

## Aquinas College Environmental Policy

### A Catholic Christian Vision of Ecological Responsibility

**“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.” ~ Genesis 1:1**

**“God saw all that He made, and it was very good.” ~ Genesis 1:31**

The biblical vision inspires the behavior of Christians in relation to their use of the earth, and also with regard to the advances of science and technology.<sup>1</sup> The results of science and technology are, in themselves, positive.<sup>2</sup> Yet, in this regard, “the greater man’s power becomes, the farther his individual and community responsibility extends.”<sup>3</sup> Therefore, he must not make arbitrary use of the earth, subjecting it without restraint to his will, as though it did not have its own requisites and a prior God-given purpose, which man can indeed develop but must not betray.<sup>4</sup>

The principle of *the common good*...stems from the dignity, unity and equality of all people.<sup>5</sup> [Among] the demands of the common good [is]...the protection of the environment.<sup>6</sup> The common good therefore involves all members of society – no one is exempt from cooperating, according to each one’s possibilities, in attaining it and developing it...<sup>7</sup> The responsibility for attaining the common good, besides falling to individual persons, belongs also to the State, since the common good is the reason that the political authority exists.<sup>8</sup>

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The United States *Environmental Protection Agency* (EPA) now mandates and encourages colleges and universities to comply with its regulations and commonsense guidelines, which are based on the latest findings in both science and human safety. Environmental safety and prudence are also important to the faculty, staff, and student body of Aquinas College.

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<sup>1</sup> Safeguarding the Environment, *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, January 2005, Art. 456, p.198

<sup>2</sup> Safeguarding the Environment, *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, January 2005, Art. 457, p.199

<sup>3</sup> Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et Spes*, 34: AAS 58 (1966), 1053

<sup>4</sup> Safeguarding the Environment, *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, January 2005, Art. 459, p.201

<sup>5</sup> Principles of the Church’s Social Doctrine, *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, January 2005, Art. 164, p.72

<sup>6</sup> Safeguarding the Environment, *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, January 2005, Art. 166, p.73

<sup>7</sup> Cf. John XXIII, Encyclical Letter *Mater et Magistra*: AAS 53 (1961), 417; Paul VI Apostolic Letter *Octogesima Adveniens*, 46: AAS 63 (1971), 433-435; Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1913

<sup>8</sup> Cf. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1910

With this in mind, Aquinas College will strive to:

- conduct affairs on campus in a way that protects the environmental health and safety of our students, faculty, staff, and the neighboring community.
- conserve natural resources and support their sustainable use
- procure reusable, recyclable, and recycled materials
- reduce the use of toxic substances and the generation of wastes, while reusing and recycling those wastes that cannot be avoided
- perform our business practices according to this environmental policy

Full compliance with the law will be considered the minimum acceptable standard at Aquinas College. We will also strive to exercise whatever control is reasonable and necessary to avoid harm to the public and environment, whether or not such control is required by the aforementioned regulations. Aquinas College will initiate, conduct, and promote programs that implement this policy throughout the College.\*

In summary, it is the conviction of the Aquinas College faculty and staff that conforming to the current requirements of environmental law is reasonable, healthful, and a perfect opportunity to fulfill the higher Biblical vision of caring responsibly for God's creation.

\*Aquinas College would like to thank Bates College in Lewiston, Maine for graciously allowing us to model some portions of this document on their own excellent environmental policy statement.