



Encounter for Climate Action: Steps and Resources for Engaging Your Catholic Leader

Thank you for discerning meeting with your Catholic leader to support the Climate Action Letter for Catholic Institutions!

This initiative will demonstrate the broad U.S. Catholic support for a strong and just agreement at the 26th U.N. Climate Change Conference November 1-12. It will also help build the “culture of encounter” for which Pope Francis calls (*Evangelii Gaudium*, no. 220). **But it will not work without your action.**

Meeting with a Catholic leader may be new for you. It may also be uncomfortable. But it is essential to maximizing Catholic support for prudent climate policy that faithfully responds to “both the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor” (*Laudato Si'*, no. 49).

This document provides steps and resources to convene a delegation and meet with your Catholic leader. The document addresses the unique steps of meeting with a bishop, however the steps and resources can be tailored to meet with any Catholic leader.



WE'RE ALL PART OF
GOD'S PLAN(ET)



Step 1: Register Your Openness to Convene a Delegation. Complete the brief form at <https://bit.ly/CatholicLeaderPre> so we can connect you with others in your diocese and support your work.

Step 2: Identify Others. Identify 5-10 other Catholics in your community who are committed to creation care, climate justice, and the fullness of Catholic social teaching. To assist in your efforts:

- Contact Catholic Climate Covenant at info@catholicclimatecovenant.org about Creation Care Teams and other potential partners.
- Reach out to the social justice ministers and staff in your diocese and parish for people they may know. Consider reaching out specifically to youth and/or young adult ministries in your parish or diocese, as young people have a powerful voice in this work.
- Explore area Catholic college and university and high school websites for:
 - Teachers offering courses on Catholic social teaching and the environment
 - Offices and directors of sustainability
 - Centers for service and justice
 - Student environmental clubs
- Research local communities of women and men religious.

Step 3: Invite Others. Invite those you've identified to join your effort. We recommend contacting others with an email that outlines your plans (see Appendix I for a sample email).

Step 4: Schedule a Meeting. If you seek a meeting with your bishop, identify the correct contact person by searching your diocese's website. Though each website is different, most have:

- An "Office of the Bishop" page, and
- A diocesan directory, which may list emails for the bishops' staff or the diocesan chancellor.

If you are unable to locate an appropriate contact, call the diocesan main line and ask for the email of whomever can schedule a meeting with the bishop. Once that person is identified, email them to schedule a meeting. See Appendix II for a sample email.

Step 5: Follow Up by Phone if Necessary. If you don't get an email response within three business days, call the person you emailed to confirm receipt of your email. Leave a voicemail if necessary and ask the person to return your call. If you don't get an email or telephone response within 24 hours, have another member of your group call, and repeat as necessary. At this point, you may also return to Step 4 and email someone else in the institution.

Step 6: Meeting Preparation. Once you are scheduled to meet with your bishop or other leader, gather the delegation members for a preparatory meeting. Use Appendix III to plan a 60-minute preparation meeting with your delegation.

Step 7: Meeting Encounter. Implement the Meeting Agenda prepared in Appendix III.

Step 8: Debrief and Follow Up. Use this Post-Meeting Debrief adapted from the [Ignatian Solidarity Network's Ignatian Advocacy 101](#):

- *Immediately After:* Review what you heard; Choose one person to send a thank you email to the leader and include any discussed follow up materials; Identify next Action Items and assign a Point Person for each.
- *Within Two Days:* Complete the form at <https://bit.ly/CatholicLeaderPost> to share your experience with Catholic Climate Covenant.
- *Within One Week:* Send a thank you email to the leader. Attach any discussed follow up materials and answer any questions you weren't able to address during the meeting. If the leader did not agree to sign the Letter, restate your ask.

Appendix I:

Sample Invitation Email to Potential Delegation Members

Dear NAME,

My name is NAME and I write with an invitation to join a delegation asking LEADER NAME to sign our ORGANIZATION/DIOCESE NAME onto the Climate Action Letter for Catholic Institutions (www.godsplanet.us/climate-action-letter-catholic-institutions) coordinated by Catholic Climate Covenant (www.catholicclimatecovenant.org).

Earlier this year, the Vatican launched the *Laudato Si'* Action Platform to help Catholics better *care for our common home*. To realize the Community Engagement and Participatory Action goal of the *Laudato Si'* Action Platform, Catholic Climate Covenant and its partners have developed the Climate Action Letter for Catholic Institutions.

The Letter calls President Biden and the U.S. Congress to support science-based climate policies that prioritize the poor, vulnerable, and marginalized. Catholic Climate Covenant will deliver the letter ahead of the 26th U.N. Climate Change Conference that Pope Francis will attend in November.

To encourage our ORGANIZATION/DIOCESE to sign the Letter, I am using resources from Catholic Climate Covenant to assemble a delegation of Catholics especially committed to creation care, climate justice, and the fullness of Catholic social teaching. Together, we will request a meeting with LEADER NAME and express our faith-based desire that ORGANIZATION NAME sign the Letter.

Please let me know by DATE whether you will join this effort. Thank you for your prayerful consideration and do not hesitate to reach out with any questions!

Sincerely,

YOUR NAME

Appendix II:

Sample Email to Request a Meeting with Your Catholic Leader

Dear Bishop (or other leader) NAME,

As Catholics from across ORGANIZATION/DIOCESE, we write to request a meeting with LEADER NAME during the Church's Season of Creation (September 1 – October 4) or shortly thereafter to discuss signing the Climate Action Letter for Catholic Institutions (www.godsplanet.us/climate-action-letter-catholic-institutions) coordinated by Catholic Climate Covenant (www.catholicclimatecovenant.org).

As you know, earlier this year, the Vatican launched the *Laudato Si'* Action Platform to help Catholics better *care for our common home*. This initiative includes public witness on climate change and builds on decades of prior Church teachings.

In 1990, Saint John Paul II warned that the “greenhouse effect’ has now reached crisis proportions.” In 2010, Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI reiterated climate change as an urgent moral issue and emphasized, “*The Church has a responsibility towards creation*, and she considers it her duty to exercise that responsibility in public life” (emphasis in original).

To realize the Community Engagement and Participatory Action goal of the Vatican’s *Laudato Si'* Action Platform, Catholic Climate Covenant and its partners have developed the Climate Action Letter for Catholic Institutions. The letter calls President Biden and the U.S. Congress to support science-based climate policies that prioritize the poor, vulnerable, and marginalized. Catholic Climate Covenant will deliver the Letter ahead of the 26th United Nations Climate Change Conference which the Holy Father will attend in November.

This initiative comes on the heels of the latest Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change Report that details the gravity and urgency of the climate crisis which threatens Catholic commitments to protect human life, promote human dignity, exercise a preferential option for the poor, and care for God’s creation.

To express the prophetic fullness of our Catholic faith, we ask that you prayerfully consider signing ORGANIZATION/DIOCESE onto the Letter and request a meeting during the Season of Creation to discuss this request. Thank you for your discerned consideration and we look forward to hearing from you soon.

In Christ,

YOUR NAMES

Appendix III:

Meeting Agenda Preparation Outline

1. Each member of the delegation should briefly introduce themselves (name and parish).
2. Review the [Climate Action Letter for Catholic Institutions](#).
3. Review this list of **Suggested Roles for Group Members** adapted from the [Ignatian Solidarity Network's Ignatian Advocacy 101](#):
 - **Facilitator** will kick off the meeting by introducing your group, explaining the purpose for the meeting, and providing space for each person attending to briefly introduce themselves and the institution, school, or parish they represent. The facilitator will also subtly redirect the conversation if the meeting goes off-track.
 - **Note Taker** will serve as a scribe for the meeting, writing down any key points that the leader brings up that the group may want to discuss later, including questions that you cannot immediately answer.
 - **Prophet 1** will briefly summarize the latest Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change report (Appendix IV).
 - **Prophet 2** will briefly review Catholic teaching on climate change (Appendix IV).
 - **Narrator** shares a personal story about why faith-based action on climate change is important to them.
 - **Connector** connects climate change to 1) something about which the leader cares or in which they are involved, and 2) the leader's prior climate change activities (if any).
 - **Resourcer** provides and explains the prepared Leave Behind resource (Appendix VI).
 - **Asker** directly asks the leader to sign the organization/diocese onto the Letter.
4. Review this **Meeting Agenda** adapted from the [Ignatian Solidarity Network's Ignatian Advocacy 101](#):
 1. **Introductions:** The Facilitator should start the meeting by thanking the leader for their time, introducing the group as a whole, and then having each person introduce themselves.
 2. **Climate Change and Catholic Teaching:** Prophet 1 should briefly outline the latest report from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (Appendix IV). Prophet 2 should briefly outline Catholic teaching on climate change (Appendix IV).
 3. **Story:** The Narrator should share a *personal* story about why faith-based action on climate change is important to them. Are they a young person unsure of whether to bring children into a warming world? Are they a parent or grandparent worried about the future of their children and grandchildren? Do they volunteer at a food pantry and worry about how droughts are increasing food and water stresses?
 4. **Connection:** The Connector should:
 - Connect climate change to something about which the leader cares or in which they are involved. Are they interested in pro-life activities? Emphasize how climate change currently kills human persons and threatens billions of lives. Are they concerned about immigration? Emphasize how the effects of climate change (rising sea levels, food and water stresses, etc.) are currently displacing communities and threaten to uproot billions of climate refugees.
 - Connect the Letter to the leader's prior climate change activities (if applicable).

5. Specific Issue Points: The Resourcer should provide and explain the prepared leave-behind material (Appendix VI).

6. Make your Ask: The Asker should make a direct ask to sign the Letter: “To prophetically live out the fullness of Catholic social teaching, will you sign ORGANIZATION/DIOCESE onto the Letter?”

7. Listen and Discerningly Respond.

- If the leader says Yes:
 - Thank them for their support, provide the link to the letter, and invite them to sign it then: <https://godsplanet.us/climate-action-letter-catholic-institutions>.
 - If meeting with your bishop, ask if he would:
 - Encourage parishes in the diocese to sign the Letter.
 - Urge individual Catholics in the diocese to sign the [Catholic Climate Action Petition](#) that complements the Letter (via an op-ed in the local secular newspaper, diocesan email or statement, diocesan publication column, or social media).
 - If meeting with your parish priest, ask if he would:
 - Urge individual parishioners to sign the [Catholic Climate Action Petition](#) by making announcements before Mass and displaying flyers around the parish (Appendix V).
- If the leader says Maybe, ask why they are hesitant and what they would need in order to sign the Letter. Offer to accompany their discernment in any way that would be most helpful. Emphasize that the signing deadline is **Monday, October 25.**
- If the leader says No:
 - Ask why they have refused and what it would take for them to reconsider.
 - If meeting with a bishop, ask if he would encourage individual Catholics in the diocese to sign the Catholic Climate Action Petition (via an op-ed in the local secular newspaper, diocesan email or statement, diocesan publication column, or social media).

8. Thank the Leader. The Facilitator should thank the leader for taking time to meet with your group and present the Leave Behind resource (Appendix VI).

5. Discern Roles and Times.

- Who in your delegation will serve in each Role (depending on the size of your group, one person may need to serve multiple roles)?
- If necessary, who will assist with preparations (e.g., assist the Connector by researching the leader’s priority concerns and activities or assist the Resourcer by printing Appendix IV)?
- How much time will you allocate to each Meeting Agenda item (this will be determined based on the length of your scheduled meeting)?

6. Plan Your Pre-Meeting Convening.

- Make sure each delegation member has the cell phone numbers of all other members.
- Decide where your delegation will gather on the day you are scheduled to meet with your leader.
 - *All members are encouraged to arrive at the designated place at least 15 minutes before the start of your scheduled leader meeting*
 - Use Google Maps to research the location if it is unfamiliar to any members.

Appendix IV:

Talking Points for Prophet 1 and Prophet 2

Prophet 1 briefly summarizes the latest Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change report.

- *Climate Change 2021: The Physical Science Basis* was published in August 2021 by the Nobel Prize-winning Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change.
- Most up-to-date and authoritative assessment of climate science.
- Human-forced climate change is “unequivocal” and “an established fact.”
- Human greenhouse gas pollution has warmed the planet 1.1°C since the Industrial Revolution.
- 1.5°C is the “tipping point” beyond which humanity risks an accelerated spiral of global warming.
- Rapid global warming will increase glacial melt, sea level rise, drought, and food and water stresses.
- Limiting global warming to 1.5°C will require immediate global greenhouse gas pollution reductions and carbon neutrality by 2050.

Prophet 2 briefly outlines Catholic teaching on climate change.

- Saint John Paul II, Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI, Pope Francis, and the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops have all recognized human-caused climate change as an urgent issue.
- The effects of climate change undermine core commitments of Catholic social teaching.
 - **Human Dignity:** Food and water insecurity and forced displacement violate human worth.
 - **Human Life:** Spiraling global warming risks killing billions of human persons.
 - **Preferential Option for the Poor, Vulnerable, and Marginalized:** Climate change disproportionately harms the poor who have historically done least to cause the problem.
 - **Common Good:** Since the “global climate is by its very nature a part of the planetary commons” (USCCB, *Global Climate Change*), climate change damages the common good upon which all depend.
 - **Care for God’s Creation:** The effects of climate change injure creation which humans are called to “cultivate” and “care for” (Genesis 2:15).
- Following Saint Thomas Aquinas, Catholic moral theology defines prudence as “right reason applied to action” - action informed by the best available information (*Summa Theologiae* II-II, q. 47, a. 8). The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops declares that in the face of contemporary climate science, “prudence dictates taking mitigating or preventative action” (*Global Climate Change*).
- Catholic social teaching affirms that love requires social justice in the form of public policies (USCCB, *The Two Feet of Love in Action*).
- The Church affirms its duty to shape public discourse and policy, especially on environmental issues (1971 World Synod of Bishops, *Justitia in Mundo*; Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI, 2010 World Day of Peace Message).
- Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI, Pope Francis, and the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops consistently call for international public policies to address the climate crisis. These calls are anchored in Catholic social teaching’s understandings of the state and subsidiarity, the global nature of climate change, and the failure of voluntary and lower-level efforts to mitigate this crisis.
 - State: Exists to protect and promote the common good (Pope John XXIII, *Mater et Magistra*, no. 20).
 - Subsidiarity: States should intervene in society as little as possible but as much as necessary (Pope Leo XIII, *Rerum Novarum*, no. 36; Pope Pius XI, *Quadragesimo Anno*, no. 80).
- The Vatican’s *Laudato Si’* Action Platform calls seven sectors of the Catholic Church—including Dioceses & Parishes—to ecological Community Engagement and Participatory Action and affirms the importance of advocacy.

Appendix V:

Catholic Climate Action Petition Mass Announcement and Parish Flyers

Hello! My name is YOUR NAME. On behalf of several other parishioners, I invite you to sign the Catholic Climate Action Petition. You can find more information in your pew, in the bulletin, and on posted flyers.

Earlier this year, the Vatican launched the *Laudato Si'* Action Platform to help Catholics better care for our common home. This initiative includes public witness on climate change and builds on decades of prior papal teachings.

In 1990, Saint John Paul II warned that the “‘greenhouse effect’ has now reached crisis proportions.” In 2010, Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI reiterated climate change as an urgent moral issue and emphasized, “The Church has a responsibility towards creation, and she considers it her duty to exercise that responsibility in public life.”

Inspired by the *Laudato Si'* Action Platform, Catholic Climate Covenant and its partners have developed the Catholic Climate Petition. This initiative calls President Biden and members of the U.S. Congress to support science-based climate policies that prioritize the poor, vulnerable, and marginalized.

To sign the Petition, use a smartphone camera to scan the QR code on the quarter sheets or flyer and follow the prompts. Catholic Climate Covenant will deliver this petition ahead of the 26th U.N. Climate Change Conference that begins on November 1 and which Pope Francis will attend.

Thank you for considering this important action to faithfully care for our common home!

Appendix VI:

Leave-Behind Resource

The Climate Action Letter for Catholic Institutions calls President Biden and members of the U.S. Congress to support science-based climate change policies that consistently prioritize the needs of people most vulnerable to climate impacts. The Letter is:

- Coordinated by Catholic Climate Covenant and its partners
- Consistent with the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops' policy positions.
- Inspired by the Vatican's *Laudato Si'* Action Platform calling seven sectors of the Catholic Church—including Dioceses & Parishes—to ecological Community Engagement & Participatory Action.
- Informed by prudent engagement with Church teaching and climate science.
- To be delivered ahead of the 26th U.N. Climate Change Conference November 1-12.

In August 2021, the Nobel Prize-winning Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change warned humanity has a rapidly closing window of opportunity to avoid catastrophic, spiraling climate change by severely reducing global greenhouse gas pollution. The warning came in *Climate Change 2021: The Physical Science Basis*.

The 26th United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP 26) to be held November 1-12, 2021 is widely viewed as a last hope to achieve these global pollution reductions.

In his April 30, 2021 Video Message to Participants in the International Leaders' "Summit on Climate," Pope Francis supported these efforts. The Holy Father plans to attend the November meeting.

The Church teaches that human-forced climate change is an urgent moral issue and undermines Catholic commitments to human dignity and life, the poor, the common good, and creation. A *partial* list of these teachings includes:

- Saint John Paul II: 1990 and 1999 World Day of Peace Messages
- U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops: *Global Climate Change* (2001)
- Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI: *Caritas in Veritate* (2009) and 2010 World Day of Peace Message
- Pope Francis: *Laudato Si'* (2015)

The Church affirms its duty to shape public discourse and policy, especially on environmental issues:

- 1971 World Synod of Bishops, *Justitia in Mundo*: "Action on behalf of justice and participation in the transformation of the world fully appear to us as a constitutive dimension of the preaching of the Gospel, or, in other words, of the Church's mission" (no. 6).
- Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI, 2010 World Day of Peace Message: "*The Church has a responsibility towards creation, and she considers it her duty to exercise that responsibility in public life*" (no. 12, emphasis in original).

The Church has consistently supported the United Nations' efforts to broker an international climate change agreement. A *partial* list of this support includes:

- Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI: 2012 Address to the Diplomatic Corps, 2010 Address to the Diplomatic Corps, 2009 Statement to the 15th U.N. Climate Change Conference.
- Pope Francis: 2020, 2019, 2018 2017, 2016 Messages and Statements to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.
- U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops: "Catholic Leaders Express Hope with President's Announcement that U.S. Will Rejoin the Paris Agreement on Climate Change" (2021).



A Catholic Appeal for
Climate Action



A Catholic Appeal for
Climate Action



Sign the Catholic Climate Action Petition with thousands of others

inspired by the Vatican's Laudato Si' Action Platform

The Petition:

Dear President Biden and Members of the U.S. Congress, As Catholics, we call for actions that:

- Drastically reduce greenhouse gas emissions so that global warming is limited to a 1.5 degrees Celsius increase, thus avoiding the worst impacts of climate change, and
- Prioritize the needs of peoples most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change and the transition to a low-carbon future.

Use a smartphone camera to scan this QR code and follow the prompts to sign the petition.

The Catholic Climate Covenant will deliver this petition ahead of the 26th U.N. Climate Change Conference Nov. 1-12.

Learn more: www.godsplanet.us

"We're all Part of God's Planet" is an initiative by U.S. Catholic institutions, managed by the Catholic Climate Covenant, to lift up the Vatican's Laudato Si' Action Platform across the U.S. Catholic community



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