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by Fr. Emmet Farrell

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Editor's note: *In his Lenten "Reflections on the Care of Creation," Fr. Emmet Farrell examines our impact on the planet and our responsibility, as people of faith, for our common home. You can sign up here to receive Fr. Farrell's reflections in your inbox every Monday, Wednesday and Friday from Feb. 17 to April 2.*

See:

Early in her career, climate scientist Katharine Hayhoe worked for Exxon, now known as ExxonMobil. In an essay for The Conversation, published in August 2017, she writes:

> Investigative reports in 2015 revealed that Exxon had its own scientists doing its own climate modeling as far back as the 1970s: science and modeling that was not only accurate, but that was being used to plan for the company's future. ...[W]hat Exxon was saying internally about climate change was quantitatively very different from their public statements. ... [A]t least 80 percent of the internal documents ... studied from between 1977 and 2014 were consistent with the state of the science — acknowledging that climate change is real and caused by humans, and identifying "reasonable uncertainties" that any climate scientist would agree with at the time. Yet over 80 percent of Exxon's editorial-style paid advertisements over the same period specifically focused on uncertainty and doubt, the study found.

Challenging world oil executives at a meeting in 2018, Pope Francis called them to "take to heart that 'civilization requires energy, but energy must not destroy civilization,' " Tony Magliano wrote in a column for National Catholic Reporter.

"The pontiff appealed to the energy executives to see the necessary moral interconnectedness of the elimination of poverty and hunger — including providing 'energy for all' — with 'sustainable development of renewable forms of energy' to replace dirty fossil fuels that are greatly contributing to a dangerous rise in global temperatures and thus leading to harsher environments and, not surprisingly, increased poverty," he wrote.

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Judge:

> A very solid scientific consensus indicates that we are presently witnessing a disturbing warming of the climatic system. … [S]cientific studies indicate that most global warming in recent decades is due to the great concentration of greenhouse gases (carbon dioxide, methane, nitrogen oxides and others) released mainly as a result of human activity. … The problem is aggravated by a model of development based on the intensive use of fossil fuels, which is at the heart of the worldwide energy system. ("*Laudato Si*', On Care for Our Common Home," 23)

Pope Francis states that this contamination is a form of "self idolatry" (a worship of humanity). Paraphrasing Revelations 11:18, he says: "If we destroy creation, creation will destroy us; don't ever forget this." St. John Paul II stated that "God gave the earth to the whole human race for the sustenance of all its members, without excluding or favoring anyone."

Act:

- From the brief description above, describe the level of consciousness that fossil fuel company executives demonstrated.
- Compare the big oil companies' attempts to sow doubt about fossil fuels with the tobacco industry's history of activities. You may want to refer to the book "Merchants of Doubt" by Naomi Oreskes and Erik M. Conway, or the film of the same name that was inspired by the book.
- Study the positions of candidates in your local and state elections and vote for those who believe in science's findings.

This story appears in the **Reflections on the Care of Creation** feature series. View the full series.