What’s happening after coal?

By BRIAN ROEWE

As visitors enter West Virginia, billboards present the Mountain State as a region filled with real, authentic experiences. Real adventure? Check. Real relaxing? Check. Real excitement? Check. To Jesuit Fr. Brian O’Donnell of Wheeling in the northern panhandle, the tourism campaign asks simply, “Which West Virginia do you want?”

That same question could apply just as easily to the people of the state. Theirs is a land enriched with miles of coal seams but one in the midst of grappling with a changing global energy economy and world-view questioning the efficacy and ethics of burning fossil fuels.

The reality of life without coal has become a pressing issue and is overdue for real discussion, said O’Donnell. While the state’s northern and central regions are more diversified and stable, its southern portion remains primarily reliant, economically and culturally, on its coalfields.

“The curious case of southern West Virginia is a conversation about what’s happening after coal?” said O’Donnell. “Well, you don’t begin by asserting to climate change, you begin by talking about, what’s the reality about the coal industry in the context of the world today.”

“Is it a strong message for West Virginia that we need to begin to talk about what we’re going to do after the coal?” asked O’Donnell. “Or is it a message that we need to begin to talk about the impact of our energy economy?”

The bishops ended by doing something the synod says discernment for re-consideration of the church’s practice toward those who have divorced and remarried.

“The curious case of southern West Virginia is a conversation about what’s happening after coal?”

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Synod puts forth new paths for the divorced

By JOSHUA J. McEELWEE

VIATICA CITY - Three weeks of intense and sometimes publicly heated debates. One year of preparation, involving the considerations of the entire global church. A year before that of even more preparation for the two-week-long pre-meeting of sorts.

And on Oct. 24, the 2015 Synod of Bishops ended by doing something many had come to think might be impossible, even with all the prep time: asking for a softening of the Catholic church’s practice toward those who have divorced and remarried.

Some 270 prelates approved — by two-thirds majority — new language for consideration by Pope Francis that says persons who have remarried should discern decisions about their spiritual lives individually in concert with the guidance of priests.

The pope himself put a point on the matter, closing the Oct. 4-25 meeting with a strong renewal of his continual emphasis of the boundless nature of divine mercy. “The church’s first duty is not to hand down condemnations or anathemas, but to proclaim God’s mercy,” said O’Donnell.

Although the final document from the synod says discernment for re-

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NCR research: Costs of sex abuse crisis to US church underestimated

By JACK RUHL and DIANE RUHL

The U.S. Catholic church has incurred nearly $4 billion in costs related to the priest sex abuse crisis during the past 65 years, according to an extensive NCR investigation of media reports, databases and church documents.

In addition, separate research recently published calculates that other scandal-related consequences such as lost membership and diverting giving has cost the church more than $2.3 billion annually for the past 30 years. (See story on Page 15.)
COAL: “HOW MUCH OF A PRICE DOES APPALACHIA HAVE TO PAY?”

Continued from Page 1

southern West Virginia? It’s falling, so we really do have to think about the future.”

In nearby eastern Kentucky, similar realities are unfolding. This is part of the reason Bishop John Stowe, in mid-August, spent his 100th day as head of the Lexington diocese traveling more than 350 miles in a daylong tour of the area’s coalfields. He saw the effects of mountaintop removal, heard the concerns of coal executives and miners, and felt, through the words of a retired miner tethered to his oxygen tank, the pains of black lung from a lifetime in the mines.

Outside the tour, Stowe, a Francis, can so far has spent the early portion of his time in his new home reading past pastoral letters of Appalachia and studying the region’s rocky history with coal.

“I know that many people depended on its mining for their livelihood here, but that it caused a lot of suffering and a lot of environmental degradation. So coal is and remains a controversial topic in this part of the country,” he told NCR.

Against this backdrop, Appalachia’s Catholic communities received Pope Francis’ encyclical on the environment and human ecology, “Laudato Si’, on Care for Our Common Home.” While the document stretches more than 40,000 words, 31 of them acutely articulate the need for accelerated transition away from highly polluting fossil fuels — especially coal, but also oil and, to a lesser degree, gas — needs to be progressively replaced without delay.

The sentence, a small extract one can dig from the many themes and messages inside Laudato Si’, has served as a banner slogan for environmentalists eager for a cleaner energy mix, and bulletin board material for those who claim the pope — and eco-advocates alike — seek to choke economic growth, and with it, people’s livelihoods, in pursuit of saving the planet.

The challenge for Catholics in America, an entire group of people in particular industries unemployed, that’s certainly not his desire. ... But I think he wants to open this dialogue, and he’s calling for new models. I think of how we drive this economy,” said Etienne, current president of Catholic Rural Life, a national agricultural outreach organization.

Lothes said that the pope has stressed that investments that yield greater short-term financial gain at the expense of people themselves is ultimately bad business for society. “Choosing the lesser of two evils is something that we have to do frequently in the moral life when there isn’t a perfect solution readily available.”

At the same time, Dan Finn, the Clemens Professor in Economics and the Liberal Arts at the College of St. Benedict and St. John’s University in Collegeville, Minn., said the argument for jobs doesn’t justify continuing the energy status quo.

“That’s not reason enough to say, ‘OK, then, let’s just stick with what we’re doing here,’ because in fact we never will have a larger role played by renewable energy resources until we make changes to the current uses and current policies,” he said.

 Added Miller, “The worker cannot be protected at the expense of the human rights of people around the world and young generations.”

Transition underway

Apparent academic interpretations of Francis’ fossil-fuel pronouncement quickly become soto-covered in real-world application: The effort, it’s clear, won’t be clean-cut.

The transition “is happening right now in West Virginia,” Bransfield said. “It’s not going to happen at the end of the century. So it’s something we’re confronted with right now.”

In West Virginia, the No. 2 coal state behind Wyoming, production has declined 5 percent since 2008, and 40 percent in the south, where 5,200 jobs have been lost since 2011, according to the state’s Center on Budget & Policy.

Richard Miller, a theology professor at Creighton University in Omaha, Neb., and editor of God, Creation, and Climate Change: A Catholic Response to the Environmental Crisis. The pope, Miller said, places natural gas at the top and in the middle — both fuels generate fewer carbon emissions than coal.

“That is, better to choose oil instead of coal, better to choose natural gas instead of oil,” Miller said.

Stowe noted that Francis is “not calling for immediate, overnight solutions that are going to radically displace people — I think there’s a sensitivity to that. And choosing the lesser of two evils is something that we have to do frequently in the moral life when there isn’t a perfect solution readily available.”

Paragraph 165 of the encyclical, said Bishop Paul Etienne of Cheyenne, Wyo., a sparsely populated state that produces nearly 40 percent of U.S. coal (or roughly four times West Virginia or Kentucky), and ranks in the top 10 in oil and natural gas drilling.

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The 116.9 million short tons mined in 2014 was the state’s lowest total since 1983 and far from its peak in 1997 (181.9 million short tons), per the West Virginia Coal Association’s 2015 Coal Facts report.

In Kentucky, coal state No. 3, production in 2014 fell 16 percent between 2008 and 2013, according to the U.S. Energy Information Administration, which projected coal availability to fall from 26 percent in 2013 to 15 percent in 2040, even without factoring in the Clean Power Plan, which aims to cut emissions from power plants by 32 percent from 2005 levels.

In July, the Sierra Club celebrated the 200th coal plant retirement through its Beyond Coal campaign, representing closure of roughly 40 percent of the nation’s 522 coal plants in five years, and the elimination of the emissions equivalent of 39 million-plus vehicles.

While coal backers, especially in Appalachia, have claimed EPA and Obama administration regulations have fired coal’s decline, others have pointed to market factors, in particular the rise of natural gas and renewables as viable energy alternatives. Fossil fuel divestment efforts on college campuses and cities nationwide have largely honed in first on coal.

Globally, coal use has risen every year since 1965 — in Asia, more than 2,100 new coal-fired power plants are in the works — though some finance firms predict a forecast more in line with US potential.

In August, Citigroup, in its second Energy Darwinism report, declared that “coal is the clear loser under a low carbon scenario,” as the fuel source most affected by a price on carbon due to its high emissions. The financial giant said that for the world to have a chance at limiting global temperature rise below 2 degrees Celsius — a chief aim of the United Nations climate change talks set for Paris in December — more than 80 percent of current coal reserves would need to remain unused, or at current coal prices, roughly $60 trillion in stranded assets.

German physicist Hans Joachim Schellnhuber, a member of the Pontifical Academy of Sciences, said at a July climate summit in Paris that the next 20-30 years must see “an induced implosion of the carbon economy” in order to curb warming below 2 degrees.

“In the end, it is a moral decision. Do you want to be part of the generation that screwed up the planet for the next 1,000 years? I don’t think we should make that decision,” said Schellnhuber, who a month earlier also spoke at a Vatican press conference introducing the pope’s encyclical.

Air of fatalism

The statistics on coal’s forlorn future are driven home in West Virginia’s south, Kentucky’s east, and other parts of America rich in the carbon-packed Appalachian mountains. West Virginia has seen its mining workforce drop from 130,000 in 1950 to less than 20,000 in 2013. In December — more than 80 percent of current coal reserves would need to remain unused, or at current coal prices, roughly $60 trillion in stranded assets.

The 116.9 million short tons mined in 2014 fell to early 1960s levels, per the West Virginia Coal Association’s 2015 Coal Facts report.

A billboard carries a message supporting the coal industry near Wheeling, W.Va., in January 2013.

Both Pike and Perry Counties were stops on Stowe’s coalfields tour, chaperoned by Glenmary Home Missionary Fr. Tom. In Pike County, Kentucky’s historical coal leader, mining jobs decreased by 20 percent from 2012 to 2013, as they did in nearby Perry County; Harlan County saw employment slashed by 35 percent in just one year.

“...I didn’t realize the coal industry was this critical,” said Rausch, a 40-year vet- eran of Appalachian ministry much of it centered on the environment and defending the rights of miners.

Recently, he has heard that more and more people are leaving Appalachia, hoping to reapply their mining skills in the Dakotas or Wyoming. “The darndest thing is, nobody wants to move away from this area. The land is part of their culture and part of their feelings,” he said.

Despite the bleak outlook and inherent dangers involved in the work, strong support survives for coal and mining in the region. Everywhere she goes in eastern Kentucky, Franciscan Sr. Robbie Pentecost, who has lived in the region for 20 years, sees the signs: “Friends of Coal.” They’re on license plates; they’re on signs of businesses like Wendy’s and McDonald’s. “They’re just everywhere,” said Pentecost, who recently wrapped up a decade working with the Christian Appalachian Project.

“It’s a way of life,” said Rausch. “I think that’s something that we don’t recognize or understand. Coal country has a lot of uniquenesses to it.”

One comes to an approach to religion, which leans more depressing than optimistic, Rausch said. At funerals, the priest recalls more tears and wailing for the great loss, and less hope for reuniting in another life. An air of fatalism and despair is tangible across central Appalachia; O’Donnell, too, has sensed “a spiritual problem” as people come to grips that an older way of life may be coming to an end.

“There is this psychological, spiritual aspect of this, that you have this life way, and it’s hard to let that go,” he said.

“That’s kind of a hegemony of discussions that at least half the state just start with the proposition, ‘Coal is great, let’s continue it.’ But the reality, as I’ve indicated, is much other — I mean, that’s not going to work.”

Her own enthusiasm for the ency- clical, she said, stems in part from seeing how it might take root in such a climate. For one, she’s not certain how many even know of the 5-month-old document. But in an area long swayed by coal company talking points (or misinformation of which is leading to continued pressure on the coal industry."

of privacy and victims of the Upper Big Branch Mine accident the previous day in Montcoal.


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fearful of challenging them), and one where “Catholic” is sometimes seen as a negative term, it’s rocky ground for planting. “It’s not that people don’t have a sense of what’s possible, and so they think coal is the only thing and decide to stay with what you know,” she said.

Still, people see hope in the excitement among the area’s more prominent Christian faithfuls for Francis, concluding possible encyclical entry through such “legitimizers.” Likewise, she’s inspired that her new bishop has indicated a desire to engage the community through Laudato Si’. While it didn’t come up in conversations with miners during his first tour, he said, it became clear during the encyclical the weekend following its release in several rural parishes. He focused primarily on its scriptural aspects, that to live in right relationship with creation extends back to Genesis and was embodied in St. Francis of Assisi. Its roots tend back to Genesis and was embodied in right relationship with creation extends back to Genesis and was embodied in St. Francis of Assisi.

The story illustrates one of the two most necessary catechetical requirements in the Church today: EMOTIONALLY to teach how relatively easy it is to have a firm purpose of amendment—resisting temptation, overcoming temptations—and increasingly become whole, holy, happy, human, free, mature, in control, loving, Christlike, as we are called to be. In vain efforts to overcome the following truth, we become frustrated, discouraged and disillusioned. And notwithstanding all good intentions, in May, 1991, a Gallup Poll published as a National and International Religious Report that “The church are just as likely to engage in unethical behavior.”

Before fifteen-year-old Anne Frank gradually to the fullness of life from the concentration camp during World War Two, she wrote in her diary, “Despite everything, I still think people are good at heart.” And during my many years of prison ministry, I have habitually encountered the same desire to do the good, as well as the same frustration experienced by St. Paul before he discovered and applied the simple means of living the freeing truth: “The will is ready at hand, but doing the good is not. For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want” (Rom 7:18,19).

Regarding inability to overcome temptations and have a firm purpose of amendment, our sins are deeply Catholic; they are an integral part of our humanity. As Jesus refers is the fruit of the Holy Spirit: “Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self control” (Gal 5:22, 23). Therefore, the application of our FAITH to be a secret to the Church of today is FAITH-Love-IMMEDIATE RETREAT TO JESUS who dwells in your heart through baptism. And at that same moment, in your mind— not on your lips—one time say, “No, in the name of Jesus, I resist temptation, I reject the temptation, I resist temptation as people who never pray. As the Arabic proverb says, “People of faith must understand how to express it when challenged.”

Therefore, the application of our FAITH to be able to realize “His commandments are not burdensome” but are the TRUTH that sets us free as is follows: Jesus said to the “Church” of people who labor and are burdened, “Come to me, all you who are burdened, and I will give you rest” (Mt 11:28). However, because of our fallen human nature, we are inclined to be slow to resist temptation. And so even from a secular, psychological understanding, “He (She) who hesitates is lost.” In order to counter this reality, Jesus says, “Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness” (Mt 6:33a); IMMEDIATELY of the application of FAITH is the means of victory and growth in the fruit of the Holy Spirit. As Jesus further emphasizes, “Unless you turn and become like children, you shall not enter the kingdom of heaven” (Mt 18:3). For the first time, we learn in Genesis that the power of first breath was immediately necessary to overcome the temptation of a sleeping world. And in the present tense, the commandment of EA is to be IMMEDIATELY RETREATING in FAITH to receive the healing and transforming love of Jesus. Accordingly, this simple, effective response is referred to as the Faith-Love Principle or FLP. The principle would be simple and found wanting: it has been found wanting to be tried. I was hard pressed and failing, but the Lord came to my help. The Lord, my strength and might came to me as Savor (Emphasis throughout is my own.)

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COAL: CLEAN ENERGY POTENTIAL A MIXED BAG FOR APPALACHIA

Continued from Page 11

authored two seminal pastoral letters, “This Land Is Home to Me” (1975) and “At Home in the Web of Life” (1985). Bransfield was introduced to a Stop New Energy Taxes Rally before a public listening ses-

sional on federal coal programs held by the Bureau of Land Management, Aug. 13 in Gil-

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WASHINGTON — One of the major decisions facing the nation’s bishops when they meet Nov. 16-19 for their annual fall assembly will be what “strategic priorities” to focus on through the year 2020, a discussion that drew some pointed debate during the group’s spring gathering.

The bishops will also vote on a new introductory note and “limited” revised Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship,” a quadrennial statement issued the year before each presidential election.

According to a release from the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, the revised citizenship statement “will feature new language around issues of public concern for Catholics” arrived at by a working group led by Galveston-Houston Cardinal Daniel DiNardo, conference vice president.

The priorities proposed in St. Louis in June (NCR, July 3-16) focused on family and life — where the bishops stressed the integration; religious freedom; human life and dignity; and vocations. Discussion arose around the questions of whether the conference was simply doing more of the same and whether the agenda, which will be used for 2017-20 strategic planning, should reflect the issues Pope Francis has emphasized.

Seattle Archbishop Peter Sartain, chair of the Committee on Priorities and Plans, said that the issue was to see if the proposal was merely a draft open to change and that a final vote would occur at the November meeting.

Bishop George Thomas of Helena, Mont., was blunt: “I want to express my disappointment with the proposal as an economically viable option, she said. “And I see that in this line [about coal].”

Rausch said. The Glenmary priest acknowledged that there needs to be much greater visibility given to the plight of the poor; the economic disparity that so many families feel, rural poverty, joblessness, the struggle of the working poor.

He added that he hoped “the body of bishops would throw our collective weight behind a voice of advocacy for those in America.”

Since the U.S. bishops’ last gathering, the themes of the Francis papacy have come more into focus. Days after the June meeting, the Vatican released “Laudato Si’ , on Care for Our Common Home,” Francis’ encyclical on the environment and human ecology, and in October, bishops worldwide concluded the two-year Synod of Bishops on the family.

In the middle, Francis made his first visit to the U.S., bringing a message of mercy to all, and appealing for the pursuit of the common good and embrace of the immigrant.

On the other hand, he spoke candidly to U.S. bishops Sept. 23 at the Cathedral of St. Matthew the Apostle in Washington, D.C., thanking them for their efforts to date but encouraging them to go further.

“For perhaps it will not be easy for you to look into the future, but you will be challenged by their diversity. But know that they also possess resources meant to be shared. So do not be afraid to become those who I am certain that, as so often in the past, these people will enrich America and its church,” Francis said.

In that same prayer service, the pope stressed the need to substitute “harsh and divisive language” for unifying, authentic dialogue with all facets of society, adding he “cannot ever tire of encouraging you to dialogues.”

Following the service, the West Virginia Cardinal Bishop David Zubik expressed appreciation for the pope’s instructions:

“People first have to be able to listen to each other. You don’t accomplish anything with a stalemate.” — Bishop David Zubik

“Usually when somebody says something that’s prophetic, it’s uncomfortable.” Warfel, the Montana bishop, said. “And I see that in this line [about coal], as a prophetic statement.”

Maybe more than in other parts of the U.S., amid the real adventure of West Virginia, the real beauty of Montana and Wyoming, the pope’s encyclical itself becomes real: a real trial. One that requests not simply altering behavior or adjusting voting priorities, but unearthing a deeply entrenched way of life.

“’It’s sort of like when anything’s going to die, you hold on,’” Pentecost said. “‘And it’s when you can let go that you can really be part of a new beginning or a new opportunity.’”

Said O’Donnell: “That basic conversation the pope asks for — about our stance toward creation, what we are doing in our own life that, on reflection, may not evidence a real care for creation, a real care for those who are poor among us — that conversation is very much needed in West Virginia.”

“But I think it’s beginning.”

US bishops set to select ‘strategic priorities’
Church’s credibility is seen in mercy, pope says

By JOSHUA J. McELWEE

VATICAN CITY - Officially proclaiming the upcoming jubilee year of mercy, Pope Francis has powerfully called on the entire Catholic church to refashion itself as a place not of judgment or condemnation but of pardon and merciful love.

Writing in an extensive document convoking the year, which will begin Dec. 8, Francis states that the church’s “very credibility is seen in how she shows merciful and compassionate love.”

“If we lack mercy,” Francis continues, “we lack the spirit of Jesus.”

Francis, using the most common title of Christ, Misericordiae Vultus (“The Face of Mercy”), has called on the entire Catholic church to refashion it as a place of mercy.

The document, released April 11 with the Latin title, “Misericordiae Vultus,” also one of the most common titles of Christ, was released April 11 with the Latin title, “Misericordiae Vultus.”

“The time has come for the Church to take up the joyful call to mercy once more,” Francis writes in the document.

The pope emphasizes that the jubilee year is a return to the basics and to bear the weaknesses and struggles of our brothers and sisters.

“Mercy is the force that reawakens us to new life and instills in us the courage to look to the future with hope,” Francis says.

The pope also notes that Dec. 8 will be the feast day of Our Lady of the Angels.

The release of Pope Francis’ encyclical on the environment later this summer will come as one of the more anticipated papal documentary records in recent decades. Since its origins as a late 2013 rumor, its hype has snowballed at a time when international attention to climate change has approached a zenith, and as world leaders converge in Paris this December for a possible binding climate agreement.

While the teaching document has fanned optimistic flames for environmentalists in and outside the church, it hasn’t raised temperatures evenly for all. Some conservative corners have a more tepid take, welcoming papal guidance on environmental issues, while voicing concerns about the document’s ultimate direction: toward a reaffirmation of the stewardship role over creation, or into the boiler of the contentious climate debate still firing in the U.S.

The unease pronounced itself in January. In the span of six days, at least 10 articles posted online from prominent conservative Catholic voices sought to temper, clarify or excoriate expectations for the eco-encyclical. One was Robert Royal, founder and president of the Washington, D.C.-based Faith & Reason Institute.

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“The time has come for the Church to take up the joyful call to mercy once more,” Francis writes in the document. released April 11 with the Latin title, “Misericordiae Vultus” (“The Face of Mercy”).

“In the year of mercy, we are called to make a new start, to set aside old ways and take up the joyous task of making mercy felt.”

Francis, using the most common title of Christ, Misericordiae Vultus (“The Face of Mercy”), has called on the entire Catholic church to refashion it as a place of mercy.

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“The temptation … to focus exclusively on justice made us forget that the Church’s very credibility is seen in how she shows merciful and compassionate love.”

Perhaps we have long since forgotten how to show and live the way of mercy,” Francis writes in the document.

Some conserva-...
The United States might hold the distinction of harboring some of the most potent climate-change-denying individuals and organizations on the planet, but it is hardly alone when it comes to organized attempts to debunk accepted science saying that the Earth’s climate is warming due to human activity. Indeed, a 2014 study by United Kingdom-based polling giant Ipsos MORI showed the United States leading the world in climate change denial. Of the 20 countries polled, people in the U.S. registered the least agreement (54 percent) when asked if climate change was caused by humans, at 92 percent; Argentina and Italy followed at 84 percent; and Chad, which has the pack tied with Belgium, 78 percent; South Korea, 77 percent; and South Africa, 76 percent.

In the same survey, India and the United States tied for the lowest percentage in each country agreeing with the statement that climate change is a naturally occurring phenomenon. It is impossible to calibrate just how much of the resistance to climate change science is the result of material generated by U.S. think tanks ample funded by interests with economic stakes in the fossil-fuel-burning status quo.

Dissent not new
Disagreement over encyclicals has been something of a church tradition over the centuries. According to Michael Schuck, a theology professor at Loyola University Chicago and author of the 1991 book Laborem Exercens, “There’s nothing new about dissent and debate about encyclicals,” Schuck said. “That’s been going on since about 1740.” What we know so far — and you can’t really tell from the Joseph Professor of Catholic Systematics at the New York Times — but to put these things together in a way that makes sense and brings us to the church’s theological thought, it needs more than I’ve seen so far,” he told VCR.

Royal has also seen much of what his peers preemptively have to say about the document. On Jan. 5, Rachel Louise Bennett wrote in Crisis magazine, “As a political conservative, I care somewhat about political issues such as this. But as a Catholic (which is much more important), I mainly care about fundamental Church teachings on faith and morals. Climate change is only very distantly relevant to any of these, so nothing the Holy Father says about it is likely to muddy doctrinal waters to any great extent. The deposit of faith is safe.”

Dennis Prager stated Jan. 6 at Real ClearPolitics.com that Francis’ previous remarks might have included “left-wing, even radical left-wing, language” — more Marx than Moses. He also questioned how the pope could focus on the climate at a time when Christians face persecution themselves too much with only one part — and you can’t really tell from what we know so far — but one part that seems to be relatively extreme in the environmental debates.”

The Holy See on this is likely to come down in an area of science that is not as settled as it thinks it is.

—Robert Royal

Smoke billows from the chimneys of the Bechtel Power Station, Europe’s largest coal-fired power plant, in Poland in 2013.

PHOTOGRAPHY BY RUPERT DOBSON

Upon reviewing excerpts of an early draft of the encyclical, he wanted to alert others of both the good and worrisome aspects he saw within it. “There’s no doubt in my mind or anybody else’s mind that there are very serious environmental questions that the human mind needs to address. There’s also the question of poverty that [Francis] speaks about so eloquently, but to put these things together in a way that makes sense and brings us to the church’s theological thought, it needs more than I’ve seen so far,” he told VCR.

The utterance is a parasite (megalomania. 

A pope devoted primarily to the topic.

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ETHOS OF CONSERVATION, VIEWS MAN AS A PARASITE (WESTERN MAN IN FRANCIS’ MARXIST Variant) AND UNDERSTANDS WEALTH IN PRE-MODERN TERMS AS A ZERO-SUM GAME, SHE WROTE.

First Things Editor R.B. Reno later publicly criticized Mullarkey’s criticism. The publication of the letter by Mullarkey’s critics did not represent the position of the publication. While Royal called such portrayals of the pope as left-wing “utterly silly,” he acknowledged a “big concern” among conservatives he considers credible to the church could “knock itself out of the serious conversation by looking like it’s going too far left.” There’s a real contribution that Pope Francis and the church can make here if they don’t identify

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The environmental encyclical will be Francis’ first such solo venture, after a Nov. 26 letter text began by Pope Benedict XVI. While Benedict and Pope John Paul II both addressed environmental issues — including concern for the state of the climate — at various times, Francis’ environmental encyclical will be the first from a pope devoted primarily to the topic. An encyclical offers a medium for the pope to communicate with the world without running the risk of an exercise of his ordinary; or non-infallible, magisterium, said Richard Gaillardetz, the director of the Joseph Professor of Catholic Systematics at the Boston College. In terms of authority, it is superseded only by an apostolic constitution.

“Catholics would have to give the presumption of truth to such teaching and could dissent from that teaching only after careful consideration, or for serious reasons,” Gaillardetz said. The bloggers and Catholic writers who argue that the Synod on the Synod-eco-encyclical have primarily pinpointed their concerns on how the document will handle climate change. In a letter to The New York Times, Father Peter Galli, director of the Acton Institute’s Rome office, said, “It is one kind of papal teaching if a Catholic believes that the papal teaching on the Trinity or abortion or that Catholic’s eternal soul would be considered at risk and all efforts would be made to avoid it, this erroneous beliefs. It is an altogether different kind of problem if a Catholic disagrees with the pope on his diplomatic efforts or environmental views,” matters where the church re-
the Koch enterprise is willing to invest in entities challenging the prevailing climate science constitutes “demonizing” is an open question. The Corporate Europe Observatory report, however, claims that the relevance of the funding can be established in the interlocking connections between U.S. and European think tanks engaged in climate change denial. One example in the 11-page report involves Robert Bradley, chief executive officer and founder of the Institute for Energy Research, who is also a visiting fellow at the Institute of Economic Affairs in London and an adjunct scholar at both the Cato Institute and the Competitive Enterprise Institute in Washington, D.C. According to CEO, Bradley “regularly speaks at conferences organized by the Heartland Institute, which brings together climate deniers from around the world.”

The Institute for Energy Research also “has active links with several of the European climate deniers’ think tanks” and “has commissioned bogus research by European think tanks and then organized campaigns to promote these in the U.S. with the support of fellow right-wing think tanks so as to attack Obama’s push for renewable energy and green jobs.”

Another European think tank viewed by CEO as a source of anti-climate-change thinking is the International Policy Network, based in London. The 2010 report says it “is an offspring of the Atlas Research Foundation, which played a role in spreading the web of Koch industry money to Europe.”

In Spain, the Instituto Juan de Mariana, a group advancing libertarian ideas, was “launched with a grant from the Japanese government’s Environmental Development Program” and international agreement that extended a 1992 United Nations initiative committing member nations to reductions in greenhouse gases.

Frederick Sabido, a researcher and campaigner for the Brussels-based CEO group, said he has not seen much reaction to the pending papal encyclical on the environment. “The libertarian or climate-change-denying think tanks in Europe. At the same time, significant pockets of resistance exist throughout Europe to climate change science and to making changes to reduce human causes of climate change. That resistance, he said, has taken new shape since 2010.

“Industry over the last five years has been moving away from denying the science of climate change,” said Sabido. In fact, he said, some of the major voices in the debate have essentially left what might be called interim strategies that Sabido said allow business as usual to continue. Another element of the strategy, he said, was to call for increased economic growth necessary to deal with the costs of transitioning to new fuels and environmentally friendly technologies.

Another, he said, is the claim that increasing the use of renewables would correspondingly increase the costs of electricity for ordinary consumers. Sabido said the Corporate Europe Observatory believes that claim is false “because the power industry in Europe is protected” from such spikes. He said the claim is used to stir fear that if electric costs go up, so will consumer prices. “It is a kind of threat used to convince people that the status quo is preferable. The threat is if prices go up, industry will leave Europe, and the political implication is that Europe takes a strong stand on emissions, those emissions will just go elsewhere.”

Another means of maintaining the status quo, he said, is to advocate natural gas as “clean burning,” a kind of “bridge fuel” to the future as a way of convincing Europeans to allow U.S.-style “fracking” as an acceptable means to explore for and capture natural gas.

(Tom Roberts is NCR editor at large. His email address is troberts@ncronline.org)
spheric Administration, the “pause” followed a period of rapid acceleration. It also found that “each of the last three decades has been successively warmer at the Earth’s surface than any preceding decade since 1850.” In addition, NOAA and NASA have reported nine of the 10 warmest years in terms of global surface temperature have occurred since 2000, with 1998 the tenth. Earth’s average surface temperature has warmed by 1.4 degrees Fahrenheit since 1880, when record-keeping began.

The pope’s opinion

Outside the science, concerns are that a strong papal statement on climate change or endorsement of U.N.-led climate action could cast the encyclical as a partisan document.

A position that demonizes capitalism for any climate change or, more generally, for environmental degradation, and calls for a new economic system could do just that, Jayabalan told the newspaper. Instead, he hopes Francis will challenge the problems of materialism in a “throwaway culture” by promoting a humanistic perspective that values life and human dignity above all, rather than creation. He also believes the church should address environmental problems in a way that is consistent with its teachings on creation and the environment.

Royals believe there is a need for a more nuanced debate on environmental policy beyond typical binary Democratic and Republican positions. Instead, they believe the church should be a moral leader and work with governments and other institutions to address climate change.

For example, Jayabalan said he would view it as the pope’s opinion, one “trying to serve a moral end, trying to get us to reframe how we think about it.”

“As a faithful Catholic, I will take the encyclical seriously. I won’t dismiss it if I disagree with it. I will try to understand the reasoning for this nomination prior to the presentation and respect the decision,” Jayabalan said.

Jayabalan endorses more local solutions to climate change, and sees the church as an ideal host. Instead, he hopes Francis will endorse climate action that can cast the encyclical — several commentators have less pollution and a cleaner environment.

What is the climate change debate going to be like when the Vatican releases it? A conversation about that in light of certain principles, but what is happening and how it’s happening and whether it’s happening and where that’s happening, are all things that are dependent on empirical studies and how to respond to them is a matter of policy. Those things, those are not absolute matters of faith and morals — “that’s one thing that one can say with a fair degree of confidence” — but will question prudential judgments.

Some on the left, said this has been a discussion between (skeptical from the church position on abortion) and saying that the emissions, especially on the nuclear weapons, including the humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons, calling on world leaders and people of faith to join together to end this global threat at the opening of the Vienna Conference on the Humanitarian Impact of Nuclear Weapons. In December, Francis said that “the horizon of catastrophic consequences are predictable and planetary.”

“I’m convinced the desire for peace will bear fruit in concrete ways,” he said, adding that he hoped “a world without nuclear weapons is possible.”

Businessman withdraws name from award after complaints

By SOLI SALGADO

KANSAS CITY, Mo. - A local businessman has withdrawn his name from a leadership and ethics award presented by a Jesuit-run university after, protests stemming from the factory he runs, a plant that assembles non-nuclear components of nuclear weapons.

Chris Gentile, president of Honeywell Federal Manufacturing and Technologies, was to have received the 2015 Rushford-Lyon Award for Leadership and Ethics from Rockhurst University’s Helzberg School of Management April 9. A 1999 graduate of Rockhurst’s executive MBA program, Gentile has been with Honeywell since 1989.

The Rushford-Lyon Award honors “those who exemplify high ethical standards of business conduct, and demonstrate excellence in leadership through their initiative, inspiration to others and impact on their community,” according to Rockhurst’s website.

The award was announced March 12, and Gentile withdrew his name March 25 after the local group PeaceWorks objected to the Catholic university honoring an executive of the Kansas City Plant. According to the Union of Concerned Scientists, the Kansas City Plant produces about 65 percent of the nation’s nuclear weapon parts.

“It is difficult for me to understand why a Catholic institution of higher learning would be honoring an executive of a company like Honeywell … especially an award for ‘ethics,’” Georgia Walker wrote in an email to her fellow PeaceWorks members.

PeaceWorks had a protest scheduled for April 9, the day of the award ceremony. The group has a recent history of organizing demonstrations against the Kansas City Plant, both for its role in nuclear manufacturing and for the contaminants the group says the plant releases.

Walker wrote to Rockhurst administration hoping to express PeaceWorks’ concerns and hear the university’s reasoning for this nomination prior to the demonstration, however, never had to meet with the university. Shortly after her request to discuss the award, Gentle withdrew his name from consideration, and Rockhurst decided not to present an award this year.

Following his withdrawal, Rockhurst released a statement: “While the University sought to honor Mr. Gentile’s work with youth, particularly in the area of science education, it also respects the consistent position of the Catholic Church, including Pope Francis’ December 2014 statement, on the humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons, which relates to a portion of Honeywell’s business.”

Gentile recently restated the Vatican’s long-standing position against nuclear weapons, calling on world leaders and people of faith to join together to end this global threat at the opening of Vienna Conference on the Humanitarian Impact of Nuclear Weapons in December. Francis said that “the horizon of catastrophic consequences are predictable and planetary.”

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PUSHBACK: FRANCIS ‘CAN DO BETTER’

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Rockhurst University in Kansas City, Mo.
The lush groves of oranges, olives and peaches in California’s San Joaquin Valley that Elvira Ramirez encountered in her childhood appear different today. In the past five years, some of the endless rows and rows of fruit trees that once filled her hometown of Lindsey have been uprooted, in part (particularly for oranges) due to the state’s historic drought, which has now entered its fourth year.

“You’re driving around, and look, there’s another field that’s drying up, and there’s another one that all the trees are getting ready to be chopped up for firewood,” said Ramirez, executive director of Catholic Charities of Stockton, Calif.

The change in landscape is partly attributed to drought, with one study declaring the 2012-14 period the region’s most severe three-year drought in 1,200 years. How much of it is attributable to climate change remains a question. Researchers at Stanford University have linked the drought to human-caused climate change, while the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration pointed to natural variability. But the prevalence of rising temperatures, less precipitation and less snowpack, especially in the Sierra Nevada Mountains, at least make droughts more likely.

Whatever the drought’s cause, the strain on water supply has led some homeowners to spray-paint their lawns to keep them green. But for growers, the largest users of the state’s water, the implications go beyond vanity.

It’s their livelihood.

This year marks the second where some regions of the Central Valley — producer of more than half the nation’s fruits, nuts and vegetables, and home of the San Joaquin Valley, producer of two years in a row where there’s been zero allocations for some of the San Joaquin Valley.”

Not all portions of the state’s $24 billion agricultural industry have experienced the drought evenly. The four vineyards operated by the near-century-old Delicato Family Vineyards, its cornerstone property in Monterey County and others to the north in Napa and San Joaquin Counties, have so far been able to avert major setbacks, thanks to a water system built for more acres of grapes than currently on the land. But the expectation is that luck may dry up this year.

“It looks like we’re not getting much more rain, so I think you’re going to see a dramatic effect on the 2015 growing season, as far as effects of the drought,” said Charlie Hossom, Delicato’s director of vineyard operations.

Climate change a complex matter for wine makers

By BRIAN ROEWE

Climate litmus test

The drought and the challenges it presents to winemakers and the larger farming community was a central subject in October at the Roundtable on Food, Farming and Faith, co-sponsored by CalCAN, Catholic Charities-Stockton and California Interfaith Power and Light. The roundtable examined the impacts of global warming on the region and the role agriculture can play in finding solutions.

Grapes offer one litmus test for detecting changes in climate, in part due to the narrow ranges for growing (for some varieties as small as 2 degrees Celsius) and also because of growers’ extensive historical records of past temperatures. As for wine, even small variations in climate in the next 50 years could reshape the viticulture landscape worldwide.
WINE: SMALL VARIATIONS IN CLIMATE COULD RESHAPE PRODUCTION

Continued from Page 1a

A 2014 report in Wine Economics and Policy stated, “Few crops are as susceptible to minor changes in climate than grapes, especially premium wine quality grapes.”

Changes in climate could push prime growing regions toward the poles, with some predicting that the Yukon as a future suitable region. In the U.S., as much as 81 percent of current premium wine grape acreage could be lost by 2030, the report said.

Elsewhere in the world, Australian winemakers have noted harvests coming 20 days earlier in the past 25 years; extreme weather has become more common in France’s wine regions; and Argentina’s southern Mendoza and northern Patagonia regions have begun switching varietals as thermometer mercury has risen.

For California, warming temperatures and reduced freshwater could leave as much as half of the current acreage in Napa and Santa Barbara Counties unsuitable for premium grape production. So far, warmer temperatures haven’t led to much vineyard relocation (an expensive option, economic and energy-wise, as Oregon becomes an attractive, fertile alternative) or shifts to new varietals, Hossom said.

Instead, the changes have come as a “very gentle, subtle progression,” such as more erratic climates, and not necessarily warmer days but warmer nights. That leads to earlier budding in the spring, and in turn early harvesting, where warmer temperatures can be detrimental to grape quality. More and more growers have begun picking grapes at night when the fruit is cooler, a rarity in the 1980s but more common by 2000.

Early budding also means more time where frost poses a threat to the grapes. With water used in frost protecting, in addition to drip irrigation afterward, scorching again poses a problem for growers. Limited supplies force tough decisions: losing land and take yield losses, or even completely uproot some acres. The problems are most severe for small- and medium-sized family farms, Brillinger said, who lack the finances to drill deep enough to access the groundwater table, itself also dropping.

“The person with the deepest and longest straw gets the most water,” she said.

In addition, workers reliant on crops for work are left in limbo to the farmer’s drought job costs for 17,000 seasonal and part-time workers statewide.

The most serious issue, Delicato is at the Monterey vineyard. Hossom said. This season will be the first time he has taken out crop insurance on several grape varieties. Should wells not provide enough water to frost protect, he’ll have to let the vines go, hope to keep them alive through drip irrigation and bring them back next year.

Smaller vineyards, in more dire water situations, could face more difficult decisions: pulling out acres of vines in order to redirect the water they have toward the remaining crop. An underground forever will drive more people out of business at some point,” Hossom said.

Other side of the coin

On the other side of the country, and in a sense the other side of the climate change, the conditions are more welcome.

The Finger Lakes, in particular, life has never looked better,” said Will Ouweleen, brand manager of O-Neh-Da Vineyard, one of the oldest producers of sacramental wine in the U.S.

Named as a top-10 world wine destination for 2012 by Wine Enthusiast magazine, the Finger Lakes western upper New York is a cool-climate viticulture region, similar to Germany’s Rhine Valley or the Loire Valley in France. Those conditions have allowed the area to gain a reputation in recent years as a producer of world-class Rieslings.

In 2012, however, the temperatures brought a surprise for Ouweleen and his fellow vintners: exceptional yields and grape production. With the fruitful harvest, he made a Meritage wine at the Finger Lakes. Instead, the changes have come as a “very gentle, subtle progression,” such as more erratic climates, and not necessarily warmer days but warmer nights. That leads to earlier budding in the spring, and in turn early harvesting, where warmer temperatures can be detrimental to grape quality. More and more growers have begun picking grapes at night when the fruit is cooler, a rarity in the 1980s but more common by 2000.

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A second threat of extremely cold winters Ouweleen knows too well. When temperatures fall too low but snow does not, the trunks of vines are left without an insulating layer, which could cause the plants food and water delivery systems to freeze and shatter in effect, killing the vine. Replanting new vines can take up to five years to return them to commercially viable grape-producing levels.

The vineyard was able to save the vines in 2011-14 by past Ouweleen 14 acres of vines and grapes from the two vineyards’ 28 acres. He estimated the cost of replanting the vines on the lost acres to be around $25,000 an acre, or $350,000 total.

“Up until 2012, we were all kind of like, yeah, let’s leave the car running a little bit here, let’s just let that exhaust go up into the atmosphere, let’s warm things up a little bit. And at the same time, the last two years have been really hard, so we really don’t know what’s going on yet,” he said.

To combat the cold, winemakers can burn hay bales or hay bales or woodsmills in the vineyard to provide radiating heat. Producers will also check the buds to see what damage to expect, and prune less during harsh winters to increase the possibility of having enough fruit on the vine—a drawback that could lead to fewer nutrients reaching and ripening the fruits.

The whole farm

The roundtable conversation in Stockton saw farmers share their stories of the climate changes they’ve detected and how they’ve worked to adapt. It also recognized the interconnection between producing food and protecting the environment.

“These factors do interfere. And our faith has something to say about both,” Ramirez said, in that it’s fundamental there is enough food for all, but that it’s not responsible to expect individuals to just figure it out the way they have historically done,” she said.

While some farmers may still reject the notion of climate change at all, Ennis, Ramirez and others in the faith community have emphasized the need for farmers to recognize the importance of collective action from all sectors even if “you may not be feeling it in your own farm.”

Stockton Bishop Stephen Blaire, an active player in food and environmental issues, hailed addressing climate change a moral responsibility not only to protect the earth, but for the “service of humanity” in ensuring adequate food, water and health, a central facet to the farming vocation.”

“We have to protect it in a way that it can legitimately serve the human being,” Ramirez said.

For Ouweleen, his concern for climate change boils down to “just a simple stewardship role.”

That same factor motivated him to fight fracking in New York, to resist natural gas storage in the Finger Lakes. He’s even gotten to the point where he can now see his electricity is generated and at whose expense. In his mind, the land has a moral purpose that lies in the best realized in producing noble grapes.

“As a Catholic and as a Christian, I consider this a divine creation that’s been put in our charge, and we need to protect it, to care for it, to love it, and to give it back to the generations to come,” Ramirez said, “the Bible says... We should do our best to do our best,” he said.

(Brian Roeoe is an ACR staff writer. His email address is brooe@ncronline.org.)