

Keeping Fossil Fuel in the Ground in Solidarity with the Most Affected Communities

We must keep warming below 2 degrees Celsius to avoid the worst effects of climate change and every effort should be made to stay below 1.5 degrees warming. Climate delegations from around the world agreed to these numbers at the UN Paris talks in 2015. We're already at about 1 degree of warming. To stay below 1.5 degrees, we can only release 343 gigatons of CO₂ into the atmosphere. All of the coal, oil and gas wells in the world that are in operation contain 942 gigatons worth of CO₂. So we need to stop any more fossil fuel projects and have a managed decline of existing projects to stay below the worldwide agreement of significantly dangerous levels of warming.

This brings in a number of themes of Catholic Social Teaching, which offer us a "rich treasure of wisdom about building a just society and living lives of holiness amidst the challenges of modern society (from reflections of the US Catholic Bishops)."

- Care for Creation – We are called to protect people and the planet and if climate change continues past 1.5 and 2 degrees we will see severe climate effects that include coral reefs collapsing nearly completely and severe droughts that are devastating humans and other animals, as well as devastation of the natural environment from fossil fuel projects and accidents.
- Option for the Poor and Vulnerable – Climate change and its effects harm the poor and vulnerable the most despite the fact that they have contributed to its cause the least. Fossil fuel activity such as oil trains harm communities such as Mosier, OR through accidents like the oil train crash and fire.
- Solidarity – St. Pope John Paul II wrote, "Solidarity is not a feeling of vague compassion or shallow distress at the misfortunes of so many people, both near and far. On the contrary, it is a firm and persevering determination to commit oneself to the common good; that is to say, to the good of all and of each individual, because we are all really responsible for all." Reducing our reliance on fossil fuels and exploitation of natural resources is one way to work for the common good.
- Life and Dignity of the Human Person – Climate change is a grave threat to human life through the extreme weather events, food and water shortages and potential for sparking violent conflicts. Recognizing that human life is sacred means addressing climate change to protect our sisters and brothers that will be harmed or even killed.

How could we respond if we chose this as our advocacy focus? I'll pass it within the four categories I mentioned in my presentation. These are only the start as we can find more things to do as we come together as a group but it can offer you a glimpse.

- Education – Learn about existing and potential fossil fuel projects and infrastructure in Oregon; hear presentations from PGE and climate justice groups at St. Ignatius;
- Continuing our Eco-Conversion and Formation – Rooting our work in Catholic Social Teaching and Ignatian Spirituality and coming together in prayer and gathering in our small group and with the larger parish community.
- Building Relationships, Building Community – Forming relationships with climate justice organizations and people from communities where fossil fuel infrastructure is going through or proposed to be built so that we can be listeners and allies to the affected communities. Building and strengthening relationships as a committee so that we can be empowered as leaders in the community.
- Advocacy - Make our voices heard to stop fossil fuel projects through: Letter writing campaigns to elected officials; Public testimony at public hearings; Petition signing; Phone calls and meetings with elected officials; Community gathering at marches and other events.

Transition to a Just, Renewable Economy

As efforts are made to stop fossil fuel projects, it is vital that new sources of energy replace them, such as solar and wind. It is also important that this new renewable economy does not leave people, especially low-income people, rural people, and people of color, behind in the transition. The renewable economy will create many jobs and helping invest in these communities and in job training programs will be important. On the Climate Report Card for Oregon, climate equity received a D grade and this focus on a just, renewable economy can help address some of those shortcomings.

Many themes of Catholic Social Teaching can also be brought to bear on this area:

- Care for Creation – Transition to a renewable economy will make it easier to move away from fossil fuels that cause devastation of the natural environment from fossil fuel projects and accidents such as open pit mining for tar sands in Canada and the oil train crash in Mosier, OR.
- The Dignity of Work and the Rights of Workers – This principle says that the economy must serve people, not the other way around. Investment in renewable energy and weatherization and job training programs offer people the opportunity at good paying jobs in positions including construction workers, engineers, salespeople, manufacturing workers and more.
- Option for the Poor and Vulnerable – We can be a voice to make sure that the poor are not left behind in a transition to the renewable economy and that bills and initiatives are mindful of ways to lift up the most vulnerable. What we do for the least of our brothers and sisters, we do for our God.

How could we respond if we chose this as our advocacy focus? I'll pass it within the four categories I mentioned in my presentation. These are only the start as we can find more things to do as we come together as a group but it can offer you a glimpse.

- Education – Learn about the proposed bills and initiatives for Portland and Oregon around clean energy; learn about the existing options for renewable energy for the Church and parishioners; explore if solar panels is an option for the Church.
- Continuing our Eco-Conversion and Formation - Rooting our work in Catholic Social Teaching and Ignatian Spirituality, we will come together in prayer and gathering in our small group and with the larger parish community.
- Building Relationships, Building Community – Connect with climate justice and social justice organizations that are working on how to make a transition to a renewable economy that does not leave people behind. Forming relationships so that we can be allies and empower others in these communities. Building relationships within our parish community and our committee to be empowered to be leaders.
- Advocacy - Make our voices heard to advocate for clean energy initiatives through: Letter writing campaigns to elected officials; Public testimony at public hearings; Petition signing; Phone calls and meetings with elected officials; Community gathering at marches and other events. Support the transition to renewable energy for the Church and parishioners.

Transportation for Oregon's Future

From the Oregon Climate Report Card: Nothing causes more climate-changing pollution in Oregon than how we move people and goods. Oregon earns a poor grade of C- in transportation due to the huge need to expand transit, the lack of walking and biking options, and the need to accelerate the adoption of more electric cars, buses, and freight.

There are several areas for improvement. Our transit system is woefully underfunded, which means many Oregonians are unable to reach jobs and other daily needs, and transit systems are unable to keep up with increased ridership, the needs of youth, and the needs of elderly and disabled citizens. In addition, Oregon has no state incentives for anyone, including low-income residents, to buy electric cars, despite having one of the best charging station networks in the country. By 2035, Oregon's freight traffic volume will increase by 60%, making it one of the fastest growing sources of transportation-related climate pollution... As the legislature considers how to fund and fix our infrastructure this year, developing a climate-smart transportation plan is a necessary step toward filling these gaps and delivering cleaner air and better mobility around the state.

I will point towards connections to Catholic Social Teaching again here:

- Care for Creation – With so much carbon pollution coming from the transportation sector, this is a major area that is causing the destructive effects of climate change. In addition to those mentioned before rising sea levels will threaten many people and wetland habitats around the world and drier summers lead to fires that destroy many large regions of forests and the life that exists there.
- Option for the Poor and Vulnerable – Many of those who have the most difficulty accessing the transportation system are the elderly, the disabled, low-income residents and youth. Building up a sustainable transportation system in a way that increases access for those communities is one way to care for the poor and vulnerable.

How could we respond if we chose this as our advocacy focus? I'll pass it within the four categories I mentioned in my presentation. These are only the start as we can find more things to do as we come together as a group but it can offer you a glimpse.

- Education – Learn about possibilities for improving the transportation system in Portland;
- Continuing our Eco-Conversion and Formation - Rooting our work in Catholic Social Teaching and Ignatian Spirituality and coming together in prayer and gathering in our small group and with the larger parish community.
- Building Relationships, Building Community – Connecting with environmental justice organizations and talking with people who are most affected by limits in the current transportation system. Building these relationships and our relationships with one another so that we can be allies for environmental justice and feel empowered as leaders in our parish and Portland community.
- Advocacy – Encouraging our parish community to use alternative transportation options such as walking, biking, busing and carpooling. Helping to set up carpooling options for people coming to the Church. Making our voices heard to support funding to maintain and preserve transportation infrastructure, transit operations, make roads and streets safe for all users, and provide more options through multimodal investments. Targeted investment in poor and vulnerable communities and investments that reflect our pursuit of low-carbon options to address climate change.

Cleaner Air for Oregon

Air pollution in Oregon is a serious problem. According to EPA's National Air Toxics Assessment, Oregon has the third largest population at risk of excess cancer due to air pollution behind only California & New York. Over 300,000 adult Oregonians and 83,000 children have asthma, putting Oregon in the top five states with the highest percentage of adults (10%) with asthma. Diesel particulate matter is responsible for approximately 460 premature deaths a year in Oregon. In total, it costs the state of Oregon \$2-4 billion a year in death, medical costs, disease, and lost work days.

Once more, I will offer in the connection to our faith through the lens of Catholic Social Teaching:

- Option for the Poor and Vulnerable – Children and elderly people are most at risk for the negative health effects. Addressing air pollution will aid these members of our communities especially.
- Rights and Responsibilities – From the US Catholic bishops on Catholic Social Teaching, “The Catholic tradition teaches that human dignity can be protected and a healthy community can be achieved only if human rights are protected and responsibilities are met.” People have a human right to clean air so working for cleaner air is working to restore this human right for our community.

How could we respond if we chose this as our advocacy focus? I'll pass it within the four categories I mentioned in my presentation. These are only the start as we can find more things to do as we come together as a group but it can offer you a glimpse.

- Education – Learning about the health effects of air pollution and the solutions to reducing our air pollution levels in our communities.
- Continuing our Eco-conversion and formation - Rooting our work in Catholic Social Teaching and Ignatian Spirituality and coming together in prayer and gathering in our small group and with the larger parish community.
- Building Relationships, Building Community – Partnering with environmental justice groups to learn from and support those who are engaging in this work so that we can lift up the voices of the many people who are affected by the polluted air we breathe. In addition, building our relationships as a committee and parish community so that we can be empowered and join together to advocate on these issues.
- Advocacy – Making our voices heard to support legislation, state investment and rule-making that reduces emissions of air toxics and particulate pollution and funds programs to limit air pollution.