



The Catholic Coalition on Climate Change

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Spring 2008 Update

A happy and blessed Easter to all of you! In this season of hope, we pray that you find much to be hopeful for as together we work to build God's Kingdom and live faithfully to the promises of Christ.

Our pastor's Easter homily reminded me, once again, of the uniqueness of the Christian experience. He said that just a few months ago, we celebrated the divine becoming human. Now we are celebrating, in the resurrection, humanity becoming divine. With this belief comes tremendous responsibility: to live Christ-like lives, to care for the poor, to be witnesses to the truth and to love deeply and completely our neighbor next door and a half a world away.

In just a week, Pope Benedict XVI will be visiting the United States to share an Easter message to all of us. Part of that message will undoubtedly be to care for God's gift of creation. Around the time of Earth Day, he will address the United Nations' General Assembly and most believe that he will touch on the issue of climate change.

We are hopeful that his speech will continue to inspire Catholics in the US and around the world to work for a more just society and a more peaceful world including reconciliation with the environment and a deeper reverence for God's gift of Creation.

In anticipation of the pope's visit, we offer a [backgrounder](#) on Benedict XVI's statements on the environment and climate change. We have tried to make this a useful tool to share. We especially encourage diocesan leaders to bring it to the attention of your diocesan communications director and urge him or her to highlight the Holy Father's commitment to the environment when covering the papal visit.

The CCCC and the Environmental Justice Program of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops will be sharing this with other media outlets, Catholic, other faith and secular organizations.

Public Policy Update

The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, with the assistance of the CCCC, has been at the forefront of efforts on Capitol Hill to ensure that any climate change legislation protects low-income people in the US and poor people around the world from the harmful effects of both climate changes and climate change legislation.

To that end, John Carr of the Department of Justice, Peace and Human Development testified before the Senate's Environment and Public Works Committee last June saying that the "real inconvenient truth" is that the poor, who have contributed the least to global climate change will suffer its worst consequences. This is why the faith community is advocating for public policies that ensure:

- low-income families in the US are protected from disproportionate impacts of rising energy costs,
- workers in energy industries that will be harmed by a move toward renewable energy receive some assistance with job transition and
- the poorest countries around the world receive assistance from the US to adapt to the negative consequences of climate change such as food shortages, flooding, heat waves, rising sea levels and water insecurity.

In our Winter Update, we said that the primary legislative vehicle in the Senate is America's Climate Security Act (S. 2191). The bill's primary sponsors are Senators Lieberman and Warner. With other faith partners, the Catholic community has been working to ensure that this legislation reflects our key anti-poverty priorities. It is likely that the bill will move to the Senate floor in June. We will be sure to keep you updated as the time approaches. In the meantime, we are seeking your help as we suggest some modest amendments to the bill to better reflect our priorities. To see the latest USCCB public policy backgrounder, go to:

<http://www.usccb.org/sdwp/projects/csmg2008/csmg2008info.shtml#Backgrounders> and click on the "Global Climate Change" link.

Educational Tools

Catholic Approach to Climate Change Question and Answer Resource

Answering difficult questions about the Church's involvement in social justice issues have always been part of the work of those engaged in social ministry. Undoubtedly, you have encountered some tough questions about climate change. We have developed a tool to help answer some of those questions for your use. This nine-page resource is divided into five sets of questions and answers: faith, science, political, economic and poverty. To download your copy, go to: <http://www.catholicsandclimatechange.org/resources.html> and click on "A Catholic Approach to Climate Change" under "Education".

This Is Your Home

Linked on our website but in need of promotion is a wonderful, downloadable PowerPoint presentation from the Immaculate Heart of Mary Sisters in Monroe, MI. With a grant from the USCCB's Environmental Justice Program, they produced a three-part series on a Catholic approach to climate change that includes a review of the science, Church teaching and actions to care for God's creation. In addition, you can download their study guide. It would make for a great one-night or several night series for parishes. It is geared towards a younger audience, but works well with adults, too. Click [here](#) to see the website.

In Michigan, Sr. Nancy Seubert, IHM, has been promoting the PowerPoint around the state.

Here are a few of her success stories:

- 1,000 DVDs were distributed in 2007, including 300 copies to Michigan Interfaith Power and Light member congregations, 100 copies to "JustFaith" parishes, and 200 to various non-profit organizations. A second 1,000 have been printed and about a third of those have already been distributed. The Education Department of the Archdiocese of Detroit gave copies to each of its 115 schools.
- The DVD was presented to 2,000 students and faculty of the Ignatian Solidarity Network and 85 Jesuit high schools, colleges and universities around the country each received a DVD and study guide to take back to their schools.

We hope these examples of actions that can be done locally in collaboration with educational institutions, corporate entities, and advocacy organizations may inspire you to "go forth and do likewise."

JustMatters Module

For JustFaith graduates and others who want to explore Catholic teaching on the environment and climate change more fully, we urge you to take a look at the JustMatters module, "God's Creation Cries for Justice," that we helped develop for the folks at JustFaith Ministries: <http://www.justfaith.org/JF1252.html>. This 8-week program has already been tested in dozens of parishes and is getting good reviews.

New Books on Ecology, Climate Change and Christian Spirituality

[*Care for Creation: A Franciscan Spirituality of the Earth*](#) takes the "three interrelated disciplines" of Franciscan theology "scientifically informed ecology, theology and the practice of reflective action" and applies them to modern environmental threats. Scholars Ilia Delio, OSF, Keith Douglass Warner, OFM and Pamela Wood analyze our current situation in light of Franciscan spirituality providing both a hopeful vision and a plea for action.

Scottish Episcopal priest and environmental ethicist Michael S. Northcott has collaborated with Maryknoll's Orbis Books to offer [*A Moral Climate: The Ethics of Global Warming*](#). Well-documented and drawing on real-life examples, this book links Christian themes and environmental challenges calling all people of faith to be much more mindful of the interrelatedness of all of God's creation and our special role as caretakers.

Other Climate Change Tools

Be sure to look at the resources page on our website for more educational tools:

www.catholicsandclimatechange.org

Coalition Partners

More and more national Catholic organizations are joining the Catholic Coalition on Climate Change. We encourage you to visit their climate change related information on their websites as well:

- Catholic Relief Services: www.crs.org
- National Council of Catholic Women: www.nccw.org
- Catholic Health Association of the United States www.chausa.org
- Catholic Charities USA www.catholiccharitiesusa.org
- National Catholic Rural Life Conference www.ncrlc.com
- Association of Catholic Colleges and Universities www.accunet.org
- Franciscan Action Network www.franciscanaction.org

Other News on Climate Change

- [US Catholic Magazine's](#) April Issue is devoted to environmental justice and includes an article by Dan Misleh, CCCC Executive Director, "[Change the Climate in Washington](#)."
- The Vatican's Apostolic Penitentiary listed "new sins" including in the areas of biotechnology, economics and ecology. Bishop Gianfranco Girotti of the Apostolic Penitentiary noted that because of globalization, the social implications of these sins are widely felt. "If yesterday sin had a rather individualistic dimension, today it has an impact and resonance that is above all social, because of the great phenomenon of globalization," he said in an interview with the Vatican newspaper, *L'Observatore Romano*.

Additional articles and CCCC activities can be found on our website.

Looking Ahead

Communication

We will be surveying Catholics across the country on attitudes, messages and messengers on environmental justice and climate change in the next month. We are confident that this project

will enable us to refine our messages and approaches to sharing Church teaching and building momentum for action on climate change.

Integration

We are assisting the USCCB in evaluating proposals from national Catholic organizations seeking funds to more fully integrate the bishops' policy priorities on climate change into their ongoing work. We are asking them to find ways to educate their constituencies about climate change, build their networks and assist with public policy promotion in exchange for a modest grant from the USCCB's Environmental Justice Program. Awards will be announced on both the CCCC and USCCB/EJP websites.

Training

We continue to accept invitations to speak to national and diocesan groups. If you wish to make Catholic teaching and climate change a part of your own meetings, please let us know and we'll do all we can to help find speakers and suggest formats. We encourage you to use the tools mentioned above as a first step.

Hearings

We have identified some key diocesan and state leaders in U.S. House of Representatives districts where a Catholic hearing or press event focused specifically on the poverty question might help shape yet-to-be-defined House legislation on climate change. We will be offering new resources and training for these leaders on how to conduct such an event.

Share This News

We encourage you to forward this e-mail to your family, friends and colleagues and help us build a network of concerned Catholics engaged in promoting the common good, acting with prudence and protecting the poor as climate change unfolds.

Click [here](#) and request that you be removed from our mailing list if you no longer wish to receive this bulletin.