Opinion
EarthBeat
Climate activists in South Africa hold placards as they gather outside the Cape Town Internati

Climate activists in South Africa hold placards as they gather outside the Cape Town International Convention Center Sept. 13, 2023, during the Southern Africa Oil and Gas Conference to call for climate justice resistance against oil and gas corporations and an end to fossil fuels. (OSV News/Reuters/Esa Alexander)

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Want some good news?

The Archdiocese of Chicago announced on Dec. 17 that its nearly 400 parishes, schools, cemeteries and offices will switch to 100% renewable energy for electricity needs beginning Jan. 1.

This covers about 2,000 buildings and is the equivalent of removing 15,000 cars from the road annually.

In his announcement, Cardinal Blase J. Cupich said the action was taken "as an expression of our commitment to the sanctity of life."

It was part of an attempt, he said, "to ensure generations to come have a future."

Think of what we could do for the climate as Catholics if we all advocated for this kind of change. What Chicago's decision says to me is that there is something we can do about this crisis, and one powerful way to help is by an institutional commitment. And what better institution to lead the charge than our church?

Related: Chicago Archdiocese to power parishes, schools with 100% renewable energy

In another piece of good news from Chicago, the University of St. Mary of the Lake at Mundelein boasts the only solar installation at a U.S. seminary. Okay, the fact that it's the only one isn't part of the good news, but let's focus on the positive.

Fr. John Kartje, rector/president of the seminary, said his seminarians are from 25 dioceses in the U.S. and abroad. Together, they will "carry the commitment to good stewardship of the earth with them."

According to a CNN survey nearly two-thirds of U.S. adults say they are worried about the threat of climate change in their communities. According to the poll, 73% of U.S. adults say "the federal government should develop its climate policies" to cut the country's planet-warming pollution in half by the end of the decade.

In a divided country, that's a lot of agreement. Good news.

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As Pope Francis has reminded us, our whole ecosystem is challenged, almost to the point of no return. The pope, in his 2015 encyclical on the environment, *Laudato Si'*, spoke of our relationships: with God, our neighbor and the earth itself, all of whom are intimately connected.

In his 2023 follow-up, *Laudate Deum*, the pope said our responses have not been adequate and that "the world in which we live is collapsing and may be nearing the breaking point."

But here's another piece of good news, something positive we can all do. In 2006, the U.S. bishops, along with other groups, founded Catholic Climate Covenant. This nonprofit offers a pledge you can take, and what better New Year's resolution to

make than a commitment to our common home? At their website, catholicclimatecovenant.org, you can take the pledge, selecting the things you feel you can do, saying "no" to those that are too challenging right now.

You can also add your own commitments. Mine, for instance, involves enrolling in a program in which I collect my food scraps — peels, pits, coffee grounds, filters, paper plates — which are picked up by a local company that composts them, keeping them out of the landfill, where they would contribute to greenhouse gasses. It's a few dollars a month for a great cause.

Remember "Bill Nye the Science Guy?" Here's some good, positive advice I heard from this science educator the other day. Recycling is fine, he said, but for real change, there are two things we must do.

We should be "talking about climate change" just as much as we talk about other major issues. And we should vote with climate in mind.

Share the good news with your parish, your diocese, your legislators. If we're serious about saving our world for our grandchildren, let's make some noise.