



Frequently Asked Questions

What is the Catholic Climate Covenant?

The Catholic Climate Covenant seeks to show respect for God’s creation by focusing on the link between creation and poverty embodied in the life and ministry of St. Francis and the words of the Psalmist: “The earth is the Lord’s and all it holds.” (Ps 24:1)

The Catholic Coalition on Climate Change, whose participants include a dozen national Catholic organizations including the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, launched The Catholic Climate Covenant: The St. Francis Pledge to Care for Creation and the Poor to encourage greater personal and shared engagement by the Catholic community to respond to the impacts of climate change.

This unprecedented initiative offers Catholics a concrete way to live out our faith by caring for God’s creation and the “least of these” in response to the challenges of global climate change. Pope Benedict XVI is leading these efforts: “*Our earth speaks to us, and we must listen if we want to survive.*”

How is the Catholic Climate Covenant responding to climate change?

The **Catholic Climate Covenant** is working to highlight the themes of “covenant, creation, and poverty” by:

- Encouraging and assisting Catholic institutions, organizations, parishes and individuals to join the Covenant by taking *the St. Francis Pledge*, a response to climate-change impacts on creation and people in poverty.
- Sharing good news about the ongoing and impressive ways in which the Catholic community is carrying out the Catholic Climate Covenant to honor our obligations toward God’s gift of creation.

Why are Catholics Being Encouraged to Join the Covenant by Taking the St. Francis Pledge?

As Catholics live out their faith—as individuals, parishioners, students (children and adults), and as members of a variety of Catholic institutions—they are increasingly concerned about climate change and are seeking ways to honor the gift of creation and live out the demands of the Gospel to care for people in poverty. It will likely be the poorest and most vulnerable people who will suffer the worst consequences of climate change.

While some of the public debate remains divided between those wishing to save plant and animal species on the one hand and the growing demand for fossil fuel energy on the other, the Catholic community enters this debate **to offer a distinctly religious and moral perspective** to what is necessarily a complicated scientific, economic, and political discussion. We seek to remind policy makers and stakeholders that care for creation must be accompanied by true concern for those most impacted by climate change and its solutions.

This new and unprecedented campaign provides individuals, parishes, schools and other organizations with both an opportunity and concrete tools to protect creation and poor people. Together the Catholic community can change the nature of the climate debate and enable us to fulfill Jesus' call in Matthew 25: to see Jesus' face in all we meet, especially those in most need.

When will the Catholic Climate Covenant initiative be launched?

This effort will be *launched during the Easter season in 2009* with a public event on Earth Day, April 22, 2009. Already dozens of Catholic organizations have committed to taking the St. Francis Pledge and are promoting the effort. These commitments will help inspire other Catholic individuals and organizations to join the Covenant by taking *the St. Francis Pledge*.

What is the St. Francis Pledge?

Individuals and organizations join the Covenant by taking the *St. Francis Pledge*. They will be asked to fulfill all five elements of the Pledge:

- **PRAY** and reflect on the duty to care for God's creation and protect the poor and vulnerable;
- **LEARN** about and educate others on both the reality of climate change and its moral dimensions;
- **ASSESS** your participation—as individuals and organizations—in contributing to climate change (i.e. consumption and conservation);
- **ACT** to change your 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.

Where can I get more information on the five parts of the St. Francis Pledge?

Information, suggestions, inspirational stories, and materials for each part of the pledge are available on the Project website: www.catholicclimatecovenant.org.

What else is the Coalition doing to promote the Catholic Climate Covenant?

The Covenant website will offer a variety of ways for Catholic individuals, families, schools, parishes and other institutions to fulfill the *St. Francis Pledge*. Besides the bi-lingual website, the following resources will be available in English and Spanish:

- Pre-Launch written materials sent to every parish in the US—and made available to other Catholic institutions—announcing the initiative. Materials will include: an explanation of the Covenant; a welcoming message; a poster highlighting the Covenant, climate change, and its impact on poor people; and a bulletin insert with the *St. Francis Pledge* and ways to fulfill it.
- A short inspirational video will be posted on the website which explains the goals of the Covenant.

Who has already committed to the Catholic Climate Covenant and the St. Francis Pledge?

Commitments have already been made by: the Franciscan Action Network, Catholic Charities USA, Catholic Relief Services, the National Catholic Rural Life Conference, and the Catholic Health Association of the United States, among others.

What is the connection between Catholics and the environment?

Catholics are called to respect God's creation and deal with environmental issues, particularly as they affect the poor. Vatican and U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops' statements have highlighted the moral imperative for Catholics to care for God's creation and its impact on those least able to respond. These statements are based on scientific evidence and public discourse which have converged in making climate change such an urgent moral imperative.

Today the great gift of God's Creation is exposed to serious dangers and lifestyles which can degrade it. Environmental pollution is making particularly unsustainable the lives of the poor of the world ... we must pledge ourselves to take care of creation and to share its resources in solidarity."

--Pope Benedict XVI

What is the connection between St. Francis and climate change?

There are many stories from the life of St Francis which illustrate his profound love for God's creation. Images of St. Francis often show him with birds and other creatures. His love of the natural world is expressed in the Canticle of the Sun, a prayer in which he speaks of Brother Sun, Sister Moon, Mother Earth, Brother Fire, and all of God's creation. But St. Francis gave up his wealth and position in society to live a life of poverty and among those who were the poorest in his day. In this way, St. Francis uniquely demonstrated a love of Creation and a deep, abiding concern for the wellbeing of the pinnacle of Creation, humankind. The life and ministry of St. Francis continues to inspire Catholics and all people of goodwill to care for creation and those in poverty.

Who Is St. Francis of Assisi?

St. Francis of Assisi (1181 – 1226) founded the Franciscan Order. He is well known for his service to poor people and his care for all living things. His deepest desire "was ever to seek among wise and simple, perfect and imperfect, the means to walk in the way of truth." This desire serves as a guide to those who, in today's world, are concerned with serving impoverished people and caring for creation.

For further information contact:

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