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A CATHOLIC CONVERSATION ON CLIMATE CHANGE:
Protecting the Poor, Promoting Prudence, Pursuing the Common Good

On Saturday, June 2, 2007, Catholics from around Alaska will convene in Anchorage to participate in a daylong conversation about the role of the Catholic community in addressing moral questions raised by climate change. The dialogue enjoys the support of Alaska's bishops, and assistance from the Catholic Conference of Alaska and the Catholic Coalition on Climate Change, based in Washington, D.C.

Catholic leaders and experts in the fields of science, business, energy, education, theology, government, fishing, human services, and the media from across Alaska will hear featured Keynote Speaker, John L. Carr, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops' Secretary for Social Development and World Peace.

Mr. Carr has a 25-year involvement in Catholic social ministry. He travels the country and the world to speak on the Church's social mission and the demands of our faith in standing up for the lost, the least, and those left behind. He has represented USCCB at the Vatican and in visits to the Middle East, Northern Ireland, Southern Africa, Russia, Central America and Vietnam. Mr. Carr writes on Catholic social teachings and moral dimensions of public and international issues, building the Catholic community's capacity to act on social mission policy and advocacy efforts on poverty.

According to Carr, Christian values such as "the virtue of prudence, the pursuit of the common good and the protection of the poor" are important contributions to the climate-change debate, and should be at the heart of policies aimed at addressing climate change. As politicians work to reach consensus on policy prescriptions that address climate change, the Church will play a convening role, and bring together a variety of viewpoints to help advance the conversation so that poor people at home and abroad will not be forced to endure the potentially harmful impacts of climate change. This conversation will focus on the Catholic Church's embrace of traditional values of sacrifice, restraint, moderation, the promotion of the common good, and a priority concern for the poor.

Other speakers joining Mr. Carr on the program include:

Dr. Glenn Juday, UAF Professor of Forest Ecology, presenting an overview on processes that cause climate change, a review of climate records and how recent changes compare, resources and systems that have been affected, and likely future change. Dr Juday's comments will provide a basis of reference for others that follow, and will relate to choices and options facing society as a result, specifically within the framework of Catholic teaching.

Adjunct Professor Jim Powell, with nearly 30 years' technical and policy position experience in natural resource and environmental management in Alaska, Jim will address the municipality point of view. Jim is the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) Section Manager for Water Quality Standards; Deputy Director for Division of Environmental Quality and Special Assistant; former Deputy Mayor and Assembly member for the City and Borough of Juneau. He serves on several local, national and international boards and commissions, including: the Scientific Panel on Climate Change for Juneau; North/North Network for Urban Sustainability and Leadership - UN Habitat Best Practices Program Affiliate; Arctic Winter Games Board of Directors; and ex officio Board Member of the Association of State Wetlands Managers Association. Jim has an MPA from the University of Alaska Southeast, where he is Adjunct Professor, and is currently pursuing an Interdisciplinary Ph.D. in Natural Resources & Sustainability Science at the University of Alaska Fairbanks.

Other panelists representing Alaska Native concerns, the energy industry, health care, and fishing, will offer their views of climate change challenges within their industry, and share thoughts on how best to proceed with practical and public policy initiatives consistent with Catholic teaching on this issue.

Participants will be guided through a discussion about the presentations, and come to common understanding about how to move forward in ways that reflect Catholic teaching and a concern for those least able to adapt to or mitigate potential negative consequences of climate change. Delegations from each of Alaska's three dioceses will be in Anchorage to listen, learn and plan follow-up activities in their area in the coming year.

This hearing, one of several being held around the country, will contribute to an ongoing, civilized and thoughtful dialogue with key stakeholders in the climate change debate. Taken together, it will give clearer direction and more precise action steps for the Catholic community in the United States.

For more information, please call 907 242-0730 or email: cclibert@aol.com

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