NATIONAL CATHOLIC REPORTER
Published on *National Catholic Reporter* (https://www.ncronline.org)

Early spring brings back climate change fears

Sharon Abercrombie | Mar. 30, 2012 Eco Catholic

Spring made her abrupt, untimely appearance here in Columbus, Ohio, recently. For a few days, we exchanged 40-degree weather and winter clothing for temperatures in the 80s. Think shorts, short-sleeved shirts, sandals, air conditioning and an explosion of purple, pink and white blossoms.

Some of our neighbors rejoiced. They rushed out to buy flowers for their yards. Others fretted. It was all just too much, too soon. We still had leftovers from St. Patrick's Day in the refrigerator. The beauty around us, while certainly welcome at one level after the chilly grayness, held an aura of bizarre eeriness. We asked ourselves with dread, "Is this another sign of climate change?"

As we worried about our yo-yo weather, a timely column by Ohio State University biology professor Steven Rissing appeared in the March 25 Insight/Science Section of *The Columbus Dispatch* newspaper.

"Are we there yet?" he asked. "If we haven't entered a period of human-caused climate change yet, what will it take for us to agree that we have?"

He supplies us with a list of events pointing to global warming. Here are a few of them.

Firstly, weather proved to be all over the place, he noted. Almost 1,500 U.S. high-temperature records fell in one week. Yet around the same time, "the iconic cherry trees in D.C. were in full bloom a week before the month-long national Cherry Blossom Festival started. All of these things occurred just over two days this month."

Rissing's additional points:

> Health-care specialists warn that Chagas disease, spread among humans by blood-sucking insects in tropical regions, might spread as temperatures rise in the United States.
>
> Agricultural specialists attribute global changes in crop maturation, for example, early ripening of grapes, to increased global temperatures.
>
> NASA releases maps showing a reduction in snow cover for North America in 2012 compared with 2011.
>
> Studies suggest that the houses where 4 million Americans live on the coasts confront increased risk of storm-surge flooding by midcentury because of warming oceans.
>
> Almost all scientists and related professionals who collect and analyze data about climate change or its effect on biological systems that the increased carbon dioxide levels cause much of the climate change and warming.

Rissing challenges the views of "hold-out skeptics" who propose that no link exists between carbon dioxide

increases and climate-change effects.

"Good science demands explanations and hypothesis that can be tested," he said. "An explanation that can't be tested is not an explanation -- it's a dream, a belief, a political position. It might make for good campaign rhetoric, but it makes for poor public planning."

To read Rissing's entire article, go to the Columbus Dispatch science/insight pages for March 25 [1].

Eco Catholic readers also might want to check out recent information concerning the "Planet Under Pressure" conference in London, held March 26-29. More than 2,500 senior policy makers, industry leaders, NGOs, scientists, health specialists and other experts met to consider how to move societies toward sustainable practices. There were more than 150 public events.

The meeting was called to prepare for the Rio+20 upcoming conference June 20-22, sponsored by the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development. Of special significance is the conference's State of the Planet Declaration [2].

Key statements from the declaration point out that as consumption accelerates everywhere and world population rises, "it is no longer sufficient to work towards a distant ideal of sustainable development. Interconnected issues require interconnected solutions. Global sustainability must become a foundation of society."

Tucked into the report is recognition that earth's resources must no longer be evaluated solely as financial commodities.

"Ecocosystem services, education, health and global common resources, such as the oceans and the atmosphere must be properly factored into decision- making frameworks to ensure that economic activities do not impose external costs on the global commons," the declaration reads.

One of the speakers was Ratri Sutarto, from the Mercy Corps' Indonesia Team. Sutarto presented a report on the corps' experience in integrating urban climate resilience strategies into city planning and government in Indonesia. The presentation can be accessed on the globalenvision.org website [3].

Source URL (retrieved on *02/27/2017 - 13:25*): https://www.ncronline.org/blogs/eco-catholic/early-spring-brings-back-climate-change-fears

Links:
[1] http://www.dispatch.com/content/stories/science/2012/03/25/any-one-still-doubt-climate-change.html
[2] http://www.planetunderpressure2012.net/pdf/state_of_planet_declaration.pdf
[3] http://www.globalenvision.org