August 24, 2016

Dear Brothers in Christ,

I am pleased to announce that our Diocese’s new climate change initiative is off to a strong start. Last month we joined our nonprofit partner Green Power at Resurrection Church in Aptos to train 100 Catholics representing parishes from King City to Davenport to “Care for our Common Home.” These are the words of our Holy Father Pope Francis, who, in his encyclical Laudato Si, made clear that Earth’s changing climate threatens us all, especially the poor, and is due to human activity. He asked us to move away from fossil fuels and towards cleaner sources of energy, like wind and solar, and to consume less – so that our earth and all living beings may flourish.

Today I’m pleased to add a new component to our Diocesan-wide climate campaign. The Diocese is now supporting “Community Choice Energy” (CCE). In 2002, California passed a law enabling Community Choice Energy, which allows cities and counties to take over their own electricity supplies and thereby choose the price and source of the electricity they use. Six other states permit CCE, but California is the first state to pass CCE with a clear environmental focus. Four regions in our state, including Sonoma, Marin, Lancaster and San Francisco, have already started successful programs that use much more renewable energy while reducing electricity costs for everyone.

The Monterey Bay area has been preparing to adopt CCE for the past three years, and between now and October 31st city councils and boards of supervisors throughout Monterey, Santa Cruz and San Benito Counties will vote on whether to join a CCE for our tri-county area. Our CCE is called Monterey Bay Community Power, or MBCP. The areas that join MBCP will cut their reliance upon fossil fuels for electricity in half within one year by using more energy from renewable sources like solar and wind; over ten years, these areas could potentially receive 85% of their electricity from renewable sources.

There are also economic reasons why we as Catholics should support Community Choice Energy: Monterey Bay Community Power will be a nonprofit, public agency; therefore, any surpluses generated from the sale of electricity will be spent meeting local needs. These local interests include reducing electricity costs for consumers, building solar fields and wind farms and creating jobs. To give an example of the potential, Sonoma County, whose CCE has operated for only two years, already has $35 million in surpluses to pour back into their local economy. Monterey Bay Community Power will likely be twice as large as Sonoma’s and so potentially have twice the surpluses.

In light of these environmental and economic benefits, which align with what Pope Francis is calling for, I am endorsing Community Choice Energy on behalf of the Diocese of Monterey – and I ask that you mobilize Catholic support for passage of CCE within your
parishes. Our nonprofit partner, Green Power – a project of the faith-based Romero Institute – is available to work with you to advocate for CCE passage. They will develop petition campaigns and other actions to demonstrate the Catholic community’s support for Community Choice between now and the October 31st voting deadline. Please expect to hear from Green Power, especially if you are in a region where support for CCE is much needed (e.g. Monterey and San Benito Counties.) Stay tuned!

In the meantime, if you need more information, please contact Deacon Warren Hoy at whoy@dioceseofmonterey.org or (831) 645-2845.

Fraternally in Christ,

+Most Reverend Richard J. Garcia
Bishop of the Diocese of Monterey