

*Climate Change and Human Health:
What's the Connection and How Can
We Help?*

Daniel Misleh

Catholic Coalition on Climate Change

National Council of Catholic Women

Columbus, Ohio

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Climate Change and Human Health

- Outline
 - What is Climate Change?
 - What might be some impacts
 - Overall
 - Human Health
 - Discussion of Options
 - Sharing of Ideas
 - Resources/Conclusion

Why should Catholics be concerned about climate change?

Not about science or politics

IS about discipleship: following Christ means being concerned about life, stewardship, the least among us

Climate Change and Life

In taking stock of the current situation, I would propose the combination of a secular approach and a religious approach, the approach of faith.

Today, we all see that man can destroy the foundations of his existence, his earth, hence, that we can no longer simply do what we like or what seems useful and promising at the time with this earth of ours, with the reality entrusted to us. On the contrary, we must respect the inner laws of creation, of this earth, we must learn these laws and obey these laws if we wish to survive.

Consequently, this obedience to the voice of the earth, of being, is more important for our future happiness than the voices of the moment, the desires of the moment. In short, this is a first criterion to learn: that being itself, our earth, speaks to us and we must listen if we want to survive and to decipher this message of the earth. And if we must be obedient to the voice of the earth, this is even truer for the voice of human life. Not only must we care for the earth, we must respect the other, others: both the other as an individual person, as my neighbor, and others as communities who live in the world and have to live together.

Benedict XVI, July 25, 2007

Climate Change and Life

- Climate Change (CC) has life-threatening consequences. It affects us all, our children, and our children's children.
- The unborn and future generations are loved by God; they have rights and deserve a voice.
- CC threatens the extinction of countless plant and animal species. As stewards of creation we are called to care for all of creation.

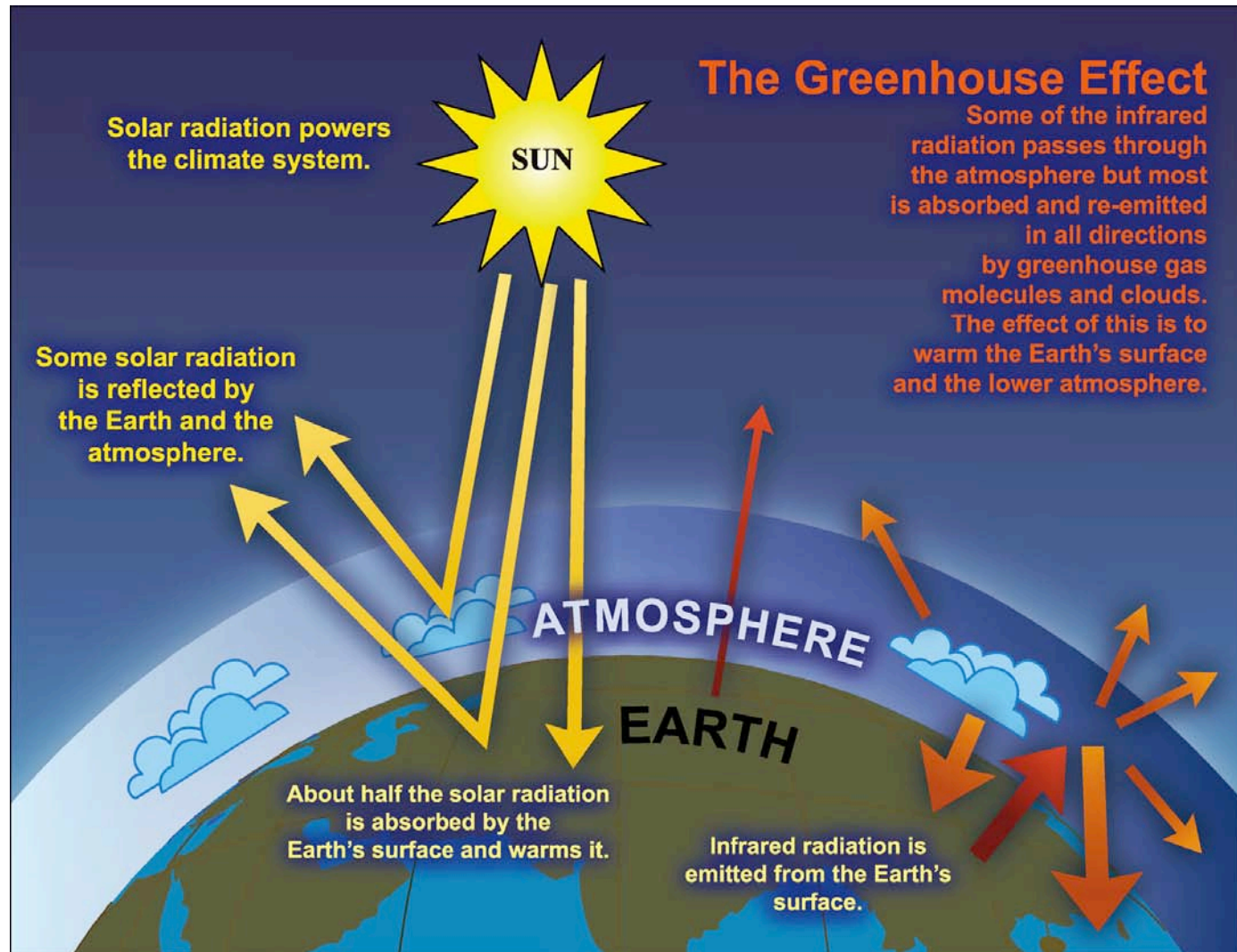
Climate Change and Poverty

- large scale weather events, floods and droughts; poor have fewest resources, least able to adapt
- food insecurity, exacerbates lack of human development, especially in poorest nations
- environmental refugees: millions displaced in low-lying lands threatened by rising sea levels (e.g. New Orleans, Bangladesh, Pacific Islands).
- wealthier nations consume more resources, but poor suffer worst consequences.

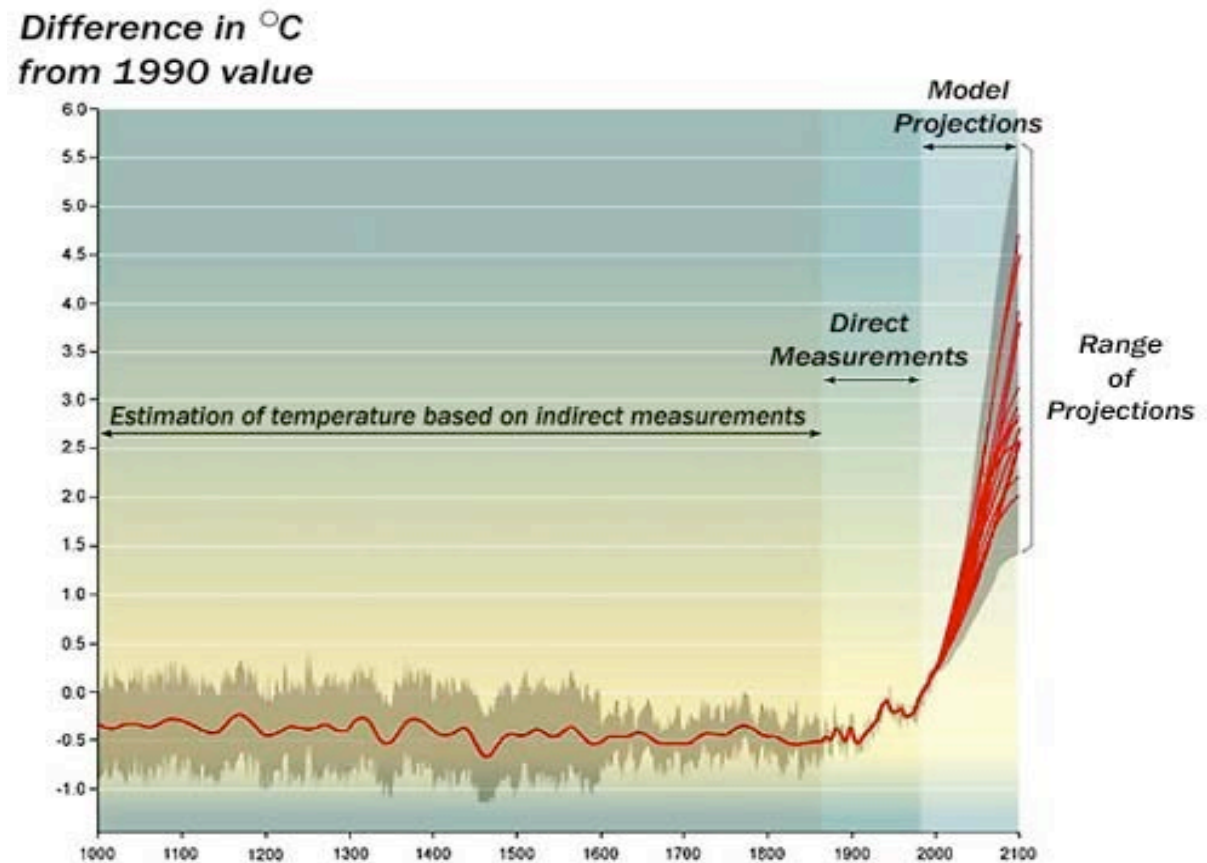
Climate Change and Faith

- God created the earth (Col 1:15.23, In Christ All Things Have Their Being).
- God said it was good (Gen 2:4-7).
- God entrusted us to take care of it (Gen 2:15)
- We are called to be wise & faithful stewards of God's resources; to use them for the benefit of all
- Discipleship--love for Christ, love of neighbor means we must pray, reflect, and take action to protect God's creation.

What is Climate Change?



What is Climate Change?



Source: Intergovernmental Panel of Climate Change 2001

Figure 3.20 Historic and Projected Variations
Of the Earth's Surface Temperature

Climate Change Impacts



Climate Change: Global Health Impacts

- Stronger and hotter heat waves
 - Will nighttime bring relief?
 - Heat-related deaths to double by 2020
 - Increased smog, allergens

(Scientific American, August 2000)

Climate Change: Global Health Impacts

- Intense floods and droughts
 - Already prolonged in arid areas
 - Death by drowning and...
 - ...starvation/malnutrition: crop damage
 - Emergence of infectious diseases
 - Massive migrations
 - Dense populations: harder to control disease outbreaks

(Scientific American, August 2000)

Climate Change: Global Health Impacts

- Mosquitoes Thrive
 - Malaria, dengue fever, yellow fever, encephalitis
 - Warmer temperatures speed maturation of parasites and mosquitoes
 - They'll move up and out
 - Floods: more puddles
 - Droughts: greater concentrations
 - Heat: decreases predators

(Scientific American, August 2000)

Climate Change: Global Health Impacts

- Malaria
 - Already kills 3,000/day, mostly children
 - In 45% of world, could go to 60%

(Scientific American, August 2000)

Climate Change: Global Health Impacts

- Dengue Fever
 - Afflicts 50 to 100 million in tropics and subtropics
 - Also found in Americas and Australia

(Scientific American, August 2000)

Climate Change: Global Health Impacts

- Sequential Extremes
 - Vectors like extremes:
 - Reduces predators
 - Increases concentrations of hosts
 - Warmer winters kill fewer
 - West Nile example

(Scientific American, August 2000)

Climate Change: Global Health Impacts

- Waterborne Diseases
 - Floods and drought favor the spread
 - Droughts: reduce safe water supplies, concentrate contaminants, less hygiene, safe rehydration
 - Floods wash sewage into water supplies, flush fertilizer into water resulting in toxic algae
 - Hurricane Mitch: 11,000 dead, thousands contract cholera, malaria, dengue fever

(Scientific American, August 2000)

Climate Change: US Health Impacts

- Poor have fewer resources to adapt (Katrina)
- Lack of insurance
- Ozone and Asthma
- Heat-related mortality

(Redefining Progress, January 2006)

Climate Change: Health Impacts

- Possible Upsides?
 - More land in agriculture
 - Excessive heat can kill some pest
 - Winds disperse pollution
 - Warmer winters reduce cold-related mortality
- On the balance, CC is bad for humans

(Scientific American, August 2000)

Climate Change Action

- What can individuals do?



Carpoolers Wanted
Carpool! (Benefits to those who pool)

Start Time: _____
Stop Time: _____
Contact: _____
Phone: _____

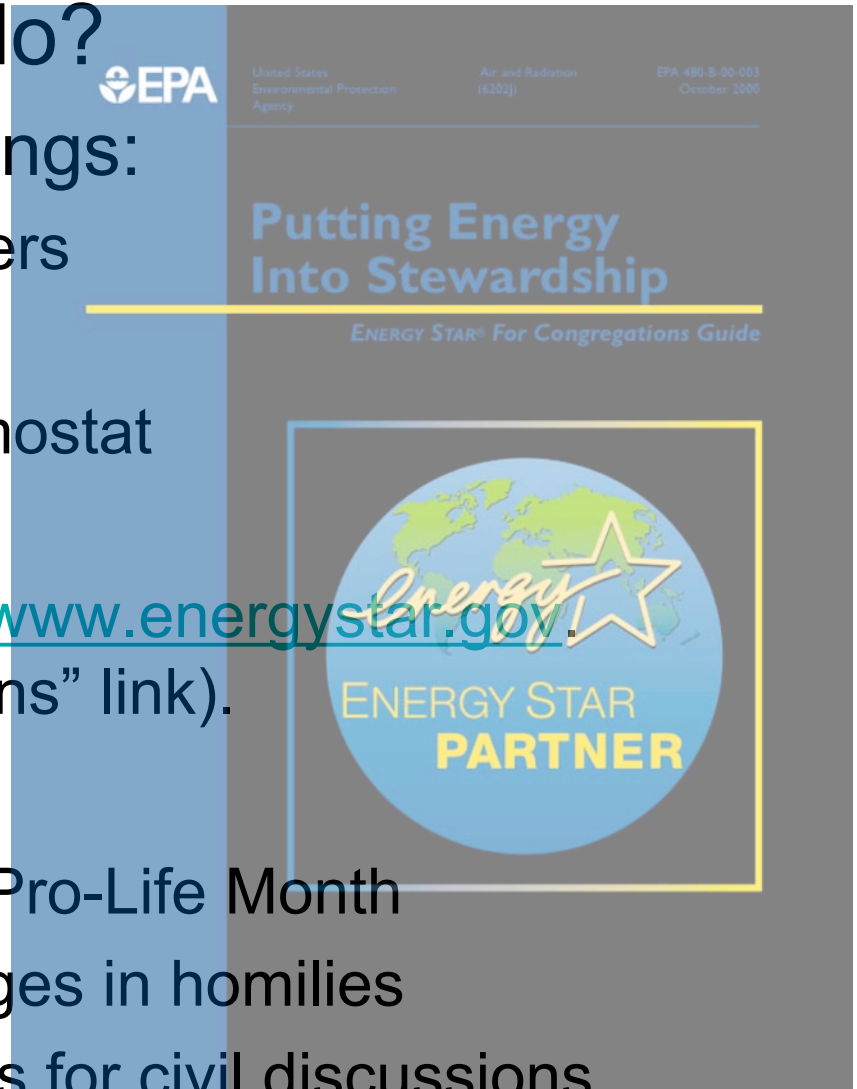


<http://www.energystar.gov>

click on “home improvements” and “products” links

Climate Change Action

- What can Parishes do?
 - Many of the same things:
 - Florescent Lights/timers
 - Better insulation
 - Programmable Thermostat
 - Plant Trees
 - EPA's suggestions: (www.energystar.gov. Click on "congregations" link).
 - ALSO:
 - Add creation care to Pro-Life Month
 - Creation care messages in homilies
 - Convene stakeholders for civil discussions



Climate Change Action

- Public Policy Options
 - U.S. bishops and other religious communities have set forth principles for public policy:
 - Climate change is real and caused primarily by human activities: prudence requires action
 - The poor contribute the least and will suffer the worst
 - Public policies addressing climate change should enhance, not diminish, the economic situation of poor
 - Public policies should help poor adapt at home and abroad and they should actively participate in these efforts

Climate Change Action

- Go to the USCCB website to see what public policies might be supported (www.usccb.org/sdwp/ejp):
 - Poor are a priority
 - Concern for displaced workers
 - Technology transfers and sustainable development overseas
- Visit www.catholicsandclimatechange.org for additional ideas and resources.