

MISSIONARY OBLATES JPIC



Combatting Climate Change

"A second key area where you are called to make a contribution is in showing concern for the environment. This is not only because this country, more than many others, is likely to be seriously affected by climate change. You are called to care for creation not only as responsible citizens, but also as followers of Christ!" *Pope Francis Address to Young People, Santo Tomás University, Manila January 2015*



Climate Change: Caring For Our Common Home

The harmful effects of climate change are now backed by science. The threat to people's livelihoods and quality of life has with far-reaching consequences across continents. People in poor regions of the world are the most vulnerable.

Climate change affects our land, ocean and air. Its impact can be felt in diverse coastal countries like Bangladesh and the Netherlands where rising sea levels is a constant problem; the African continent where changes in the ecosystem cause plants and animals to go extinct; in south Asia where low rainfall leading to crop loss negatively impacts the economy; in the Antarctic where fast melting glaciers is a cause for concern; and unpredictable weather patterns every other place on the globe. As the earth is affected so are humans. Droughts, monsoons and other natural disasters either temporarily or permanently force people from their homes. Community conflicts flare up due to scarce natural resources with disastrous consequences. Hurricane Katrina, which hit the U.S. Gulf Coast in 2005, is one example of an extreme weather event leading to the significant displacement of people.

Despite somber forecasts, 2015 was an optimistic year for the environment. In May 2015 Pope Francis released his well-received encyclical, *Laudato Si: On Care for our Common Home*. In his historic visit to the U.S. later in the year, the Pope gave significant attention to the issue in his address to the U.S. Congress saying, "The U.S. has a role to play in implementing "a culture of care" and "an integrated approach to combating poverty, restoring dignity to the excluded, and at the same time protecting nature."

Late in the year, in November 2015 the United Nations convened a much-anticipated conference in Paris to negotiate new international agreements on climate. At the COP21 event, officially known as *United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change*, 195 countries committed to standards for things like the use of solar power and cutting greenhouse gas emissions. One major outcome of the meeting was the official launch of the Green Climate Fund. Rich countries have pledged money to help poor countries mitigate the effects and adapt to climate change.

The Paris gathering was also preceded by climate change rallies around the world, including Washington, DC, where hundreds of thousands of people took to the streets to call for action on the environment.

Connect with Missionary Oblates JPIC

Take Action for the Climate

- At home – Reduce, Reuse, Recycle
- Ask your local and national authorities to engage in environmentally-friendly measures.
- Read a letter faith-based organizations including Catholic groups sent to Congress urging them to advocate for US contribution to the Green Climate:
http://www.crs.org/sites/default/files/crs-files/gcf_faith_ltr_appropriations_final.pdf
- Find out how much CO2 your lifestyle produces and the amount of resources it takes to live the way you do:
<http://www.un.org/climatechange/take-action/>

Facebook: Missionary Oblates JPIC

Twitter: @omiusaJPIC

Blog: <http://missionary-oblates-jpic.blog.com>

YouTube:
www.youtube.com/OMIJPIC

The Church Response

In *Laudato Si: On Care of our Common Home*, the first papal document of its kind, Pope Francis calls on and challenges all people to protect creation and our common home. The Pope makes clear that our care for one another and our care for the earth are intimately bound together. The Catholic Church brings a distinct perspective to the debate about climate change by lifting up the moral dimensions of this issue and the needs of the most vulnerable among us. As Catholics our faith calls us to care for all of God's creation, especially the 'least of these' (Mt 25:40).

The Oblate JPIC Office works in coalition with other faith-based groups to highlight the perspective of the poor and marginalized in public policy debates. The congregation is deeply concerned about the impacts of environmental degradation on God's creation, human and non-human. The General Council of the congregation, in the JPIC "Vade Mecum" first published in 1996 and revised in 2015 and now renamed "The OMI Pastoral Companion", calls on members of the congregation to include this new reality in their missionary consciousness.

Across the United States, local Oblate communities are continually searching for new ways to respond to this call. In 2003 the Province formally established the Oblate Ecological Initiative and approved the founding of the Community Supported Garden at La Vista in Godfrey, IL. In 2004 the parish eco-mission project was established to bring the message to local ministry sites across the country. In 2011 the U.S. Province entered into agreement with Three Part Harmony Farm to provide a 2-acre parcel of land at its residence in Washington, DC for an urban commercial garden.

Through the Faith Consistent Investment program the Oblates work with other religious and institutional investors to encourage corporations to include their environmental footprint in their business model.

In a recent interview, Fr. Daniel LeBlanc, OMI, NGO representative to the UN for the Missionary Oblates and VIVAT International offered an observation on *Laudato Si*, "Pope Francis is talking about a long-term relationship of human beings with their environment."

"Climate change is a global problem with grave implications: environmental, social, economic, political and for the distribution of goods."
Pope Francis, *Laudato Si: On Care of our Common Home*, 2015

Pope Francis - A prayer for our earth

All-powerful God, you are present in the whole universe and in the smallest of your creatures. You embrace with your tenderness all that exists. Pour out upon us the power of your love, that we may protect life and beauty. Fill us with peace, that we may live as brothers and sisters, harming no one.

O God of the poor, help us to rescue the abandoned and forgotten of this earth, so precious in your eyes. Bring healing to our lives, that we may protect the world and not prey on it, that we may sow beauty, not pollution and destruction.

Touch the hearts of those who look only for gain at the expense of the poor and the earth. Teach us to discover the worth of each thing, to be filled with awe and contemplation, to recognize that we are profoundly united with every creature as we journey towards your infinite light.

We thank you for being with us each day. Encourage us, we pray, in our struggle for justice, love and peace. AMEN.

RESOURCES

USCCB Climate Change

<http://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/human-life-and-dignity/environment/climate-change-background.cfm>

United Nations and Climate Change

<http://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/climate-change-2/>

Catholic Coalition on Climate Change

www.catholicclimatecovenant.org

Catholic Climate Movement

<https://catholicclimatemovement.global/>

Catholic Relief Services

www.crs.org/climate-change