

CATHOLIC CLIMATE AMBASSADORS

Katie's notes from the March 4-6, 2011 training session at The Presentation Center, Los Gatos, CA

Based on comments of John Carr, Br Keith Warner, Bishops Blair & Skylstad, Dan Misleh, etc., etc.

Catholic (RC) contribution to the Climate Change Discussion:

- The role of the Church in public life is to form consciences
- Roman Catholicism has a different way of looking at the world; we (the Catholic Coalition) are not *"the Sierra Club at prayer;"* we are Catholics doing what Catholics do best, i.e.
 - a) RC has a very comprehensive approach, i.e., "Both/And"
 - b) RC is not "trendy"-- what we bring is old, deep and important,
 - c) RC must connect to reason: Faith and Reason together (*vs. Fideists = exclusive reliance in religious matters upon faith, with consequent rejection of appeals to science or philosophy.*)
 - d) RC's key principle is emphasis on Human Life & Dignity
- RC view: Prudence + Poor + Common Good *"What could be more common than the climate?"*
- RC perspective: *"We make the conservative case for Climate Change"*
- RC exposes false choice between economics and climate change; every economic decision has moral consequences; it's economically foolish to ignore climate change & economically wise to conserve at home; what we want is for good economics and good morality to converge
- RC Looks at climate change from the bottom up: how it affects the most vulnerable; Catholic Relief Services has a presence everywhere the global poor reside; gives us a unique credibility
- Catholics understand sacrifice: Sacrifice = "to make holy;" it's about "making sacred." We are doing this because we desire to be holy; be transformed; *"this issue needs some sacrifice from me; it won't get better w/o sacrifice ("a very LONG Lent!"),* but sacrifice does not "poll well," & as in general public, average Catholic doesn't think about this issue *first* from a faith perspective
- People may think the Church's focus on the Poor is a "sideline issue," but without a serious plan to help poor countries adapt to climate change, adaptation will not ever be able to happen globally. The issue of the Poor is central to the discussion.

Guidance for Ambassadors: *This work must be done as a community of faith. God will help us find a way to solve this if we use reasoned approach and work on it together as a human family.*

- 1) Begin w/ people's faith, authenticate what we believe (no politics)
- 2) Play to our strengths – view thru eyes of faith; accept what scientific community says; prudence
- 3) Watch your language: e.g., say "worldview" instead of cosmology, etc.
- 4) Refer to climate change, not global warming
- 5) Take questions and objections seriously; no condescension
- 6) Stay on message; don't get sidetracked; e.g., no specifics on energy bills, etc.
- 7) Play against type (don't look or sound like people will expect)
- 8) Use stories
- 9) Be confident but modest/humble
- 10) Be principled, but not ideological (*def = a body of ideas that reflects the beliefs and interests of a nation, political system, etc and underlies political action*)
- 11) Use Creation as the focus
- 12) Be political without being partisan
- 13) Be civil but no soft
- 14) Be engaged but not "used"
- 15) Do everything we can to diminish polarization around this issue
- 16) Strive to take people from FEAR → FAITH → HOPE

Other advice from discussion:

- Emphasize “Grass Roots” vs. “Tree Tops” approach
- Problem of “Light bulbs vs. CST”: pretty soon this issue turns into a discussion about facilities and the CST piece gets lost. *“We have to move beyond switching light bulbs to concern over those who don’t have any!”* Always connect what we are doing to global solidarity.
- Some critiques and questions are really avoidance of responsibility (e.g., isn’t this issue just about environmentalists trying to “make a buck?”)
- Don’t over rely on a didactic / lecturing approach that emphasizes guilt; rather emphasize “our common dilemma” e.g., *we didn’t arrive at this nefariously, some decisions in the past were honest choices, only with hindsight do we now understand the severe consequences*
- Bend over backwards to enlist everyone on this issue
- Stress the positive things out there!
- Population issue: Some environmental groups claim “People are the problem” and see each new child as a “planet pest;” Catholic position: “The actions of people are the problem”
- Catholic teaching on reproduction: marked by generosity and responsibility; leave it to the parents to make the responsible decision, always within licit means; RC emphasizes the locus of decision making in the right place (between the couple), not the government
- Our U.S. consumption level is unsustainable
- Science and ethics – is there really a sharp distinction between these? Can a *natural ethics* be drawn out from the science? (Bishop B) my suggestion: “the interconnectedness of all things”

Guidelines / Hints for Talks:

- Spend time in PRAYER
- Describe what you are doing and what you are not; explain how/why you became an ambassador
- Begin broad: what does our faith have to do with the environment?
- Don’t necessarily put “Climate Change” in title
- Don’t go into the science that much!
- Always assume you are being recorded
- For “off the wall” questions: *“That’s a question for another time” or “This is a really wonderful question. As a guest here at St X Parish, I would invite you to discuss your question with your pastor.”*
- Take the “high road” / agree with them to the point that is possible, e.g. *“I don’t agree with you on . . . but if humans are responsible for even 5% of warming, I can agree with you.”*
- It’s ok to broaden the message to local issues: air pollution, water supply , etc.
- Some ways to make the case for a switch from fossil fuels:
 - Climate change
 - Air pollution
 - National energy security
 - Saves money
 - Theological and ethical
- Don’t get discouraged if only 12 folks show up! (Bishop B)