

Pax Christi USA

THE NATIONAL CATHOLIC PEACE MOVEMENT

Confronting the climate change crisis

We face the greatest challenge ever in the effort to confront global climate change. For Pax Christi USA, the effects of global warming go to the very heart of our commitment to nonviolence, justice and the pursuit of peace. In the near future, those most seriously affected by climate change include the most vulnerable communities on the planet—coastal populations that will be wiped out by increasingly harsh weather and rising ocean levels, and poor communities which will experience increased food shortages as fertile land is transformed and growing seasons are shortened. We will see an increase in violence, wars over resources, and civil strife arising from weather-related tragedies like Hurricane Katrina. Indeed, our sense of community must expand to meet the dire needs of a planet in crisis.

Fortunately the tide of public opinion is turning, and with it the opportunity for greater responsiveness from political leaders here and around the world. This fall, the House and Senate will hold debates on the climate change crisis. We see this as an opening that must lead to concrete action.

This newsletter is devoted to the climate change crisis. Included is a press release issued by the United Nations' Department of Public Information. It is an excellent background on the current status of the crisis as well as potential directions for action.

Also included in this mailing is a Pax Christi USA-initiated sign-on statement which will be published in *Sojourners* magazine and sent to all members of Congress. I also ask you to prayerfully consider endorsing and circulating

widely a call for fasting on September 4th, "So Others Might Eat: The Climate Emergency Fast," as well as resources for education around climate change.

As always, I want to thank you for your ongoing financial support for Pax Christi USA. We rely on your generosity in order to do the important work of educating, organizing and resourcing that supports and builds our movement for personal and social transformation. Please consider sending an extra gift, beyond your regular membership dues, to support this work. You can do so by sending a check for the "35th Anniversary Fund for Peace" in the return envelope or at our secure website, www.paxchristiusa.org. I ask you to also consider joining our Sustainers Circle for Peace with Justice by signing up for a secure, recurring donation, charged automatically to your credit card. You can stop these gifts whenever you like, but in the meantime, your monthly gift of at least \$10 will provide an invaluable financial foundation for our work year round.

As Dr. Michael Oppenheimer states inside, we do have the capacity to deal with the climate change crisis. As people of faith and followers of the nonviolent Jesus, we are called to be in right relationship with the planet in which God has embedded us all. Let us all take up this crucial challenge and be catalysts for our communities so that we can ensure a healthy and viable planet for our children and all God's people for generations to come.

In peace,



Dave Robinson
Executive Director, Pax Christi USA



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PEACEMAKING:

Day by Day

"If our cause is a mighty one, and surely peace on earth in these days is the great issue of the day, and if we are opposing the powers of darkness, of nothingness, of destruction, and working on the side of light and life, then surely we must use our greatest weapons - the life forces that are in each one of us. To stand on the side of life, we must give up our own lives."

- Dorothy Day

* This quote and hundreds more are available in Pax Christi USA's "Peacemaking Day by Day." Visit our Web site, www.paxchristiusa.org, to order your copy today, or contact our sales department for more information at 814-453-4955, ext. 231 or sales@paxchristiusa.org.

Adapting to climate change

What's needed in poor countries, and who should pay

Excerpts from Oxfam's Briefing Paper, issued May 29, 2007

If the rainy season starts late, crops fail and people suffer. Children eat leaves. In that situation, only God can help us. - Kasko Ajikara, farmer and father, Gadabedji village, Niger

We basically have three choices - mitigation, adaptation, and suffering. We're going to do some of each. The question is what the mix is going to be. The more mitigation we do, the less adaptation will be required, and the less suffering there will be. - John Holdren, President of the American Association for the Advancement of Science

There is a deep injustice in the impacts of climate change. Rich countries have caused the problem with many decades of greenhouse-gas emissions (and in the process have grown richer). But poor countries will be the worst affected, facing greater droughts, floods, hunger, and disease.

The impacts are already hitting vulnerable communities, where people are starting to adapt their lives to this reality. In South Africa, less frequent and less reliable rains are forcing farmers to sell their cattle and plant faster-maturing crops. In Bangladesh, villagers are creating floating vegetable gardens to protect their livelihoods from flooding. In Viet Nam, communities are helping to plant dense mangroves along the coast to diffuse tropical-storm waves.

Climate change is a challenge to current models of economic growth: all countries will have to find low-carbon paths to development, in order to keep global temperatures to less than 2 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels. But given their historic role in causing the problem, rich countries now have two extraordinarily clear obligations: to stop harming, by massively cutting their greenhouse-gas emissions; and to start helping, by providing compensatory finance so that poor countries can adapt, before they suffer the full impacts of climate change.

Climate change could spark war

From UK News, May 31, 2007

Climate change could spark war as well as a wave of natural disasters across the world, researchers have warned.

A study has shown when rainfall drops dramatically, tempers rise - and the risk of a low-level conflict escalating to full-blown combat doubles the following year.

It means the planet could be brought to the edge of anarchy as more countries develop a nuclear threat to protect dwindling food, water and energy supplies.

The International Crisis Group (ICG) in Brussels which meets each month to discuss the world's potential trouble spots is now considering using climate change as another variable in its analyses.

A number of retired U.S. admirals and generals have already said global warming would act as a "threat multiplier" with events such as droughts toppling unstable governments and unleashing conflict.

And the crisis in Darfur, Sudan, has been described as the first "climate change war" due to the decades of droughts that preceded the conflict.

Drought can cause food shortages, generating anger against governments, for example. "Semi-retired" armed groups may return to conflict in these situations.

Parts of Nepal that witnessed fighting during the 2002 Maoist insurgency, for example, had suffered worse droughts in preceding years than regions that were conflict-free.

For each of the 70 or so locations on the ICG's watch list, rainfall measurements and forecasts are used to calculate the impact the weather is having on conflict risk.

"We're starting to see a real focus on this," said environmental lawyer Dan Esty of Yale University. "Suddenly people are making the link."

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Visit www.paxchristiusa.org for more educational and spiritual resources for peace.

**PAX CHRISTI
USA**

1) Reduce, Reuse, Recycle

Do your part to reduce waste by choosing reusable products instead of disposables. Buying products with minimal packaging (including the economy size when that makes sense for you) will help to reduce waste. And whenever you can, recycle: paper, plastic, newspaper, glass and aluminum cans. If there isn't a recycling program at your work, school, or in your community, ask about starting one.

2) Insulate Your Home

Add extra insulation to your walls and attic, and install weather stripping or caulk around doors and windows. This step alone can reduce your home heating costs by more than 25 percent, by reducing the amount of energy you need to heat and cool your home.

3) Be Thrifty with Heating and Cooling

Turn down the heat while you're sleeping at night or away during the day, and aim for moderation with heating and cooling at all times. Try pulling on a sweater before rushing to the thermostat.

4) Leave the Car at Home Whenever You Can

Less driving means fewer emissions. And besides saving gasoline, walking and biking are great forms of exercise. Explore your community's mass transit system, and check out options for carpooling to work or school.

5) Buy Energy-Efficient Products

When it's time to buy a new car, choose one that gives you the best gas mileage. Home appliances now come in a range of energy-efficient models, and compact florescent bulbs are now designed to provide more natural-looking light while using far less energy than standard light bulbs.

6) Turn Down Your Appliances

Set your water heater at 120 degrees to save energy, and wrap it in an insulating blanket if it is more than 5 years old. Buy low-flow showerheads to save water. Wash your clothes in warm or cold water to reduce your use of hot water and the energy required to produce it. Use the energy-saving settings on your dishwasher and let the dishes air-dry.

7) Don't Leave the Water Running

Remember to turn off the water when you're not using it. For example, while brushing your teeth, shampooing the dog, or soaping up your car, turn off the water until you actually need it for rinsing. You'll reduce your water bill and help to conserve a vital natural resource.

8) Get a Report Card from Your Utility Company

Many utility companies provide home energy audits to help consumers identify areas in their homes that may not be energy efficient. In addition, many utility companies offer rebate programs to help pay for the cost of energy-efficient upgrades.

9) Be an Informed Consumer

Learn more about environmental issues so that you can make wise choices for yourself and your family.

10) Encourage Others to Conserve

Share information about recycling and energy conservation with your friends, neighbors and co-workers, and take opportunities to encourage public officials to establish programs and policies that are good for the environment.

These 10 steps will take you a long way toward reducing your energy use and your monthly budget. And less energy use means less dependence on the fossil fuels that contribute to global warming.

* From *An Inconvenient Truth* - 10 Things You Can Do

*On September 4th, give up food for a day,
and send a powerful message on global warming.*

Dear friends at Pax Christi USA,

As global warming rapidly intensifies, the prospect of much more extensive hunger worldwide becomes increasingly likely, especially in poor countries, due to drought, Katrina-like storms, glacial melting and sea level rise. These impacts will lead to crop failures and economic and social disruption on a massive scale.

To draw attention to this threat and its moral implications, we are calling on thousands of Americans to voluntarily give up food for one day on September 4th, 2007. Other participants will fast even longer beginning on that date, some for weeks. Our appeal to you is to consider joining us in this climate initiative called, "So Others Might Eat: The Climate Emergency Fast." **Give up food for one day now to draw attention to the fact that others may have no food tomorrow unless we halt global warming.**

September 4th is the day Congress returns from its summer recess. What better way to mark that day than with a small personal sacrifice meant to send an urgent message: it's time for our national leaders to take action to solve the climate threat!

Fasting is a simple yet profound way of combining the spiritual and the political. Mahatma Gandhi called it "the sincerest form of prayer." It communicates seriousness and urgency without violence, thereby focusing peoples' attention on the issues of the fast.

The overwhelming urgency of the climate situation is motivating this call. We don't think the climate movement can accept that there will be little of substance coming out of this Congress while President Bush is in office. We can't, in essence, let Congress off the hook for another two years. We must do as much as we can, we must push ourselves to do more than we're used to doing, to step it up now.

What will we be calling for? Three things: no new coal or coal-to-liquid plants; freeze greenhouse gas emissions and move quickly to reduce them; and a down payment of \$25 billion for energy conservation, efficiency and renewable energy.

Our hope is that this fast will generate the kind of media coverage and grassroots response sufficient to pressure Congress to act quickly and decisively.

Won't you join us?

For future generations,

Ted Glick, Mike Tidwell, Josh Tulkin

U.S. Climate Emergency Council/Chesapeake Climate Action Network



**So Others Might Eat
The Climate Emergency Fast**

September 4, 2007

"I think we face a severe problem, one that's extremely threatening, but one that we have the capability to deal with," Michael Oppenheimer, the lead author of the *Fourth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC)* told correspondents recently at a United Nations press conference.

Mr. Oppenheimer is the Albert G. Milbank Professor of Geosciences and International Affairs in the Woodrow Wilson School and the Department of Geosciences at Princeton University. He joined the Princeton faculty after more than two decades with Environmental Defense, a non-governmental organization, where he served as chief scientist and manager of the Global and Regional Atmosphere Program. Joining him was the Chair of the upcoming Conference, Richard Jordan, of the International Council for Caring Communities.

The Sixtieth Annual DPI/NGO Conference, entitled "Climate Change: How it impacts us all", to be held from 5 to 7 September at Headquarters, would use as its basis the three-part report released this year by the Intergovernmental Panel -- a joint venture between the World Meteorological Organization and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), bringing together an international network of climate scientists.

Mr. Oppenheimer explained that the Panel was established under United Nations auspices following a General Assembly resolution in 1988. Its purpose was to inform Governments with the expectation that there would be global negotiations on some sort of an accord to limit climate change. Subsequently, there was the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Kyoto Protocol. "And now we're moving on in anticipation of negotiations on a post-Kyoto phase for the period after 2012," he said.

According to the Panel's latest report in May, some further warming was inevitable due to emissions in the atmosphere that had not yet manifested their full effect. "Yet, by and large, the future remains in our hands and we have the ability to turn this thing around -- to slow emissions and eventually reduce them in a way which will allow a stable climate to develop toward the end of the century," he said.

The Panel estimated that the cost of slowing emissions over the next few decades, of getting started, was the equivalent of a fraction of total global output, he said. That would hardly be noticed against the "background jiggling of the economic system". The main problem -- his personal view -- in solving global warming, however, was neither economic nor technological, but it was politi-

cal, which was why the United Nations in the end was very important.

He said that the United Nations and non-governmental organizations had been very important in the transformation of the climate change issue, from an arcane, obscure, abstract, hard-to-understand issue that only a few people really cared about to the globally pervasive question that it was today.

Explaining the greenhouse effect, he said that certain gases existed naturally in the atmosphere; they were transparent, and the sunlight came through. The same

gases, however, trapped heat that would otherwise escape into space. It was a kind of invisible blanket -- that was the greenhouse effect. It was a good thing because, without it, the Earth would be about 60° Fahrenheit, 32 Celsius; it would be a frozen desert. Human beings would not have evolved as a species, and neither would any other species. The greenhouse problem arose because human beings were causing a build-up in the levels of those gases. Carbon dioxide -- the primary human-made greenhouse gas -- now had levels at about 30 percent above what they were in pre-industrial times.

That meant that the Earth would inevitably warm; the Earth was already warming -- about three quarters of a degree Celsius, and more than a degree Fahrenheit warmer than it was 140 years ago, he said, adding, "it is just going to warm further until we restrain the emissions of those gases". In fact, carbon dioxide levels were now higher than they had been in 20 million years, and if the emissions of gases were not limited, they would soon be higher than they were 50 million years ago. Fifty million years ago, the planet was totally different than it is today. It was semi-tropical to tropical, and there were no ice sheets. If that happened today, sea levels would be hundreds of feet higher and there would be no civilization along the coasts. "So, these are the stakes we face,"

he warned.

The Panel, in the report it issued in February, pointed out in very strong language that it was "unequivocal" that the Earth had warmed, that the warming was very likely attributable to the build-up of greenhouse gases, that sea levels had risen in response as glaciers melted and as ocean water expanded, that all those changes were accelerating, and that there had been a broad change in the climate aside from the temperature change. The very circulation of the atmosphere -- the global winds -- had changed, hurricanes appeared

to have gotten more intense, there was a drying in many areas of the world, and in others, there was excess precipitation and very heavy rainstorms, possibly generating additional flooding. The human effect of the build-up of the greenhouse gases was implicated in most of

Hurricane Katrina "is a big metaphor for what is going to happen in the future," Oppenheimer said... A lot of lessons could be drawn from that. Katrina drew people's attention to that fact that "we're not protected against or immune to the effects of the climate".

those changes, the Panel found.

The second report, which came out in April, indicated that all those climate changes were already having significant effects on human society and natural ecosystems. For instance, there were changes in water availability, owing to more droughts in certain parts of the world. There was difficulty coping with sea-level rise along the coast and, perhaps most importantly, as projections were made on where those changes were going, the world would be somewhere between 1° and 6° Celsius warmer than today if nothing was done to restrain emissions; sea-level rise would be up to two feet higher; the loss in biodiversity would be about 30 percent if warming was only a few degrees, and up to 70 percent if warming got in the range of 3° or 4° Celsius in the current century.

Most importantly, he said, the largest effects were expected to happen in those parts of the world that had the least capability to deal with them. There were vul-

nerable populations in all parts of the world -- everyone saw that during Hurricane Katrina -- even in rich countries. There, the world saw a profound inability to anticipate, defend and clean up afterwards, and still people were suffering. That kind of vulnerability was only magnified in many countries a lot poorer than the United States. One of the most marked projected effects of climate change was a drying at mid to low latitudes in tropics and subtropics, such as sub-Saharan Africa, parts of Mexico and South Africa. There, questions would arise about whether people would have enough to feed themselves or whether malnutrition and starvation would become endemic instead of sporadic.

Asked why there was a sudden interest in global warming and climate change, he said that, here in the United States, it probably started with the strong hurricane systems of a few years ago. Hurricane Katrina had a very strong psychological effect on people's views. It had revealed the ineptitude of Government at all levels. People had thought they did not have to worry about climate, that insurance and their Government would take care of it. Hurricane Katrina revealed that there was a big gap between capacity to adapt and the actual political ability to adapt. Even knowing that New Orleans could be hit by such a big hurricane, and that it had been hit by a pretty big hurricane 40 years ago, there was still inadequate preparation and inadequate response. The limited ability to respond was so visible and so apparent.

Hurricane Katrina "is a big metaphor for what is going to happen in the future," he said. People who did not have cars could not drive out of town, for instance. A lot of lessons could be drawn from that. Katrina drew people's attention to that fact that "we're not protected against or immune to the effects of the climate". Even if the hurricane itself had nothing to do with climate change -- and it was not known how much it had to do with climate change -- those images daily on television and in the newspapers had a very telling effect on people's psyches.

He said that the second factor that sparked interest in climate change was the energy price crisis. People started paying attention to energy security, oil availability, burning fossil fuels, being dependent on fossil fuels, the cost of energy -- that got the solution end of it in people's minds. The third factor was the "wonderful work" done by former United States Vice President Al Gore. All of that worked together to generate a "perfect storm of public interest", he said.