

Can You Spare Some Change?

"It is becoming more and more evident that the issue of environmental degradation challenges us to examine our life-style and the prevailing models of consumption and production, which are often unsustainable from a social, environmental and even economic point of view." Pope Benedict XVI

Climate change is real.

The overwhelming evidence shows that humans are causing the climate to change.

Climate change is causing droughts, floods, extreme weather, and rising sea levels which lead to immense human suffering, especially among the poorest and most vulnerable people.



Our recent Popes, our U.S. bishops, and the Pontifical Academy of Science have all warned of the dangers to humanity and the rest of creation caused by climate change.

The Church calls us to view climate change as a moral issue, a crisis that we are obligated to address.

These simple, stark facts can seem overwhelming but we are not at liberty to ignore them. We only have one planet and we are responsible for it and for each other.

According to the world's top climate scientists who comprise the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, "the atmospheric concentrations of carbon dioxide, nitrous oxide and methane have increased to levels unprecedented in at least 800,000 years." These greenhouse gasses are produced in large measure from burning fossil fuels (oil, coal, natural gas), and from agricultural practices and deforestation. It is these emissions that are the main culprits in causing climate change.

That means that we humans, who create the greenhouse gasses, can and must do something about the damage caused by them. We in the United States have a particular responsibility since we consume so much of the world's resources; we make up 5% of the world's population but use up **25%** of the world's energy.

Our life-styles are wreaking havoc on the planet. This is a difficult reality to face; **it's a sin we would rather not admit.** However, the time has come for us to recognize that we are hurting God's creation and our sisters and brothers. We need a lot of CHANGE— by individuals, by institutions such as our parishes, by corporations and by governments— to save the planet from greater catastrophe.

The Diocesan Public Policy Committee is asking individual Catholics and parishes to learn about and then do something about climate change. You'll find prayers, bulletin notices, inspiring quotes and ideas on how to take action on the diocesan web site at this link:

<http://www.dor.org/index.cfm/catholic-charities/public-policy/care-for-gods-creation-and-the-poor/global-climate-change-resources/>

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Be the Change

Individual actions: *CONSUME LESS*

Pretend gas is \$10/gallon. Act accordingly. Walk, bike, take the bus, set up a carpool. Offer up any inconvenience in atonement for the sin of over-consumption.

Industrial agriculture creates a lot of greenhouse gasses. Eat less meat. Eat more produce grown on local farms.

Turn off the air conditioning. Instead, open your windows in the evening, close them in the morning.

Get a free energy assessment of your home to learn how to use less electricity and heating fuel. Subsidies and low interest financing are available for water heaters, furnaces, insulation, appliances, etc. For details: www.nyscrda.ny.gov/Energy-Efficiency-and-Renewable-Programs/Residential/Programs/Existing-Home-Renovations.aspx

Parish actions: *ACTIVATE*

Encourage your parish to get a free energy assessment of the church and other buildings. <http://www.nyscrda.ny.gov/small-commercial-energy-assessment>

Ask your pastor to use the diocesan climate change materials in bulletins, homilies, and prayers during Mass.

Organize carpools for Sunday Mass. Everybody is going to the same place—why not go together?

Changing corporations: *DIVEST*

If you have investments, consider taking your money out of the fossil fuel industry. Invest instead in solar and wind power and businesses that view protecting the environment as part of their purpose. Talk to your financial advisor about socially responsible funds.

Other possibilities include: <http://naturalinvesting.com/> <http://greencentury.com/>



Catholic Climate Covenantsm
Care for Creation. Care for the Poor.

Learn more about why Catholics care about climate change at

<http://catholicclimatecovenant.org/>



Solar electric panels atop the Vatican in Rome

Changing public policy: *ADVOCATE*

Many government policies affect climate change, such as vehicle fuel efficiency standards and tax incentives for installing solar panels. Many environmental organizations are following these issues. Lend your voice to one of them.

One such possibility is **Citizens Climate Lobby**, a national group with local chapters working to pass “**carbon fee and dividend**” legislation. This policy would establish a fee that would be collected on fossil fuels, starting low and increasing each year. As companies have to pay more to produce fossil fuels, prices would increase.

That’s where the dividend part comes in. The fee collected would be distributed directly to U.S. households to help them cover those energy costs.

Since the implementation of the fee would be predictable, it would give energy companies time and incentive to switch to alternative energy sources.

We know that fossil fuels are already costing our planet a lot, but that the oceans, the animals and the poorest and most vulnerable people are “paying for” much of that cost. The fee would shift more of the cost to the actual consumers of fossil fuels and give them the financial encouragement to reduce their consumption.

To learn more, see:

<http://citizensclimatelobby.org/>