Clean Power Plan Support Letter
By US Catholic Leaders
Urges Elected Leaders to Exceed Clean Power Plan’s Carbon Reduction Goals

As Catholic individuals and representatives of Catholic institutions, we call upon our state and federal elected officials to address the emerging climate crisis and lead the transition to renewable energy by taking legislative and executive action to meet and exceed the carbon reduction goals as laid out in the Clean Power Plan.

In *Laudato Si’*, his groundbreaking encyclical on ecology, Pope Francis echoes Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI and Saint John Paul II calling climate change an urgent moral issue which wounds creation, threatens human life and dignity, and disproportionately harms the poor and vulnerable who contribute the least to climate change but are already suffering its consequences. Pope Francis writes, “Climate change is a global problem with grave implications: environmental, social, economic, political and for the distribution of goods. It represents one of the principal challenges facing humanity in our day” (25).

Pope Francis says that each of us is called to do our part to care for creation and the poor. Individuals, families, communities, governments, business and other institutions, including religions, all have a role to play to safeguard our common home. He observes that “technology based on the use of highly polluting fossil fuels – especially coal, but also oil and, to a lesser degree, gas – needs to be progressively replaced without delay” (165). He underscores the “urgent need to develop policies so that, in the next few years, the emission of carbon dioxide and other highly polluting gases can be drastically reduced, for example, substitution fossil fuels and developing sources of renewable energy” (26).

One such policy in the United States is the Clean Power Plan. It is the most significant step that the U.S. has ever taken to address climate change. By 2030, the Plan is projected to reduce carbon pollution from existing power plants by nearly 30 percent relative to 2005 levels. The Plan would also reduce other dangerous power plant pollution like sulfur dioxide and nitrous oxide. These reductions are expected to prevent 3,600 premature deaths, 90,000 asthma attacks in children, and 300,000 missed work and school days every year. They are also anticipated to produce an estimated $54 billion in public health and climate benefits per year by 2030 – benefits that would be lost if the Clean Power Plan is not upheld and implemented.¹

A national standard for reducing emissions in the electricity sector also goes a long way to promoting human equality and environmental justice. African American children in the United States are four times more likely to be hospitalized for asthma and 7 times more likely to die from asthma than white children.² Nearly 40 percent of Latinos and 68 percent of African Americans in the United States live within 30 miles of a coal-fired power plant.³ Their health is at a greater risk because of their proximity. Reducing or eliminating emissions will go a long way to reducing this risk.

We believe that the Clean Power Plan provides the flexibility needed for states to meet reduction goals and public polling consistently shows support for efforts to reduce the greenhouse gases that contribute to climate change. States and citizens know that the Plan will protect public health, promote equality,

address climate change, and help create new economic opportunities in communities across the country—including an expected national net gain of tens of thousands of new jobs.\(^4\)

And we join with the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops and other faith leaders who have called for a national carbon pollution standard. We agree with them that the Clean Power Plan is “an important step forward to protect the health of all people, especially children, the elderly, and poor and vulnerable communities, from harmful pollution and the impacts of climate change.” If the Clean Power Plan is not upheld by the Courts, then we call upon Congress to replace the Plan with new policies that will achieve the same or more ambitious carbon reduction goals.

Finally, we believe that additional legislative action by Congress is necessary to drive down carbon pollution even further, including action to put a price on carbon. At the same time, we call for these and all greenhouse gas reduction efforts to be accompanied by job transition programs to assist local communities that rely on some aspect of the fossil fuel industry.

In sum, we call upon our elected leaders to \textit{care for our common home} by taking legislative and executive action to meet and exceed the carbon reduction goals as laid out in the Clean Power Plan. We urge you to exercise strong leadership in transitioning the United States away from its reliance on fossil fuels and towards a clean and renewable energy future.

Signed,