



PURPOSE OF THE VISIT:

To voice support for sustainable environmental policies including the EPA's Clean Power Plan and urge the United States, with the support of Congress, to take the lead on implementing and following international environmental standards.

WHAT OUR FAITH TELLS US:

A Catholic response to climate change incorporates the **care for creation** with the **protection of those most vulnerable to climate impacts**. In his encyclical titled *Caritas in Veritate* Pope Benedict said, "**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.**" He continues, "The protection of the environment, of resources and of the climate obliges all international leaders to act jointly and to show a readiness to work in good faith, respecting the law and promoting solidarity with the weakest regions of the planet."

WHAT WE SEE:

1. Care For Creation: The Impacts Of Global Climate Change

- **Global climate change is happening and it is caused largely by human activity.** Greenhouse gas emissions from power plants, cars, and other human activities— rather than natural variations in climate—are the primary cause of global warming. Current and future impacts of global warming include:
 - **Rising temperatures:** Earth's average temperature has risen by 1.4°F over the past century, and is projected to rise another 2 to 11.5°F over the next hundred years (U.S. Environmental Protection Agency).
 - **Stronger storm events:** The strength of the winds and amount of precipitation falling in tropical storms is likely to increase over the next decade. In the United States, the intensity of Atlantic hurricanes is likely to increase as the ocean warms (U.S. Environmental Protection Agency).
 - **Rising sea levels:** Since 1870, the global sea level has risen by about 8 inches. Estimates of future sea level rise vary for different regions, but global sea level for the next century is expected to rise at a greater rate than during the past 50 years (U.S. Environmental Protection Agency).

2. Protection Of Those Most Vulnerable To Climate Impacts: The Link Between Race, Poverty, And Vulnerability

IN THE UNITED STATES:

- **"Race and poverty are directly correlated with greater exposure to toxics from pollution sources** such as highways, waste disposal sites, and coal-fired power plants that are

disproportionately sited near low-income, tribal, and racially segregated communities” (Environmental Justice Leadership Forum).

- People of color are exposed to nearly 40% more polluted air than Caucasian Americans, which is linked to asthma symptoms and heart disease. African American children are twice as likely to be hospitalized for asthma and Latinos are 30% more likely to be hospitalized for asthma. If people of color breathed in the same amounts of pollution as Caucasian Americans, it is predicted that it would prevent nearly 7,000 deaths from heart disease each year (University of Minnesota).
- **The impacts of extreme weather events are often disproportionately felt by African Americans, Latinos, Native Americans and low-income Caucasian Americans.** Displacement from Hurricane Katrina disproportionately came from African American communities; rising sea levels and flooding have already compelled the relocation of 31 Alaska Native Villages (National Congress of American Indians (NCAI)).
- **People living in poverty are disproportionately more susceptible to illness or death from extreme heat or cold** due to the deadly mix of likelihood of exposure and fewer resources. Extreme heat events are the leading weather-related cause of death in the U.S (700/year), and they are predicted to rise to between 3,000-5,000/year by 2050 (U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention).

INTERNATIONALLY:

- A 2009 study conducted by the Global Humanitarian Forum found that climate change was responsible for 300,000 deaths a year, the suffering of 325 million people, and economic losses of over \$100 billion. **Over 90% of those persons most severely affected by climate change were from developing countries that have contributed least to global carbon emissions.**

3. Personal Testimony: Please share a personal story from your work or ministry about how climate change has impacted vulnerable communities.

A FIRST STEP: EPA CLEAN POWER PLAN

- In June 2014, the Environmental Protection Agency issued rules governing fossil fuel power plants that are designed to drive emissions of CO₂ down 30% from 2005 levels by 2030. Currently power plants contribute to over 40% of the carbon pollution in the United States. As outlined, the rules give states fairly wide latitude about how to lower emissions—including greater energy conservation, using more renewables like wind and solar, and joining or starting state or regional level cap and trade programs.
 - Employment impacts will vary with state implementation but overall most analysts believe that there will be no net job loss and perhaps job gains as the country moves forward with new energy technologies and conservation measures.
 - Increases in energy costs are likely but small, and not much above current projected increases as fossil fuels increase (Catholic Climate Covenant).
 - Once fully implemented, the regulations will prevent 150,000 asthma attacks 3,300 heart attacks and 6,600 deaths each year

OUR REQUESTS:

- Will the Congressperson support legislative action that responds to climate change domestically and globally by supporting the EPA's Clean Power Plan?
- Will the Congressperson, in conjunction with international leaders, support a future global climate agreement that promotes sustainable international environmental standards?
- Will the Congressperson invest in multilateral funds to build climate resiliency of vulnerable communities in our nation and worldwide?
- Will the Congressperson support the nation's ability to create new jobs in sustainable industries like energy efficiency and green infrastructure?