



The Catholic Coalition on Climate Change

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Catholic Climate Covenant
Care for Creation. Care for the Poor.

Catholic Coalition on Climate Change

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Franciscan Action Network

Leadership Conference of Women
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National Catholic Educational
Association

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Rural Life Conference

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of Catholic Women

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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SUSTAINABILITY AND CATHOLIC HIGHER EDUCATION: A TOOLKIT FOR MISSION INTEGRATION

WASHINGTON, D.C. (August 29, 2011)—As Catholic colleges and universities across the country begin a new school year, eight national Catholic organizations are publishing and promoting an exciting new resource, *Sustainability and Catholic Higher Education: A Toolkit for Mission Integration*. This new resource will help schools strengthen ongoing commitments to live out Catholic mission and “cultivate and care for” (Genesis 2:15) God’s good gift of Creation through mission-based sustainability.

The Toolkit is being co-sponsored by the Catholic Coalition on Climate Change (www.catholicclimatecovenant.org), the Association of Catholic Colleges and Universities (www.accunet.org), the Association of Jesuit Colleges and Universities (www.ajcunet.edu), the Association of Franciscan Colleges and Universities (www.franciscancollegesuniversities.org), the Lasallian Association of College and University Presidents (www.ialu.net), Catholic Relief Services College (www.crscollege.org), the Catholic Campus Ministry Association (www.ccmanet.org) and the National Catholic Student Coalition (www.catholicstudent.org).

These organizations hope that Catholic colleges and universities will use the Toolkit to strengthen Catholic mission and publicly commit themselves to mission-based sustainability by becoming a Catholic Climate Covenant Partner (<http://catholicclimatecovenant.org/about-us/covenant-partners/>) as Saint Michael’s College recently did:
http://www.smevt.edu/admission/news/news_story.asp?iNewsID=1566&strBack=%2Fnews%2FDefault.asp

The sponsoring organizations believe that while many Catholic schools have successfully taken steps to integrate sustainability into their institutions, more can to be done to ensure that these efforts are grounded in Catholic mission and identity. As articulated by Pope Benedict XVI and the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, sustainability is not simply “going green” but recognizes and

faithfully responds to the reality that ecological degradation and climate change are moral issues and that, “*At its core, global climate change is not about economic theory or political platforms, nor about partisan advantage or interest*” Conference of Catholic Bishops, sustainability is not simply “going green” but recognizes and faithfully responds to the reality that ecological degradation and climate change are moral issues and that, “*At its core, global climate change is not about economic theory or political platforms, nor about partisan advantage or interest group pressures. It is about the future of God’s creation and the one human family,*” (US. Catholic Bishops, 2001).

Most Reverend William S. Skylstad, Bishop Emeritus of Spokane, Honorary Chairman of the Catholic Coalition on Climate Change and Past President, U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops said, “I welcome this excellent new resource and hope that our Catholic colleges and universities will find it a practical and effective tool for capturing and directing the energy of so many of our young people—the Church’s future—on the environment. As we know, care for the gifts of God’s Creation is not a new component of Catholic identity, but rather, it is as old as Genesis. In this age of serious environmental threats, this Toolkit is more important than ever. It offers a way for Catholic higher education to be beacons of hope in the spirit of St. Francis, the patron saint of ecology.”

The Toolkit is organized around the five components of the *St. Francis Pledge to Care for Creation and the Poor* (<http://catholicclimatecovenant.org>): PRAY, LEARN, ASSESS, ACT and ADVOCATE. For each component, the Toolkit offers practical suggestions about how to identify campus leaders, as well as implementation suggestions for living each component on the campus and in the larger community.

Dan Misleh, executive director of the Catholic Coalition on Climate Change, said, “This Toolkit, over a year in the making, is an excellent roadmap to help Catholic higher education strengthen their Catholic identity. For the Catholic higher education, indeed for the whole Catholic community, environmental concern has to be more than an Earth Day slogan. Our contribution should include saving polar bears but must go beyond. It has to put humankind at the center of environmental efforts, especially the poor and vulnerable, who have contributed the least to the problem of climate change but are now and will continue to suffer its worst impacts.”

The co-sponsoring organizations all support the Toolkit as they each recognize that the issue of environmental responsibility is intimately related to all other aspects of Catholic tradition; as Blessed Pope John Paul II said in his 1990 World Day of Peace Message, “[W]e cannot interfere in one area of the ecosystem without paying due attention both to the consequences of such interference in other areas and to the well-being of future generations” (No. 6, emphasis in original).

Additional statements by co-sponsors of the Toolkit:

Most Reverend William S. Skylstad, Bishop Emeritus of Spokane, Honorary Chairman of the Catholic Coalition on Climate Change and Past President, U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops: “Since environmental sustainability is an issue of human life and dignity, justice and stewardship, it is my sincere hope that using this Toolkit and becoming a Catholic Climate Covenant Partner will help Catholic colleges and universities to strengthen their commitments to Catholic mission.”

Michael Galligan-Stierle, Ph.D., President/CEO, Association of Catholic Colleges and Universities: “We are honored to co-sponsor this collaborative effort to help Catholic colleges and universities more fully integrate Catholic mission and the Christian vocation to cultivate and care for God’s good gift of Creation.”

Reverend Gregory F. Lucey, S.J., President, Association of Jesuit Colleges and Universities: “Ignatian spirituality seeks to find God in all things, including the natural world. The Association of Jesuit Colleges and Universities recognizes that environmental stewardship is an integral part of both our Catholic mission and Jesuit spirituality. This will help us build on our efforts toward mission-based sustainability.”

Kevin Godfrey, Ph.D., Executive Director, Association of Franciscan Colleges and Universities: “St. Francis understood deeply the connections between the environment and human life and dignity- especially the poor and vulnerable. We fully support this Toolkit as a way to faithfully carry Francis’ ethic forward into the modern world.”

Brother James Gaffney, FSC, President, Lasallian Association of College and University Presidents: “A concern for education and the poor has always been integral to the Lasallian charism. Since environmental degradation disproportionately harms the ‘least among us,’ and because education can help us better care for both Creation and the poor, we are excited to support this Toolkit in the spirit of St. John Baptist de La Salle.”

Ken Hackett, President, Catholic Relief Services: “People living in poverty—both at home and abroad—contribute least to climate change and environmental degradation, but they suffer its worst consequences as they have few resources to adapt and respond. This Toolkit will help schools live their Catholic commitments to care for the poor & seek justice in the world.”

Reverend Martin Moran, Executive Director, Catholic Campus Ministry Association: “We at CCMA appreciate the reality that, as Pope Benedict XVI observes, ‘The way humanity treats the environment influences the way it treats itself, and vice versa.’ This Toolkit will help students combine their passion for the environment with a more holistic faith which respects and cares for both the human environment and the natural environment.”

Joe Ewing, National Chairperson, National Catholic Student Coalition: “This Toolkit will help students strengthen their Catholic identity by further developing an integrated faith in which authentic Church teaching animates and inspires all of their decisions and choices.”

For more information, contact:

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