Pope Francis and the Population Problem

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The pope has come out against climate disruption and he is more articulate and compassionate than his recent predecessors. Certainly his encyclical on climate change is welcomed by Sierra Club members as well as others. Climate change or climate disruption is just one symptom of a planet overpopulated by its dominant animal, *Homo sapiens*.

The Pope is addressing poverty which is also a good thing. One of the best ways out of poverty is to provide contraception to poor women which enables them to have fewer children and thereby better their circumstances. The F. Scott Fitzgerald quote “the rich get richer and the poor get children” is still the state of the world. The Vatican has opposed provision of contraception to developing nations as far back as the 1950’s. Many Catholics in more developed nations have access to and use modern contraception. It is time for the Vatican to play catch up.

The Vatican remains out of step with all who understand the dire consequences of not addressing population growth and over consumption. Some consequences of the population explosion include, but are not limited to, refugees pouring into Europe, war, chaos, climate change, rising seas, myriad forms of pollution, depletion of resources: minerals, ores, oil, gas, soils, forests, and fisheries. We need to get our priorities straight. The future for humans is calamitous without more efforts to humanely reduce our numbers using voluntary family planning.

Today, 225 million women have no access to contraception and over 50 percent of pregnancies here and abroad are unplanned. Population is growing by 80 million a year and is projected to explode from 7 billion to 9 or 10 billion by 2050, yet our efforts and funding are miniscule relative to other spending, e.g., military and weapons.

The lack of contraception leads to unsafe illegal abortions in much of the world with an estimated 68,000 women dying and 5.3 million suffering disabilities annually. Certainly these facts should trouble a concerned, compassionate Pope. He did say Catholics don’t have to ‘breed like rabbits’, on his way back from the overpopulated Philippines, but has yet to condone modern methods of birth prevention. The planet and the poor would both benefit greatly, if the Pope supported modern contraception and sex education for all.

If you are concerned about population issues, join the CSWP. Our next meeting will be on January 10 in Sacramento. Contact Chuck Knutson, chuckknutson@gmail.com or (916) 524-9763 for details.