



Franciscan Action Network

Transforming the World in the Spirit of St. Francis and St. Clare

Allies on Climate Change

by Lonnie Ellis

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For several years, the Pentagon, led by the Navy, has been planning for the impacts of climate change, referring to it as a “threat multiplier,” U.S. Navy Vice Admiral Dennis McGinn spoke about our “over reliance on fossil fuels” in his 2009 testimony before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. He said, “Climate change has the potential to create sustained natural and humanitarian disasters on a scale and at a frequency far beyond those we see today.” What will happen when cities flood and “climate refugees” flow across national borders, when people fighting for their lives meet a military intent on keeping them out? This situation threatens millions in Bangladesh and India and in many other countries.

Just four years ago, our national leaders seemed to want to take action to stem these threats to global stability. The [2008 GOP platform](#) called for “technology-driven, market-based solutions that will decrease emissions, reduce excess greenhouse gases in the atmosphere, increase energy efficiency, mitigate the impact of climate change.”

Now that the challenges have been acknowledged, we need inspired hope and action, starting with people of faith. Earlier this month, 70 leaders among the Franciscans went to the desert of Arizona for spiritual grounding and to re-envision a path out of our terrible politics. Fr. Richard Rohr, OFM, worked with our group from [Franciscan Action Network](#) (FAN) to move past the same old dualistic patterns of looking at issues and into a new way of seeing the path forward. The ecumenical group of sisters, friars, lay Franciscans and ministry leaders of Franciscan parishes included leaders like Sr. Glenna Czachor, OSF, Director of Justice and Peace Advocacy for the Wheaton Franciscans and a leader among U.S. nuns, and Fr. Michael Lasky, OFM Conv., Regional Director for the Americas of Franciscans International. Franciscans have a long tradition of being one of the most credible voices for the earth, including [recent advocacy](#) on climate change.

We left our Arizona gathering with a plan to bring the influence of unusual allies on climate change to strategically chosen members of congress. People of faith have the unique ability to bring different voices together, beyond narrow self-interest, for uncommon conversations. Imagine if people of faith could set the table for military and environmental voices to join with representatives of agriculture, manufacturing and logging interests in bringing a unified climate change message to public officials. Linking the economic interests of climate change with the moral

imperative to do right by future generations seems to be the best chance to break through the intransigence of our politics on this issue to appeal to progressives, moderates and conservatives alike.

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If our national leaders are not willingly having a conversation about climate change – I am convinced a chorus of uncommon voices of Franciscans and other people of faith can force that to change soon.

Franciscan Earth Corps

The Franciscan Action Network is proposing the formation of a **Franciscan Earth Corps** consisting of a network of young adults in their 20s and 30s and professed Secular Franciscans, who will expand the reach of Franciscan spirituality and the Franciscan way of doing justice work. The long-term goal is to grow the Franciscan family, in both professed members and Franciscan-hearted members, and build up our wonderful work for justice and care for creation. Franciscan Earth Corps will involve spiritual formation and action, using the Secular Franciscan Rule as a framework that can be summarized by the four core values of: Social and Environmental Justice, Franciscan Spirituality, Community, and Simple Living. Elements of the program are Action for Justice, Study and Reflection, Retreats, and Sustainable Living Projects. This project has a goal of creating sustainable young adult ministries in 20 U.S. cities by the end of 2016, as well as gaining hundreds of additional members through an online community.

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