



**Catholic Coalition on
Climate Change**

**United States Conference
of Catholic Bishops:**

**Department of Justice
Peace and Human
Development**

**Migration and Refugee
Services**

**Association of Catholic
Colleges and Universities**

Carmelite NGO

Catholic Charities USA

**Catholic Health
Association of the United
States**

Catholic Relief Services

**Conference of Major
Superiors of Men**

**Franciscan Action
Network**

**National Catholic
Educational Association**

**Leadership Conference of
Women Religious**

**National Catholic
Rural Life Conference**

Catholic Parish and School Planning Guide

Resources to help you organize your school or parish to

Take the St. Francis Pledge

INTRODUCTION

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 (and/or Catholic parishes and schools as a whole) to respond to the call of Pope Benedict XVI and the U.S. 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.

As climate disruption escalates and weather patterns become increasingly unpredictable (dramatic flooding, prolonged droughts, etc.) one thing is for certain: the life and dignity of those with the fewest resources and living in the poorest places on earth will be impacted the most—this despite contributing least to the problem. One only needs to recall recent, powerful storms in the U.S., “hundred year floods” occurring with more regularity, and “dust -bowl” like conditions in our own country or the forest fires in Russia and the utter devastation felt by tens of millions of Pakistanis in 2010.

As Pope Benedict reminds us:

“Environmental degradation makes the life of the poor especially unbearable.”

The Catholic Coalition on Climate Change—a partnership of a dozen national Catholic organizations including the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops—invites your parish, school, campus, or youth group to join the Catholic Climate Covenant by taking the St. Francis Pledge to Care for Creation and the Poor and registering your commitment online at catholicclimatecovenant.org.

The Coalition urges you to promote the St. Francis Pledge within your parish, school and organization and encourage parishioners and students to do likewise. In this way, the Catholic community can clearly focus on “the least of these” who are adversely affected by climate change and environmental degradation.

HOW DO I GET STARTED?

1. PREPARE FOR A MEETING WITH PARISH/SCHOOL DECISION MAKER(S): Are you the one to work with others to move this project forward at your parish or school? Are there others whom you might invite to join you? Be prepared as you present to your pastor, parish council, principal or school administration. Here are some tips:
 - Explore the “[resources](#)” page at the Covenant website to learn more about:
 - [The Covenant/St. Francis Pledge](#)
 - “[Who’s Under Your Carbon Footprint](#)” 3:45-minute video.
 - [Why Does the Church Care](#)
 - [Frequently Asked Questions](#)
 - [Climate Change and the Seven Principles of Catholic Social Teaching](#)
 - [Global Climate Change and Our Catholic Response](#)
 - [Quotes from the Pope and Bishops on Climate Change](#)
 - Print one or more of these resources for distribution to those you want to encourage and inspire:
 - “[Direct Mail](#)” piece (especially the letter of endorsement from Bishop William Skylstad, Honorary Chairman)
 - The St. Francis Pledge “[Bulletin Insert](#)”
 - [Prayer and Worship Suggestions](#) (for parishes, especially)
 - “Who’s Under Your Carbon Footprint” [Poster](#)
 - ALSO: Consider bringing or borrowing a laptop so you can show the “[Who’s Under Your Carbon Footprint](#)” video.
2. MEET WITH DECISION MAKERS: Schedule a meeting with your pastor, parish council, principal or school board. Be prepared to share:
 - Why you feel passionately about this project: your own personal reflections.
 - How this approach is consistent with authentic Catholic teaching (Pope Benedict, U.S. bishops): [US bishops’ 2001 statement](#); Pope Benedict’s [2010 World Day of Peace Message](#), [Climate Change Informed by the 7 Principles of Catholic Social Teaching](#) and is a demand of our faith.
 - How the Catholic Climate Covenant: St. Francis Pledge to Care for Creation and the Poor is [endorsed](#) by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops and over two-dozen other national Catholic organizations.
 - How this approach differs from those in the environmental community: we start from faith—Genesis, St. Francis, obligation to be in solidarity with the poor and vulnerable, etc.
 - How this projects helps parishioners/students live up to the obligations of faith—regardless of one’s views on the science of climate change.
 - How young people, in particular, feel passionately about the environment but need to be shown how their responses may also help deepen their faith.
 - How the materials and resources needed to be successful have already been produced by the Catholic Coalition on Climate Change (the only cost is to print materials).
 - How you would like to form a small, voluntary St. Francis Pledge Committee to help think through and implement the project (and invite these decision makers to be part of that if they wish).
3. CONVENE COMMITTEE/KEY STAKEHOLDERS: Once your project has been approved, gather others who might help think through your parish or school implementation plan. Likely people might be:

For Parishes:

- Pastor
- Parish Council members
- Youth Minister
- Liturgist
- Director of religious education or faith formation teachers

For Schools:

- Principal
- Director of Religion Department/Religion teachers
- Director of Science Department/Science teachers
- Interested Students/Student Council members/Parents
- School ecology or social justice club
- Facility/maintenance staff

4. COMMITTEE/STAKEHOLDER QUESTIONS: Some key questions for your St. Francis Pledge Committee might include:

- Who should take the lead in moving the effort forward?
- What might the project cost: money, personnel? (Note: this should require minimal costs as resources are available for download on the Catholic Climate Covenant website.) AND what are the benefits for implementing it? (Depending on how far you take it, it could provide not only needed spiritual formation—the first priority—but also short and long-term costs savings in energy efficiencies.)
- What are some initial “winnable” goals that can help the Committee gain experience, establish credibility, demonstrate the feasibility of environmental responsibility and build momentum for bigger initiatives later on?
- What other people, committees or groups might help in this effort?
- How will our parish/school fulfill the five parts of the St. Francis Pledge?
- How might we communicate this effort to ensure the greatest participation, and who might help us do that?
- How will we measure success (i.e., number of individual families/students who sign the St. Francis Pledge and/or the parish/school as a whole)?
- How do we celebrate our accomplishments and recognize efforts?

As you meet and plan, put in writing: specific assignments, timelines and plans for moving forward. Consider mechanisms for following-through, and don't forget to celebrate your accomplishments.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

Take time to Promote: be sure to let parishioners/students (and parents) know why this is a priority and that it has the support of your pastor/principal.

- Use the St. Francis Pledge [Bulletin Insert](#) (PDF) in your worship bulletin and/or utilize the Clip Art resource. For schools: send the Pledge insert home with parishioners/students.
- Place an article in your church bulletin or school newsletter citing some of the [quotes from the pope and bishops](#) and encouraging full participation in taking the Pledge by parishioners/students.
- Print and make use of the [St. Francis Pledge Sign Up form for group meetings/parish](#)

[gatherings](#) and appoint someone to enter the names and e-mail addresses on the Covenant website.

- Add a link on your church/school website to the Catholic Climate Covenant/St. Francis Pledge: <http://catholicclimatecovenant.org>.
- Consider BOTH parish or school-wide efforts to fulfill the St. Francis Pledge AND encourage individual and family Pledges.

Some examples on how a parish or school can fulfill the St. Francis Pledge (see: <http://catholicclimatecovenant.org/the-st-francis-pledge/> and click on Parish or School on the left side of this page):

- PRAY
 - Use the [prayer resources](#) during parish or school liturgical celebrations
- LEARN
 - Encourage science and religion teachers to work together to discuss both the science of climate change (look for “Overview of the Science of Climate Change at <http://catholicclimatecovenant.org/the-st-francis-pledge/individuals/learn/>) 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
 - Schedule a waste audit of your church or school
 - Reflect on the extent to which your sustainability efforts are grounded in and communicated as being part of part of Catholic mission and identity
- ACT
 - Plan an electronic waste-recycling day.
 - Plant a parish or school community garden. Plant trees.
 - Sell compact florescent or LED light bulbs 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
 - Encourage network organizers to include environmental stewardship as part of the legislative agenda, especially as it relates to low-income people in your community.
 - Share with the diocesan or state legislative network 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](#).
 - Sign up for action alerts from the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, Catholic Relief Services, Catholic Charities USA and other Covenant partners.

AND PLEASE: Register Your Pledge!

Be sure to go to catholicclimatecovenant.org and register parish, school, family 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.

FOR GOING DEEPER

The Coalition has endorsed a number of programs and projects to help Catholic students and parishioners know more about Catholic teaching on the environment and climate change. Here are some of those resources:

- *Catholic Climate Ambassadors*: The Coalition has trained 24 new Catholic leaders who are spreading the news about Catholic teaching on climate change and available for presentations across the country. To learn more and schedule an Ambassador to speak in your diocese, parish or school, go to the [Ambassador](#) page on our website.
- *Friending Planet Earth: Helping Youth Understand Climate Change and Respond in Faith*. With the [Center for Ministry Development](#), the Coalition has worked to produce these five interactive lesson plans for high-school aged students. High school religion teachers and youth ministers are especially encouraged to take advantage of these excellent materials.
- The Franciscan Action Network has developed the [C4C](#) (Care for Creation) program designed to help Catholics make the link between Br. Francis' abiding concern for both creation and poor people.
- In partnership with JustFaith, the Coalition has designed an eight session JustMatters module entitled, [God's Creation Cries for Justice. A Faithful Response to Climate Change.](#)
- The Archdiocese of Hartford has a number of parish resources covering the environment during Lent, Respect Life Month, and Earth Day as well as a packet to help implement the St. Francis Pledge similar to this one. Go to: <http://www.catholicsocialjustice.org/environmental-justice-parish-resource-packets>.
- [Global Climate Change: A Catholic Response](#), a five-session study guide from the National Catholic Rural Life Conference.

If you have any questions, please e-mail us at: info@catholicsandclimatechange.org

THANK YOU!

For more information: catholicclimatecovenant.org or write to:
info@catholicsandclimatechange.org.

[T]oday 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. In dialogue with Christians of various confessions, we must pledge ourselves to take care of creation and to share its resources in solidarity.

--Pope Benedict XVI, August 27, 2006