



Introduction to Problem Solvers

by Anne Neuberger

Learning from Problem Solvers

Topics such as pollution, endangered species, and climate change can be dispiriting or even frightening for both children and adults. However, we must be courageous and creative to solve these problems.

In *On Care for Our Common Home*, Pope Francis outlines many of the problems we need to solve together. In Chapter 6 of the encyclical, he says ecological education is an essential part of the solution.

This resource offers examples of many inspirational people, both children and adults, who are creation caretakers in various fields. Their stories will give you motivation, encouragement, and insight. Find areas that interest you and get ideas of how others have made positive change.

Beyond focusing simply on the specifics of each situation or story, be sure the step back and look at the bigger picture. “Only by cultivating sound virtues,” writes Pope Francis, “will people be able to make a selfless ecological commitment.” What virtues can you learn from these problems solvers and start using in your life?

How to Use This Resource

We have carefully prepared *Problem Solvers* as a flexible, interactive learning resource that can be used in many ways.

If you are a creation care kid, you can decide for yourself how to proceed. Consider working through this resource with friends or your parents.

If you are a teacher or catechist, realize that there are many ways that you can adapt this resource for classroom or group use. Here are some possible approaches:

- Divide children into groups to explore different parts of the resources. For example, you can break your group into six sections and have each explore one of the “Heroes for Animals.”
- Send some of the research home. Have the children report back to the larger group what they learned!
- Take one story at a time, spread throughout the year. Perhaps add it to the end of another lesson.

A Multitude of Problem Solvers

Creation Care Kids

Many young people have accomplished a great deal for creation care, helping bring about positive solutions to big problems. Use this collection of stories to:

- Talk about how the work done has benefited the world.
- Learn about these heroes and how they came to do their work.
- Ask yourself how they came to do this: what is it about them that is also like you? How can you use these same traits or circumstances to get started?
- Question which of the problems or solutions really get your attention. Why? What intrigues you about this?
- Use the information provided to do some research on a topic that especially interests you.
- Start dreaming and planning what you will do.

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Heroes for Animals

You can learn a great deal here about certain kinds of animals who may be endangered, and the dedicated people who are working very hard to keep them safe. Read the stories and use the website links to learn more.

Have you ever heard or wondered about:

- The problems for orangutans after seeing a show called *Orangutan Diaries*?
- How some adults came to know, even as children, that they wanted to help protect wildlife?
- Why some kinds of sea turtles are considered vulnerable while other kinds are critically endangered? And what do those words mean?
- What is all the fuss about Emperor Penguins?
- How at least four kinds of animals may be forced to leave their habitats if the critically endangered saiga became extinct? And what are saigas?

Meet More Problem Solvers

Do you already know what animal or issue you want to study or research? This long list will help you start. The animals or issues are listed first, the problem solvers after that. You may learn about creatures you have never heard of before, of kinds of work done by problem solvers you have never thought about, and get very good about doing research!

Our Creation Care Communion of Saints: Martyrs for Creation Care

Is concern about the environment new? Here you will learn about all sorts of people who lived long ago who worked to protect the earth and its creatures. They did so through a great variety of ways, such as with photography, studying dragonflies, writing, and building humane zoos. Some even died because of their dedication to poor people and their exploited lands.

Big Name Hunters

Learn about the people whose work for the care of the earth was so new at the time, so courageous, and so influential that it is now known around the world.

Now Keep Going

Use all this information and then build upon it by considering these questions and challenges:

Questions to Ponder

- What problem or issue am I passionate about?
- Do I believe I can do something about this?
- When can I start?
- How can I get my friends/family, classmates interested in this?

Traits of Problem Solvers

Problem solvers come in all shapes and sizes and ages, but they share certain ways of acting. Here are some:

- Tenacious, persistent, sticks with it
- Imaginative
- Courageous, brave, spirited
- Clear thinking
- Organized
- Clever
- Willing to work with others
- Able to prepare information to share with others
- Can handle rejection or criticism
- Flexible, accepts change
- Logical
- Cheerful
- Energetic
- Good listener
- Honest, truthful
- Can look at the problem in several ways, sees what all the options are
- Not afraid to make a decision
- See problems as a good challenge
- Can clearly see the problem
- Can clearly explain the problem
- Treats others respectfully

Using this list:

1. Choose a story of a problem solver. After reading the story, choose at least six traits this person has.
2. Choose one of those traits and write about (or discuss) when in the story you saw that trait being used, and how it affected the work.
3. Choose a second story. Name some traits of the problem solver. Compare the two. How many traits do they have in common?



Actions in Problem Solving

Choose a story of a problem solver. List the actions taken and in what order.

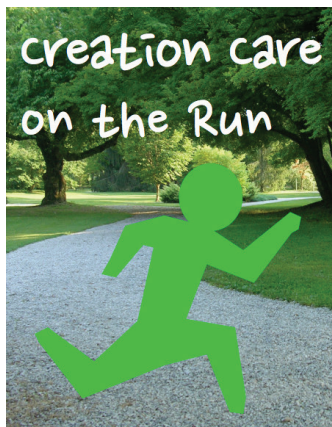
Actions may include:

- Research
 - online
 - by visiting a place where the problem is, or where a solution may be found
 - by contacting (phone, email, etc.) people who may be helpful in your research
- Invite others to join
- Choose or define a problem
- Make a plan of what needs to be done, who does it, and when it will be done
- Raise money
- Teach others

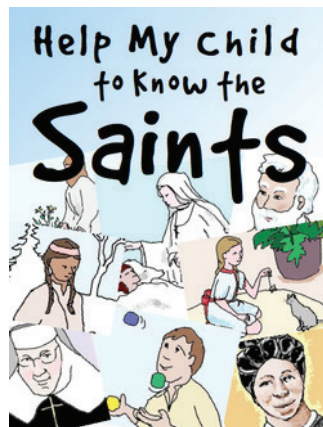
Yet More Problem Solvers

1. Name other problem solvers you know or have read about.
2. What was the problem?
3. What did this person solve?
4. How?
5. What do you admire about this person?
6. Name one thing about this person that may have helped him/her become a problem solver.

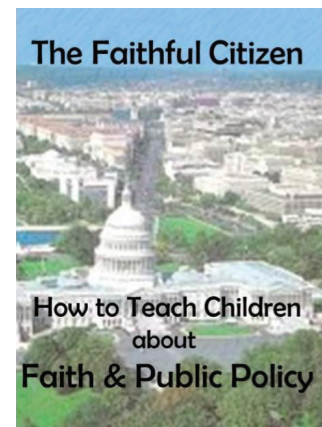
Find more resources for teaching children
how to care for our common home at
CreationCareKids.com



Handouts for Busy Parents



Creation Care Saint Stories



Help Kids Take Action