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As citizens of the most powerful nation in human history, we have a unique responsibility to promote sustainable development, reduce our dependence on fossil fuels and build a thriving culture of life that protects human dignity. At their core, climate change and air pollution caused by the burning of fossil fuels are pro-life issues. The toxic pollution released from coal-fired plants and chemicals spewing into rivers and oceans present especially grave risks for life in the womb, young children and the elderly. The costs of delay are unacceptable. As Pope Francis wrote: “There is an 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.”

We urge elected officials to reflect on the pope’s words and recognize that climate change, poverty and extreme inequality – interconnected issues that can’t be understood in isolation – are defining challenges of our day. In a spirit of solidarity, we encourage presidential candidates, Members of Congress and governors who have raised doubts about the seriousness of climate change to consider the moral dimensions of this issue.

Pope Francis is not alone in calling for a response. Pope John Paul II, Pope Benedict XVI, Catholic bishops and diverse faith-based organizations have long been at the forefront of advocating for prudent action. Evangelical leaders issued an evangelical call to action in 2006 stating: “Christians must care about climate change because we are called to love each as Jesus Christ himself.”

We hope our nation’s politicians will address this profound moral issue and show the world that we can lead by example.

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