

CLIMATE DEPOT SPECIAL REPORT

CLIMATE of FAITH: Talking Points about Pope Francis' Climate Encyclical

September 2015

Do Catholics have to believe in man-made global warming in order to be good Catholics?

No. The Pope's view on climate science and its alleged "solutions" are not part of the faith and moral teachings of the church. When the Pope speaks on climate change, he is not speaking authoritatively on Catholic doctrine. He is merely offering his opinion. Catholics are not bound to follow the Pope's view on global warming.

Is climate change a part of Catholic teachings now?

No. Climate change is not part of Catholic doctrine. It is just another political issue to be debated among Catholics and the general public. *The Federalist's* Rachel Lu: "The pontiff clearly has high authority to speak (at least to Catholics) on questions of faith and morals, but when it comes to predictive pronouncements on the Earth's climate, he is not a definitive expert. Nor does he claim that mantle in *Laudato Si*."

Does the Pope's encyclical present accurate climate science?

No. Noted climate statistician Dr. William Briggs was blunt in his assessment. "[Most of the scientific claims cited in Pope's encyclical are not true,](#)" Briggs said. "For example, the claim that the world's temperature has been increasing is demonstrably false: it hasn't, and not for almost two decades. Another is the claim that storms are increasing in size and strength: also false; indeed, the opposite is true. Another is the claim that thousands of species are going extinct: false, and easily proved to be so," Briggs added.



Who is advising Pope Francis?

Sadly, there has been nothing short of an “Unholy Alliance” between the Vatican and promoters of man-made climate fear. The Vatican advisors can only be described as a brew of anti-capitalist, pro-population control advocates who allow no dissent and who are way out of the mainstream of even the global warming establishment. Regrettably, the Vatican only listened to extreme voices within the climate movement with whom even other climate activists are not comfortable. Many of the Vatican’s key climate advisors have promoted policies directly [at odds with Catholic doctrine and beliefs](#) on such issues as population, contraceptives, abortion, and euthanasia. But despite these advisors, “Population control is condemned at some length, and in no uncertain terms, in the encyclical itself,” as *The Federalist's* Rachel Lu points out.

Did the Vatican allow a climate debate at the Vatican before the encyclical was issued?

No, none at all. In fact, the Vatican went out of its way to exclude skeptics from participating in their meetings. [The Vatican banned a skeptical French scientist from its climate summit. The scientist who was invited then uninvited said the reason was that the Vatican “did not want to hear an off note” during the summit with UN officials.](#)

Is the Pope hoping to use the encyclical to bring Catholic teachings to the secular environmental Left?

Father Dwight Longnecker explains the strategy behind the encyclical: "The Pope successfully integrates a theology of creation into the ecology debate. He affirms, as so many environmentalists affirm, that 'all things are connected.' In doing so he then connects the rights of the unborn, the needs of the poor, the rights of immigrants, the needs of the elderly and disabled, and the rightful demands of the workers." Many non-Catholics who are interested in reading the Papal encyclical will learn about Catholic teaching on a host of moral issues that they have probably have never been willing to listen to before. There is a lot in this encyclical that the global warming establishment will not like. For example, warmists will be challenged by Pope Francis when he states that it is "incoherent" to be concerned with climate change while at the same time supporting abortion.

The Pope's strategy may be working. None other than Al Gore is being swayed. Gore said: "I was raised in the Southern Baptist tradition, I could become a Catholic because of this Pope. He is that inspiring to me."

Should Catholics ask God for a successful outcome to the UN climate summit in Paris?

No. But Pope Francis did summon a lobbying tone when he urged prayers for the passage of a UN climate treaty, specifically exhorting Catholics "to ask God for a positive outcome" for a Paris UN agreement. Pope Francis: "We believers cannot fail to ask God for a positive outcome to the present discussions, so that future generations will not have to suffer the effects of our ill-advised delays." So no matter how nuanced and faithful to Catholic teachings this encyclical seeks to be, the Pope urging Catholics to "ask God for a positive outcome" to the current UN global warming treaty process will overpower every other message. The Pope is essentially endorsing a specific UN political climate treaty and implying that God is smiling upon the treaty process.

Is the state of the planet as dire as *Laudato Si* claims?

No. The Pope's general point that man has a moral duty to care for creation is traditional Catholic moral teaching. However, Catholics need not agree with his encyclical's opinion on the dire state of the planet. The Pope declared in the encyclical: "The Earth, our home, is beginning to look more and more like an immense pile of filth." But Alex Epstein, author of *The Moral Case for Fossil Fuels*, responded: "If the pope from 300 years ago could see our world today, he'd say it was actually cleaner and healthier than his own era." Another climate skeptic responded: "We live in luxury that even kings a few centuries ago could only dream of. You only have to look at the filth and squalor in which previous generations lived to know that most people in the past would have given anything to be born now." As *FrontPageMag.com* noted in its article "Sorry Pope Francis, the State of the Planet Is Getting Better," "If it's covered in trash, it's a strange kind of trash that has caused global crop yields to increase by 160% since 1961 and deaths from droughts to be reduced by 99.8% since the 1920s. It's an odd kind of 'mistreatment' of the planet over the life of the Industrial Revolution that's resulted in the global life expectancy rising from 26 years in 1750 to 69 years in 2009. This is in spite of the fact that Earth's population increased from 760 million to 6.8 billion and incomes (in real dollars) rose from \$640 to \$7,300 during the same period."

Doesn't the encyclical discuss other things besides climate?

Yes. In fact, climate is a very small part of it, less than 2%. But it was the focus of intense media coverage. *The Federalist's* Rachel Lu points out: "It's very misleading to refer to *Laudato Si* as 'the climate change encyclical.' Climate change is one of a variety of environmental problems with which the pontiff is concerned, but even his general interest in the environment is embedded within a broader critique of modernity."



If the encyclical essentially has clauses that allow for debate, why is there such a media uproar?

The encyclical has many carefully worded clauses and caveats, but key newsworthy parts were the Pope's foray into climate science and his alignment with a UN climate treaty.

How does the Pope link economics and climate change together?

Some observers have speculated that the Pope's South American poverty perspective makes him very suspicious of modern capitalism, and thus more open to the centralized planning ideas of the UN climate agenda. A leader of the UN IPCC stated that their goal is to "redistribute wealth" by climate policy. By contrast, Pope John Paul II grew up in Soviet-dominated Poland and saw what centralized planning and restrictions did to human liberty and development.

Are Catholic climate skeptics still in good standing with the Church?

Yes. The Pope's opinion on scientific and economic matters is not the same as his authority on issues of faith and morals. Climate skeptics can agree with his teaching that we have a moral duty to care for creation without agreeing about man's impact on climate change.

Is there a 'consensus' inside the Vatican on global warming?

No. There is major climate dissent inside the Vatican. Skeptical Vatican Cardinal George Pell took a swing at the Pope's climate encyclical, declaring the Catholic Church has "no particular expertise in science." Pell, who now serves at the head of the Vatican bank, declared in 2006: "In the past, pagans sacrificed animals and even humans in vain attempts to placate capricious and cruel gods. Today they demand a reduction in CO₂ emissions."

How did previous popes deal with the issue of global warming?

Previous popes allowed debate and dissent. In 2007, during the tenure of Pope Benedict XVI, the Vatican hosted a climate summit through the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace and invited many different perspectives in the climate debate to participate. The 2007 event included atmospheric physicist and climate skeptic Dr. Fred Singer, skeptic and theologian Dr. E Calvin Beisner, and the climate skeptic president of the World Federation of Scientists, Dr. Antonio Zichichi. In 2007, Cardinal Renato Martino, president of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, sought out different perspectives on climate change. Also in 2007, Pope Benedict was on record denouncing the type of alarmist activists that Pope Francis invited into the Vatican in 2015. Pope Benedict condemned what he termed the "climate change prophets of doom."

Does Pope Francis have a degree in chemistry?

Via the myth-busting Snopes.com: This claim is "false." "According to the pontiff's official biography on the Vatican's web site, Pope Francis 'graduated as a chemical technician' before entering the priesthood, received a degree in philosophy and theology from the Colegio de San José in San Miguel ... the only mention of the Pope's chemistry education was the notation that he graduated as a 'chemical technician'; whether his training constituted the equivalent of a university degree, and where he undertook that course of study, was not specified."

The Pope relies on UN science claims to promote climate action. How reputable is the UN IPCC?

The UN IPCC is a political organization masquerading as a "science" body. [Many UN lead authors have now resigned from the IPCC or had their names removed](#) due to the politicization of science to fit the climate "narrative." The former chief of the UN IPCC, Rajendra Pachauri, declared global warming "is my religion." Former Thatcher advisor and climate skeptic Christopher Monckton explains: "It is not the business of the Pope to stray from the field of faith and morals and wander into the playground that is science. Do not invite only one narrow and boisterous scientific viewpoint that has been repeatedly discredited as events and the science and the data have unfolded."

Why are skeptics in an uproar over the Pope's climate actions?

Climate skeptics have been shut out of the debate by the Vatican, and opponents have exploited and exaggerated the Pope's support of their side to use his influence. Having a pope personally lobby for a UN agreement and hype climate fears is confusing to Catholics who may falsely believe one's views on climate change and alleged "solutions" are now part of being a good Catholic. A major difference in what this pope has done versus previous popes is that he is taking the extra step of endorsing a UN climate treaty. This is a game changer from previous popes and previous Vatican statements on climate. It is especially frustrating for Catholic skeptics to be pitted against the Pope on climate issues because their political opponents disagree with him on just about all of the moral issues raised in the encyclical, but they have ignored their disagreement to "cherry pick" this one issue.



Why are many Catholic pro-life activists upset at the Vatican's climate campaign?

Many pro-life activists believe the Vatican is aligning itself with a UN climate agenda that is at odds with major aspects of Catholic teachings and doctrine. The [UN's climate agenda includes heavy doses of development restrictions](#), promotion of contraceptives, population control, abortions, etc. Despite these strange bedfellows, the encyclical is clear in condemning abortion, contraception, and population control. Pro-life activists believe the Pope is causing Catholics who oppose climate fear predictions and UN "solutions" to feel as if they are not properly following their faith.

Will the Pope's endorsement of the UN climate agenda harm the world's poor?

Yes. The Vatican is being misled on development and poverty issues as they relate to "climate change." The Vatican's well placed and long established concern for the developing world's poor is being hijacked by a radical UN agenda that seeks to [prevent life-saving fossil fuel energy development in the world's poorest regions](#). The Pope's concern that climate-change impacts are going to harm the world's poor the most was entirely misplaced. Preventing poverty-stricken nations of the world from obtaining affordable and plentiful fossil fuels means they cannot develop and thus insulate themselves from climate change whether it be man-made or natural. The Pope's claim that "it is man who has slapped nature in the face" needs to be weighed against the fact that fossil fuels have allowed mankind to stop nature from slapping man in the face. The more we develop with fossil fuels and increase our wealth and standard of living, the more we can inoculate ourselves from the ravages of nature. Centrally planning energy economics by restricting fossil fuels due to unfounded climate fears in the developing world is immoral. The Vatican and the Pope should be arguing that fossil fuels are the "moral choice" for the developing world for people who don't have running water, electricity, or other basic needs.

Is the case for man-made global warming getting stronger or weaker?

The science behind man-made global warming fears is actually weakening considerably. The 97% "consensus" claims are a fallacy – studies by UN lead authors now say such 97% claims are “pulled out of thin air” with no basis in fact. Extreme weather was stable or declining on almost every measure, and global temperatures have been in a standstill for over 18 years. On everything from sea levels to polar bears, the climate narrative is failing. In addition, prominent scientists (many politically left) who used to believe in man-made global warming fears are now reversing themselves and becoming skeptics, including many UN scientists.

CLIMATE DEPOT



COMMITTEE FOR A CONSTRUCTIVE TOMORROW

1875 Eye Street NW
5th Floor
Washington, DC 20006
www.cfact.org
www.climatedepot.com