Opinion
Letters to the Editor

by NCR Staff

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In a column for Religion News Service published at EarthBeat, Jesuit Fr. Thomas Reese said that the good news is there are ways to reduce and eliminate the growth in global warming; the bad news is he's not sure we will implement them fast enough. Following are NCR reader responses to that opinion with letters that have been edited for length and clarity.

This is a comment about Jesuit Fr. Thomas Reese's column on hope for global warming mitigation. Here is an additional action that governments around the world could take: stop subsidizing fossil fuel extraction and distribution. According to the International Energy Agency, global fossil fuel subsidies for 2022 amounted to $1 trillion. That money could be put to much better use than adding to carbon pollution and driving global temperatures even higher.

JOANNE COREY
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Are Catholics allergic to admitting that the U.S. military is the largest institutional consumer of fossil fuels in the world and the world's largest institutional emitter of carbon? This has gotten ridiculous. I've heard Catholic after Catholic speak at length about the crisis of anthropogenic climate change, yet they refuse to so much as allude to the role that U.S. empire plays in destroying our planet.

Reese doesn't discuss nuclear energy, except to claim that wind and solar are cheaper. Everyone who takes anthropogenic climate change seriously must take a serious look at nuclear energy. I hope Reese will take the time to carefully and comprehensively examine the arguments for and against nuclear energy and report back to us readers with his well informed position.

Recently my brother, a permanent senior researcher in environmental science at the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona's Institut de Ciència i Tecnologia Ambientals, said: "At 2.7 degrees of warming, which is our present policy trajectory, two billion people will be exposed to extreme heat. 99.7% of those people live in the global South."

Catholics in the Global North would do well to place less emphasis on the voices of white, middle-class Catholics when we talk about solutions to the climate crisis. Middle-class white Catholics are not protected from the effects of climate change, but while mass numbers of people in the Global South are writhing in hell on earth caused by global warming, the vast majority of middle-class white Catholics will be relatively comfortable by comparison.

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Reese is wrong, as wrong as NCR for printing this. The answers lie not in D.C. but at the state, county and local levels where the Catholic Church can have the most impact. All politics are local as is religion.

Texas gets more than 25% of its electricity from renewables — mostly wind with some solar. Catholic Texas Gov. Abbott is the linchpin thwarting renewables that have proven profitable, efficient and reliable. Abbott undercut the GOP's "free market" mantra by proposing legislating fossil fuel state incentives while excluding renewables. Abbott defends his decision stating there's already federal monies for renewables. Where is the moral outcry of the Texas Catholic Conference of Bishops against Abbott and in support of Pope Francis? There is none and there won't be because GOP supporting bishops put politics over religion.

If every state, county and local government building along with every church building were converted to renewable energy, Texas would meet climate change goals. Texas claims the moral high ground as a Bible Belt state, yet its leadership undermines clean energy progress.

Reese and NCR know the property-wealthy U.S. Catholic Church should be doing more. If they are not part of the solution they're part of the problem.

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