



Capitol Comments: Protect Creation and Care for the Poor

By Jennifer Allmon, Associate Director, Texas Catholic Conference

“Going green” is all the rage these days. I have to admit that I feel a sense of accomplishment and purpose when I’m rinsing out my yogurt container to recycle it or when I discover a new item to recycle. More cities are offering streamlined recycling programs, celebrities are doing public service announcements, cloth diapering is making a comeback, and the Vatican has installed solar panels. Why is the Church getting into all this hype? Pope Benedict XVI’s answer is, “If you want to cultivate peace, protect creation.” This is the theme of his 2010 message for the World Day of Peace.

But the Church isn’t just another environmental voice; our message includes care for the poor and vulnerable along with care for creation. These priorities must be balanced. In his World Day of Peace message, the Holy Father writes, “The environment must be seen as God’s gift to all people, and the use we make of it entails a shared responsibility for all humanity, especially the poor and future generations. When Congress turns its attention toward Climate Change, the Bishops will be reminding members that we must focus both on creation and on the impact of the legislation on the poor as individuals and on poor nations. As the Holy Father reminds us, “Our duties towards the environment flow from our duties towards the person, considered both individually and in relation to others.” In his address to the diplomatic corps to the Holy See, the Pope asked, “How can we separate, or even set at odds the protection of the environment and the protection of human life, including the life of the unborn?”

Recognizing the impact that environment has on the dignity of the person, the Texas Catholic Conference supports protection and improvement of air, land, and water quality, especially as they impact poor communities and the unborn. In the last legislative session, we supported a bill that required consumption advisories for fish containing excessive levels of methylmercury. This was out of concern for the unborn, because a pregnant woman passes mercury to her unborn child, and also out of concern for poor families who rely on subsistence fishing and are more likely to eat locally caught fish.

The Catholic Climate Change Coalition is a partner of the USCCB. Together, they encourage the faithful to learn more and take action through the St. Francis Pledge, a commitment by Catholic individuals, families, parishes, organizations and institutions to live our faith by protecting God’s Creation and advocating on behalf of people in poverty who face the harshest impacts of global climate change. The pledge is:

I/We Pledge to:

- **PRAY** and reflect on the duty to care for God’s Creation and protect the poor and vulnerable.
- **LEARN** about and educate others on the causes and moral dimensions of climate change.
- **ASSESS** how we-as individuals and in our families, parishes and other affiliations-contribute to climate change by our own energy use, consumption, waste, etc.
- **ACT** to change our choices and behaviors to reduce the ways we contribute to climate change.
- **ADVOCATE** for Catholic principles and priorities in climate change discussions and decisions, especially as they impact those who are poor and vulnerable.

For more information on Catholics and Climate Changes, please visit:

www.catholicsandclimatechange.org. To take the St. Francis Pledge, please visit:

<http://catholicclimatecovenant.org/>