



# FAITH: A *FRESH TAKE*



January 26, 2017



CNS/PAUL HARING

Pope Francis blesses a man as he greets the disabled during his general audience in Paul VI hall at the Vatican Jan. 25.

## Climate Change: a Catholic Issue

Amid the excitement of a presidential inauguration, a troubling omen: Soon after Donald Trump was sworn



in as our 45th president, CNBC reported that the official White House webpage on climate change was deleted.

"The requested page 'energy/climate-change' could not be found" was the response if you searched whitehouse.gov.

We can only hope that climate change reappears on the site as the Trump team works to create their online profile. Last time I checked, the site mentions protecting air and water and "refocusing" the Environmental Protection Agency – but no mention of climate change or renewable energy.

Make no mistake about it. This is a vital issue and it's a Catholic issue. With his encyclical, "Laudato Si", on Care for Our Common Home, Pope Francis placed our response to this issue squarely in the moral realm.

The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops supports a national standard to reduce carbon pollution from existing power plants. In their 2001 statement on climate change, they said climate change "is about the future of God's creation and the one human family."

No matter our presidential pick or party affiliation, this is an issue that transcends partisanship and gravely impacts our children's and grandchildren's future. We can debate what to do about climate change, but we can't deny it.

For most of my adult life, I lived in Alaska. My giant of a home state is like the canary in the coal mine of climate change.

When I first arrived there in the 1970s, winters were frigid and temperatures pretty unimaginable to most Americans. Although this year Alaska is having a more traditional winter – minus 53 degrees the other day in McGrath – for the most part recent winters have been eerily warm and lacking in the usual snow depth.

When I lived there, Alaskans would

actually pray for snow, something my Midwestern neighbors find hard to fathom. But it was natural for Alaskans. The mostly dark days needed the brightness of a snow pack, and people reveled in cross-country and downhill skiing, snow machining, playing hockey outdoors.

I have friends who are avid cross-country skiers who have resorted to biking in recent winters.

But losing a little outdoor recreation time is the least of it.

In 2015, the U.S. Geological Survey reported that the northern part of Alaska was experiencing coastal erosion at an alarming rate, averaging 4.6 feet per year since the mid-20th century.

I know friends in western Alaska, who live in coastal Eskimo villages, whose homes are threatened by the rapid rise of sea water due to the warming of water temperatures brought about by climate change. I know people who are literally being forced to relocate because their coastal villages face ruin.

Parts of coastal Louisiana and the city of Miami are among those coping with similar problems.

What can we do? We can add our own efforts to reduce our carbon footprint. Avoid unnecessary driving. Honor the Catholic tradition of meatless Fridays: The EPA says livestock production accounts for 4 percent of America's greenhouse gas emissions.

The EPA also says water processing accounts for approximately 2 percent of energy use in the U.S. We can all cut back on irrigating our yards and those lengthy showers. We can recycle more, consume less, be more mindful about buying in our disposable culture.

But we need to be advocates, too. One organization, catholicclimate-covenant.org, works to educate and advocate. You can find resources and petitions at their site.

And check out whitehouse.gov. Hold our government's feet to the fire on developing renewable energy. Tell your representatives it's what we want.

– Effie Caldarola

(This column is part of the CNS columns package.)

## The Pressing Need to Be Busy

A year ago, I took a sabbatical from teaching to devote myself to a research project. I was ecstatic about this



venture and looked forward to the opportunity to work from home, spend more time with my children and get more involved in my faith community. Without a two-hour commute each day, I just knew that the extra time would be well spent.

The extra time was ample; however, it was not something I initially coped well with at the start of the sabbatical. With hours blocked off for my research project and activities with my active teenagers, I found that I had an abundance of free time.

While this seems like a wonderful problem to have, it made me anxious to see large open blocks of time on my daily planner. Just like many people in society, I had a pressing need to be busy. Instead of focusing on time to relax, reconnect with friends and family members and embrace a new hobby, I focused on just how dreadful it was not to have pressing commitments to keep me busy.

It's no secret that many people are overcommitted. We rush from one meeting to the next, volunteer for committees at church and find ourselves running through drive-thrus for meals

just to gain energy for our next commitment. This was my life prior to my sabbatical. I missed it. I craved it. And, I realized that it was an unhealthy need.

It wasn't until my son accused me of "working all the time" that I took a long hard look at why I needed to be busy. Was it because I was avoiding something? Was it because I had lost my way? Was it because I needed more interaction and quality time with others?

When we cram our schedules full of activities as if we have something to prove, we are bound to stretch ourselves too thin, leaving little or no time to really discover who we are, evaluate how to strengthen our faith and connect with our faith communities.

I had time to make a difference. I had time to learn more about myself. And sadly, I didn't embrace it right away.

Eventually, I learned to take a few moments to myself, observe my surroundings and my family and enjoy a day of "nothing" so that I was ready to take on the next day's challenges. I still feel the need to be busy at times, but I don't ever want to be so busy that I forget what's important – family and faith.

– Shannon Philpott

*Shannon Philpott is a freelance writer and college journalism instructor, but most of all a mother of two teens. You can see her work at [www.shannonphilpott.com](http://www.shannonphilpott.com).*



CNS/LESLIE E. KOSSOFF

Pro-life advocates make their way toward the U.S. Supreme Court Jan. 27 during the annual MarchFor Life in Washington.

### Fresh Take: a way to look at faith from a different perspective

This is an online-only page dedicated to young adult Catholics, their interests, their needs, their challenges and their faith.

We want to give young adults something to "chew on," to think about when they're looking for something more than an on-line horoscope or the

latest star news.

This page offers columns we believe will interest our young adults. Let us know.

Email us at [cathnews@bellevillemessenger.org](mailto:cathnews@bellevillemessenger.org) with questions, suggestions or for more information.

Email us at [cathnews@bellevillemessenger.org](mailto:cathnews@bellevillemessenger.org)