

Trump pulls out of the Paris agreement: Catholic leaders respond

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Just last week President Trump told Pope Francis that he would read “Laudato Si’,” Francis’ encyclical on the environment and climate change. Based on today’s events, it is clear that the president either has not yet read it, or he simply disagrees with what the pontiff said.

Today in the Rose Garden, Mr. Trump announced that the United States would withdraw from the Paris Climate Accord, which virtually the entire world had joined in order to mitigate the effects of climate change. The United States joins Syria and Nicaragua as the only nations not committed to the voluntary restrictions outlined in the agreement.

Around the United States and the world, Catholic leaders quickly voiced their concerns. Below are excerpts from statements, emails and tweets:

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U.S. Bishops

Bishop Oscar Cantú of Las Cruces, who is the chairman of the USCCB committee on international justice and peace issued the following statement: “The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB), along with Pope Francis and the entire Catholic Church, have consistently upheld the Paris agreement as an important international mechanism to promote environmental stewardship and encourage climate change mitigation. The President’s decision not to honor the U.S. commitment to the Paris agreement is deeply troubling.

“The Scriptures affirm the value of caring for creation and caring for each other in solidarity. The Paris agreement is an international accord that promotes these values. President Trump’s decision will harm the people of the United States and the world, especially the poorest, most vulnerable communities. The impacts of climate change are already being experienced in sea level rise, glacial melts, intensified storms, and more frequent droughts. I can only hope that the President will propose concrete ways to address global climate change and promote environmental stewardship.”

Pontifical Academy of Sciences and the Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences

This morning, the Italian paper *la Repubblica* published an interview with Bishop Marcelo Sánchez Sorondo from the Pontifical Academy of Sciences. He referred to President Trump’s proposed actions as a “disaster and “a slap in the face.” Responding to a question about the church’s relationship with science, Bishop Sorondo noted that pretending that the world can not continue without reliance on carbon and oil “is like saying that the earth is not round.” He also noted that this dramatic reversal is a result of relying on presidential decrees to combat climate change.

Catholic Relief Services

“As an international humanitarian organization, we are confronted with the realities of climate change every day and see the devastating impact on the lives of the people we serve,” said Bill O’Keefe, vice president for advocacy and government relations for CRS. “People around the world—especially those who contribute least to global warming, will be worse off because of today’s decision.”

“We must hear the cry of the poor. Withdrawing from Paris and cutting foreign assistance is a double whammy to

millions around the world. Without American leadership—imperfect as it is—problems fester, people suffer, and in the end we too feel the effects of instability, forced migration, and conflict,” O’Keefe said.

Franciscan Action Network:

The announcement by President Trump to pull the United States out of the 2015 Paris Climate Agreement is a decision with “catastrophic consequences for the earth and all of its living creatures,” according to a statement released today by the Franciscan Action Network.

FAN’s Executive Director, Patrick Carolan said, “Issues like poverty and migration are connected to the climate crisis. When there is no water, crops fail and people fall into poverty. Widespread poverty and resource scarcity lead to mass migration. When large countries like the U.S. deny the reality of the climate crisis and pull out of commitments holding us accountable for doing our part to curb global temperature rise, we are turning our backs on the poor and vulnerable, which goes directly against our Franciscan-Christian values.”

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University of Notre Dame department of Theology

J. Matthew Ashley, associate professor of theology and chair of Notre Dame’s Department of Theology, emailed a statement in anticipation of today’s decision yesterday: “Responding aggressively and proactively to climate change is a core principle of Pope Francis’s encyclical, “Laudato Si,” not only because of its devastating impact on natural ecosystems, but also because it causes disproportionate suffering for the poor, who do not have the financial resources to avoid or mitigate its effects.

This decision would be, thus, not only an abdication of leadership on an issue on which the U.S. has long led the way, but a direct confrontation with Catholic doctrine, as laid out in this encyclical.”

Global Catholic Climate Movement

Tomás Insua, Executive Director of the Global Catholic Climate Movement, issued the following statement: “Trump’s withdrawal from the Paris Agreement is a backward and immoral action. Catholics are saddened and outraged that Trump is not listening to Pope Francis after their meeting last week. Still, the world will continue to accelerate climate action, despite the White House’s retrograde stance.

As people of faith, we will continue to take action within our Church, and urge elected leaders in the United States and around the world to make the changes needed to hold global warming below 1.5 degrees Celsius. Trump’s decision only strengthens our resolve to mobilize the global family of 1.2 billion Catholics to reduce emissions, pressure society to change, and spread the Pope’s message of Laudato Si in order to protect our common home.

We remain inspired by our faith, Pope Francis, and Laudato Si in our work, keeping in mind this quote from the encyclical, ‘While the existing world order proves powerless to assume its responsibilities, local individuals and groups can make a real difference,’ (Laudato Si 179).”

Catholic Climate Change

Leaders from eleven of Catholic organizations have signed a [letter](#) that expresses “deep disappointment” over President Trump’s decision to withdraw the United States from the Paris Agreement and cease American contributions to the U.N. Green Climate Fund that will help poorer nations address climate change. The letter, organized by Catholic Climate Covenant, follows a [statement](#) today from the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops urging President Trump to “honor the Paris Agreement” and the bishops’ [repeated support](#) for the Green Climate Fund.

The letter begins with a description of how climate change harms the human family, especially the poor and

marginalized. The letter then underscores that since Saint John Paul II's 1990 World Day of Peace Message, the Catholic Church has recognized climate change as a moral issue that indicts key commitments of Catholic Social Teaching. Additionally, the letter notes that Pope Francis, Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI, the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, 15,000 U.S. Catholics, majorities of Americans in every state, and hundreds of U.S. businesses – including major fossil fuel companies – support an international climate change agreement. The letter then implores President Trump to reconsider his decisions to withdraw the United States from the Paris Agreement and stop American contributions to the Green Climate Fund.

Signatories to the letter include representatives from Catholic Climate Covenant, Catholic Charities USA, the Catholic Health Association and the Leadership Conference of Women Religious, among other Catholic organizations.

Joe Biden

We're already feeling impacts of climate change. Exiting [#ParisAgreement](#) imperils US security and our ability to own the clean energy future

— Joe Biden (@JoeBiden) [June 1, 2017](#)

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Rep. Paul Ryan

Not all prominent Catholics were critical of the decision. House Speaker Paul Ryan (R-WI) issued the following statement on President Trump's decision to withdraw from the Paris climate agreement:

“The Paris climate agreement was simply a raw deal for America. Signed by President Obama without Senate ratification, it would have driven up the cost of energy, hitting middle-class and low-income Americans the hardest. In order to unleash the power of the American economy, our government must encourage production of American energy. I commend President Trump for fulfilling his commitment to the American people and withdrawing from this bad deal.”