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## **POPE FRANCIS' CLIMATE CHANGE ENCYCLICAL NOT BINDING ON CATHOLICS**

Pope Francis' encyclical on climate change should not be treated as official Catholic doctrine binding on all Catholics, but rather a personal position of the Pope, according to Father James Grant, Adjunct Fellow at the Institute of Public Affairs.

"Many will see the Pope's encyclical as the official position of the Church on the area of climate change. This is simply not the case," says Father James.

"An encyclical is meant to provide spiritual guidance from the Pope on a particular subject, for bishops to then discuss with their faithful. In Catholic doctrine, it is completely acceptable for Catholics to disagree with the opinions of the Pope in an encyclical."

"So while the encyclical will hold significant weight in the Catholic community, there is nothing new in the debate regarding encyclicals. Catholics can feel safe in being sceptical about the Pope's opinions," says Father James.

"While it is reasonable for the Pope to use his moral authority on issues such as the Trinity or the nature of God, it is altogether different if a Catholic disagrees with a Pope on his environmental views."

A draft of the encyclical appeared on Monday night. In it, Pope Francis expresses his concerns about climate change, and of the "urgent and compelling" need to reduce carbon emissions.

"Climate change is a scientific debate. It is entirely legitimate for people of faith to disagree on the science of climate change and what, if anything, should be done about it," says Father James.

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**Father James Grant is a Catholic Priest and founder of Chaplains Without Borders, and Catholics in Business. He is the author of *Resurgence: Revitalising Western Catholicism*, has founded two schools in India, and has been a Priest for more than 30 years.**