

# **Catholic Coalition on Climate Change**

Helping Catholics become faithful stewards of God's earth

December Update '08

Blessed Christmas greetings to all of you from all of us!

Our staff has grown since we last wrote in October. Christopher Anderson, Marti Jewell and Anne Balzhiser of the National Association for Lay Ministry join Kolya Braun-Greiner and I to help develop the Catholic Climate Covenant: the St. Francis Pledge to Protect Creation and the Poor. Please join me in welcoming them to our team.

## **A Catholic Climate Covenant: the St. Francis Pledge to Protect Creation and the Poor**

This ambitious project is in response to a growing desire by the Catholic community to respond in faith to climate change. It will also be a demonstration of a common Catholic commitment to care for God's creation and to stand with poor and vulnerable people in our nation and around the world who face the impacts of a changing climate.

The effort will be launched during the Easter season in 2009 and at its center will be the St. Francis Pledge calling Catholic individuals, groups and institutions to make a serious commitment to all of the following:

PRAY and reflect on the duty to care for God's creation and protect the poor and vulnerable;

LEARN about and educate others on climate change and its moral dimensions;

ASSESS our participation-as individuals and organizations-in contributing to climate change (i.e. consumption and conservation);

ACT to change our choices and behaviors contributing to climate change and;

ADVOCATE Catholic principles and priorities in climate change discussions and decisions, especially as they impact the poor and vulnerable.

We are seeking endorsements and participation in the Covenant from national Catholic organizations and a few dioceses even before we officially launch this important new project during the Easter season of 2009. For more information about the Covenant, please visit our [website](#) and click on the link at the top of the homepage. Download this [flyer about the Covenant](#) to share with others to help promote this event as we prepare for the launch.

As always, we hope you will share our website and this project with friends and

family and encourage them to sign up with the Coalition to stay abreast of the work of the Catholic community on this important issue. Please share this information with your friends and colleagues. Go to our [tell-a-friend](#) page and send them an invitation to sign up too!

### **CIDSE/Caritas Internationalis**

We take heart in the efforts of our European brothers and sisters to place the needs of poor people, especially those in developing countries, at the center of their advocacy work.

During the latest UN climate summit in Poznan, Poland, CIDSE president René Grotenhuis said, "Communities in the developing world have been hardest hit by climate change --despite doing (the) least to cause it. We have a moral obligation to make sure countries receive the financial and technical assistance they need to adapt to climate change and to build better lives and livelihoods for their people."

We encourage you read about it [here](#) and download their policy paper, [Development and Climate Justice](#).

### **Pope Benedict's first "Green Audience"**

The Holy Father flipped the switch on the 2,400 newly installed solar panels for the first time on November 27, 2008. It is estimated that the panels, which power the Paul VI Audience Hall and other nearby buildings will save the equivalent of 80 tons of oil each year. To offset the rest of its carbon footprint, the Vatican is planting trees on 37 acres in Hungary. Both the panels and the Hungarian acreage are donated. [Read about this](#) and the 2008 Euro Solar Prize the Vatican won for their efforts.

### **Public Policy Update**

Cecilia Calvo, Project Coordinator of the [Environmental Justice Program](#) of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops briefed the National Association of State Catholic Conference Directors meeting in Washington recently on the prospects for climate change legislation under a new Administration and new Congress. In her memo with John Carr of the Department of Justice Peace and Human Development, she noted:

With a new Congress and a new administration, our challenges are more significant. The good news is that the new administration is likely to take the lead in addressing climate change. The bad news is that the current focus on the economy may lead to a delay in climate change legislation and greater difficulties in allocating resources to poor families, communities and countries.

Within our own community, national organizations such as [Catholic Relief Services](#), [Catholic Charities USA](#) and the [National Catholic Rural Life Conference](#) are increasingly engaged in implementing the bishops' public policy priorities on climate change. This will add much needed experience and expertise to help shape specific public policies going forward.

In addition, other members of the relief and development community and non-governmental organizations are also engaged in the issue of how climate change will affect the poor (Examples include: Oxfam America, Center on Budget and Policy Priorities and Green for All).

The state of the economy will present new challenges for the development of future climate legislation. Designed correctly, proposed policies to address climate change will create new and necessary resources to protect the poor and vulnerable from the impacts of climate change and climate policy. Additionally, economic stimulus plans geared toward investments in clean energy technology could spur job growth. Nonetheless, many constituencies will compete for new resources created by climate policy, especially in tough times.

### **Join Us In Washington!**

The Catholic Social Ministry Gathering is just around the corner: February 22-25, 2009. If you have never attended a Catholic Social Ministry Gathering, we encourage you to do so. It is a wonderful celebration of the social mission of the Church and includes over 600 social ministry leaders from around the country, top-notch plenary speeches, great issue workshops and a trip to Capitol Hill to advocate on behalf of the lost and the forgotten of our world. We'll also be unveiling more information about the Catholic Climate Covenant. Register by following the link on USCCB's [Justice, Peace and Human Development](#) website.

### **A Reflection**

*Once we start living in a way that is people-friendly to all of God's family, we will also be environment-friendly.* -- Archbishop Desmond Tutu

In addition to care for creation, a central tenet of Catholic social teaching is family, community and participation. I was reminded of this while reading Archbishop Desmond Tutu's forward in the new "[Green Bible](#)". He says, in essence, that we cannot become fully human unless we are in relationship with other humans: "We are made to live in a delicate network of interdependence, for we are made for complementarity [but]...all kinds of things go horribly wrong when we flout this law-when we don't ensure that God's children everywhere have a supply of clean water, a safe environment, a decent home, a full stomach."

He goes on to say-as have the Holy Father and the bishops for years now-that it is the poor who are most severely impacted by droughts, high temperatures, flooding and unpredictable weather that climatologists say will become the norm with a warming planet. Solving the climate crisis will go hand in hand with solving the relationship crisis. Says Tutu: "Once we start living in a way that is people-friendly to all of God's family, we will also be environment-friendly."

This sums up well the purpose of our Catholic Coalition on Climate Change. Like the eminent Anglican Archbishop, our goal is to remind all people of goodwill that when we begin to have more compassion and understanding of the plight of the

poorest people at home and abroad then we will begin to solve climate change, too.

We hope you find peace, restfulness and joy this Christmas season through the loving embrace of family and friends.

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