

## Whoever the new pope, speak strongly on climate change

Maureen Fiedler | Mar. 4, 2013 Eco Catholic  
Conclave 2013

Even on a good day, I get discouraged thinking about the coming conclave and the election of a new pope. The ?leading? candidates, as named in the media, are so-o-o traditional in their views, that I wonder if any meaningful change is possible. They all look like a Vatican version of the tea party movement.

But I tell myself from time to time, maybe, just maybe, there is a ?John XXIII? lurking somewhere undiscovered, waiting to be elected. If so, I hope he remains obscure. If he?s ?discovered,? he may not be elected!

Some of my friends hope for a choice from Africa. They theorize he would at least do away with mandatory clerical celibacy, which, as most observers know, is not widely practiced on the continent.

Others want a pope from the United States, like Cardinal Sean O?Malley of Boston, who at least displays some of the Franciscan virtues of simplicity. No red shoes, perhaps?

Another friend hopes for the young cardinal from the Philippines ? Luis Antonio Tagle, age 55 ? who wants a more ?people-centered? church (whatever he means by that), and who has a great concern for the poor. Could be promising, but who really knows?

But of this I am convinced: Whoever the new pope is, he needs to become a strong voice for action on climate change. Pope Benedict XVI was called the ?green pope? for [his views and actions on this issue](#) [1]. But the new pope needs to become a leading global figure in an interfaith coalition to save the planet.

A ready and willing ally lives in Istanbul ? Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew I of the Eastern Orthodox church, who is already a leading advocate on these issues. The World Council of Churches has a climate justice campaign.

?Green Muslims? are beginning to appear everywhere, and the Jewish community has leading advocates on these issues, like Washington D.C.-based Rabbi Fred Scherlinder Dobb, who has risked arrest over climate issues. The Dalai Lama would surely welcome such an emphasis, as would leaders of the Hindu and Sikh traditions.

Even a doctrinally conservative pope can embrace climate issues. The political leaders of the world are not doing enough to save the planet from the worst threats. One can hope that religious leaders, like a new pope, might step into that void.

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[1] <http://ncronline.org/blogs/eco-catholic/benedict-brought-theology-earth-environmental-movement>