



## CATHOLIC CLIMATE COVENANT CARE FOR THE CREATION. CARE FOR THE POOR

### **September 2015**

In 2015, Catholic Climate Covenant has truly become a force for action and information on an authentically Catholic approach to climate change. It is seen both in the United States and abroad as a model for how to advance the Catholic Church's teaching on this significant moral issue.

Catholic Climate Covenant brings the strength of Catholic organizations and people to bear in responding to the moral call for action on climate change. We open conversations on policy solutions, help reduce carbon footprints, and share authentic Catholic teaching on climate change.

Our vision is that the Catholic Church becomes a key actor in bringing about comprehensive national policies that encourage a climate-friendly economy, that Catholic people and organizations become public leaders in sustainability, and that Catholic teaching on climate change informs the thoughts and behaviors of U.S. Catholics as well as local, state and national policymakers.

The Covenant is powerfully positioned within the Catholic community. We arose from the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) in 2006, and have structural and operational support from the major Catholic organizations in the U.S., including the USCCB, Catholic Charities USA, the Catholic Health Association, the Association of Catholic Colleges and Universities, Catholic Relief Services, and congregations of Catholic women and men, among others. We have the ability to insert valuable and uncommon voices into the public debate on climate change and have an established track record of effective engagement, including media strategy, grassroots advocacy, and broad public education.

We believe that culture shifts and policy change are both immensely important and reinforce one another. Political debate changes systems and laws and also creates major

advances in public opinion and culture. Catholics engaged in a culture of sustainability are a force for policy change and vice-versa.



We strive to be both strategic and realistic. We engage “the world as it is” with a hopeful, faith-based message that asserts a vision of “the world as it should be.” The world as it is requires us to understand and engage the fact that organized people and money are what change policy and political debates.

In looking at the Sustainable Development Goals, much of the Catholic contribution will be through the Vatican and national or multi-national Catholic relief and development agencies and conferences of Catholic bishops. However, in the United States, the Covenant can help advance the global Catholic goals in this area by supporting and/or urging more activity with our U.S. partners. Key to our partnerships include the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops and Catholic Relief Services as well as men and women religious orders who have an NGO presence at the United Nations.

While not all of the SDGs will be a focus of the Covenant’s work, we have the ability to provide some direction and support for several of them. Working through these partners, we see the following possibilities when looking at the Sustainable Development Goals:

**GOAL 1: End poverty in all its forms everywhere**

- We will work with our primary partners including the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) and Catholic Relief Services (CRS) to continue to help staff and expand their efforts and attention to climate change in development work.
- We will assist the USCCB and Catholic Charities USA (the umbrella organization for all U.S.-based Catholic charities agencies) to integrate climate change mitigation and adaptation into domestic poverty reduction efforts. The initial focus will be to assist them in domestic disaster relief efforts.

**GOAL 3: Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages**

- We will assist the Catholic Health Association of the United States (CHA) to work to avoid and address the adverse health impacts of climate change for U.S. citizens seeking health care within Catholic health agencies. Members of CHA currently provide health care to one in 6 Americans.
- Catholic Relief Services provides health education and assistance in nearly 100 low-income and developing countries. By collecting stories of their efforts and distributing them to our network and those of our partners, we can increase the

reach of CRS's domestic educational programs which, in turn, increases U.S. support for CRS's ongoing efforts. We will work to support the USCCB's efforts to connect climate change with core principles of Catholic social teaching especially the protection of human life and the promotion of human dignity.

**GOAL 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls**

- We will assist our partners with education and advocacy activities within the U.S. and through international organizations such as the United Nations and the World Bank to ensure that there is a wider embrace of the fact that consumption by wealthier nations is the primary driver of climate change and not population size or population growth. Following our consciences and Catholic teaching, we will actively resist efforts for access to abortion and artificial means of birth control around the world. At the same time, we will be strong advocates for the education and empowerment of women and girls, especially in developing countries, so they can make morally defensible decisions about their families.

**GOAL 7: Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all**

- We will continue and accelerate our efforts to raise awareness about energy choices and energy conservation measures in the U.S. (both within the Church and through public policies) so as to set an example for others. We will work closely with our domestic national partners to advocate for U.S. climate change policies that dramatically reduce domestic greenhouse gas emissions, support energy conservation, and that provide funding and support for international transfers of renewable energy technologies.
- We will develop and expand programs to provide encouragement and practical tools for Catholic individuals, families and institutions to can expand their use of renewable energy and energy conservation.
- We will work closely with the members of the Association of Catholic Colleges and Universities to support academic efforts to shape public discourse on energy and core Catholic social teaching teaching principles.
- We will work with the Conference for Catholic Facility Management and others to develop pilot programs targeted to dioceses that wish to adopt clean energy and accelerate energy conservation.

**GOAL 8: Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all**

- With our U.S. Catholic partners, we will work to expand Catholic advocacy for integral development and integral ecology. This integral approach will consider both behaviors and attitudes as well as positive actions that drive down energy use,

promote energy conservation and increase a wider embrace of the virtues of prudence, restraint and sacrifice within the Catholic community.

- With these same partners, we will advocate to ensure that climate change policies do not disproportionately impact workers in fossil fuel-intensive industries.

**GOAL 12: Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns**

- We will develop a new Catholic campaign based on the ideas of “Sabbath living” that inspires Catholic individuals and institutions to “remember” the Sabbath. The program will tap into a longing by all people, but particularly people of faith, to find time to rest, contemplate nature and our place within it, consume less, and re-build relationships with natural and one another and with God.

**GOAL 13: Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts\***

- With our partners, we will activate our networks and partner relationships to help shape and advance climate policies consistent with Catholic teaching that drive down greenhouse gas emissions and offer assistance to those most vulnerable to current and future climate impacts.
  
- *Acknowledging that the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change is the primary international, intergovernmental forum for negotiating the global response to climate change.*