

# J.D. Vance Is Right and the Pope Is Wrong on “Climate Change”

Leftist Catholics are upset that J.D. Vance doesn't accept the mainstream narrative about climate change—charging that he's defying "Church teaching." Is this true?



[Austin Ruse](#)

Some on the political left-Catholic division have their panties in a bunch because Donald Trump named J.D. Vance as his running mate.

J.D. is a recent convert. **Converts are always suspect by the political left-Catholic division.** I converted almost 40 years ago and just yesterday got tut-tutted about being a “convert.” Stay in your lane, newbie! Learn the Faith before you opine! This big boy Catholic work is for cradles only! That’s the pitch, anyway.

**Now, there are issues with J.D. and some positions he has taken that run sideways with the Faith. He says he supports the abortion drug. This cannot be and has to change.**

He’s getting tagged for his opposition to illegal immigration. **But the Church does not give us the number of illegals we are required to take under Church doctrine, though I am pretty sure we are not required by our Faith to take any illegals, and it is undoubtedly not millions per year.**

And then there is “climate change.” We are told that we oppose Church teaching or that we are anti-Francis if we question

catastrophic man-made “climate change.” I know J.D. questions this scientific proposition. **What are we required to believe?**

Without a doubt, the Church teaches that we must care for creation. In our own lives, that means not littering, to be sure. Maybe it means running the air conditioner at 73 rather than 72. Actually, you can run that thing at 69 or 71 or 75. Pope Francis does not like air conditioning, but it is really up to you and not him. In fact, I make it a little cooler every time I hear someone, even bishops, claiming that Church teaching requires we must live a little warmer.

Look at the closest thing to Church teaching on “climate change”: the pope’s letter *Laudato Si’*. Advocates tell us that this is Church doctrine and that we are not Catholic if we do not give full religious assent to this document.

One of the striking claims in the document is that “The earth, our home, is beginning to look more and more like an immense pile of filth.” **This is Pope Francis. He says the earth is beginning to look like an immense pile of filth. Is this true? Are we required to give religious assent to this claim?**

**No, we are not. In fact, this is a false claim.** Like many claims of the climate catastrophists, you can test it with your own eyes. Are there places that need work? Certainly. But if the world is turning into an immense pile of filth, I have missed it, and I have traveled widely. Such polemics are not helpful.

But the political left-Catholic division says we must believe that the world is becoming an immense pile of filth. To this specific question, Rich Raho, a high school theology teacher at DePaul College Prep in Chicago and a leading popesplainer says, “*Laudato Si* is an official document published by Pope Francis and is part of the magisterium of the Church.” **The implication is we have to believe every jot and tittle of *Laudato Si’*.**

**The problem is that if some of *Laudato Si’* is up for grabs, how much more of it is up for grabs?** For instance,

the pope says in this document that “climate change” is real. This is one of the central assertions in *Laudato Si’*. If you question it, you are a cafeteria Catholic. Remember that “climate change” refers primarily to global warming, which is not disputable and is a good thing, as well as its effects and what might happen in the future. **The effects now and in the future are up for debate, not a doctrine of the Church.**

In an online exchange, I asked point-blank if we are required by our Faith to believe in “climate change.” The always reliable popesplainer Mike Lewis of *Where Peter Is* was quick to say, “Let me put it this way: I have difficulty imagining a scenario in which Austin Ruse has studied the issue—consulting with scientists and experts, exploring the peer-reviewed literature, etc.—sufficiently enough to come up with a contrary position to that of the last 3 popes.” So, yes, we are required by our Faith to believe in “climate change.”

To back this claim, a “physicist” named Bruno jumped in and posted a link from something called the “*Laudato Si’* Movement.” The link supposedly included the statements of recent popes on “climate change.” To be sure, Benedict mentioned “climate change” quite a bit. Sadly, even he erroneously believed that “climate change” has created more and bigger storms.

Then there is the problem that this website includes two documents by John Paul the Great that do not mention “climate change” at all. **And this is one of the problems with the climate catastrophists. They have this tendency to exaggerate. Actually, they exaggerate quite a bit.** We all remember the global ice age. They said we would soon be out of polar bears. This never happened. I recall they told us that lower Manhattan would be underwater by now and that the tiny island chain of Kiribati would disappear. Kiribati is still there, so are more and more polar bears.

**The bottom line for faithful Catholics is that we are not required to believe the world is turning into an**

**immense pile of filth, as Pope Francis asserts. Nor are we required to agree with his personal scientific view that catastrophic climate change is upon us or is even real.**

**Go get J.D. Vance on mifepristone; but, as far as Catholic teaching, he's fine on climate change.**

Author



**Austin Ruse**

Austin Ruse is a contributing editor to Crisis Magazine. He is president of the Center for Family and Human Rights in New York and Washington DC. He is the author of several books including, [Under Siege: No Finer Time to be a Faithful Catholic](#) (Crisis Publications). He can be reached at [austinruse@c-fam.org](mailto:austinruse@c-fam.org).