CARE FOR THE ENVIRONMENT

LIBBY: Hey, pick that up.

KAI: What's the worst that could happen?

CATHOLIC CENTRAL OPENING TITLES

LIBBY: Hi, I'm Libby.

KAI: And I'm Kai.

LIBBY: Welcome to Catholic Central.

KAI: So, the environment.

LIBBY: Beloved of tree huggers, animal rights activists ... and popes?

KAI: Surprising, yet true. Today, we'll be talking about how the environment is an important issue for Catholics and what it means for us today.

LIBBY: Catholic concern for the environment starts in Scripture, at the start of Scripture.

KAI: In Genesis, God gave humans dominion over the Earth, and the responsibility to care for it.

LIBBY: And even though Adam and Eve got kicked out of paradise, care for the Earth remained one of the duties they owed to God and to each other.

KAI: And they evidently managed to feed themselves enough to stay alive and have kids, so they must've done a decent enough job at it.

LIBBY: Throughout the Old Testament, we see how important land was to the people.

KAI: Kings were expected to take care of it and not sell it, and God reminds everyone through the prophets that He is the owner of it, and it is the heritage of future generations.

LIBBY: In Jeremiah, God also gets angry that the people have defiled the land saying, "You turned my heritage into an abomination."

KAI: In Psalms, we see praise for the beauty of creation, which honors and reveals the power of God.

LIBBY: Psalm 19 reads, "The heavens declare the glory of God. The firmament proclaims the works of His hands."

KAI: Catholics even see a call to respect the integrity of creation in the Seventh Commandment.

LIBBY: Adultery.

KAI: Thou shalt not steal.

LIBBY: Oh, that makes more sense.

KAI: That's because Catholics see God as being the creator of everything and the ultimate landlord.

KAI: This week on *God's My Landlord*.

(THEME MUSIC)

KAI: Roomie, I was Power Ranging in my room and accidentally put my hand through the wall seven times! Help me lie about it?

LIBBY: I can't do that. He already knows!

God: Guys?

KAI: *God's My Landlord* is filmed in front of a live studio audience.

KAI: But you might be saying, "Okay, fine, but the Old Testament doesn't really count, right?"

LIBBY: Well, Revelations says "Your wrath has come and the time to destroy those who destroyed the earth."

KAI: And then in Catholic tradition …

LIBBY: Oh, it's time for my favorite game! *Who Said It?: Hippies Versus Popes Edition*.

KAI: First up, "It is essential to sense that the Earth is our common home, and the problems looming on the horizon are complex. Time is short. In order to face the situation effectively, there is a need to act in harmony."

LIBBY: Hmm. They used air quotes and the word “harmony.” I'd say hippie.

KAI: Nope, it's non-hippie Pope Benedict XVI.

LIBBY: OK, I've got one. "The depletion of the ozone layer and the related ‘greenhouse effect’ has now reached crisis proportions. The resulting meteorological and atmospheric changes range from damage to health to the possible future submersion of low-lying lands." Who said it?

KAI: Al Gore?

LIBBY: Good guess, but this quote is from Pope Saint John Paul II.

KAI: Nice! And not all that shocking. The Catholic popes have called for morality when it comes to nature ever since Pope Leo XIII in 1891.

LIBBY: And that continues in full force to this day with Pope Francis's 2015 encyclical *Laudato Si*, which challenges everyone to consider the moral implications of our lifestyles and take urgent action for the environment.

KAI: So why do Catholics care so much?

LIBBY: Well, first of all, as we mentioned before, Catholics believe that God is the creator of all, and humans have been charged with caring for Creation.

KAI: We can show respect to God by doing the job He gave us and respecting what He's made.

LIBBY: Catholics also believe that each creature has its own purpose, and reveals something about God.

KAI: You can look at it like getting to know an author through their works, or a player through their record-setting Pac-Man score.

LIBBY: Next, Catholics are concerned about the environment because of how problems with it affect people's lives.

KAI: As Pope Francis says, it's the poor that suffer the most when it comes to environmental catastrophes.

LIBBY: Problems with the environment like polluted air and drinking water directly affect people's health.

KAI: And changes to the environment can damage people's livelihoods and their means of supporting themselves ...

LIBBY: Sometimes causing them to disrupt their lives by forcing them to migrate to a new place.

KAI: Also, the misuse of the environment points to the Catholic belief that human freedom has limits.

LIBBY: Pope Benedict XVI pointed out that abuse of freedom occurs when we see nothing but ourselves, and linked a selfish attitude towards the environment with the same attitude towards people.

KAI: It's too easy in modern society to think only about what's best for me, and forget that our actions impact everyone else.

LIBBY: But the Catholic understanding of interdependence means that our actions affect all of humanity, and we have a moral obligation to serve our neighbors.

KAI: This isn't limited to current humans either.

LIBBY: It includes wooden dolls that wish they were human.

KAI: I meant that it includes future generations.

LIBBY: Right.

LIBBY: Catholics believe that the Earth belongs to everyone, especially those that will come after us.

KAI: You know what though? Our children's children will probably be just as selfish as we are. Why don't we just take humans out of the picture? Let's go ahead and let the animals take over.

LIBBY: Oh, hold on there. You don't keep up your house just for the house's sake. You clean it and you fix it up for you, or in the case of nature and the environment, the whole human family. So if we get rid of all humans, we miss the point of environmental stewardship, which is to protect the planet for people.

KAI: True, and Catholics hope that we humans can use our intelligence to invent some solutions to some of our problems ...

LIBBY: Such as better distribution of the resources we do have.

KAI: OK, so since letting the animals take over doesn't make sense, you might be wondering what can we do?

LIBBY: You can start on a local level and look at issues affecting your community.

KAI: Or go even more local and look at your own habits.

LIBBY: Even though the problems can feel overwhelming and like nothing we do matters, there's always something we can do, however small. Pope Francis encourages us to use "simple daily gestures which break with the logic of violence, exploitation and selfishness."

KAI: We can all look at how we use and misuse both things and people.

LIBBY: And how that misuse might be coming from our need to fill a void in our lives, or from bad habits that have a hold on us.

KAI: For Catholic Central, I'm Kai.

LIBBY: And I'm Libby.

KAI: For more resources on caring for the environment, check out our website at CatholicCentral.com.

LIBBY: And be sure to subscribe.

KAI: Until next time, stay green.

LIBBY: Yeah. Like don't use plastic, like styrofoam. You could start there.

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