



## The Catholic Coalition on Climate Change



### Reflection for Holy Week 2010

As the Triduum approaches and in preparation of the Easter celebration, the Church invites us in a special way to reflect on the Passion and Death of Jesus, remembering always that, “In all of his life Jesus presents himself as *our model* [emphasis in original]. He is the ‘the perfect man,’ who invites us to become his disciples and follow him” (CCC 519).

In this context, when we follow Jesus’ model, we might begin to restore what Pope Benedict XVI calls “the harmony between the Creator, mankind and the created world,” and to take faithful climate action to care for Creation, the poor, and the common good.

Our Christian faith maintains that Jesus Christ came “to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many” (Mk 10:45), and that through his passion, death, and resurrection, Jesus is indeed “the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world” (Jn 1:29). Yet while we acknowledge that Jesus was “obedient unto death,” it is also worth noting his prayer in the Garden of Gethsemani: “My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me...” (Mt 26:39). In this prayer, Jesus “expresses the horror that death represented for his human nature” (CCC 612) and demonstrates his humanity as well as his divinity. In other words, Jesus knew that the sacrifice to which he was called would compromise his own temporal human comforts and ease.

However, Jesus ultimately put our salvation ahead of his own self-interested inclinations, praying “yet, not as I will, but as you will” (Mt 26:39) before “freely accept[ing] his Passion and Death” (CCC 609). In so doing, “Jesus presents himself as *our model*” and calls us to “follow him” (CCC 519) in learning to put the common good and welfare of others ahead of our own personal comforts, pleasures and desires.

As we consider this reality and its implications for our lives, we do so knowing that Pope Benedict XVI has challenged us to reflect on our consumption habits, reduce our contributions to climate change and help to preserve God’s great gift of Creation. “Specifically,” the Pope asserts that the challenges of climate change and environmental degradation, “call for a lifestyle marked by sobriety and solidarity” with the poor who suffer most from the misuse of the natural world (2010 World Day of Peace Message).

In our society, often marked by egoistic consumerism, excess and pleasure, these words of altruistic prudence and restraint may prove especially challenging. In our modern world, there are many who tell us to think only of our own desires, and to pursue and consume what we want, when we want it, without any inconvenience. However, the Holy Father is aware of the environmental, social, and spiritual degradation of such a self-centered and materialistic worldview. As he said during his inauguration as pope, “The external deserts in the world are growing, because the internal deserts have become so vast.”

Instead of a self-interested paradigm that puts short-sighted, egocentric material excess ahead of common environmental stewardship and care for the poor, Pope Benedict invites us to reflect on how our choices affect the environment and other people, both around the world and in future generations. As he reminds us, we must be especially mindful that “environmental degradation makes the life of the poor especially unbearable.”

Ultimately, he asserts that “Our present crises ... require us to rethink the path which we are travelling together” (2010 World Day of Peace Message). Towards that end, the Holy Father asserts that “economic activity needs to consider the fact that ‘every economic decision has a moral consequence’ and thus show increased respect for the environment. When making use of natural resources, we should be concerned for their protection and consider the cost entailed – environmentally and socially – as an essential part of the overall expenses incurred” (2010 World Day of Peace Message).

In preparation for Easter, the Catholic Coalition on Climate Change offers this reflection on the choices that each of us makes as individuals in light of our faith. As well, each of us is invited to consider more fully the implications that these choices have on other people and the environment, and to follow more faithfully the model of Christ crucified by putting the common good ahead of our own immediate pleasures and preferences. As Pope Benedict points out, “This obedience to the voice of the Earth is more important for our future happiness ... than the desires of the moment. Our Earth is talking to us and we must listen to it and decipher its message if we want to survive.”

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