



Office of the Vice President for Mission

TO: The Gonzaga Community
FROM: Frank E. Case, S.J. and Shanea Giroux
SUBJ: Moment for Mission
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This Thursday, October 4, is the feast day of St. Francis of Assisi, a much-revered patron saint not only of the Italians but increasingly of the entire world. The town of Assisi with its churches and convents that celebrate the lives of Francis and Clare is vibrant with a sense of the sacred. The very atmosphere of Assisi reminds visitors that they are in the presence of something, someone very special to the Lord, to all of us humans, and to the world. Pope John Paul II invited world religious leaders to gather in Assisi around this time of the year to pray together for peace. St. Francis and his town have captured the world's imagination as points of reference for responding to the deepest desires of the human heart.

It is understandable then that the Catholic Climate Covenant would choose St. Francis as its patron in its efforts to make us aware of and committed to the protection of our environment into the future. The link to their website is: <http://catholicclimatecovenant.org/the-st-francis-pledge/>

During their World Peace Day messages of January 1, in the years 1990 and 2010 Popes John Paul II and Benedict XVI gave major addresses on the topic of concern for the environment.

In his World Peace Day message on January 1, 2010, Pope Benedict XVI in rather stirring words described the ecological project facing all of humanity:

Can we remain indifferent before the problems associated with such realities as climate change, desertification, the deterioration and loss of productivity in vast agricultural areas, the pollution of rivers and aquifers, the loss of biodiversity, the increase of natural catastrophes and the deforestation of equatorial and tropical regions? Can we disregard the growing phenomenon of 'environmental refugees', people who are forced by the degradation of their natural habitat to forsake it – and often their possessions as well – in order to face the dangers and uncertainties of forced displacement? Can we remain impassive in the face of actual and potential conflicts involving access to natural resources? All these are issues with a profound impact on the exercise of human rights, such as the right to life, food, health and development.

He concluded his message with these words:

I would advocate the adoption of a model of development based on the centrality of the human person, on the promotion and sharing of the common good, on responsibility, on

the realization of our need for a changed life-style, and on prudence, the virtue which tells us what needs to be done today in view of what might happen tomorrow.