

Vatican ambassador encourages voluntary simplicity to reverse climate change

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COLUMBUS, Ohio - Every Catholic can do something about climate change by adopting a life of voluntary simplicity, believes the Vatican's ambassador to the United Nations.

It comes down to "working less, wanting less, spending less," thus reducing the impact each person has on the environment, Archbishop Celestino Migliore told the second in a series of regional Catholic conversations on climate change Saturday.

Citing Genesis' call to humanity to oversee creation and protect it and the church's social doctrine, the Vatican diplomat outlined the Holy See's position on the need for Catholics to heed the environmental dangers facing the planet.

"The denigration of the environment has become an inescapable reality," the archbishop said. "There is no doubt that the latest assessment has established a strong connection between human activity and climate change," he said, referring to the February statement by Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change.

Archbishop Migliore acknowledged that although not all scientists agree that climate change is occurring, other environmental threats, such as indiscriminate deforestation, water pollution, the lack of potable water in parts of the world and depletion of fish stocks, demand action from the world community and individual Catholics alike.

"We need to drink deep from this frustrating foundation of knowledge and wisdom, known as the aggressive and progressive degradation of the environment, that has become an inescapable reality," he said.

Archbishop Migliore called God's placing of humans in the Garden of Eden with the instruction of not only taming nature, but keeping, or preserving, it as well. God's instruction was not so much a commandment but a blessing "to perfect, not destroy, the cosmos," he said.

Any steps to protect the environment must depend on more than the use of technology and traditional economics but also on "ethical, social and religious values as well," he said.

Likewise, any corrective steps require turning to people in the developing world, especially those living in dire poverty, and making decisions with their advice and consent, the papal nuncio said.

"With humans open to love, creation becomes the place for the mutual exchange of gifts among people," he said.