

## Faithful Citizenship

### Principles and Strategies to Serve the Common Good

Edited by Dennis Hamm, S.J., and Gail S. Risch

## Faithful Citizenship and Climate Change

### Reclaiming Christian Principles of Prudence, Poverty and the Common Good

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#### Introduction

[1] In this paper, I will look at the problem of global warming and how the Church in the U.S. can play a leadership role in addressing the threat of climate change by advocating on behalf of the poor and calling all to embrace the common good as illustrated by the planetary resources, including the climate, to which all are entitled. While primarily focusing on the Church, I will also look briefly at the essential roles of individuals and families, community and religious organizations, the private sector and the marketplace, and government in addressing climate change.

[2] In focusing on the Church, I will examine the core principles of Catholic social teaching that provide a helpful framework in addressing this issue, including the common good, poverty alleviation, and prudence, as well as the moral authority of a global Church with members from all walks of life. I will conclude with concrete action steps by which the Church can exercise leadership in each of the four social structures mentioned above.

### The Interconnectedness of Life and the Miracle of Creation

[3] In his essay, “The Voice of the Hurricane: Cosmology and a Catholic Theology of Nature,” David Toolan, S.J., offers this reflection:

Look into your hand; the whole history of the cosmos is inscribed there as if in the age-rings of a tree. Imagine you had an electron microscope handy. Increase the magnification and you will see within your hand’s cells a mosaic of ribosomes and mitochondria, lysosomes and centrioles – the indispensable agents of your respiration, sanitation, and energy-production – whose architecture dates back a billion years. Increase magnification more and you move into the cell nucleus and behold the DNA macromolecule that stores genetic information garnered over some four billion years of evolution. It contains the blueprint that makes you a human being, from internal atoms composing your genes, their nuclei and electron shells bonded in nebula more than five billion years ago. Increase the magnification an hundred thousand times more and you will come upon a single carbon nucleus bound together five to 15 billion years ago. Finally, looking closer still, one can make out trios of quarks that compose each proton and neutron in the nucleus. They were joined together when the cosmos was but seconds old. The whole history of the universe lies in the palm of your hand (96-97).

The whole history of the universe lies in the palm of our hands. That takes awhile to sink in. We are stardust, as the poet Joni Mitchell says. True indeed.

[4] The whole history of the origins of time can be found in everything else that we can sense: other mammals, reptiles, insects, trees, flowers, and all organic matter. How can one doubt the Creator when one contemplates such profound depths of revelation, the grand plan for life set in motion by a singular event some 10 or 20 billion light years ago?

[5] Yet at this very moment in time, in the whole history of the universe, we stand at a critical juncture. Dramatic, collective decisions are not far off (or perhaps too late) if what the vast majority of scientists believe to be true unfolds (IPCC 2007). Humankind has to decide whether it will alter its present consumption model – one that relies heavily on energy derived from fossil fuels to drive economic progress – to one that is in keeping with the limits of a finite planet and in this way honor the Creator who gave us life and asked us to tend this garden.

[6] Peak oil? We may have already reached it. Keeping the carbon dioxide threshold below 450 parts per million (ppm)? Most scientists agree this is necessary to keep climate change from becoming a runaway freight train. We may already be at 400 ppm, with no serious restraint in sight. Saving humankind? Maybe, but some think even this may be too late. Keeping extinctions levels down to just 30% of all plant and animal life within this century? A sorry goal, unlikely to be met.

[7] How did we arrive at such a place? Is it really that bad? Can we save the planet from ourselves? There are some hopeful signs, but the decision time is drawing near.

### New Leadership for New Concerns

[8] What is needed now is real leadership on this issue. Signs are good in some sectors, not so good in others.

[9] In their 2002 statement, *A Place at the Table: A Catholic Recommitment to Overcome Poverty and to Respect the Dignity of All God's Children*, the U.S. Catholic bishops argued that solving poverty will require attention and effort on the part of the four basic foundations of a just society: individuals and families, community and religious institutions, the private sector and marketplace, and government. Each must assume its role in solving poverty:

The debate about how to address poverty in the United States and abroad too often focuses on just one of these four foundations and neglects others. While these four elements work together in different ways in different communities, a table may fall without each leg. Some emphasize family responsibility or the role of religious and community groups. Some insist the market can solve all our problems. Others see a government solution for every challenge, while still others see government corruption as an insurmountable obstacle to development. These narrow positions are not our tradition. The Catholic way is to recognize the essential role and the complementary responsibilities of families, communities, the market, and government to work together to overcome poverty and advance human dignity (18).

[10] I propose that solving climate change will require a serious and sustained effort on the part of all of these foundational structures if we are to prevent a global catastrophe. I will use the U.S. context as that is where we are situated and because on a historical basis, we have been by far the largest contributors to greenhouse gas pollution. We are also among the wealthiest nations in the world, have been on an unsustainable consumption binge since WWII, and may be the slowest of nations to recognize our overwhelming contribution to global warming and to embrace the real demands of global solidarity necessary to change this trajectory.

[11] And in keeping with the theme of this symposium, I will focus most of my comments on the responsibilities of the Church. What roles can the Church play to urge other social foundations (individuals and families, community institutions – including the Church itself, the marketplace and government) to do be part of the dialogue and ultimately part of the solution to the threat of global climate change?

[12] Even to church folk such as ourselves, it may be obvious what roles the other foundations might play in reversing climate change. Most U.S. individuals and families have options available to them: purchasing energy-efficiencies such as the now ubiquitous (thankfully) compact fluorescent light bulb (CFL), a better-mileage car, more insulation and weather-stripping, etc. Less quickly embraced but just as necessary will be a sober examination of our consumption habits.

[13] The private sector and climate change is a mixed bag, to be sure. In some market sectors, products that will reduce greenhouse gases, such as renewable energy and more efficient transportation and housing, will help push the issue into greater public

consciousness. As a representative of the Vatican at the recent Washington International Renewable Energy Conference, I was astounded by the array of companies developing alternative fuels and power production and by the number of financing mechanisms helping to fuse partnerships between governments and entrepreneurs which are spurring these new technologies past the research and development stage and into the marketplace.

[14] Likewise, property insurers are placing demands on particular customers. Do you live near the ocean? In some coastal communities, insurance rates are skyrocketing or homeowners are denied private insurance altogether. Look at Wal-Mart. It has “seen the light” and is selling nothing but CFL light bulbs and is greening up its stores (and finding that they can make a tidy sum in the process). But other sectors are less enamored of changing the way of doing business. Oil companies and coal mining come to mind. Some of them are helping to fund “do-nothing” messages or promote scare tactics to ensure continued public confusion about the seriousness of climate change.

[15] Government? At a state and local level, there is much going on. California – by itself one of the largest economies in the world – sees climate change as both threat and opportunity. Threats include the future of their water supply and their current air quality. An opportunity is for California to become a leader in renewable energy technology and solutions. Other states are forming pacts to put a price on carbon and to generate renewable energy portfolios. Hundreds of mayors have committed themselves to reducing greenhouse gas emissions in the areas where they have some control: e.g., buildings, vehicles, contractors, and schools.

[16] At the federal level, the picture is not nearly as encouraging. Until recently, the Bush Administration has emphasized marketplace solutions to global warming and rejected calls for mandatory greenhouse gas controls even though public and Congressional support has become increasingly willing to embrace policies that put a price on greenhouse gas emissions. (A recent effort to create a global technology transfer fund to speed alternative energy to the poorest nations in the world are a welcome development and one in which the faith community will support.<sup>1</sup>) Congressional leadership is uneven at best. Some leaders on both sides have been pushing a climate change bill that would place mandatory caps on greenhouse gas emissions through a cap and trade program but garnering bi-partisan support has been difficult.

[17] The role of the Church (and other religious institutions) can and will be a significant force to inspire all social foundations to look beyond self-interest and the Church will draw upon religious language, symbols, and teaching to call the faithful to a continually renewed sense of purpose and hope which leads to a clearer recognition of the problem and an enduring sense of mission to honor the Creator and his Creation.

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<sup>1</sup> In a speech given to the Washington International Renewable Energy Conference, President Bush committed to pushing a \$2 billion clean technology fund to help least developed countries adopt new clean energy technologies.

## Faithful Citizenship and Climate Change

The Pharisees and Sadducees came and, to test him, asked him to show them a sign from heaven. He said to them in reply, "In the evening you say, 'Tomorrow will be fair, for the sky is red'; and, in the morning, 'Today will be stormy, for the sky is red and threatening.' You know how to judge the appearance of the sky, but you cannot judge the signs of the times (Matthew 16:1-3).

[18] In this year of decision, we are asked to read the signs of the times and make choices about real leadership. When it comes to climate change, leadership across the spectrum is uneven at best. Former Vice President Al Gore has certainly been at the forefront of sign-reading and storm-warning. But in a society that is so politically and ideologically polarized, many find a problem with the messenger, if not the message. At the same time, entrenched interest groups have done their best to cloud the picture and sow doubt about climate change or claim that solutions are too expensive and not worth the risk of economic calamity.<sup>2</sup>

[19] In my own experience, people are hungry for real leadership on this issue, especially from the Church. In traveling about the country offering workshops and speeches on a Catholic approach to climate change, most Catholics express gratitude for the Church's clarity on the issue (once they actually understand that the bishops and the pope have spoken about the issue), but like many justice issues Church activists are frustrated by the lack of real, demonstrable leadership from the Church at the local level (i.e., the local bishop and pastor). And as in other justice issues, my message back to these frustrated activists is that they must develop relationships of trust with their own pastors and bishops and engage in an honest exchange that will encourage greater openness to new leadership on emerging issues. Too often I find angry and frustrated parish activists unwilling to temper their rhetoric and seek common ground with their parish leadership and promote their agendas through persuasion rather than indignation.

[20] That said, and notwithstanding the Holy Father's consistent and powerful messages on the need to "listen to the voice of the earth" (see Benedict XVI 2007), efforts to develop Catholic leadership on the threat of climate change to life (human life, all life) are slow in coming but have a rich potential.

[21] There will need to be a different symposium to explore how religious language and symbols can inspire new ways of living our obligation to care for God's creation. But I would like to propose ways in which the Catholic community can engage climate change issues in the public arena and be the voice of the poor, the leaven to act, and the inspiration to alter the course of history. The bishops' statement on climate change provides some direction. This framework focuses on four principles for the Catholic community to help understand and act on the moral questions raised by climate change: the appeal for prudence, the promotion of the common good, the protection of the poor, and the

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<sup>2</sup> But such claims are not likely to become fact. A recent report from the Environmental Protection Agency rates the Lieberman/Warner climate change bill, America's Climate Security Act, saying that the economy can grow despite capping and trading carbon permits.

importance of dialogue. And though not explicitly stated in the document, I am going to suggest that a fifth principle: the safeguarding of life.

### **The Appeal for Prudence**

[21] In the late 1990s, when the issue of climate change was just becoming more publicly discussed, there remained plenty of serious questioning about the accuracy of climate science and the possible outcomes of a warming planet. Competing scientific claims by various scientific associations (some affiliated with environmental causes and tending to be alarmist; others affiliated with energy companies and tending to be dismissive) made finding the truth difficult for the bishops as they began exploring the issue and drafting their statement. In the end, they embraced the findings of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) as they represented a broad scientific consensus from hundreds of scientists representing dozens of countries. Since that time, the IPCC has issued two more reports, each building on the previous and each clearer about the human contributions to climate change and likely consequences.

[22] But even with the relative caution of the 2001 IPCC report, the bishops emphasized the virtue of prudence:

In facing climate change, what we already know requires a response; it cannot be easily dismissed. Significant levels of scientific consensus – even in a situation with less than full certainty, where the consequences of not acting are serious – justifies, indeed can obligate, our taking action intended to avert potential dangers. In other words, if enough evidence indicates that the present course of action could jeopardize humankind’s well-being, prudence dictates taking mitigating or preventative action (USCCB 2001: no. 6).

[23] Pope Benedict XVI echoed these same thoughts this past January in his World Day of Peace Message. The message focused on the family as the cradle of peace but devoted two lengthy paragraphs to the home of all of humanity, our earth. “Prudence,” he said,

does not mean failing to accept responsibilities and postponing decisions; it means being committed to making joint decisions after pondering responsibly the road to be taken, decisions aimed at strengthening that covenant between human beings and the environment, which should mirror the creative love of God, from whom we come and towards whom we are journeying (2008: no. 7).

The analogy of purchasing insurance is certainly apt here: house fires, car crashes, and illness do happen. We purchase insurance policies to cover homes, cars and health so that we have protection when we do suffer such losses. Spending time and money now to limit the impacts of climate change may mean that we will not have to draw down coverage later.

### **The Promotion of the Common Good**

[24] This notion seems old-fashioned in a society as individualistic as ours. While presenting in Birmingham, Alabama recently, I was publicly scolded by a member of the audience for a suggestion that curtailing our consumerist tendencies, especially fossil fuel use, will help ensure a safer climate and a decrease in poverty for the billions living on a few dollars a day

around the world. To paraphrase his response, he said in effect, “My eating less meat or using less electricity doesn’t mean that others can have more meat or more light. It just does not work that way, and you can’t tell me it does.”

[25] On February 12, Archbishop Migliore, the Holy See’s Permanent Observer to the United Nations, made my point for me. Addressing a session of the United Nations he said of climate change:

The personal commitment and numerous public appeals of Pope Benedict XVI have generated awareness campaigns for a renewed sense of respect for and the need to safeguard God’s creation. Individuals and communities have started to change their lifestyles, aware that personal and collective behavior impacts climate and the overall health of the environment. While such lifestyle changes at times may seem irrelevant, every small initiative to reduce or offset one’s carbon footprint, be it the avoidance of the unnecessary use of transport or the daily effort to reduce energy consumption, contributes to mitigating environmental decay and concretely shows commitment to environmental care.

This sense of being all in it together is vitally important to reclaim the ancient notions of community, solidarity and care for creation.

[26] In a culture that values individual rights, private property, and private wealth over the common good and distributive or social justice, it may not be particularly effective to elaborate on the Church’s teaching on private property namely, that “the right to private property . . . does not do away with the original gift of the earth to the whole of mankind” (Catechism: no. 2403). As a public policy strategy or communication campaign, this will be less persuasive than it should be, given the threats we face from an altered climate. But climate change may provide the Church with a new way of expressing solidarity and promoting the common good. Real threats to basic earth resources (common property) shared by all and necessary for life – especially the atmosphere but also water, land and food – could become a true “teachable moment” highlighting how our individual actions impact people and places around the globe. Mary Evelyn Tucker, Yale University professor and coordinator of the Forum on Religion and Ecology puts it this way:

If the life-support systems are destroyed irreparably, if water shortages increase, if food supplies decrease, if fisheries are depleted, forests are clear-cut, and topsoil lost, there will [be] no lasting security and military violence or terrorism will erupt (360).

[27] Our personal contributions to greenhouse gas pollution does have an impact on low-lying island nations, farmers in rain-dependent Africa and the third of humanity that relies on glacial runoff from the Himalayan mountain range.

### **The Protection of the Poor**

[28] Real and tangible leadership by the U.S. bishops has already resulted in positive results for climate change legislation. Their focused emphasis on the poverty dimensions of climate change impacted a major piece of climate change legislation now before the U.S. Senate.

[29] Under legislative proposals designed to put a price on carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases, new public and private resources will be made available for a variety of public goods. The bishops have emphasized that poor people at home and overseas ought to have the first claim on these new resources. With other religious leaders, they successfully advocated this point of view in the recently passed America's Climate Security Act of 2007 sponsored by Senators Lieberman and Warner.<sup>3</sup>

[30] Stakes are high in this public policy debate. On the one side are energy companies (from mining and refining to production and delivery) who could take advantage of this new market (tradable emission permits) and, if well positioned, make a good deal of money. On the other side are some environmental organizations seeking to pass a bill and justify to their funders progress in this public policy debate.

[31] Additionally, under either a cap and trade approach or a carbon tax, billions of dollars of new revenue will be generated. When there is new money in the public pie, self-interested organizations will elbow their way to the front of the line to grab a sizable slice for their constituencies. Powerful lobbyists for wildlife protection and land conservation and those for renewable energy and technology research and development firms, to name a few, will do all they can to ensure that their patrons get a share. Poor people do not have the ability to hire lobbyists or conduct media campaigns to persuade decision makers. They will depend on our voice and the moral authority of people of faith.

### The Importance of Dialogue

[32] In *Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship: A Call to Political Responsibility* from the Catholic Bishops of the United States, the bishops encourage dialogue and debate:

Although choices about how best to respond to these and other compelling threats to human life and dignity are matters for principled debate and decision, this does not make them optional concerns or permit Catholics to dismiss or ignore Church teaching on these important issues (2007: 29).

[33] One important role for the Catholic Coalition on Climate Change has been to encourage debate on the moral aspects of climate change. It assisted bishops in Florida, Ohio and Alaska last spring to host hearings on the issue. In each of the daylong sessions, the science of climate change was explained and Catholic teaching on the environment elaborated. Panels of stakeholders discussed ways in which climate change is or could impact their business or service and offered advice to the bishops as to how they might demonstrate new leadership in this area. Success of these hearings can be illustrated with a couple of anecdotes:

- The vice-president of a major coal-fired electricity producer said that it was good to be in a room where he was not vilified and that there could be an

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<sup>3</sup> For an elaboration of the U.S. bishops' position, see John Carr's testimony before the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee. This voice has been amplified by an ecumenical consensus formed by the National Religious Partnership for the Environment. Bishop William Skylstad (then President of the USCCB) signed a letter to Congressional leaders urging the protection of poor communities at home and abroad as Congress debates climate change legislation.

honest discussion about the complexities of providing electricity to the eastern seaboard. While environmentalists urge a “polluter pays” policy, behind this executive’s comment was recognition that the Church understands our individual and corporate complicity by buying what his company produces. Are we not all polluters?

- In Alaska, climate change is felt today more than in many other parts of the world. An elder from the village of Newtok described how his low-lying village now regularly floods since the sea ice does not form as quickly as it used to in the fall. This leaves the village vulnerable to powerful fall and winter storms. The village is seeking funding from the state and the federal government to move the village to higher ground at considerable expense. The bishops of Alaska and others in attendance at the hearing saw first-hand how climate change is impacting people, many of them very poor with few resources.

[34] There are many approaches to addressing climate change at a public policy level. Some will say that it is too expensive to limit CO<sub>2</sub> emissions and will hurt the poor the most. Others will say that doing nothing will make the situation far worse in the future, costing even more. The U.S. bishops say clearly that we need to understand both sides of this argument and ensure that any public policy approach to climate change must take into consideration current and future costs.

[35] Promoting dialogue places the Church squarely between the two camps: the alarmists and the obfuscators. The Catholic tent, situated here, allows us to be at the crossroads of warring factions and to invite differing points of view around the table to have serious and sustained discussions about strengthening our covenant with the Creator.

### **The Safeguarding of Life**

The right to life implies and is linked to other human rights – to the basic goods that every human person needs to live and thrive. All the life issues are connected, for erosion of respect for the life of any individual or group in society necessarily diminishes respect for all life (USCCB 2007: 25).

[36] In some segments of the U.S. Catholic community, linking climate change to other life issues is viewed as a weakening of the core life issues: abortion, euthanasia, the death penalty, and stem cell research, for example. For other segments, climate change is among the issues that have a moral equivalency. They argue that it is just as important to have a quality life (human dignity) as to have life itself (human life). The Church has rejected both of these views:

Two temptations in public life can distort the Church’s defense of human life and dignity: The first is a moral equivalence that makes no ethical distinctions between different kinds of issues involving human life and dignity. The direct and intentional destruction of innocent human life from the moment of conception until natural death is always wrong and is not just one issue among many. It must always be opposed. The second is the misuse of these necessary moral distinctions as a way of dismissing or ignoring other serious

threats to human life and dignity. Racism and other unjust discrimination, the use of the death penalty, resorting to unjust war, the use of torture, war crimes, the failure to respond to those who are suffering from hunger or a lack of health care, or an unjust immigration policy are all serious moral issues that challenge our consciences and require us to act. These are not optional concerns which can be dismissed (USCCB 2007: 27-29).

[36] Climate change, not listed in the second part of this statement, may, in fact, become a different type of issue: one that will begin to move from a morally distinct issue and not currently seen as a “fundamental right and the condition for all other personal rights” (John Paul II 1988: 38) to one where our behaviors (over-consumption, knowing disregard for the science of climate change and subsequent impacts, etc.) do, in fact, result in the direct taking of innocent life and thus a life issue that leans more into the first category.

[37] Pope Benedict may himself be leaning this way. In a meeting with Italian priests, the Holy Father answered a question about the formation of conscience. In an age where all things must be scientifically proven, little room is left for “the subjects of religion and morals.” They “should not enter into common reason because they cannot be proven.” In this situation, “the subject is the only ultimate criterion of morality and also of religion, the subjective conscience knows no other authority. In the end, the subject decides, with his feelings and experience [and] in this way the subject becomes an isolated reality and . . . the parameters change from one day to the next” (Benedict XVI 2007).

[38] But in the Christian context, conscience “means ‘with knowledge’: that is, ourselves, our being is open and can listen to the voice of being itself, of God” (Benedict XVI 2007). The U.S. bishops, in their 2007 statement on faithful citizenship said much the same thing: “[C]onscience is the voice of God resounding in the human heart, revealing the truth to us and calling us to do what is good while shunning what is evil” (USCCB 2007: 28).

[39] Pope Benedict takes this one step further:

In taking stock of the current situation, I would propose the combination of a secular approach and a religious approach, the approach of faith. Today, we all see that man can destroy the foundations of his existence, his earth, hence, that we can no longer simply do what we like or what seems useful and promising at the time with this earth of ours, with the reality entrusted to us. On the contrary, we must respect the inner laws of creation, of this earth, we must learn these laws and obey these laws if we wish to survive. Consequently, this obedience to the voice of the earth, of being, is more important for our future happiness than the voices of the moment, the desires of the moment. In short, this is a first criterion to learn: that being itself, our earth, speaks to us and we must listen if we want to survive and to decipher this message of the earth. And if we must be obedient to the voice of the earth, this is even truer for the voice of human life. Not only must we care for the earth, we must respect the other, others: both the other as an individual person, as my neighbor, and others as communities who live in the world and have to live together (2007).

[40] In essence, Benedict is saying that the voice of creation (i.e. the Creator) is speaking to us and we are beginning – through science and observable reality – to hear a message: one that urges far greater care than in the past. This new earth-awareness, precipitated by the threat of climate change and environmental degradation, may spur society to come to grips with the inner voice (the conscience, the Creator) within each individual that tells us right from wrong and shakes into the realization that not all is relative but that actions have consequences. The unprovable, unknowable scientific argument about when life begins stirs the conscience in a similar way that the voice of the earth stirs our conscience today.

[41] The key to climate change bridging the divide between a morally distinct life issue to one that is integrally apart of the pro-life agenda is that of future generations. Just as the threat of nuclear annihilation raised this question of the fate of future generations, so too does climate change. Should the direst predictions of climate change come true, future generations could experience it as nuclear annihilation in slow motion.

[42] Daily warnings by top scientists that we must quickly end the use of fossil fuels if we are to keep the world's climate from spinning out of control (and the droughts, floods, diseases, extinctions and mass human migrations resulting from it) emphasize this point. They are offering us a choice in much the same way that Deuteronomy offered the people of Israel a choice long ago: "I call heaven and earth today to witness against you: I have set before you life and death, the blessing and the curse. Choose life, then, that you and your descendants may live, by loving the LORD, your God, heeding his voice, and holding fast to him" (Deuteronomy 30:19-20).

### Summary and Conclusion

[43] I want to be clear that the approach I have outlined here should not be construed as solely an anthropocentric approach to public policy engagement in the issue. A focus on prudence, poverty, the common good, dialogue and human life does not mean that we ignore other forms of life. Indeed, we will need all other forms of life to not just survive but to continue to inspire humankind to look beyond itself to see the beauty of creation and the Creator. In other words, an authentic Christian approach to the issue must be first Theocentric: we honor the Creator by honoring Creation. "And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good (Genesis 1:31). God entrusted the whole of creation to the man and woman, and only then - as we read - could he rest 'from all his work' (Genesis 2:3)" (John Paul II 1990: no. 3).

[44] This approach will value the interdependence of all life and be concern about the future of the planet and its marvelous created order. Such an attitude frees us to be clear about the dangers of rampant consumerism on the one hand and equitable share of the earth's limited resources on the other.

[45] Such an attitude will enable us to call for public policies that encourage economic and energy sustainability – lifting all boats – while at the same time urging generous assistance in times of natural disasters that are predicted to become more and more likely as the planet warms.

[46] Such an attitude will encourage greater efforts to educate citizens of developed countries to share more equitably with those in least developed nations and to promote education (and

rights for women and children) in developing countries as an integral part of poverty alleviation.

[47] As Catholics begin to decide in this election year about candidates and policy options, climate change is beginning to emerge as a key “voice.” As we know more about the threats of our current fossil fuel dependent lifestyle, we must begin to think about the long-term sustainability of the planet and the threats to life.

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