

Advocacy Resources

Interviews and Public Speaking 101

Interview and public speaking can seem intimidating, but they're both critical avenues for bringing your message to a wider audience. The key to acing an interview or speech is preparation: know your messages, know your facts, and know your audience. The better you know who your target audience is, the better you can shape your messaging to appeal to that group of people through whatever medium you're using. Here are some general tips on how to talk about climate, faith, and the moral argument for climate action to reporters or public audiences around the papal encyclical.

Identify your key messages

- Identify the two or three points or messages you want to convey during your interview **before** your interview. For example, one of your messages may be that climate change disproportionately harms the poor.
- **Match** message with the medium. A long-form print feature, news brief, TV interview, or radio show will all require different approaches to preparing and giving a speech. If a reporter is involved, try to understand what level of background knowledge they might have: are they a seasoned climate reporter, or a faith reporter trying to understand a new and complex topic? This understanding will help you deliver critical information in a time-sensitive manner.
- **Lead** with your key message point. Given deadline pressures and people's attention spans, you may only have time to deliver one point.
- **Don't equivocate.** If you have to use qualifiers to discuss something, return to your core message before moving on.

Reinforce your message points with key data

- Start with what you **know** and what the latest research reveals. We all recognize there are plenty of unknowns and degrees of uncertainty in this research; however, you won't likely be given time to discuss many qualifiers in great detail during the interview.
- Begin with the **strongest** climate-justice connections.
- Use persuasive **data points** to support your argument. You can play off name recognition to provide support, as institutions like the UN, Pope Francis, and the World Bank are perceived as credible among the general population.
- Don't leave it as just numbers, though. If possible, link data and research to phenomena you've **personally experienced**.

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- Emphasize breadth of evidence: Describe the broad body of research across various disciplines that support your point. Express your values and use appropriate **emotion**, as messages resonate when they match a reader's or viewer's values. Act as though you're speaking person-to-person. What would you say to a parent/neighbor/policymaker affected by climate change?
- Use **metaphors** that your audience can visualize and paint a picture for your intended audience. Compare climate impacts on communities around the world to concepts with which the average person can identify.
- Employ historical examples, like comparing the link between smoking and lung cancer to the link between coal-fired power plants and rising cases of respiratory illness.

Stay positive and factual

- Don't engage with leading questions about whether climate change is "real." Make it clear that the science is settled, and emphasize that climate change **impacts are here now** and will get worse without action.
- **Emphasize consensus** among different communities. Faith, labor, business, science, social justice, military and intelligence, and health groups have all come together on this issue and asked for climate action.
- Focus on the **positive momentum** in states and local communities in the US, as well as in countries around the world. While there may be setbacks, adopting a narrative of inevitability and scientific surety will help move the conversation from talking about the science and climate impacts to talking about solutions.