

Protecting All of God's Creation



Preparing for Pope Francis's Encyclical:
Caring for Creation
and the Poorest Among Us

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As we remember our theme, **PROTECTING ALL OF GOD'S CREATION**, on our day of fasting and prayer on Sunday, October 11, 2015, we celebrate Pope Francis's Ecological Encyclical through a reflection that invites us to action as we care for creation and the poorest among us.



Pope Francis is gearing up to release his Papal Encyclical on the environment this summer and will make the humanitarian and spiritual case for acting on climate change. The much-anticipated teaching document will be the first from a pope to be devoted entirely on creation and human relationship with it. The encyclical is likely to reference such themes as: the possible causes of global warming; the human toll on climate change; the need to repair our relationship with the natural world; the call to view environmental advocacy as an opportunity for dialogue and evangelization; and a gospel call to peoples of all faiths to make lifestyle choices to reduce the existential threat to human beings from anthropogenic climate change.

The timing of the encyclical is momentous. In July, nations will come together for the Third International Conference on Financing for Development in Addis Ababa. In September, the United Nations General Assembly will approve a new set of sustainable development goals (2015-2030). In December, the Climate Change Conference in Paris will obtain the action plans and commitments of each government committing to the reduction of global warming. The ensuing ten months are critical as decisions are made on international development, human flourishing, care for the common home we call planet Earth, and tying climate action to the Christian mandate to aid the afflicted and give comfort to the needy. In September, the Pope will travel to the U.S. where he'll address the U.N. as world leaders gather to agree on a new set of sustainable development goals. He'll also travel to Washington, where he'll become the first pope to address the U.S. Congress. Conservative think tanks such as the Chicago-based Heartland Institute and the Koch brothers, who question the reality of climate change continue to cry out, "There is no global-warming crisis!" These voices of denial are fearful that the tone of the cultural conversation is about to shift and their worst fear is that "Francis might successfully disabuse religious conservatives of a longstanding and pernicious myth: that climate change should be thought of as a splinter issue, and that belief in climate science and support for environmental action signify membership in the "enemy camp." (*Pacific Standard*: <http://bit.ly/1MkB6Cb>) Pope Francis' encyclical is likely to challenge conservative U.S. Catholic policy makers who continue to deny the veracity of climate change science and who refuse to support regulations to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Pope Francis is calling on the global faith community to discern, not simply on whether our lifestyles are promoting care for creation, but also whether our social, economic, and political choices protect the interests of the poorest among us.

From the beginning of his papacy, Pope Francis has spoken on issues pertaining to the environment. Reflect on Pope Francis' messages on the Care for God's Creation and honoring the dignity of the human person.



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**“... We need to see, with the eyes of faith,
the beauty of God’s saving plan,
the link between the natural environment
and the dignity of the human person.”**

- Pope Francis, January 18, 2015

REFLECTION

- How does human action fail to respect nature and have an effect on inequality and increase what Pope Francis describes as, “globalization of indifference” and “economics of exclusion?”
- If you believe humans are the main cause of global warming, do you think you contribute to global warming and, if so, how?