



The Catholic Coalition on Climate Change

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United States Conference of
Catholic Bishops:

Department of Justice Peace
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Migration and Refugee
Services

Preservation of the environment, promotion of sustainable development and particular attention to climate change are matters of grave concern for the entire human family. No nation or business sector can ignore the ethical implications present in all economic and social development. With increasing clarity scientific research demonstrates that the impact of human actions in any one place or region can have worldwide effects.

--Pope Benedict XVI, September 1, 2007

The Association of Catholic
Colleges and Universities

Carmelite NGO

Catholic Charities USA

The Catholic Health
Association of the United
States

Catholic Relief Services

The Conference of Major
Superiors of Men

The Franciscan Action
Network

The Leadership Conference of
Women Religious

The National Catholic Rural
Life Conference

The National Council of
Catholic Women

The Catholic community, led by our Holy Father and the US bishops, is addressing the important moral issues surrounding climate change, including prudence, poverty and the common good. These important efforts include convening, education, public policy development and advocacy by USCCB with significant support and coordination by the Catholic Coalition on Climate Change (CCCC). With other national Catholic partners, this Coalition seeks to contribute a distinctive and authentic Catholic voice to the public debate highlighting the human and moral dimensions of this issue and encouraging the Catholic community to become involved in practical and public policy remedies to address climate change. This resource is a brief summary of Catholic teaching and Catholic efforts to address climate change and outlines approaches to this morally complex and growing issue. We begin with three principles:

PRUDENCE

Prudence does not mean failing to accept responsibilities and postponing decisions; it means being committed to making joint decisions after pondering responsibly the road to be taken, decisions aimed at strengthening that covenant between human beings and the environment, which should mirror the creative love of God, from whom we came and towards whom we are journeying.

**--Pope Benedict XVI World Day of Peace Message,
January, 2008**

Because we are not experts on climate change and its consequences, we rely on a scientific consensus (best represented by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change) to guide our activities. The clear evidence of climate change, caused primarily by human activities (e.g., the burning of fossil fuels). Prudence, in this instance, means we do not have to know everything with absolute certainty to begin to address the damage being done. One role the Coalition will play is to convene stakeholders (scientists, theologians, business and labor leaders, government officials, and others) to help shape a more fruitful dialogue around climate change. With a well-reasoned, thoughtful and deliberate approach the Catholic community is addressing climate change with faithfulness and urgency as we respond to God's call to be faithful stewards.

POVERTY

We should look at climate change from the “bottom-up.” The real “inconvenient truth” is that those who contribute least to climate change will be affected the most and have the least capacity to cope or escape. The poor and vulnerable are most likely to pay the price of inaction or unwise actions. We all have an obligation to help make sure their voices are heard, their needs addressed, and their burdens eased as our nation and the world address climate change.

--USCCB testimony to the U.S. Senate, June, 2007

As we have seen again and again, natural disasters take the greatest toll on poor people who have the fewest resources to effectively handle such catastrophes. We are working to ensure that voices of the poor are heard in the public debates about climate change and that those who contribute least to the problem are not hurt the most by climate change or climate change policy remedies.

COMMON GOOD

Responses to global climate change should reflect our interdependence and common responsibility for the future of our planet. Individual nations must measure their own self-interest against the greater common good and contribute equitably to global solutions.

--U.S. Catholic Bishops, 2001

Catholic teaching calls us to embrace the common good and the virtue of solidarity. The climate is a clear example of a good we hold in common. God embraces all of humanity: our well-being is tied to every other person. We have an obligation to respond charitably to those in need and seek justice for those without a voice. Climate change offers both a serious challenge to the common good and opportunities to face this challenge with courage and creativity. We will assist the Catholic community in linking stewardship and care for creation with our obligations to our brothers and sisters at home and around the world.

HOW TO CARE FOR CREATION

Because of the blessings God has bestowed on our nation and the power it possesses, the United States bears a special responsibility in its stewardship of God's creation to shape responses that serve the entire human family... We offer some themes from catholic social teachings that could help to shape this dialogue, and we suggest some directions for the debate and public policy decisions that face us.

--US Catholic Bishops, 2001

These Catholic websites will serve as clearinghouses of action and education ideas for the Catholic community. The websites contain statements by the Holy Father, bishops and others as well as stories of people and institutions carrying out programs to raise awareness and promote action on climate change. You will also find analysis and action alerts on legislative efforts to reduce global climate change and lessen its impacts.

U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops: www.usccb.org/sdwp/ejp/climate

Catholic Coalition on Climate Change: www.catholicsandclimatechange.org

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[T]oday the great gift of [God's Creation] is exposed to serious dangers and lifestyles which can degrade it. Environmental pollution is making particularly unsustainable the lives of the poor of the world. In dialogue with Christians of various confessions, we must pledge ourselves to take care of creation and to share its resources in solidarity."

--Pope Benedict XVI, August 27, 2006