



October 28, 2015

Dear Member of Congress,

In his Encyclical, *Laudato Si', On Care for Our Common Home*, Pope Francis calls on Catholics and people of goodwill to acknowledge “the intimate relationship between the poor and the fragility of the planet” and the need to address climate change. In response to this call, the undersigned national Catholic organizations respectfully request that Congress fund U.S. contributions to the Green Climate Fund and support U.S. leadership in reaching an agreement on reducing greenhouse gas emissions in the upcoming United Nations negotiations on climate change in Paris.

On his recent visit to our nation Pope Francis said, “[C]limate change is a problem which can no longer be left to a future generation. When it comes to the care of our ‘common home’, we are living at a critical moment of history.” In *Laudato Si'*, Pope Francis noted that “a number of scientific studies indicate that climate change is the result of the great concentration of greenhouse gases released mainly as a result of human activity,” that our “common home is falling into serious disrepair.”

Pope Francis’ call is not new. Indeed, the Church has seen for many years how climate change has contributed to human suffering around the world; climate change has exacerbated problems such as coffee leaf rust in Central America, droughts in Syria, the Sahel and East Africa, and storms of historic proportions affecting North America and Asia. Many of the groups signing this letter have people, projects and partners who respond to these challenges. The reality that our sisters and brothers face prompted Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI to note:

In 1990 John Paul II had spoken of an ‘ecological crisis’ and, in highlighting its primarily ethical character, pointed to the ‘urgent moral need for a new solidarity.’ His appeal is all the more pressing today, in the face of signs of a growing crisis which it would be irresponsible not to take seriously. Can we remain indifferent before the problems associated with such realities as climate change...? Can we disregard the growing phenomenon of environmental refugees...?

In 2001 the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops issued a statement on *Global Climate Change: A Plea for Dialogue, Prudence and the Common Good*. They wrote: “In facing climate change, what we already know requires a response; it cannot be easily dismissed ... prudence dictates taking mitigating or preventative action.”

Guided by the teachings of Pope Francis, Pope Benedict and Pope Saint John Paul II, and a long tradition of stewardship in Catholic Social Teaching, Catholic organizations across the country are ramping up efforts to educate and mobilize Catholics to take action. Part of this action is encouraging our political leaders to take steps to address climate change. In particular, we call on Congress to:

- Fund U.S. contributions to the Green Climate Fund, an independent, global fund established by the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change to help poor countries better respond to the challenges of climate change. With this funding, and the collective

contributions made by other advanced economies, poor countries will have resources to help them mitigate and adapt to the realities of climate change.

- Support strong U.S. leadership in securing a global commitment to curb global greenhouse gas emissions in the upcoming United Nations Climate Change Conference in Paris. Climate change is a result of global emissions and it is only through a global accord that we can hope to turn the tide against the worst projected impacts of climate change.

As Pope Francis writes, “to take up these responsibilities and the costs they entail, politicians will inevitably clash with the mindset of short-term gain and result which dominates present-day economics and politics. But if they are courageous, they will attest to their God-given dignity and leave behind a testimony of selfless responsibility.” It is our moral obligation to be courageous, to act now, and to care for our common home. We must protect vulnerable populations around the world who are the most adversely affected by rising sea levels, drought conditions, and extreme weather events. We must also act within our own country to curtail carbon emissions that contribute to the problem and assist vulnerable populations. Leading by example will give our nation the moral authority it needs to help hold the rest of the world to their commitments as well.

As people of faith, we pray that our political leaders will embrace the difficult truth and the necessary changes that need to be made in order to be good stewards of the gifts that God has given all of us. We urge you to support funding for the Green Climate Fund and strong U.S. leadership in the upcoming United Nations conference in Paris on climate change. In the recent words of Pope Francis to Congress, we are “convinced that we can make a difference and [we] have no doubt that the United States – and this Congress – have an important role to play.”

Sincerely,



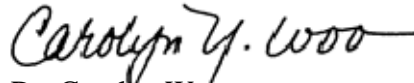
Most Reverend Thomas G. Wenski  
Archbishop of Miami  
Chair, Committee on Domestic Justice and  
Human Development  
United States Conference of Catholic Bishops



Most Reverend Oscar Cantú  
Bishop of Las Cruces  
Chair, Committee on International Justice and  
Peace  
United States Conference of Catholic Bishops



Sister Donna Markham, O.P., Ph.D.  
President and CEO  
Catholic Charities USA



Dr. Carolyn Woo  
President  
Catholic Relief Services