



Celebrate the Feast of St. Francis: Take the St. Francis Pledge to Care for Creation and the Poor

Parish and school celebrations of the Feast of St. Francis (Monday, October 4, 2010)* are nothing new. But linking this celebration to the *St. Francis Pledge to Care for Creation and the Poor* is new for many in the Catholic community. *Following is a list of resources and practical suggestions to help you organize your school or parish around the St. Francis Pledge.*

The St. Francis Pledge is an integral part of a nation-wide effort to promote the Catholic Climate Covenant, and encourages Catholic parishioners and students to respond to the call of Pope Benedict XVI and the Bishops to embrace climate change solutions consistent with Catholic social teaching. This teaching promotes the values of stewardship in caring for God's Creation and solidarity in our response to poor people—values that were especially embodied in the life of our beloved St. Francis.

One only needs to look at the spring floods in Tennessee, the recent fires in Russia and the utter devastation threatening the lives and livelihoods of tens of millions of Pakistanis to understand that severe weather events (as predicted by climate scientists) impact the poorest people on earth the hardest. As Pope Benedict reminds us, “Environmental degradation makes the life of the poor especially unbearable.”

The Catholic Coalition on Climate Change encourages you take advantage of this most celebrated of feast days to focus on “the least of these” who are adversely affected by climate change and environmental degradation- despite being least responsible for their causes. The Coalition—a partnership of a dozen national Catholic organizations—invites your parish, school, campus, or youth group to promote the St. Francis Pledge as a way to celebrate the Feast of St. Francis.

WHERE DO I FIND RESOURCES?

Feast of St. Francis and St. Francis Pledge materials are available for download at:

<http://catholicclimatecovenant.org/resources/>

Resource materials include:

- 11 x 17 “Who’s Under Your Carbon Footprint” poster
- The St. Francis Pledge flyer/bulletin insert and prayer card
- Suggestions for liturgists: music, prayers, homily helps
- Petitions
- Bulletin Quotes from the Pope and Church on Climate Change
- Clip Art (PDF)

WHAT STEPS CAN I TAKE TO BE SUCCESSFUL?

1. Gather a team of people with whom you can plan your celebration of the Feast of St. Francis. The team might include your parish or school:
 - Pastor and/or Principal
 - Youth Minister
 - Students, youth and young adults
 - Liturgist
 - Director of religious education or religion teachers
 - Parish Council members or school ecology or social justice club
 - Parish or school social ministry coordinator

2. Print from the Covenant website (<http://catholicclimatecovenant.org/resources/>) and share the following resources with your pastor, principal or other interested leaders.
 - A copy of the four-page resource packet containing: a letter of endorsement from The Honorary Chair of the Catholic Coalition, Bishop Skylstad, the St. Francis Pledge, Ideas for Promoting the Pledge, the 11x17 poster, and a copy-ready flyer.
 - A copy of the “Bulletin quotes from Pope Benedict and U.S. bishops on Climate Change”

3. Promote your event and the St. Francis Pledge prior to your planned celebration or other activity:
 - Use the St. Francis Pledge Bulletin Insert (PDF) in your worship bulletin and/or utilize the Clip Art resource. Send the Pledge insert home with parishioners/students.
 - Place an article in your church newsletter citing some of the quotes from the pope and bishops encouraging full participation in taking the Pledge by parishioners/students.
 - Add a link on your church/school website to the St. Francis Pledge: <http://catholicclimatecovenant.org/the-st-francis-pledge/>

4. Consider parish or school-wide efforts to fulfill the St. Francis Pledge. Some examples:
 - PRAY
 - Use the prayer resources during parish or school liturgical celebrations (<http://catholicclimatecovenant.org/resources/>)
 - LEARN
 - Encourage science and religion teachers to work together to discuss both the science of climate change and Catholic teaching about stewardship and care for the poor.
 - Invite parishioners to a special evening session to examine the U.S. Catholic bishops’ statement on climate change (<http://www.usccb.org/sdwp/international/globalclimate.shtml>)
 - ASSESS
 - Schedule an energy audit of your church or school
 - ACT
 - Plan an electronic waste recycling day.
 - Plant a parish or school community garden. Plant trees.
 - Sell CFL light bulbs available during coffee hour or use as a fundraiser for the schools ecology club.
 - Encourage the use of recyclable or reusable cups, plates and utensils at church and school functions.
 - ADVOCATE
 - Join the Arch/Diocesan or state Catholic conference legislative network and encourage network organizers to include environmental stewardship as part of the legislative agenda, especially as it relates to low-income people in your community. You might also share with them the criteria for climate legislation outlined by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops and Catholic Relief Services as part of their *Catholic Confront Global Poverty* initiative: http://www.usccb.org/sdwp/globalpoverty/ccgp_issues_climatechange.shtml
 - Sign up for action alerts from the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, Catholic Relief Services, Catholic Charities USA and other Covenant partners.

5. Register Your Pledge!
 Be sure to go to www.catholicclimatecovenant.org to register parish, school and individual pledges and stay up-to-date with all that is happening in the U.S. and around the world as Catholics put their faith into practice on global climate change.

THANK YOU!

**Recognizing that the first Sunday in October is reserved nation-wide as “Pro-Life Sunday,” the Catholic Coalition on Climate Change encourages a Sunday celebration of the Feast of St. Francis and the promotion of the St. Francis Pledge on either September 26 or October 10, 2010.*