

## Mercy Global Concern: - Earth Day 2009

### Climate Change

#### Background

A major UN conference on the climate will be held in Copenhagen in December of this year. The primary purpose of the conference is to design a treaty to replace the Kyoto Protocol which will expire in 2012. According to Yvo de Boer, executive secretary of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), *“this conference may not yield a new global climate treaty with every minor detail in place. But hopefully it will close with agreements on four political essentials, thereby creating a clarity the world needs. The four essentials are: 1) How much are the industrialized countries willing to reduce their emissions of greenhouse gases? 2) How much are major developing countries such as China and India willing to do to limit the growth of their emissions? 3) How is the help needed by developing countries to engage in reducing their emissions and adapting to the impacts of climate change going to be financed? And 4) How that that money going to be managed?”*

*“Climate change imperils the most precious treasures of our planet and the effects are so severe and so sweeping that only urgent global action will do. We are all in this together. We must work together.”* – Ban Ki-Moon, UN Secretary General

*“Preservation of the environment, promotion of sustainable development and particular attention to climate change are matters of grave concern for the entire human family. No nation or business sector can ignore the ethical implications present in all economic and social development. With increasing clarity scientific research demonstrates that the impact of human actions in any one place or region can have worldwide effects.”* –Pope Benedict XVI

Sixteen of the world’s 19 largest cities from Jakarta to Shanghai are under threat from sea level rise caused by warming of the oceans. Everywhere, the environment is changing in response to human activity. People in developing countries will be both first and worst affected with global change.

The Catholic community, led by Pope Benedict XVI and the bishops, is addressing the important moral issues surrounding climate change, including prudence, poverty and the common good. These important efforts include convening, education, public policy development and advocacy. The Catholic Coalition on Climate Change seeks to contribute a distinctive and authentic Catholic voice to the public debate highlighting the human and moral dimensions of this issue and encouraging the Catholic community to become involved in practical and public policy remedies to address climate change.

This month, instead of a single action, several ideas will be offered. If you are already involved with the climate issue, you may want to choose a specific action. If you are not currently involved, you may opt to take the time to inform yourself about the issue and learn what is happening in your own community.

1. [www.catholicsandclimatechange.org](http://www.catholicsandclimatechange.org) provides an excellent overview of church teaching on climate change and assists the Catholic community in linking personal stewardship and care for creation with the moral responsibility to practice solidarity.

2. Join the Catholic community in signing the St. Francis Pledge to Care for Creation and the Poor. Launched on Earth Day, April 22, 2009, the St. Francis Pledge is a promise and a commitment by Catholic individuals, families, parishes, organizations and institutions to live our faith by protecting God's Creation and advocating on behalf of people in poverty who face the harshest impacts of global climate change. The St. Francis Pledge asks us to: **PRAY** and reflect on the duty to care for God's Creation and protect the poor and vulnerable. **LEARN** about and educate others on the causes and moral dimensions of climate change. **ASSESS** how we-as individuals and in our communities contribute to climate change by our own energy use, consumption, waste, etc. **ACT** to change our choices and behaviors to reduce the ways we contribute to climate change. **ADVOCATE** for Catholic principles and priorities in climate change discussions and decisions, especially as they impact those who are poor and vulnerable. To sign the pledge go to <http://catholicclimatecovenant.org/the-st-frances-pledge/>
3. [www.unep.org/wed/2008/english/Information\\_Material/factsheet.asp](http://www.unep.org/wed/2008/english/Information_Material/factsheet.asp) provides twelve concrete steps to help you kick the CO2 habit.
4. Plan an awareness raising event: invite a speaker or watch a video about climate change and take action.
5. Collect news items that highlight local efforts to conserve energy.
6. Develop a prayer service on the stewardship of creation. Share with others. (This can be sent to [info@catholicsandclimatechange.org](mailto:info@catholicsandclimatechange.org) )
7. Go to <http://www.epa.gov/climatechange/wycd/index.html> to find specific actions you can take at home, at the office, in school and on the road.
8. The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) has launched a major worldwide tree planting campaign. Under the *Plant for the Planet: Billion Tree Campaign*, people, communities, business and industry, civil society organizations and governments are encouraged to plant a tree with the objective of planting at least one billion trees each year. In a call to further individual and collective action, UNEP has set a new goal of planting 7 billion trees by the end of 2009. The campaign strongly encourages the planting of indigenous trees and trees that are appropriate to the local environment. For more information go to [www.unep.org/billiontreecampaign/](http://www.unep.org/billiontreecampaign/)
9. Contact the people in your own geographic community who are working on environmental issues and ask them to give a talk or workshop on their efforts.
10. Learn more about the work of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), a group of more than 2,000 scientists from around the world. Go to [www.ipcc.ch/](http://www.ipcc.ch/)
11. Sponsor a workshop in your local area to educate people about what they can do to mitigate and adapt to the realities of climate change.