



CLIMATE CHANGE

What we see: Human-induced climate change is the most serious and pressing ecological challenge facing the U.S. and the world today. While all of us are impacted by the changes taking place, our global sisters and brothers living in poverty and at the margins of society are the most vulnerable and least able to adapt, yet they have contributed the least to the greenhouse gas emissions causing global warming. Climate change raises serious moral and ethical concerns about the distribution and use of our planet's finite resources.

- With only 5% of the world's population, the U.S. emits approximately 20% of greenhouse gases generated by human activity.
- The glaciers in the Himalayas, which provide water to the Columban mission country of Burma, are predicted to disappear completely by 2035. The glaciers in Peru, where most of the population depends on glacier-fed rivers for water supply and food production, have already lost one-third of their surface area and are predicted to have all but disappeared by 2015.
- Increased intensity and frequency of storms, flooding and rising sea levels are making small island nations and coastal regions increasingly uninhabitable. The rate of sea-level rise has nearly doubled in recent decades, further threatening Columban mission countries including Fiji and the Philippines. Poor water distribution in countries such as Burma and Pakistan can lead to further instability and violence, which could be a threat to US security.
- Already there are over 25 million climate migrants. Current projections estimate the displacement of 200 million people by 2050.
- If continued unchecked, many scientists believe that our current carbon emissions could lead to a 6°C rise in temperatures by 2100, detrimental to the state of the environment with which we are familiar. In addition, it has been determined that every year a comprehensive agreement on fighting climate change is avoided, a cost of \$500 billion extra will be incurred to cut the amount of CO₂.

What our faith tells us: We are guided by principles of justice, stewardship, sufficiency and sustainability. As stated by Pope Benedict XVI in his 2009 encyclical, "The environment is God's gift to everyone, and in our use of it we have a responsibility towards the poor, towards future generations and towards humanity as a whole." We recognize this interconnectedness of all life and recognize our call to share in the act of Creation by responsibly caring for the world around us.

What we hope for: While there is a role for technology and alternative sources of energy, we must at the same time fundamentally reconsider the lifestyles that we choose to lead and reduce our levels of consumption and waste.

Legislation: We call on Congress to enact legislation on climate change that includes:

- Mechanisms that mitigate the impacts of global warming, particularly for vulnerable populations in the U.S. and abroad.
- Comprehensive, mandatory, and aggressive reductions in emissions that follow scientific guidelines to reduce carbon emissions to 25-40 % below 1990 levels by 2020, and to 80% below 1990 levels by 2050.
- A dedicated, sufficient and transparent fund to help developing countries and local affected communities to adapt to the impacts of climate change.
- Development of the renewable energy sector.
- Humanitarian assistance to climate migrants.
- A new entry mechanism for climate migrants, similar to the special immigration visa process.