

**Oral Testimony**

**Cecilia V. Calvo**

**On behalf of**

**Archbishop Thomas Wenski and Bishop Oscar Cantú, Chairmen of the  
Domestic and International Committees of the United States Conference  
of Catholic Bishops**

**EPA Public Hearing**

**Proposed Federal Plan for the Clean Power Plan**

**William Jefferson Clinton East Building, Room 1153, Washington, DC**

**November 18, 2015**

Good morning. My name is Cecilia Calvo. I oversee the Environmental Justice Program within the Department of Justice, Peace and Human Development at the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops.

On behalf of Archbishop Thomas Wenski and Bishop Oscar Cantú, Chairmen of the Domestic Justice and Human Development and International Justice and Peace Committees of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, I thank you for this important and timely hearing on an issue that clearly affects God's creation and the entire human family.

In his encyclical on ecology, *Laudato Si'*, Pope Francis called on all people to care for God's creation and our common home for the well-being of current and future generations. He wrote this encyclical to "enter into dialogue with all people about our common home." As Pope Francis said in his encyclical, "[w]e need a conversation which includes everyone, since the environmental challenge we are undergoing, and its human roots, concern and affect us all."

As Pope Francis said during his visit to our nation, "Now is the time for courageous actions and strategies, aimed at implementing a 'culture of care' and 'an integrated approach to combating poverty, restoring dignity to the excluded, and at the same time protecting nature.'" He continued, "[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."

The U.S. bishops stand united with Pope Francis in his call to protect creation. The bishops speak as people of faith, not as technical experts. They are pastors offering a moral perspective rooted in a rich faith tradition.

On August 3, the day the EPA announced its final rule limiting carbon pollution, Archbishop Wenski said, "A new national standard to reduce carbon pollution from existing power plants is an important step forward to protect the health of all people, especially children, the elderly, and poor and vulnerable communities, from harmful pollution and the impacts of climate change."

Power plants are the largest stationary source of carbon emissions in the United States, and a major contributor to climate change. And, we know the effects of climate change are borne by the most vulnerable people, whether at home or around the world.

These standards are a vital first step to protecting the world's most vulnerable people and allow the United States to exercise critical leadership necessary for reaching a global agreement at the upcoming negotiations on climate change in Paris.

As the U.S. bishops wrote in their statement, *Global Climate Change: A Plea for Dialogue, Prudence and the Common Good*: "Action to mitigate global climate change must be built upon a foundation of social and economic justice."

Our Committee Chairmen support a national standard to reduce carbon pollution and recognize the important flexibility given to states in determining how best to meet these goals. The EPA's proposed federal plan can serve as a model for states as they take steps to develop their own plans. States and local leaders know best how to design customized plans

that will reduce carbon pollution in the most cost-effective way, help states move toward the development of clean energy and protect poor and vulnerable people. States have the ability to implement these standards in a comprehensive manner and to adopt complimentary measures needed to protect poor and vulnerable people.

As the EPA and states take steps to implement the final standards, the bishops urge them to be guided by moral principles articulated in their July 30, 2014 letter to the EPA, including:

- **Respect for Human Life and Dignity.** All efforts to reduce the impact of climate change should recognize human life and dignity as the foundation of a healthy society.
- **Social and Economic Justice.** Any additional costs that such standards may generate must be distributed fairly. Workers should be protected from negative effects that might arise and should receive assistance to mitigate impacts on their livelihoods and families.
- **Participation.** Communities should have a voice in shaping these standards based on their local impact, especially low-income communities whose voice is often not heard.

Archbishop Wenski and Bishop Cantú appreciate the Agency's commitment to address this urgent global challenge confronting the human family, and call upon leaders in government and industry to act responsibly, justly and rapidly to implement these standards.

The moral measure of debate and decisions on climate change will be whether our nation acts with prudence to safeguard God's creation, advance the common good, and protect humanity.

Thank you.