Christians and non-Christians as it strives to make ever more strenuous efforts to relieve abundant misery.

*Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, #84 (Gaudium et Spes), 1965 [language updated].*

# IMAGINATIVELY DEVELOP AND APPLY THE VISION

**From You Are Sent**

“To each of us . . . .” C1

“As members of an international congregation, we recognize our obligation . . .” C 26

“A particular concern in all ministries is the establishment of a just society . . . .” GD 33

**From The Call to Transformation**

We call each sister of our international congregation to open her entire life to radical transformation for the sake of the mission of Jesus Christ that all creation may be one in the fullness of God’s love. At this moment of our sacred history, radical transformation requires that: We . . .

# What is your dream for our world?

## ENVISIONING THE FUTURE



TAKE A FEW MOMENTS AND TRY TO ENVISION OUR WORLD THE WAY GOD INTENDS.

**“When we plant trees, we plant the seeds of peace and seeds of hope.”**

### **Living the *Earth Charter***

The Norwegian Nobel committee awarded the 2005 Peace Prize to Wangari Maathai of Kenya for her contribution to sustainable development, democracy, and peace. “Peace on earth depends on our ability to secure our living environment,” according to the committee and [Wangari] has taken a holistic approach to sustainable development. On learning of the Nobel Peace award, Wangari said, “When we plant trees, we plant the seeds of peace and seeds of hope.”

**God, our creator we pray . . .  
May ours be a time remembered  
for the awakening of a new reverence  
for life, the firm resolve to achieve  
sustainability, the quickening of the  
struggle for justice and peace, and  
the joyful celebration of life.  
Amen.**

dream  
for  
Earth  
with others



TAKE SOME ACTION . . .

**Share your dream for Earth with others. You might . . .**

- Write a letter-to-the-editor or an opinion piece for your local or diocesan newspaper.
- Contact your Head of State, Parliament, or Members of Congress and share your commitment to a world where ecological integrity, social and economic justice, democracy, nonviolence, and peace are the norm.
- Join the Global Call to Action Against Poverty, [www.gerhardinger.org/index/htm](http://www.gerhardinger.org/index/htm).
- Write to your unit leadership and to the General Council and share your thoughts about what we might dare to do together.

LEARN MORE . . .

dare to do together

#### **Web Sites**

- The United Nations [www.un.org](http://www.un.org)
- The Millennium Campaign [www.millenniumcampaign.org](http://www.millenniumcampaign.org)
- United Nations Environmental Program [www.unep.org](http://www.unep.org)

#### **Videos**

- Canticle to the Cosmos, Brian Swimme (12 tapes)
- Christian Values and Lifestyles, Miriam MacGillis (40 min.)
- The Global Brain, Peter Russell (35 min.)

#### **Books**

- Berry, Thomas. *The Dream of the Earth*. San Francisco: Sierra Club Books, 1988.
- Dear, John, SJ. *Living Peace, A Spirituality of Contemplation in Action*, NY: Doubleday 2001.
- Ijjasz-Vasquez, Ede Jorge, ed. *Environment Matters: At the World Bank*, Washington DC: World Bank, 2003.
- O’Murchu, Diarmuid. *Rediscovering God in Our Great Story: Evolutionary Faith*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2003.
- Toolan, David. *At Home in the Cosmos*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2001.
- Wessels, Cletus. *Jesus in the Universe Story*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2003.

Editor:  
S. Jeanne Wingenter, SSND (MK)  
[jwing1948@aol.com](mailto:jwing1948@aol.com)

Layout Design:  
S. Gen Cassani, SSND (SL)  
[gcassani@ssnd-sl.org](mailto:gcassani@ssnd-sl.org)

