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We need to take global warming seriously

Tony Magliano | Jul. 22, 2013 Making a Difference

Reflecting on his new patron saint, Pope Francis said, "For me," St. Francis of Assisi "is the man of poverty, the man of peace, the man who loves and protects creation; these days, we do not have a very good relationship with creation, do we?"

No, we do not.

Consider the words of Pope Francis' predecessor, Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI: "Can we remain indifferent before the problems associated with such realities as climate change ... 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?"

We remain indifferent to the poor relationship we have with creation at our own peril and at the peril of our children and future generations. And of all the serious human-caused threats to the natural world, none is more serious or more urgent than climate change, especially global warming.

According to a new report from the United Nations' World Meteorological Organization, "The Global Climate 2001-2010: A Decade of Climate Extremes [1]," the earth is warming faster than ever in recorded history.

The report states that the 2001-10 decade was the warmest since modern meteorological records began around 1850. And during 2010, the warmest year recorded, Russia experienced a severe heat wave that killed approximately 55,000 people. It was also the wettest on record, causing massive flooding.

According to NASA [2], 97 percent of climate scientists agree global warming trends over the last century are "very likely due to human activities."

The current warming trend, NASA says, is of particular significance because "most of it is very likely human-induced and proceeding at a rate that is unprecedented in the past 1,300 years."

According to NASA, the evidence for rapid climate change is compelling. In addition to dangerous human-induced rising temperatures, oceans are warming, Greenland's and Antarctica's ice sheets are decreasing, Arctic sea ice is shrinking, sea levels are rising, glaciers are retreating, ocean acidification is increasing, and extreme weather events are on the rise.

There is a way out of this. We still have a little time to avoid an environmental nightmare. But we must act quickly.

Unfortunately, green is obviously not Congress' favorite color, and President Barack Obama's recent climate plan speech at Georgetown University was overall narrow and vague. While he promised tighter restrictions on new and existing fossil-fueled power plants, he failed to be specific.

Climate change and global warming must be treated as an unfolding emergency. Bold, comprehensive and quick

action from U.S. and world political officials is needed.

Dangerous nuclear and fossil-fueled power plants need to be phased out with all due speed. In the interim, these plants and other polluting industries need broad, tough antipollution regulations and restrictions.

Abundantly safe and clean solar, wind and geothermal sources of energy need to be put on the fast track and receive enormous financial investments to slow down and eventually reverse climate change and global warming.

We know from Genesis that "God saw everything that he had made, and indeed it was very good."

Before it's too late, let's begin to follow his master climate plan and be responsible stewards of his good creation -- for our sake and the sake of those yet to come.

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