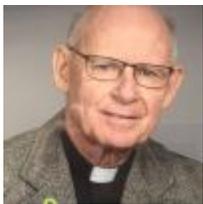


## [Faith](#)



(Max Kukurudziak/Unsplash)



by Fr. Emmet Farrell

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February 24, 2021

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**Editor's note:** In his Lenten "Reflections on the Care of Creation," Fr. Emmet Farrell examines our impact on the planet and our responsibility, as people of faith, for our common home. You can [sign up here](#) to receive Fr. Farrell's reflections in your inbox every Monday, Wednesday and Friday from Feb. 17 to April 2.

## See:

Big Oil has been fighting to open Alaska's Arctic National Wildlife Refuge to drilling for decades. Leases for oil drilling in the refuge were signed in January, before President Donald Trump left office. President Joe Biden declared a temporary moratorium on leasing, but the future is still uncertain.

Turning this region of the Arctic over to the fossil fuel industry would destroy one of the world's most majestic and vital landscapes. It would put at risk the lives of Alaska's Native people, as well as migratory birds from six continents and the porcupine caribou herd.

In a [2018 article for Sierra magazine](#) about offshore oil drilling, journalist Andrea Cooper wrote, "At a moment when, for the first time in recent history, the United States is a net exporter of oil; it simply makes no sense to drill here." A quote from a boat captain about potential drilling off the Atlantic coast could also apply to the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge: "If the oil companies get their hands on this, it's gone forever."

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## Judge:

We know that technology based on the use of highly polluting fossil fuels — especially coal, but also oil and, to a lesser degree, gas — needs to be progressively replaced without delay ("[Laudato Si', On Care for Our Common Home](#)," 165).

We need proposals that "limit exploration and exploitation of new fossil fuel supplies to parts of the nation where this can be done without adverse damage to people and the environment. As the climate in the Arctic warms, it is doubtful that the economic benefits of drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge can outweigh the environmental damage that this will do to one of the nation's most beautiful and wild places. ("[The Power to Change: U.S. Energy Policy and Global Warming](#)," Presbyterian Church (USA)).

## **Act:**

- Research how drilling for oil is harmful for living creation and why.
- Read and reflect on "A Christian Prayer in Union with Creation," found at the end of Pope Francis' encyclical "[Laudato Si', on Care for Our Common Home](#)."
- Research the relationship between Alaska's Native peoples and the caribou. If caribou herds were to disappear, what would that mean for the people and their culture?

This story appears in the **Reflections on the Care of Creation** feature series. [View the full series.](#)