

Not just Francis

Thursday - March 19, 2015

Thank you for Craig Smith's news story "[Political fallout predicted from papal letter on climate change](#)" (March 9 and [TribLIVE.com](#)) on the pope's upcoming climate-change encyclical. Citizens' Climate Lobby volunteers had the opportunity to hear a presentation by Lonnie Ellis of the Catholic Climate Coalition. Ellis noted that climate-change deniers are already trying to paint Pope Francis as different from previous popes in an effort to convince American society to ignore him.

It's important for us to remember that U.S. bishops have been writing and talking about climate change since 1981. Both Pope John Paul II and Pope Benedict XVI addressed environmental problems and fossil-fuel use. Pope Francis' encyclical will follow in these traditions.

In particular, Ellis thinks Francis will write about the virtue of prudence: We don't have to know everything to conclude we must take mitigating action now on climate change. I find it fascinating that prudence includes determining right action by using reasoned thought, learning from experience, being open-minded toward the authority of others, shrewdly evaluating situations, researching and comparing alternatives, assessing special circumstances and mitigating risk.

I hope the U.S. Senate is blessed with a special dose of prudence this year so that, relying on the wisdom of true scientific authorities (not just the few rogue voices on whom it wants to rely), it researches and compares alternative climate policies and enacts the one that will best mitigate potential risks.

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<http://triblive.com/opinion/letters/7948787-74/climate-pope-francis#axzz3UxUGF39Q>