

Forum on Religion and Ecology at Yale
<http://fore.yale.edu/>

Religion and Ecology News Articles

January – April 2015

January 2015

Green Church Newsletter

http://egliseverte-greenchurch.ca/green/index.php?option=com_acymailing&ctrl=archive&task=view&mailid=56&key=415afdd1b9563923821f5e5ce9c0009a&subid=189-dbe0c9b642707e4c37fc810b1cf1134f

January 2015

Eco-Congregation Scotland Newsletter

<http://us9.campaign-archive2.com/?u=a37b4ff760ffcc7fd1c3611b4&id=862a87b1d0&e=709fe41ec4>

January 2015

“Climate Change” issue

Friends Journal

Some of the articles in the issue include:

[*Allen’s Neck Meeting Clambake Celebrates 125 Years*](#)

By [Joseph E. Ingoldsby](#)

[*Affirming the Heart of Climate Advocacy*](#)

By [Jose Aguto and Emily Wirzba](#)

[*Taking Heart*](#)

By [Marcia Cleveland](#)

[*The Lambs War and Climate Change*](#)

By [Will Taber](#)

[Allowing Ourselves to Be Bold](#)

By [George Lakey](#)

[Climate Change Is a Hot Mess](#)

By [Karie Firoozmand](#)

For more, visit:

<http://www.friendsjournal.org/category/2015/january-2015/>

January 2015

Earth Keeper Newsletter

Southern African Faith Communities' Environment Institute

<http://us6.campaign-archive1.com/?u=887c3de8b0&id=cf5449b637&e=a758405790>

January 1, 2015

Can a Christian Make Conservatives Care About Climate Change?

Meet the 29-year-old using her conservative pedigree to help save the planet

By Coco McPherson

Rolling Stone

Anna Jane Joyner is evangelical royalty: Her father, Rick Joyner, founded a South Carolina-based megachurch with 1,000 congregations in 59 countries. But Anna Jane had a political come-to-Jesus moment while at UNC, where she embraced progressive politics. Today, at 29, she's the millennial face of a growing national movement that seeks to convince America's 80 million evangelicals that biblical tenets are compatible with environmentalism. "There's a huge host of faith communities who get it theologically, who even get the science piece of it," Joyner says. "But they're not mobilized in taking action."

Last year, Joyner was featured in Showtime's documentary series *Years of Living Dangerously*, where she debated climate change with her father in a gripping segment. "What I found was that his resistance had very little to do with theology and much more to do with his entrenched political ideology," she says. "Conservative talking heads and think tanks don't have to prove the science, they just have to introduce an element of doubt."

Lately, Joyner is working with Here Now, a group testing new tactics for engaging hard-to-reach audiences – including evangelicals – around climate change. And she's excited about an even bigger name in the faith-based community than her dad: Pope Francis, who will release a papal

encyclical on the climate this year. "We're experiencing climate impacts, but we have the solutions ready to go," says Joyner. "Renewable energy is an economic driver and a climate solution, and getting [Obama's] Clean Power Plan enacted is critical."

<http://www.rollingstone.com/culture/features/anna-jane-joyner-christian-activist-conservatives-climate-change-20150101#ixzz3OxGBkTG8>

January 2, 2015

2015 could be the year we save the earth

By NCR Editorial Staff
National Catholic Reporter

When it comes to our planet's health, "2015 could be a decisive year in history," Bishop Marcelo Sánchez Sorondo, chancellor of the Pontifical Academy of Sciences, told a gathering in London in November. We agree with the bishop: 2015 could go down in history as the year we saved the earth. We hope Catholics around the world can muster the spiritual and political clout to help make it happen.

The developments in early December out of Peru signal that a concrete, global solution for addressing climate change might well be within reach. [The Lima Accord](#) was an important breakthrough, representing the first time that each of the 195 member-nations in the U.N. Framework Convention on Climate Change agreed to make commitments to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Deadlines for submitting carbon-cutting plans come in March and June, and U.N. meetings in Geneva (February) and in Bonn, Germany (June), will further shape the Lima document before possible finalization in Paris in December. The year holds great possibilities, but it will be a long, hard fight against vested interests in the fossil fuel industry and global economic status quo.

Those looking for a strong voice for sustainability and environmental stewardship could find an able ally in Pope Francis. Faith-based communities can expect an accurate road map to the issues early in 2015 when Francis is expected to release his long-awaited encyclical on the environment. Francis will use the document to teach Catholics — as well as other religious and secular communities — about creation, humans' relations to it, and the state of the climate. If usual patterns with this pope hold true, it should spark intense global interest and prompt much conversation, within parishes, among bishops and in society at large, thanks to media coverage.

That Francis has selected the environment for his first solo encyclical (*Lumen Fidei* was largely written by Pope Benedict XVI) is in itself significant. Judging from his comments so far, Francis won't likely wax poetically about the fate of frozen tundra or endangered species, as much as he will place special focus on the human elements involved — both in the mistreatment of the planet and the resulting mistreatment of its people, particularly the world's poor.

"Respect for nature also calls for recognizing that man himself is a fundamental part of it. Along with an environmental ecology, there is also need of that human ecology which consists in respect for the person," he told the European Parliament in November.

Additionally, the Vatican has floated the idea of hosting religious leaders at some point this year to further raise climate awareness ahead of the Paris summit. We hope Francis can duplicate in climate change negotiations the diplomatic acumen he demonstrated in cracking a 60-year stalemate in U.S.-Cuba relations.

As for the U.S., President Barack Obama clearly sees climate change as a legacy issue, and he will spend his remaining time in office addressing it. The mid-November deal he made with China, the world's leading greenhouse gas emitter (the U.S. is second), gave needed momentum to the Lima talks.

The groundwork for U.S. commitments, though, will become a battleground once the 114th Congress is sworn into office. Incoming majority leader Sen. Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., has stated his first priority will be a bill approving construction of the highly contentious Keystone XL pipeline.

Politicians from coal country, McConnell included, are also dead set against the Environmental Protection Agency's proposed Clean Power Plan, which would greatly reduce emissions from coal- and gas-fired power plants.

On behalf of the U.S. bishops, Archbishop Thomas Wenski of Miami and Bishop Richard Pates of Des Moines, Iowa, wrote to the EPA in July supporting national carbon reduction standards and encouraging Catholics to weigh in during a public commenting period that ended Dec. 1.

We applaud these efforts and encourage the U.S. bishops to do more. They have pulpits, blogs and diocesan newspapers as platforms and will have Francis' encyclical to form their message. By further leveraging alliances with groups like Franciscan Action Network and Catholic Climate Covenant, Catholics could become opinion leaders for carbon reduction in 2015.

<http://nronline.org/blogs/eco-catholic/editorial-2015-could-be-year-we-save-earth>

January 5, 2015

Pope Francis climate change call to action makes waves in faith communities

CBC/Radio-Canada

The Current

With Anna Maria Tremonti

The Catholic Church is about to bring the influence of the Holy See to the issue of climate change. Today, we look at the religious push to protect the environment.

[Download the podcast](#)

A few months ago, Pope Francis urged humanity to have more respect for nature, saying that we are the custodians of a planet created by God.

It's not for nothing that the Pope chose to name himself after St. Francis of Assisi -- the Patron Saint of Ecology who, it is said, preached to birds and blessed wolves.

The environment may feature highly among the Pope's priorities in 2015. There are reports that Pope Francis will issue a powerful edict -- called an Encyclical -- telling the Catholic world to step up the fight against climate change. And news of the Pontiff's environmental intentions have made waves -- both within the Catholic world and outside it.

For more on this we were joined by:

- [Heather Eaton](#) is as an ecological Catholic Theologian at Saint Paul University in Ottawa.
- [Asma Mahdi](#) is an environmental scientist and a board member of a non-governmental organization called [Green Muslims](#) in Washington.
- [Jim Wallis](#) is a Christian Evangelical writer and political activist and the founder of [Sojourners magazine](#). He was in Daytona Beach, Florida.

We want to hear from you. What's the role of religion in taking action against climate change? Let us know what you think.

Tweet us [@thecurrentcbc](#). Or [e-mail us](#) through our website. Find us on [Facebook](#). Call us toll-free at 1 877 287 7366. And as always if you missed anything on *The Current*, grab a [podcast](#).

This segment was produced by The Current's Marc Apollonio and Ines Colabrese.

<http://www.cbc.ca/thecurrent/episode/2015/01/05/pope-francis-climate-change-religion/>

January 5, 2015

Why Pope Francis is going green in 2015

Pope Francis has made an ambitious New Year's resolution: help heal human relations with all of creation.

By Stephen Scharper
The Star

While many make New Year resolutions involving better exercise, improved diet, and enhanced time management, Pope Francis appears to have adopted a slightly broader New Year's objective: to help heal human relations with all of creation.

This past December, having been cited by U.S. President Barack Obama as a key player in the thawing of U.S.-Cuba relations, and having vigorously challenged the Vatican bureaucracy to be more pastorally grounded, the pontiff in 2015 will be turning his impressive energies to climate change.

In March 2015, [according to The Guardian](#), following a visit in Tacloban, the Philippine city ravaged by typhoon Haiyan in 2012, the pope will issue an encyclical on climate change and human ecology, the first environmentally themed encyclical in history.

He is also slated to address the UN General Assembly in September and convene a summit of world religious leaders to address climate change.

According to Bishop Marcelo Sorondo, chancellor of the Vatican's Pontifical Academy of Sciences, the pope hopes to influence next year's crucial UN climate meeting in Paris, when countries will attempt to finalize two decades of troubled negotiations with a universal and binding commitment to reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

According to Yale religion and environment professor Mary Evelyn Tucker, co-founder of the Forum on Religion and Ecology, the forthcoming encyclical will be one of the "most important" documents dealing with the moral implications of climate change, and will explore environmental justice concerns, including how the poor and other vulnerable groups are deeply impacted by global "climate disruption."

For Dennis Patrick O'Hara, professor of ecological theology at the Toronto School of Theology, Francis's forthcoming encyclical is an "important new development."

Whereas Popes John Paul II and Benedict XVI expressed environmental concerns in selected messages and addresses, O'Hara notes that an encyclical "has a much greater level of authority" than a message or an address. In addition, Francis has tended to see humanity "as more intimately related to the rest of creation" than his predecessors, suggesting a novel papal approach to the issue.

Once published, the encyclical will be shared with the world's 5,000 Catholic bishops and over 400,000 priests, who will then potentially incorporate it in their pastoral ministries and share it with their communities.

Why, one wonders, is the pope doing all of this?

The reasons might be threefold.

First, perhaps Pope Francis wishes to make clear that when it comes to matters of creation, the church should be a major player, not a marginal voice. The earth is not just a geopolitical arena,

but it is also, from an ecclesial perspective, God's creation, and is thus of central concern to the church. Rather than waiting to simply be invited to the table of secular climate change colloquies, Pope Francis is helping set the table.

Second, perhaps Francis is underscoring that this is not just a question of policies and carbon emissions, critical as they are, but it is also one of persons, especially poor and vulnerable persons, who often contribute the least to carbon emissions but suffer the most from "climate chaos" in the form of floods, drought, typhoons, and wildly whipsawing weather patterns.

Building on the social teachings of the church, especially the "option for the poor," Pope Francis may well be underscoring that climate change, for both ecological and social reasons, is the defining moral reality of our time. As such, it requires the social, political, and moral teachings and imagination of the world's largest Christian community.

Third, might Pope Francis be suggesting that climate change is not only a moral crisis, but a deeply spiritual crisis as well, one that cuts to the core of who we are and how we relate to all that is? Might he be suggesting that a sustainable solution to this morass is not going to happen outside of a spiritual as well as political and economic framework? Through these myriad green initiatives, might he be picking up a spiritual piece that other world leaders cannot?

If he is picking up that piece, he will be handling it, if his early pontificate be any guide, with compassion, simplicity, gravitas and courage — enviable gifts to bring to any conversation concerning faith and the fate of the earth.

Stephen Bede Scharper is professor of religion and environment at the University of Toronto. His column appears monthly. Stephen.scharper@utoronto.ca

http://www.thestar.com/opinion/commentary/2015/01/05/why_pope_francis_is_going_green_in_2015_scharper.html

January 6, 2015

Pope Francis plants a flag in the ground on climate change

The Pope's expected actions continue a tradition of leadership

By John Abraham
The Guardian

Make no mistake about it, there is no longer any rationale for division between science and faith. Over the past decades, scientists and persons of faith have learned to dance in a complementary manner, a "non-overlapping magisterium" as the saying sometimes goes. But as prior conflicts were found to be more molehill than mountain, leaders among the scientific and religious communities have explored collaborative ways to answer scientific questions and provide

solutions to real-world problems that reflect a universal motivation to care for our fellow humans and honor our religious traditions.

Such collaboration is necessary, particularly in areas where the impacts of science so deeply affect the lives of people around the world. A present example comes from our changing climate. As I've written in these pages before, [my work in the developing world](#) has provided me with first-hand experience of how somewhat abstract and theoretical "global warming" studied in my office in the United States is manifested as human impacts, particularly in subsistence agricultural nations. These subsistence countries are already feeling the impacts of climate change. Ironically, [those with the least ability to adapt are being impacted beyond their contribution to the problem](#).

I am a scientist and my motivation for studying climate change is driven by both a desire to understand the Earth's environment, but also to provide information for decision makers. What are the impacts of taking certain actions? How will they affect the future climate of our children? But that is as far as my science hat can take me. The actual decisions we make to deal with climate change must come from the values of our society and the cost-benefit analyses of taking action.

But there are some in our society who specialize in human values, they think about what actions reflect ethical and moral values we hold as a collective society; in some cases, these are religious leaders.

[A recent news splash](#) was made of predictions of an encyclical soon to be given by Pope Francis, the spiritual leader of the Catholic Church with its 1.2 billion members. This encyclical is expected to further solidify the Catholic Church's strong stance on climate change and its focus on the impact to people around the globe. As examples of this tradition, the US Conference of Catholic Bishops [made early and public statements](#) about the challenge of climate change. Among other statements, [in 2011, Pope Benedict XVI strongly supported international climate change action](#). And now, Pope Francis continues that tradition. But this soon-to-be released encyclical should properly be viewed as a continuation of strong statements he has made since ascending to the papacy.

I asked [Dr. Michael Naughton](#), Professor of Catholic Studies at the University of St. Thomas about the significance of the expected encyclical. He told me,

For Francis, our ecological crisis highlights how important the relationship between faith and science is. On one hand, science enriches faith by protecting it from superstition and ideologies. On the other hand, faith helps science to see the deeper human implications of the reality in front of it. One of the terms that will most likely to come from Francis' encyclical is 'human ecology,' which sees our ecological crisis in terms of both our natural as well as cultural and social environments.

While it is not clear what will be in the encyclical, it likely will urge Catholics around to world to take action in their own lives to preserve the environment for themselves, others, and for future generations. The urging will be based on both moral and scientific bases. It may surprise people,

but the Catholic Church has long had active and informed scientific bodies which have informed the papacy, in fact there is a [Pontifical Academy of Sciences](#) which serves such a purpose.

While it remains to be seen what long-term impact there is from this encyclical, it is clear that there is a continued emergence of a science-informed, religiously motivated cause for action. Actions that will help the most vulnerable of this world prepare for, and even avoid, the worst consequences of climate change. When people of faith and people of science work together for a common goal, a tremendous potential is realized.

Professor Naughton added his perspective on this forthcoming action, saying,

Francis will no doubt, in his punchy and prophetic tone, draw our attention to a market system that too often treats the environment like a commodity in what he describes as a “throw away” culture. As he is never tired of repeating, the poor suffer the most from our ecological crisis. He will confront this “logic of the market” with a “logic of gift” that views the earth to be shared with all of humanity—a gift in need of great care and attention.

I couldn't have said it better.

<http://www.theguardian.com/environment/climate-consensus-97-per-cent/2015/jan/06/pope-francis-plants-flag-in-ground-on-climate-change>

January 7, 2015

'Rock-star pope' intends to amplify his climate message

By Scott Detrow, E&E reporter
ClimateWire

Pope Francis has led the Catholic Church for less than two years. But during that short window, he has breathed new life into a religion struggling with apathy and scandal; earned the praise of social justice activists around the world for an intense focus on poverty; and even played a role in ending a half-century-old stalemate between Cuba and the United States.

So environmental activists were excited to [read](#) in *The Guardian* last week that Francis will add to this busy agenda by making climate change a top priority in 2015.

Like many of Francis' high-profile statements and actions, the move is simultaneously rooted in the Catholic Church's teachings and somewhat unprecedented.

Francis is not the first pope to tackle climate change. Both of his immediate predecessors -- church leaders with well-established conservative roots -- spoke bluntly on the matter. But the formal document Francis plans to issue later this year will be the first time a pontiff has devoted the entire text of a papal encyclical to environmental issues.

Environmentalists hope the document could provide momentum to the push to curb greenhouse gas emissions ahead of December's United Nations climate conference in Paris.

'Speaking up' in a more formal way

Francis has generated global headlines for comments ranging from whether gay men can serve as priests to the validity of the Big Bang theory. All of these remarks came during speeches or off-the-cuff statements at press conferences and papal audiences. Preparing a formal statement of church policy, called an encyclical, is much different.

"While popular media is always enthusiastic about any new utterance by this beloved pope, not all utterances are created equal in the realm of the Catholic Church," explained Christiana Peppard, an assistant professor of theology, science and ethics at Fordham University.

"An encyclical is a document that has one of the highest forms of authority of any teaching in the church."

Recent popes have regularly called for more environmental stewardship, and they've spoken out on the specific topic of climate change, but no encyclical to date has solely focused on the environment.

"This is really exciting," said Jame Schaefer, an associate professor of systematic theology and ethics at Marquette University.

"For people who are already engaged [on climate change], it's very exciting to have that affirmation from the head of a church. It's important for them to ... feel, wow, we've got a leader from a world religion speaking up."

Many Vatican observers view a recent speech by Argentine Bishop Marcelo Sanchez Sorondo as a kind of preview of what Francis will call for in the document. In the November [speech](#), Sorondo said, "If current trends continue, this century will witness unprecedented climate change and the destruction of the ecosystem, with tragic consequences for us all. Human action that doesn't respect nature has a boomerang effect on human beings, creating inequality."

A deeper commitment, not a departure

On a wide range of topics, Francis has departed from the conservative style and substance of his immediate predecessors, Benedict XVI and the recently canonized John Paul II. That's not the case with climate change.

John Paul delivered [high-profile remarks](#) on the topic as early as 1990. "The gradual depletion of the ozone layer and related 'greenhouse effect' has now reached crisis proportions as a consequence of industrial growth, massive urban concentrations and vastly increased energy needs," he said during a World Day of Peace message.

Benedict earned praise as "the green pope" from some quarters for a series of symbolic actions on climate change. He installed solar panels near St. Peter's Basilica, used offset purchases to make Vatican City the world's first carbon-neutral state and even purchased an electric "Popemobile" ([Greenwire](#), March 1, 2013).

In a wide-ranging 2009 [encyclical](#), Benedict addressed energy consumption. "The technologically advanced societies can and must lower their domestic energy consumption," he wrote, "either through an evolution in manufacturing methods or through greater ecological sensitivity among their citizens. It should be added that at present it is possible to achieve improved energy efficiency while at the same time encouraging research into alternative forms of energy."

Upcoming speech for the U.N.

But Benedict's 2009 document didn't exactly galvanize the world's 1 billion Catholics to reduce their carbon emissions. The fact is, Peppard said, "most lay people ... don't read encyclicals. They're a somewhat heavy and plodding genre."

Environmental advocates hope Francis' growing global appeal and clout could lead to a different outcome. "A lot of people in positions of power would love to have his approval ratings. He's enormously popular," said Dan Misleh, the executive director of the environmental group Catholic Climate Covenant.

"This is the rock-star pope," said 350.org spokesman Jamie Henn. "For him to take bold leadership on climate change and go beyond the usual rhetoric would send shockwaves through the global community." The climate activist group is urging Francis to take the message a step further and divest the church's massive financial portfolio from the oil and gas industry.

The encyclical's timing could help its message resonate beyond church theologians. The Vatican is expected to release the document in the coming months, ahead of a high-profile U.N. summit on climate change in Paris. And with Francis likely to visit and address the United Nations in New York City this fall, the encyclical could provide the pontiff with material to address the issue head-on to a room full of global leaders.

<http://www.eenews.net/stories/1060011220>

January 8, 2015

Muslim Groups Give \$100,000 To Help Detroiters Without Water, Say It's 'Part Of Our Faith To Help'

By Robbie Couch
Huffington Post

Two Islamic organizations are alleviating Detroit's water crisis with a generous donation that'll benefit some of the city's poorest residents.

Islamic Relief USA and the Michigan Muslim Community Council (MMCC) [have donated \\$100,000](#) to the [Detroit Water Fund](#) and [Wayne Metropolitan Community Action Agency](#) to help the groups assist Detroiters with making their water bill payments, the Associated Press reported.

Beginning last spring, the city has been [shutting off water](#) for residents with overdue balances -- a move the United Nations deemed a [human rights violation](#).

More than [31,300 residents](#) have had their water turned off since January 2013, the AP reported.

At a press conference on Wednesday, officials noted that both Islamic Relief USA (the largest Muslim charity organization in the U.S.) and the MMCC agreed to give [\\$50,000 each](#) in funds earmarked for residents with past-due accounts with the water department, The Detroit News reported.

"We are hoping this [is going to be contagious](#)," Anwar Khan, CEO of Islamic Relief USA, said in a statement, according to the Detroit News. "The most important thing we have is not our money, it's our energy and our enthusiasm, and it's our people ... Also, it is important to us in our faith to help our neighbors. It is a part of our faith to help our friends."

HuffPost blogger Engy Abdelkader spoke to Dr. Muzammil Ahmed, chair of the MMCC, about Detroit shutting off water to some of its most vulnerable residents -- an act the chair called ["outrageous."](#)

Ahmed said he'd brainstormed with Islamic Relief USA's leadership and local city officials on how to help a community in need. Ultimately, they decided on giving water -- ["the best form of charity](#), according to Islamic tradition."

"There is a lot of frustration and pessimism among Muslims, and people of faith in general, due to the horrific things that have been done in the name of God and religion over the past year," Dr. Ahmed said, according to Abdelkader's blog. "But there are [far more wonderful things that can be done](#) and that are being done, inspired by our faith and our love for our fellow neighbors."

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2015/01/08/muslim-group-detroit-water_n_6437506.html

January 8, 2015

When the Anthropocene Came to Halji

By Chris Crews
State of Formation

This is the second in a multi-part series discussing sacred landscapes and religion in the Himalaya. Read the first post [here](#).

The rocky trail we had been hiking all day along the Limi River was interspersed with a mix of subalpine trees and large boulder fields, followed by a low stone wall alongside empty fields. As we crossed an old wooden bridge constructed of hand hewn logs and stones, a wide field of barley in various stages of harvest slowly came into view. The field was interspersed with a winding network of small streams, all nestled inside a small river valley. We were about to enter the village of Halji, our first destination in the remote Limi Valley of far western Nepal. Although I did not realize it as we crossed the bridge, we were entering another community on the front lines of a new era of climate chaos, or what some have taken to calling the [Anthropocene](#).

After traveling in this area for several weeks, it's easy to appreciate how vulnerable many of these Himalayan communities are to the impacts of climate change, especially those located at higher altitudes where glacial melt poses a serious threat. Halji, the village we had just entered, is a poster child for what at-risk mountain communities facing an increasingly unstable and erratic climate future look like. Although we don't tend to talk about the issue as much, climate change also poses serious threats to everyday religious practices, especially when sacred sites are located in vulnerable areas. As we spent time in Limi Valley, and talked with locals there, it became clear that what we were seeing in Halji was a portend of a much larger climate trend across the Himalaya.

Halji is located in a small river valley, surrounded by mountains on all sides, with less than one hundred families living there. At one end of the valley, located at the base of one of the mountain slopes, is the main Halji settlement, a cluster of several dozen stone houses and a large monastery complex. Directly behind this area the mountains rise hundreds of meters, and behind one side of this mountain range lies a [series of glacial lakes](#) that have formed and expanded thanks to the increasing ice melt from the top of the mountain.

In early 2006, these glacial lakes began to burst, leading to a phenomenon scientists call a glacial lake outburst flood, or [GLOF](#), which can destroy entire towns in an instant. On the afternoon of June 30, 2011, one such flood occurred. It washed away part of Halji, and in the process destroyed several homes and threatened a historically important *gompa*, or monastery, located in the middle of the village and close to the outflow path from the flood. By chance, a Norwegian graduate student was conducting fieldwork in the village at the time of the flood, and [recounted the incident firsthand](#) for the *Nepali Times*.

At around 4:30 pm there was a loud roar from up the valley, and everyone ran out of their houses. At first, the raging brown water was retained by the gabion walls, the last stretch of which was built only a month earlier. Soon, the embankments gave way and the water and the boulders raced towards the village with great force.

The ground shook and the water was nearly black because of the landslides along the banks. People managed to evacuate in time and move most of their belongings, but had to watch as their homes and fields were carried away.

Amazingly, no humans were killed, but the damage was done. When we visited the village three and a half years later, the damage was still clearly evident, with exposed building sides and a large debris pile where several houses had been sucked into the raging flood waters. The village had rebuilt and the residents had extended a rock retaining wall as protection from future flood surges, but it was obvious to our group as we walked through the outflow area that the new stone walls wouldn't stop another severe flood.

Villagers in Halji are aware of their precarious situation, and have continued to petition the Nepali government for additional support to address this ongoing climate risk. Some outside groups and individuals, including the graduate student Astrid Hovden who witnessed the 2011 flood, have attempted to raise funds and public attention to help address the issue. Although some aid was sent, the larger glacial flood issue remains.

Besides the human and nonhuman lives at risk, there is a worry that another significant GLOF could damage or destroy Halji's Rinchenling Gompa, which would be an irreplaceable cultural and historic loss. The monastery is estimated to have been built in the 11th century, and has been connected to the legendary Buddhist figure [Rinchen Zangpo](#), who helped spread Buddhism throughout Tibet and Nepal, making it a historically important site for those studying the transmission of Buddhism from India to Tibet and Nepal. Based on recent dating of the central, [four-fold Vairocana statue](#) inside the temple, the Halji monastery may also be [one of the oldest](#) such monasteries in Nepal, which could make it a potential candidate for a UN World Heritage Site designation and an important site for religious pilgrims and cultural tourism.

Discussing the damages she documented while working in the area with the online journal *Asian Art*, [Hovden wrote](#):

Since the flooding started in 2006 more than 100 fields have been washed away and another 100 fields were completely covered by sand and rendered useless by the recent flood. Some of the livestock is reported missing after the flood and a few of the families have lost all their fields. Food aid will therefore be needed for the winter.

Water mills and important infrastructure like bridges and sections of the main road through the valley were also washed away, and virtually the whole path at the bank of the flooding river leading up to their pastures in a neighbouring valley was completely flooded.

As anyone familiar with climate change in Southeast Asia knows, increasingly frequent floods and more erratic and damaging monsoons are becoming the new norm across the Himalaya. The future for villages like Halji will only grow more dangerous, not less. As climate instability leads to more coastal flooding and melting mountain glaciers, both highland and lowland communities will increasingly have to address and make sense of climate-related disasters in their own backyards. When we spoke with the head monk of the Rinchenling Gompa, he told us that initially many villagers thought the floods were due to local spirits or deities being upset with the village, but after recent events they are convinced climate change is the real source of the problems, not angry mountain spirits.

In this respect, Halji is emblematic of wider changes across the Himalayan region. Just over a year earlier, in the summer of 2013, floods [devastated Northern India](#) and portions of the Himalaya, including the [Kedarnath Temple](#) and surrounding Kedarnath valley, killing dozens of religious pilgrims who were making their *yatra*, or pilgrimage, to Hindu holy sites in the region. Ominous scenes like those broadcast on Indian television from Uttarakhand, where a large [statue of Lord Shiva in Rishikesh](#) was first submerged, then washed away completely, by the raging water of the Ganges River, are becoming increasingly common. According to the Indian government, more than [5,500 people died](#) in the aftermath of these floods, and millions of rupees of damage was done. Last year saw more erratic monsoons and drought conditions across India, Pakistan and Bangladesh, a trend climate scientists tell us is not likely to improve.

Scientists and writers claim we may now be living in the Anthropocene, a new epoch defined by human actions so immense they are forcing changes to the entire planet that are outside historical norms and without precedent. Despite what commentators like Andrew Revkin claim, there is no such thing as a “[good Anthropocene](#).” For mountain communities like Halji, and coastal cities like New York or New Orleans, increasingly the only options left for us in the Anthropocene are adaptation or extinction. This point was driven home a few days before we departed for western Nepal, when more than [40 people were killed](#) on the Annapurna Circuit in Nepal after Cyclone Hudhud caused a freak snowstorm and series of devastating avalanches, leading to one of the worst trekking disasters in Nepal’s history.

Welcome to a brave new world. Welcome to the Anthropocene.

(For those interested in the Rinchenling Gompa, I have included a series of photos I took, to give a sense of its importance.)

<http://www.stateofformation.org/2015/01/when-the-anthropocene-came-to-halji/>

January 8, 2015

Pope Francis, the climate activist

The world may hear more about the Pope's coming encyclical on climate change when he visits Tacloban City this January

By Pia Ranada
Passig City Rappler

MANILA, Philippines – Many are familiar with Pope Francis' love for the poor and his commitment to a simple lifestyle, but did you know that he is also a devoted activist for climate change awareness and a passionate environmentalist?

In fact, the leader of the Catholic Church has promised that his first encyclical will be about climate change. Vatican insiders say it could be released early this year, in time to influence an important international climate change [conference](#) to be held in Paris in December 2015.

It's no coincidence that one of the Pope's first travels for the year will be to the Philippines, recently ranked the country most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. He'll be making a visit to Tacloban City, ground zero of Super Typhoon Haiyan, said to be one of the strongest storms to make landfall.

In a "mini-encyclical" he delivered last October 28 at the World Meeting of Popular Movements, he blamed global warming and the "plunder of nature" to an excessive economic system centered on the "god of money."

The Pope highlighted that, ironically, those who bear the brunt of ecological devastation are those at the fringes of such an economy.

"Climate change, the loss of bio-diversity, deforestation are already showing their devastating effects in the great cataclysms we witness, and you are the ones who suffer most, the humble, those who live near coasts in precarious dwellings or who are so vulnerable economically that, in the face of a natural disaster, lose everything," he said.

The speech, one of the longest in Pope Francis' papacy (6 pages long, single-spaced), shows his deep concern for the topic.

But you need not look farther than his name to know where his soft spot lies. Among the Leos, John Pauls and Piuses, this Pope took on the name of nature-loving St Francis of Assisi.

Bishop Marcelo Sanchez Sorondo, Chancellor of the Pontifical Academy of Sciences said to be close to the Pope told Catholic news site *The Tablet*, "The Pope is very aware that the consequences of climate change affect all people, but especially the poor. This is the moral consequence, the moral imperative."

The Pope's visit to the Philippines this month is not the first time he's shown the spotlight on the country in the context of the environment. In the most important document of his papacy, he quoted Philippine bishops to illustrate how environmental degradation is a "painful disfigurement."

"Here I would make my own the touching and prophetic lament voiced some years ago by the bishops of the Philippines," he says in section 215 of *Evangelii Gaudium*.

He then quotes a Pastoral Letter written by the Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines: "God intended this land for us, his special creatures, but not so that we might destroy it and turn it into a wasteland...How can fish swim in sewers like the Pasig and so many more rivers which we have polluted? Who has turned the wonderworld of the seas into underwater cemeteries bereft of color and life?"

Climate and social justice

A papal encyclical is a rare document that could wield great influence on the world. Technically defined as the Pope's letter to bishops and Catholic churches all over the world, it not only defines papacies but can inspire revolutions.

'Climate change is about social justice. A Church committed to defend and serve the poor must work to find solutions that will have its greatest impact on the poorest countries, communities and families.'

- Tony La Viña, environmental lawyer

Some world-changing encyclicals from previous popes include *Redemptor Hominis* by Pope John Paul II, in which he confronted the ideology of communism, and Pope Leo XIII's *Rerum Novarum* in which he tackled the ills of industrialization and urbanization.

When Pope Francis publishes his encyclical on climate change, it will be sent to the 5,000 Catholic bishops and 400,000 priests with the goal of reaching all of the world's 1.2 billion Catholics.

Climate change experts and environmentalists in the Philippines are heartened by the Pope's eagerness to get involved with an issue often deemed too complicated or abstract by most people. (READ: [What PH did about climate change in 2014](#))

Jesuit priest, scientist and Ateneo de Manila president Fr Jett Villarin, who has joined the Pope in calling climate change a moral issue, looks forward to the encyclical.

"Surely we welcome this as this would firm up the theological, ethical and spiritual foundation of our action to protect the planet," he told Rappler.

Environmental lawyer and spokesman of the Philippine delegation to the UN climate change talks Tony La Viña called the Pope's concern for climate change "downright inspiring."

"Climate change is about social justice. A Church committed to defend and serve the poor must work to find solutions that will have its greatest impact on the poorest countries, communities and families," he told Rappler.

'The right speech, at the right time'

Will a papal encyclical have any chance of influencing the tension-fraught climate negotiations?

The upcoming Paris conference is meant to end more than 20 years of talks, hopefully with a legally-binding, global commitment to cut down on carbon emissions.

La Viña says it can.

"The value of the encyclical will probably be on the ethical aspects of climate change. Understanding personal and social responsibility for overcoming climate change is key to be able to address it effectively."

Pope Francis' voice, which has strongly championed for the rights of the poor and marginalized, can "put into focus the necessary perspective to enable Parties to look past politics and put our survival and the integrity of creation at the center of the whole process," said Aksyon Klima national coordinator Voltaire Alferez.

Other than contributing to ideas to the negotiations, the encyclical could also give encouragement to negotiators and activists frustrated with the talks and to those who directly suffer from impacts of a changing climate: typhoon victims, drought victims, climate refugees.

"The right statement and speech at the right time can have a huge impact," said La Viña."

In fact, La Viña hopes the Pope himself will attend the Paris conference during its second week, when stalemates usually arise to threaten the progress of the talks.

"I don't think we need another statement that will embarrass or shame governments. But a word of encouragement – an appeal to our common humanity and climate justice, that would make a difference." – **Rappler.com**

<http://www.rappler.com/specials/pope-francis-ph/79824-pope-francis-climate-change-encyclical>

January 9, 2015

Faith, reason, and the future Pope Francis: An interview with Dr. Pablo Canziani

By Bill Patenaude
Catholic Ecology

With so much being said about Pope Francis and ecology, it would be helpful to hear from someone who knows about both faith and science—and about Jorge Mario Bergoglio. Dr. Pablo Canziani of Buenos Aires is one such person.

Dr. Canziani is an atmospheric physicist who had been tapped by Cardinal Bergoglio to help the Argentinian Church better engage environmental issues. An active Catholic, he possess a masters and PhD from the University of Buenos Aires. He performed post-doctoral work at the University of Washington in Seattle, working under Dr. James Holton, a leading researcher in climate change. Dr. Canziani is a member of the Argentinian National Research Council and a university professor currently working in applied climate change studies, especially as they impact South America.

He is also a member of the Board of the Lay Department of the Argentinian Conference of Bishops and a member of a newly created network of Argentinian lay citizens. In this latter role he is working on the creation of a professional solidarity group for the environment and development.

Catholic Ecology: Thanks for taking the time to talk about your work in the Church and in science, which you blend quite naturally. So tell us, how does your faith impact the work that you do in the realm of science?

Dr. Canziani: At first it wasn't easy. When I was getting my basic degrees there was all this discussions about faith versus science. But then in studying advanced topics, like quantum mechanics, I came to realize that there are no contradictions between science and faith. They are a complimentary and integral view of the universe. So as in quantum mechanics you have a view of what is the behavior an object that, under given conditions, is that of a particle but under different conditions is that of a wave. It's the same thing in creation. It is a single thing with a view from the material, scientific perspective but also you have a view from a spiritual world—and to understand the whole thing you have to put them both together. They're complimentary, because it's all God's creation.

CE: The faith-reason link is something I've always appreciated about the Catholic faith. So why, do you think, is there such a rift today over scientific issues related to ecology? Why is there so much discord about topics like climate change?

Dr. Canziani: My feeling is that there is always this view that if you deal with environmental issues you're going against the economy. And especially since the 1980s we see the economy as the big thing that drives everything. I'm not saying it's wrong to think about the economy. I'm saying it's misplaced in how we see it in the work of humanity. We have put the economy above everyone else. It even rules politics.

We have today economic interests that see the economy not as a management of scarcity but as a maximization of gains. And that's a perversion of the economy.

And yet the economy is part of the biosphere. So as progress is made in science, there is a reaction against scientific results. And then you have that scientists are, in general, very poor at interacting with society. We were never trained for that. So a vast number of scientists cannot communicate their results—to explain them to the community at large.

CE: It seems that the Church now has an opportunity now to be the communicator for scientists.

Dr. Canziani: Yes. And I think that has been something that's been brewing. We see this in preliminary ways in the writings of Pope Paul VI in *Populorum Progressio*, and that exploded with Saint John Paul II and Benedict XVI, who was called the Green Pope—but I think he's going to be overcome by Pope Francis. In Benedict's *Caritas in Veritate* he says some very

sound things about the environment. And in [his last Easter homily](#) he goes through the Creed through an environmental perspective.

And now we have Francis who studied before the priesthood as a technical chemist, and that influences his whole experience. And he managed to blend that with his views of humanity and with his faith.

CE: And he does it quite beautifully.

Dr. Canziani: Yes.

CE: What experience do you remember most that can help us understand Pope Francis's engagement of the environment?

Dr. Canziani: I was involved with the lay ministries here because of him. He had heard about me and was surprised that I was both a scientist and a practicing, active Catholic. So a few years after we met in 2002 he considered it could be useful if I joined the Catholic University (UCA) to create research opportunities around environmental and social issues. At the very beginning of my period at the UCA there was a huge problem here between Argentina and Uruguay because of a giant pulp mill that was being built on the border on the Uruguay River. I was asked by a local bishop for technical support. So I analyzed the situation with the environmental lawyers in my group and with some engineers and we produced a report.

That report went to Cardinal Bergoglio shortly before Holy Week. And then he found out himself where I was so that he could call me with questions—and I wasn't at home that day that he called. I was visiting my mother-in-law. So he called my home and then he got the number of where I was that day and he called there. He had a number of questions about the report and the science at hand, which I answered. And this was about half an hour before he was going to celebrate the Stations of the Cross. That shows you how interested he is in these affairs.

CE: That is wonderful. And you heard your science echoed later.

Dr. Canziani: Yes. Yes. And then in April, 2012, the last time I actually met him, I was asked to spend two-thirds of a day at the national meeting of the [Argentinian] Conference of Bishops, which meets twice a year. We held a tutorial with two priests and me as a scientist on environmental issues from the point of view of the bible, from the social doctrine of the Church, and from the point of view of science.

And Cardinal Bergoglio was very attentive and involved. We actually put the bishops to work asking them to report out on the important environmental issues in their diocese.

CE: That's great! How did they take it?

Dr. Canziani: Well, many of them were really interested. Some thought it was irrelevant. But it was a very successful day.

CE: So you come from a long track record of working with local bishops—and none other than the future pope himself—to better understand science to explore what we’re doing with God’s creation. So how would you encourage Catholics who may not be in that situation, who may have a family or a pastor that doesn’t appreciate the environmental connection with our faith. What would you tell them?

Dr. Canziani: I would say that one of the first problems is that people have to realize the limits of the planet we live in. It’s a beautiful planet. It’s a beautiful creation. But we have forgotten that we are part of that creation. And that’s very clear in the Old Testament and in the New—that we’re part of that biosphere. And we have to learn—as St. Paul said in Romans—creation is waiting for the redemption of humanity so it can be redeemed as well. Creation is suffering from the consequences of human action, and that’s in the epistles of St. Paul.

I had run a radio show on Radio Maria. One Holy Thursday, I had a theologian on and we spent ninety minutes speaking about environmental issues and joining them with Jesus’ sacrifice on the Cross—and how these issues affect the lives of people, especially poor people. From that experience we realized there is a huge need in the community to understand environmental issues and how they relate to development—we cannot separate them from development.

I’m not sure how we would handle that in wealthy communities, like in countries like the U.S., as compared to many in Latin America, where people are closer to the environmental issues and they suffer much more frequently from issues like mega-mining, water rights, and mono-agriculture. All this is having an impact on people in Latin America—in Argentina, Uruguay, Peru, Brazil—a major social impact.

People are concerned because they’re seeing the environment disappearing before their eyes. So there is a growing base for change in the community that is getting to the priests—especially those from poor or mining areas. They’re very aware of these issues. So in that sense we have an easier task of talking about the environment in this part of the world because it’s a big issue.

An example: Archbishop Pedro Barreto of Huancayo, Peru—and he’s a good friend of the pope as well—he’s been menaced by the Shining Path (Sedero Luminoso) terrorists and owners of mines in Perú. He’s received death threats. He’s been threatened on both sides.

CE: A reminder of the stakes that some people hold in all this.

Dr. Canziani: Yes. And that’s the major issue—when you get all this materialistic views coming from both sides of the political spectrum. Both sides are materialistic. It’s a view of the world which we have to change. We’re being driven as it were to a materialistic view of things. And that has to change. Especially within the Catholic community. We have to understand that loving people means loving their environment as well.

CE: Which is really why all ideologies need to be welcome to the conversation because everyone has a part to play in this. Because it is about life.

Dr. Canziani: I often have to deal with politicians and other religious people and lay people who may not think the same as we do, and I have to explain to them that this is not about an agenda. This is something very basic. It comes before we can discuss an agenda. It's basic survival of humanity and basic survival of creation—which in a sense has its own right to be because it was made by God.

So we're not just fighting for humans we're fighting for something that God created. And that becomes the starting point from which we can then discuss our political and religious perspectives. After all, we are bio dependent. We cannot live without life around us.

CE: Amen. So now we're getting ready—the Church is getting ready—for the pope's trip to the Philippines and later his encyclical on the environment. What are you expecting it to say, and having worked with the future pope on faith and science issues, how do you think he will handle those who say we should not be speaking about environmental issues because of the politics involved?

Dr. Canziani: He knows it's not a political issue. He knows it's a survival issue. And he is a very able politician himself. So he knows how to go around these issues—he can be either very diplomatic or very blunt. And he knows when to be both.

I think he's been doing marvelous work of linking all the social issues with all the aspects of life, as he did here. We had a big smile when [*Evangelii Gaudium*](#) came out because so many of the things he said there he had said before here in Argentina. And because his philosophies are clearly going on with him, I know that he will have very strong positions on the environmental issues because he knows that you cannot change social issues—issues of poverty—and not also change the issues of the environment. As we say here in Argentina they are two sides of the same coin. You have to talk about them both to get a good solution for society.

You know, before he was elected he was very tired and thinking of retiring. And the way he is now—I think he's being held by the Holy Spirit. Lots of us down here think that.

CE: Amen. So do lots of us up here.

Dr. Canziani: Okay!

CE: He's a gift to the Church. No doubt about it. I had done my graduate work on Benedict XVI and I will always have a special place for him. So I felt badly that people didn't understand or appreciate him better. And I was heartbroken when he stepped down. But I love Pope Francis. He's the perfect, perfect person to be in the Chair of St. Peter right now.

Dr. Canziani: As we say down here, there are two things. The big problem with Benedict was that he wasn't a good communicator of his thoughts outside of his writings. His writings are of course excellent—his thoughts are excellent. And they're very modern.

And second, as we say down here, you can't have Francis if you didn't have Benedict. You needed someone like Benedict with a sound theological background to set the premises for what Francis is now executing.

CE: That's absolutely right. So when people object to Francis's comments on ecology, you can just refer them to Benedict, because he's already laid the groundwork.

Dr. Canziani: Yes. And one thing that all Catholics should know is that all things being said about the environment are in the bible. I mean, the social doctrine of the Church is just taking the bible and adding today's science and language—but it's all there.

CE: I always look at the popes as pastors who no longer have many opportunities to have the same pastoral experiences as they did when they were priests or bishops. And Francis is certainly a pastor. How would he be if he sat with someone who thought climate change was a hoax, or someone upset at the Church's involvement in the environment? How would he handle that?

Dr. Canziani: You know, I met him in his office a number of times. First thing, he never sat at his desk—only when he had to work. When he received someone he would bring two chairs together and sit by you and look at you earnestly and hear what you had to say. And then he would speak—slowly, with this slow, low voice. And then he would try to say what he thought about the issue. And if you had a different perspective you could tell it to him, frankly—at least that's my experience. And he would meditate on what you said. When the conversation was done, he would actually walk you to the elevator himself, open the elevator for you, and ask you to pray for him. And he would bless your family. And that's him.

And later if he had some new idea or more thoughts, he would either call you or have his secretary email you. So that's the kind of person we're speaking of.

CE: So how can we as a Church help him? Because some of our brothers and sisters may be angry right now because they're understanding this whole conversation in a political way or a worldly way. What would Pope Francis like us to do to help him?

Dr. Canziani: I think he'd like us to do two things. First, a strong dialogue, through reason—with a solid scientific background and a solid analysis of the limitations of the current development models, looking at flaws in economic models. And I'm speaking now as a physicist analyzing economic theory, because there are many economic issues that need to be reviewed from a physical-biological perspective—because the economy is in everything—

CE: Right. "Economy" and "ecology" have the same root word.

Dr. Canziani: Yes. Ecology, the understanding of the home. Economics, the management of the home. So we have to understand that.

And then second, once we have looked at the science of all this—once that is more or less clear and we understand our own limitations as well—we have to look at the things that top all this:

ethics and faith. And if you go through this process, even the most staunchly anti-environmentalist will realize how wrong he is.

CE: Yes. And it is a process. And it has to be done pastorally because people are hurting and afraid. And that's really what we're doing here—dialoguing to help Catholics and non-Catholics understand what the Church is doing when she engages ecology. So on that note, before closing is there anything else you'd like to say, anything you'd like to add?

Dr. Canziani: Yes. My wife and I are both members of the charismatic Church renewal and I think the crucial need that can help change people is prayer—especially prayers thanking God for everything—for creation and everyone. And praying for the sick and the poor. Over the years I've seen this in many of the writings of the saints, which are not frequently read. But prayer is very powerful.

And this is not just prayer in Church, but in the countryside—prayer watching the environment. There's an old Spanish movie I think of. It's called "It's Sunrise, and it's Not a Little Thing." Even a sunrise should result in a prayer of gratitude.

I also want to say that in the books on ecology that I am writing with my sister, we choose not to use the term sustainability. We use the term "human integral development," because nature evolves. Humanity develops.

CE: Yes, from Paul VI—

Dr. Canziani: —Yes—

CE: —and that reminds me of how Pope Francis has been using the term "human ecology," coined by Saint John Paul II and continued by Benedict XVI—a term that connects ecology with the fundamental issues of life, like abortion. I think that when people finally read the encyclical they will be surprised—on both ends of the political spectrum—they'll be surprised because they won't be expecting the language that he will use.

Dr. Canziani: No. I am certain of that.

CE: Which makes it a lot of fun to read.

Dr. Canziani: Yes. When he releases a document we read the Spanish version and we find all the localisms that he would use here. And we wonder how the translators in the Vatican manage to handle that.

CE: [Laughs] From what I can see, Pope Francis is keeping everyone at the Vatican on their toes.

Dr. Canziani: [Laughs] Oh yes, yes. That's good!

CE: Pablo, you're a blessing. Many thanks, and I look forward to talking soon.

Dr. Canziani: Thank you, and God bless.

<http://catholicecology.net/blog/faith-reason-and-future-pope-francis-interview-dr-pablo-canziani>

January 14, 2015

Pope to make moral case for action on climate change

By Andy Coghlan
New Scientist

COULD one man succeed in spurring decisive action on global warming? [Pope Francis](#), leader of the world's 1.2 billion Catholics, plans to release a ground-breaking appeal to combat climate change, in a major document called an encyclical.

Its message will be spread to congregations around the world by Catholic clergy, mobilising grassroots pressure for action ahead of the key [UN climate](#) summit in December in Paris. The encyclical may be published as early as March, and may be couched in terms of the biblical parable of the Good Samaritan, which teaches that we have responsibilities to our fellow humans.

It will be the first encyclical to address concerns about a global environmental issue, and will provide "important orientation" to all Catholics to support action on climate change, says [Bishop Marcelo Sánchez Sorondo](#), chancellor of the Pontifical Academy of Sciences and Social Sciences in Vatican City. Last May, he organised a workshop there discussing the science and impact of climate change. Participants issued a [hard-hitting statement](#), which laid the groundwork and set the tone for the encyclical.

The most likely thrust of the pope's appeal will be that failure to combat climate change will condemn the world's poorest people to disproportionate harm. "The sad part is that the poorest three billion will be the worst affected by the impacts of climate change, such as sea level rise and drought, but have had least to do with causing it," says [Veerabhadran Ramanathan](#), a climatologist at the Scripps Institution of Oceanography in San Diego, California, and a scientific adviser to the Vatican on the encyclical.

"The world's richest billion people, by contrast, are responsible for 50 to 70 per cent of the greenhouse gases that are to blame." This, he hopes, will be the evidence on which the pope rests his moral case for action to remedy what, in the pope's view, is a global injustice.

Scientists and religious figures who champion urgent action hope that by focusing on moral rather than scientific or economic grounds, the pope can help persuade climate sceptics by appealing to their consciences.

"Science has taken this issue as far as it can, and now it's in the domain of policy-makers to bring about action which requires changes in behaviour," says Ramanathan. "As a scientist, I have no authority to demand changes in behaviour, but religious leaders do."

The pope's call may also help persuade some of the most trenchant opponents of action on climate change: evangelical Christians in the US. A [survey of 3022 Americans](#), published in November by the Public Religion Research Institute in Washington DC, found that only 27 per cent of white evangelical protestants polled believe in human-generated climate change.

"A papal encyclical may shock millions of evangelicals into reality," says Richard Cizik, president of the [New Evangelical](#) Partnership for the Common Good in Fredericksburg, Virginia. "It could be a real game-changer, because many evangelicals are still consumed by right-wing political ideology and apocalyptic theology."

It could also resonate in the US Congress, nearly a third of which is Catholic – split about equally between Democrats and Republicans.

But not everyone is convinced the move will have a major impact. "It's unlikely that any one action, even by someone as influential as the pope, will suddenly alter the global political landscape," says [Naomi Oreskes](#), a historian of science at Harvard University. "But many of us are hopeful that papal authority will help some people revisit and reconsider the issue."

This article appeared in print under the headline "Can the pope win hearts and minds on climate?"

<http://www.newscientist.com/article/mg22530044.500-pope-to-make-moral-case-for-action-on-climate-change.html#.VLia8nvNdWx>

January 15, 2015

Whether they want it or not, Republicans get religion on climate change

By Scott Detrow, E&E reporter
ClimateWire

On the rare chance any Republican congressmen or senators leave the premises of the Hershey Lodge during their joint caucus retreat today, they'll be greeted by an interfaith religious service aimed at motivating the GOP lawmakers to take action on climate change.

The group putting on the joint service and protest outside the Republican retreat, Interfaith Moral Action on Climate, is just one of an increasing number of religious coalitions organizing on both sides of the debate over how -- or whether -- to address climate change. That debate will likely intensify over the coming months, as Pope Francis stakes out climate change as a key policy issue.

"Our purpose will be to say very clearly to those inside that we believe any of those members who are motivated by religious beliefs need to look more closely at their own religions traditions and what they teach about stewardship of the Earth and care for the Earth," said Ted Glick, an environmental advocate who sits on Interfaith Moral Action on Climate's steering committee.

"We can't be saying we are following those principles and those teachings if we are looking away from the impacts of economies dominated by fossil fuels. Fossil fuel economies are about polluting land, polluting water and heating up the Earth in dangerous ways," he added.

But while many of these religious groups are singing from the same hymnal -- or, more accurately, quoting from the same environmental-stewardship-themed Bible verses -- some are coming to very different conclusions about what climate change policies to pursue.

Same Bible, different messages

"Fossil fuels promote life -- human life and all the rest of life," said E. Calvin Beisner, the founder of an evangelical Christian group opposing policies lowering carbon dioxide emissions. Beisner's group, the Cornwall Alliance, argues accessible, cheap, fossil-fuel-powered energy has played a key role in combating poverty throughout human history and that curbing society's carbon footprint would do more harm than good.

"People can thrive in any climate if they have adequate wealth," he said. "But they will die like flies in any climate if they don't have adequate wealth."

Research has long shown that evangelicals view climate change more skeptically than other American religious groups. A 2008 [Pew survey](#) found that just 34 percent of white evangelicals think the Earth is warming due to human activity, compared with 47 percent of the total U.S. population.

Another increasingly active evangelical group is trying to change that mindset. "This year we did almost 100 different presentations to local church groups and Christian colleges around the country," said Mitch Hescoc, the president of the Evangelical Environmental Network ([E&ENews PM](#), Dec. 1, 2014). He attributes the skepticism to the fact the evangelicals are typically conservative and Republican, and that climate change has been long framed as a partisan issue.

"It's not about Al Gore, it's about Jesus," Hescoc said he tells groups. "And it's not about polar bears. It's about our children." The group has taken an active role in promoting U.S. EPA's Clean Power Plan, submitting thousands of supportive comments to the agency from people it labels "pro-life Christians."

"There is a biblical responsibility for caring for God's creation," Hescoc said.

Catholic groups begin to mobilize

The world's most influential religious leader, Pope Francis, is signaling an aggressive push for climate change action, too. The Catholic leader is meeting with survivors of Typhoon Haiyan during this week's visit to the Philippines.

The Vatican has hinted that meeting could serve as a launching pad for more high-profile calls to action on curbing carbon emissions ahead of December's U.N. summit in Paris. That push will culminate with the release of a papal encyclical, one of the most authoritative documents a pontiff can issue ([ClimateWire](#), Jan. 7).

Francis' impending climate change push has already led to the formation of a new international alliance called the Global Catholic Climate Movement. Announced yesterday, the coalition includes groups -- primarily Catholic lay organizations -- from around the world.

"We're viewing [the impending papal encyclical] as a call to action for Catholics. Not a document to sit around and have a theology debate on," said Patrick Carolan, the executive director of one of the coalition's American organizations, the Franciscan Action Network. "We have to do something for what's happening to the environment, and we have to do it now."

What exactly will they do? Carolan said one of the effort's first attempts at raising awareness will be a call for a coordinated fast during Lent. "A different country each day in Lent can have a hunger fast," he said. "Each day, a different country can be highlighted, and we can talk about how Bangladesh is doing their fasting and how climate change is affecting them."

Carolan said that while Francis' statements on climate change have, for the most part, mirrored prior popes like Benedict XVI, his words have carried farther. "People are feeling engaged to be able to speak out on these issues. In the past, I don't think people felt comfortable to speak out as Catholics," he said.

<http://www.eenews.net/stories/1060011713>

January 15, 2015

Rate of environmental degradation puts life on Earth at risk, say scientists

By Oliver Milman
The Guardian

Humans are "eating away at our own life support systems" at a rate unseen in the past 10,000 years by degrading land and freshwater systems, emitting greenhouse gases and releasing vast amounts of agricultural chemicals into the environment, new research has found.

Two major new studies by an international team of researchers have pinpointed the key factors that ensure a livable planet for humans, with stark results.

Of nine worldwide processes that underpin life on Earth, four have exceeded “safe” levels – human-driven climate change, loss of biosphere integrity, land system change and the high level of phosphorus and nitrogen flowing into the oceans due to fertiliser use.

Researchers spent five years identifying these core components of a planet suitable for human life, using the long-term average state of each measure to provide a baseline for the analysis.

They found that the changes of the last 60 years are unprecedented in the previous 10,000 years, a period in which the world has had a relatively stable climate and human civilisation has advanced significantly.

Carbon dioxide levels, at 395.5 parts per million, are at historic highs, while loss of biosphere integrity is resulting in species becoming extinct at a rate more than 100 times faster than the previous norm.

Since 1950 urban populations have increased seven-fold, primary energy use has soared by a factor of five, while the amount of fertiliser used is now eight times higher. The amount of nitrogen entering the oceans has quadrupled.

All of these changes are shifting Earth into a “new state” that is becoming less hospitable to human life, researchers said.

“These indicators have shot up since 1950 and there are no signs they are slowing down,” said Prof Will Steffen of the Australian National University and the Stockholm Resilience Centre. Steffen is the lead author on both of the studies.

“When economic systems went into overdrive, there was a massive increase in resource use and pollution. It used to be confined to local and regional areas but we’re now seeing this occurring on a global scale. These changes are down to human activity, not natural variability.”

Steffen said direct human influence upon the land was contributing to a loss in pollination and a disruption in the provision of nutrients and fresh water.

“We are clearing land, we are degrading land, we introduce feral animals and take the top predators out, we change the marine ecosystem by overfishing – it’s a death by a thousand cuts,” he said. “That direct impact upon the land is the most important factor right now, even more than climate change.”

There are large variations in conditions around the world, according to the research. For example, land clearing is now concentrated in tropical areas, such as Indonesia and the Amazon, with the practice reversed in parts of Europe. But the overall picture is one of deterioration at a rapid rate.

“It’s fairly safe to say that we haven’t seen conditions in the past similar to ones we see today and there is strong evidence that there [are] tipping points we don’t want to cross,” Steffen said.

“If the Earth is going to move to a warmer state, 5-6C warmer, with no ice caps, it will do so and that won’t be good for large mammals like us. People say the world is robust and that’s true, there will be life on Earth, but the Earth won’t be robust for us.

“Some people say we can adapt due to technology, but that’s a belief system, it’s not based on fact. There is no convincing evidence that a large mammal, with a core body temperature of 37C, will be able to evolve that quickly. Insects can, but humans can’t and that’s a problem.”

Steffen said the research showed the economic system was “fundamentally flawed” as it ignored critically important life support systems.

“It’s clear the economic system is driving us towards an unsustainable future and people of my daughter’s generation will find it increasingly hard to survive,” he said. “History has shown that civilisations have risen, stuck to their core values and then collapsed because they didn’t change. That’s where we are today.”

The two studies, [published in Science](#) and [Anthropocene Review](#), featured the work of scientists from countries including the US, Sweden, Germany and India. The findings will be presented in seven seminars at the World Economic Forum in Davos, which takes place between 21 and 25 January.

<http://www.theguardian.com/environment/2015/jan/15/rate-of-environmental-degradation-puts-life-on-earth-at-risk-say-scientists>

January 16, 2015

Church Authority and Assent: Clarifications Ahead of Pope Francis’s Encyclical

By Daniel DiLeo
Political Theology Today

The church has known for the last year that Pope Francis is working on an encyclical about ecology. Until recently, this awareness has generally only been discussed by those who regularly work on environmental justice in the Catholic tradition. On December 27, however, the *Guardian* published an article about the forthcoming document that has sparked passionate—and sometimes uncharitably acerbic—interest from people who are opposed to climate change mitigation and/or fear that Francis will inappropriately address the topic in his encyclical. In many such instances, those who express anxiety about Francis’ encyclical raise questions about church authority and either deny that Francis can speak authoritatively on climate change or suggest that Catholics are free to quickly (even preemptively) dismiss such teaching.

In light of these recent debates, it is important to correctly understand the various levels of church teaching authority, identify the level of potential encyclical teachings and appreciate the corresponding response to which Catholics are called by the church. This is especially true for political theologians, since Francis is likely in his encyclical to build on the support for an

international climate treaty offered by Pope Benedict XVI, the Holy See's Permanent Observer to the United Nations, and Francis himself. As such, I here review levels of church authority and locate likely encyclical teachings in the hopes of providing prescient clarifications to political questions regarding Francis' encyclical.

Levels of Church Authority and Catholic Social Teaching

In his chapter "The Ecclesiological Foundations of Modern Catholic Social Teaching" (*Modern Catholic Social Teaching: Commentaries & Interpretations*, ed. Kenneth R. Himes), Richard Gaillardetz describes Catholic Social Teaching (CST) as "the normative articulation of official church positions regarding social questions" (87). In addition, Gaillardetz points out that the church recognizes three levels of authority in CST. The highest level is "universal moral teaching." These are dogmatic teachings that are divinely revealed, infallibly taught, and "call forth from the believer an assent of faith" (88-89). Examples include "the law of love, the dignity of the human person, respect for human life, and obligation to care for the environment" (89).

The next level of moral teaching include those "specific moral principles" that have the status of *authoritative doctrine*, i.e., are principles "that have been taught authoritatively but not infallibly by the magisterium" through reflection on Scripture, tradition and experience (89). Examples include the church's teaching about the necessary conditions to support capital punishment or the prohibitions against the direct taking of innocent human life. The church calls Catholics to "treat these teachings as more than mere opinions or pious exhortations but as normative church teaching that they must strive to integrate into their religious outlook" (90; Cf. *Lumen Gentium*, no. 25).

Finally, the lowest level of authoritative church teaching is the prudential "application of specific moral principles" to concrete situations in light of "changing contexts and contingent empirical data" (89-90). The virtue of prudence is classically understood as "right reason applied to action" (St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, II-II, 47.8), and in the case of climate change prudential judgment entails right reason about the assessment of empirical data and application of Catholic moral principles. Gaillardetz points out that an example of such an authoritative teaching is the U.S. bishops' "no first nuclear use" exhortation in *The Challenge of Peace*. Additionally, Gaillardetz notes that while Catholics can differ with these judgments for well-founded reasons after deep reflection, such teachings are, according to the bishops, "to be given serious attention and consideration by Catholics as they determine whether their moral judgments are consistent with the Gospel" (*The Challenge of Peace*, no. 10). In other words, the church calls Catholics to deeply and prayerfully consider any/all magisterial prudential judgments in a way that precludes their dismissal in good conscience without due consideration (and, by definition, before they have been promulgated).

Authority and Pope Francis' Encyclical

In light of this developed taxonomy of church teaching authority, I believe it possible to [anticipate](#) teachings that Francis is likely to make in his encyclical and situate them within the abovementioned framework. These projections are firmly rooted in CST and church precedent regarding climate change, and this exercise can, I think, provide a template to better structure

discussions about the encyclical. First, Francis will presumably affirm the prudential judgment about the reality of anthropogenic climate change that he has [already made](#) and which was repeatedly asserted by Pope John Paul II ([1990 World Day of Peace Message](#), no. 6; [1999 World Day of Peace Message](#), no. 10), Pope Benedict XVI ([2009 encyclical *Caritas in Veritate*](#), no. 50; [2010 World Day of Peace Message](#), nos. 4, 7, 10; [etc.](#)), the [U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops](#), and [international bishops and episcopal conferences](#).

In addition to this assessment of anthropogenic climate change, Francis will likely apply the CST principles of Life and Dignity of the Human Person, Option for the Poor and Vulnerable and Solidarity to his understanding of the issue and, like the church has [repeatedly done](#), prudentially judge climate change to be a moral issue. Finally, Francis will likely apply the CST principle of [subsidiarity](#) to his understanding of climate change and call for an international climate change accord in keeping with the precedent established by Pope Benedict XVI ([2009 encyclical *Caritas in Veritate*](#), no. 50; [message to the 2009 U.N. Climate Change Summit](#); [2010 Address to the Diplomatic Corps](#); [2012 Address to the Diplomatic Corps](#)), the Holy See's Permanent Observer to the United Nations ([September 2014](#); [October 2014](#)), and his own previous remarks ([December 2014 message to the U.N.](#); [January 12 message to the Diplomatic Corps](#); [January 15 remarks en route to the Philippines](#)).

Francis' probable encyclical teachings about climate change and an international climate treaty are what seem likely (and have already proven) to be areas of the document most ripe for contentious debate. In particular, some appear to believe that prudential teachings made through the ordinary papal magisterium about climate change possess no authority whatsoever, are in no way normative for the church, and, as such, can be quickly discarded by Catholics without due consideration. As has been shown, however, none of these positions is correct within the framework of church teaching on authority and assent. Catholics are free to ultimately disagree (in charity) with prudential magisterial judgments, but can only do so in good conscience after thoughtful consideration marked by sincere openness and deep prayer.

Presuming that Francis thus accepts the reality of human-forced climate change in his encyclical and calls for an international climate agreement, Catholics will only be able to disagree with him in good conscience after serious reflection and the determination that the pope has reasoned incorrectly, i.e., imprudently, about the findings/appropriation of mainstream climate science and/or application of Catholic moral principles. This strikes me as an exceedingly high burden of proof to satisfy given the [widespread international agreement](#) about the reality of human-forced climate change and [precedent Catholic teaching](#) on the issue. Thus while Catholics may disagree with Francis' prudential judgments on climate change in his encyclical *after due consideration*, my own feeling is that such disagreement is likely to itself be imprudent. Nevertheless I, like everyone, will need to wait for the encyclical's publication in order to properly consider Francis' encyclical judgments on climate change and/or assess those subsequently made by other Catholics about the teaching.

Conclusion

The Vatican recently [indicated](#) that Francis' encyclical on ecology will likely be published before the summer. *Crux* observes that already "[Pope Francis' stance on climate change is the](#)

[latest battleground for US Catholics](#)” and, unfortunately, this battle seems likely to intensify rather than abate between now and the encyclical’s release. Nevertheless, political theologians can make substantive contributions to present and future encyclical conversations by reminding Catholics about the correct assent owed to various levels of church teaching. This would ensure that Francis’ encyclical is received with the utmost amount of genuine openness and humility, and as such would be a great service to the church and to the world.

N.B. This piece builds on my December [essay](#) at *Millennial Journal*. I am grateful to Richard Gaillardetz, Ph.D., the Joseph Professor of Catholic Systematic Theology at Boston College, for feedback on previous iterations of this piece.

<http://www.politicaltheology.com/blog/church-authority-and-assent-clarifications-ahead-of-pope-franciss-encyclical/>

January 16, 2015

Storm Warnings for Pope’s Climate Stop in the Philippines

By Andrew C. Revkin
Dot Earth
New York Times

[Updated, 11:40 p.m. | Pope Francis made it to Tacloban and, wearing a yellow plastic rain coat like those on the tens of thousands of people before him, delivered a simple and moving homily focused on assuaging people’s sense of loss. The [transcript is here](#).]

Here’s the post as written Friday afternoon:

On Saturday, nearing the end of his visit to the Philippines, Pope Francis is scheduled to hold mass for residents of [Tacloban City](#), which was devastated in late 2013 by [Typhoon Haiyan](#) (known as Yolanda in the Philippines). The Vatican has [signaled](#) that he will also talk about global warming.

If the stop comes off as planned, he’ll have a suitable backdrop in the form of [high winds and downpours](#) from [Tropical Storm Mekkhala](#) [now upgraded to a typhoon, [as Jason Samenow reports](#)], which is swirling in the Pacific nearby. The website [Western Pacific Weather](#) has the meteorological details.

The pope has been speaking out more about climate change of late, most recently in an exchange with reporters during his flight from Sri Lanka to the Philippines. Here’s the relevant moment, thanks to a [transcript from the Catholic News Agency](#):

[Gerard O’Connell](#), *America Magazine*: ... We have seen in Sri Lanka the beauty of nature, but even in the end the vulnerability of that island to climate change, etc. We are going to the Philippines, you are going to visit the stricken area. It is more than one year

that you are studying the issue of ecology, of the cure of creation, etcetera. My question has three aspects. First, is climate change an outcome of the work of man, of man's lack of care of nature? Second, when will your encyclical be released? Third, you insist – as we have seen in Sri Lanka – very much on cooperation among religions. Are you going to invite other religions to gather together to discuss this issue? Thank you.

Pope Francis: The first question, you had said a word that requires a clarification. Mostly, I don't know if it's all, but mostly, for a large part, man 'slaps' nature, continually, but we have taken hold of nature, of mother Earth. I remember – you already heard this – what an old peasant once told me: God always forgives, we men sometimes forgive, nature never forgives. If you slap it, it will always slap you back. Then, we exploited nature too much, with deforestations, for example. I remember [the 2007 meeting of Latin American bishops at] Aparecida; at that time, I did not understand this issue so much; when I listened to Brazilian bishops speaking about the deforestation of the Amazon, I never understood it in depth. The Amazon is the lung of world. Five years ago, with a human rights commission, I appealed to the Supreme Court of Argentina to stop, at least temporarily, a terrible deforestation in Northern Argentina, in the Norte de Salta area. This is one issue.

Then – I will say another one – the one-crop system – I will give two or three [examples]: Farmers know that if you make a cultivation of corn for three years, you have to stop, and then cultivate a different crop for one or two years, in order – I don't know how to say it, *nitrogenizar* is the Spanish word for it – to regenerate the soil. Nowadays, for instance, there is the exclusive cultivation of soy; you take everything, you make soy until the soil is exhausted; not everyone does it, it is an example; many others don't.

I think that man has gone overboard. Thank God, today there are voices and many people speaking out about this. But I would like in this moment to remember my beloved brother [Patriarch] Bartholomew, who has been speaking out about this for years. I read many things of his to prepare this encyclical.... The first draft was sketched by Cardinal Turkson with his staff.

[**ACR:** *Cardinal Peter Turkson of Ghana has dealt with other contentious scientific issues – including weighing the role of genetic engineering in agriculture. In 2013, he threaded a path between industry and critics of genetically modified organisms, or G.M.O.s., saying they need to be used, but only with “[the guidance of a deeply responsible ethic.](#)”*]

Then I took over the draft with the help of some people and worked on it, then I made a third draft with some theologians and I sent this draft to the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, to the Second Section of the State Secretariat, and to the Theologian of the Pontifical Household, so that they could study it, and find if I had said some foolishness. Three weeks ago I received the responses, some of them this big, but all of them constructive. Now I will take a whole week in March to complete it, so at the end of March it should be completed, and will then be translated. I think that, if the work of translation goes well..., in June or July it will be released.

It is just important that there is some time between the release of the encyclical and the [climate treaty] meeting in Paris so that it may be brought there. Because the [treaty] meeting in Peru was not that much; it disappointed me, the lack of courage. They stopped at one point. Let's hope that in Paris representatives will be more courageous.

The third [question]. I believe that dialogue among religions is important; this issue is felt by other religions as well, on this issue there is a common feeling. I have spoken with some representatives of other religions on the issue, and I know that Cardinal Turkson has, as well, and two theologians also; this was the path: it will not be a common declaration, meetings will come after.

If he gets to speak in Tacloban, I hope Francis recognizes how the scope of the social calamity in that coastal city was [far more the result of deep poverty and poorly governed urban growth](#) than any shift in typhoon patterns — which [really haven't changed at all in that region](#) in recent decades. This graph shows the frequency of tropical cyclone landfalls:

There, as in so many places around the world, the prime driver of losses in severe weather calamities is poverty or settlement in danger zones.

Global warming, through sea-level rise, will raise odds of bad outcomes in such storms down the line even if warming has little impact on the storms themselves.

But for the time being, better governance and paths out of poverty are the prime priority in such places.

Family planning would help, too, and it was encouraging to see the Philippine Supreme Court approve a pioneering [Reproductive Health Law](#) last year.

As [The Wall Street Journal reported](#) just before the pope's arrival, that decision has made it possible for the government to start providing thousands of families with access to contraception.

The Journal noted:

The Roman Catholic Church fought the measure, but many rank-and-file Catholics supported it as a way to reduce the country's high birthrate and reduce poverty.

On his stop in Manila on Friday, while meeting with a thousand Catholic families, Francis made it clear that he was not shifting from longstanding Vatican policies against contraception.

The [Catholic publication Crux reported](#):

The pope also issued a strong defense of Pope Paul VI's controversial 1968 encyclical [Humanae Vitae](#), which upheld the Church's traditional ban on birth control.

“He had the strength to defend openness to life at a time when many people were worried about population growth,” Francis said.

Take a strong stance on climate change is one thing. Changing a stance on population is another.

<http://dotearth.blogs.nytimes.com/2015/01/16/storm-warnings-for-popes-planned-climate-stop-in-the-philippines/>

January 16, 2015

Pope Francis Hopes World Leaders Will Make the Environment a Priority

By Ashley Curtin
Nation of Change – Bullhorn

In a recent interview, Pope Francis is making the environment a priority this year in hopes that his encyclical on ecology will encourage world leaders to reach an agreement during the next round of climate change talks in Paris in November.

Citing deforestation and monoculture as just two ways that man has exploited nature, he said "[man has] taken over nature" in what he referred to as a "culture of waste." Pope Francis' encyclical is set to be released by June or July, according to the Associated Press, so that world leader taking part in the world climate change negotiations will have ample time to read it in its entirety and absorb it.

"The meetings in Peru were nothing much, I was disappointed," he said in an Associated Press story. "There was a lack of courage. They stopped at a certain point. We hope that in Paris the representatives will be more courageous going forward."

Pope Francis was en route to the Philippines where he will visit with survivors of the 2013 Typhoon Haiyan, which is said to be just one example of the severe and disastrous weather pattern caused in part by climate change. During the interview, he said that while many other things might have caused global warming, it was "man who has slapped nature in the face."

The pope said it was about time that world leaders make "'courageous' decision" to protect "God's creation."

Pope Francis will offer up some of his opinions about climate change and the role man plays in September at the United Nations in New York. And when he takes the stage, he hopes his points will encourage world leader to act fast.

http://bullhorn.nationofchange.org/pope_francis_environment_a_priority

January 16, 2015

Take 5: Forum on Religion and Ecology co-director Mary Evelyn Tucker

By Susan Gonzalez
Yale News

Take 5 offers a brief introduction to Yale faculty members in a Q&A format. The featured faculty member selects [5 out of 10 questions](#) to answer. *Any opinions shared are not necessarily those of YaleNews.*

[Mary Evelyn Tucker](#), senior lecturer and research scholar, holds appointments in the School of Forestry & Environmental Studies and the Divinity School, as well as the Department of Religious Studies. Her special area of study is Asian religions. Her concern about the growing environmental challenges led her to help shape a new interdisciplinary field linking religion and ecology. Tucker teaches in the joint M.A. program in religion and ecology and directs the [Forum on Religion and Ecology](#) at Yale with her husband, John Grim. She is the author of “Moral and Spiritual Cultivation in Japanese Neo-Confucianism,” “The Philosophy of Qi,” and “Worldly Wonder: Religions Enter Their Ecological Phase,” and is co-author (with Grim) of the recently published “Ecology and Religion.” She has also co-edited a number of books, including “Religion and Ecology: Can the Climate Change?” and “Worldviews and Ecology,” among others. She is a co-creator (with Brian Thomas Swimme) of the multi-media project [“Journey of the Universe.”](#) which includes the Emmy Award-winning film of the same name that was broadcast on PBS and is now available on Netflix. She and Swimme co-authored a companion book for the film that was published by Yale Press in 2011.

What scholarly/research project are you working on now?

Along with my husband, John Grim, I am writing a biography of Thomas Berry for Columbia University Press. Berry was a remarkable historian of world religions who studied the traditions of Asia and of indigenous peoples, along with the western religions. He was our teacher and inspired us to help create the Forum on World Religions and Ecology. He had an abiding concern for what the religions might contribute positively to solving our environmental crisis. One example is that the Pope is soon to release an Encyclical on the environment, which will have a major influence on 1.2 billion Catholics and another 1 billion Christians. We hope to do something at Yale in March to mark this occasion and explore the ethical implications of this new teaching document.

What important lesson(s) have you learned from your students?

How much resilience they have. With all of the dispiriting news in the world today — from politics to the environment — our students have not given up the hope of making a real difference in our world. I find this so invigorating, indeed inspiring. In starting new online classes in world religions and ecology I also realize that there are fresh ways that students learn and reflect on video lectures and reading. The responses and interactions of students online have been some of the most creative discussions I have seen in 40 years of teaching.

What world problem would you fix, if you could?

The health of the environment has been a concern of mine for many decades, as this is what we all depend on. If we can continue to devise viable programs for protecting the biosphere, maintaining biodiversity, and supporting human communities, I would feel immense relief, indeed happiness. This means that we have to try to reframe human-Earth relations in a mutually enhancing manner. That is what our PBS film “Journey of the Universe” is trying to do by showing that we are part of a vast process of cosmic, Earth, and human transformation. As 65,000 people have rated it on Netflix in one year, we are feeling quite hopeful!

Is there something you’ve always wanted to do — either professionally or personally — that you haven’t yet?

I have published academic volumes, but I would love to write one or two small books in a more personal vein. We live in such challenging times and how we may navigate through these challenges is something I often reflect on in my diaries. So I would like to share these reflections, perhaps in a collection of letters addressed to family and friends.

What is your favorite spot on campus?

I love being in Kroon Hall on Prospect Street where the School of Forestry and Environmental Studies is located. My office is there on the first floor. The building has a great feeling about it, not just because it is a beautiful green building, but because of the buzz of students and faculty who inhabit the building. Every week we have the opportunity to hear first-class lectures on a wide range of environmental topics. The students run a coffee shop on the top floor and several active centers are housed here, like the Center for Environmental Law and Policy, the Center for Business and the Environment, and our Forum on Religion and Ecology.

<http://news.yale.edu/2015/01/16/take-5-forum-religion-and-ecology-co-director-mary-evelyn-tucker>

January 18, 2015

Details of the proposal for Pope Francis' US visit revealed

By Alan Holdren and Elise Harris
Catholic News Agency

Manila, Philippines - Archbishop Bernardito Auza – a member of the organizing committee for Pope Francis’ upcoming visit to the U.S. – has revealed details of the proposed schedule, which includes visits to three cities.

“He would arrive on the 22nd and he would leave the evening of the 27th. It’s really a full six days, plus the travel, so it’s really one week,” Archbishop Auza told CNA in Manila on Jan. 18.

A Philippines native, Archbishop Auza is the Holy See’s permanent observer to the U.N. in New York and to the Organization of American States in Washington. He is back in his homeland this

week participating in the events of Pope Francis' Jan. 15-19 apostolic journey.

The archbishop spoke of a meeting held last Monday by the U.S. trip's organizing committee appointed by Pope Francis, during which the details of the visit were discussed.

After a projected arrival to Washington, D.C. on the evening of Sept. 22, they're proposing that Pope Francis visit the White House the following morning, where the official welcoming ceremony would take place.

Following his stop at the White House, the pontiff would go on to celebrate Mass at Washington's Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception.

The Mass, the archbishop observed, would be primarily for bishops, consecrated and religious men and women, seminarians and representatives from humanitarian and Catholic charitable organizations.

"And we might say really the highlight of the Washington visit might be his speech to the joint-meeting of Congress, so the Senate and the House of Representatives," Archbishop Auza said. According to the proposal, Pope Francis would leave for New York City on the afternoon of the 24th.

The U.N. general-assembly would be his destination on the morning of the 25th, which is also the opening of the 3-day Post-2015 Sustainable Development Summit.

"Practically all of the heads of states and governments will be around and they will all be there on that day, so if the Pope were to finalize this visit to the U.S. that means that he would address all the heads of states and of governments, who will be sitting with their official delegations," the archbishop explained.

"We certainly are looking forward to that," he said, noting how everyone involved is anticipating what the Pope might say, particularly U.N. secretary-general Ban Ki-moon, who is "extremely thrilled."

The papal address at the U.N. would take up the entire morning of Sept. 25, Archbishop Auza said. He added that proposals for what the pontiff may do afterward include an interreligious meeting, and "of course the Pope will visit St. Patrick's (Cathedral). That's for sure."

The visit to the historic church wouldn't likely mean the celebration of Mass there, the archbishop said. Mass has been proposed instead for another area of New York. He named the Madison Square Garden as a possibility.

"Our plan is not to have a huge Mass outside of Philadelphia, because the focus will really be Philadelphia, because the Pope is going to the United States for the World Meeting of Families," he explained.

Perhaps the most "unique ingredient" of Pope Francis' proposed schedule for New York would

be an interethnic meeting with the pontiff, which is significant given the diverse ethnic background of the city.

“Ground Zero,” the site of the terrorist attack on Sept. 11, 2001, which brought down New York City’s twin World Trade Center towers, is another foreseeable stop on the Pope’s itinerary, Archbishop Auza noted.

Benedict XVI visited the site during his 2008 visit, but the Archbishop mentioned that since then the official memorial has been inaugurated, the museum has been finished, and the metal cross found in the wreckage of the towers is there.

“But these are just proposals. At the end of February there will be the first organizational visit (from a Vatican delegation), and then we will see what we could really fill in,” the archbishop said.

Pope Francis could spend a couple of nights in New York, but “it depends” on what else comes up.

From New York the Roman Pontiff would head to Philadelphia in the early morning of the 26th as his last stop, where he is set to participate in the World Meeting of Families from Sept. 26-27.

“Philadelphia is confirmed. That’s for sure,” the archbishop observed, explaining that the two big events set to take place with the Pope are a prayer vigil on the 26th and Mass Sunday, the 27th.

There is also an encounter planned with grandparents and children, however the archbishop said he does not know whether or not the Pope will participate.

Pope Francis himself confirmed his presence at the World Meeting of Families in Philadelphia during the Nov. 17-19 Humanum Conference in Rome, saying that he will attend “if God wills it.”

Besides the encounter with families, Archbishop Auza said that the Philadelphia visit will likely include “a visit either to a children’s hospital or a juvenile prison.”

Members of the organizational committee for the visit, he said, include himself; papal nuncio to the United States Archbishop Carlo Maria Vigano; Cardinal Donald Wuerl, archbishop of Washington; Cardinal Sean Patrick O’Malley, archbishop of Boston; Archbishop Joseph Kurtz of Louisville, also president of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops; Cardinal Timothy Dolan, archbishop of New York; Archbishop Charles Chaput of Philadelphia; Msgr. Ronny Jenkins, secretary-general at the bishops’ conference, as well as a team of various secretaries and assistants.

On his Jan. 15 flight from Sri Lanka to the Philippines, Pope Francis also made the surprise announcement that he would canonize the founder of California’s first missions, Blessed Junipero Serra.

When asked whether or not the Pope's itinerary for his U.S. trip would include a visit to California for the canonization, Archbishop Auza said that although it would be the ideal place, the state will most likely not be on the agenda.

"I think he may do that in Washington," he said, noting how there is a statue of Bl. Serra in the National Statuary Hall of the Capitol building, honoring him as one of the founders of California.

The pontiff would most likely preside over "what they call a brief canonization, not the formal solemn canonization," he said.

On a final note, Archbishop Auza spoke of the possibility that the Pope would go to Mexico as part of his trip to the U.S., saying that "they might skip Mexico this time because it becomes a very, very long (trip)."

The pontiff might make another visit to Latin America, the archbishop noted, although he did not know when that would be.

"So that's more or less the plan. It's a plan, we'll see how it will pan out."

In addition to being Catholic News Agency's Rome bureau chief, Alan Holdren is also the Rome correspondent for EWTN News Nightly.

UPDATED on Jan. 19, 2015 at 11:29 a.m. MST:

Archdiocese of Philadelphia director of communications Kenneth Gavin clarified that Pope Francis' official schedule during his trip to the U.S. in September has yet to be finalized.

"We are overjoyed that Pope Francis will be with us in September, and planning for his visit is intensely underway," he told CNA. "However, no final decisions regarding the Papal itinerary for Philadelphia have yet been made."

"Certainly, we are exploring a wide variety of potential scenarios and there are numerous factors and contingencies to consider," Gavin noted, adding that final confirmation of the Pope's Philadelphia schedule "can come only after consultation with the Papal household."

<http://www.catholicnewsagency.com/news/exclusive-details-of-the-proposal-for-pope-francis-us-visit-revealed-13383/>

January 19, 2015

Film journeys into the cosmos' history

By Chase Brunton

The Maine Campus - The University of Maine student newspaper

Fourteen billion years ago, all of the energy in the universe was contained in a single point. Then the big bang happened, sending all of the energy in the universe scattering off in all directions.

Today, the force generated by the big bang is still causing the universe to expand outward. Eventually, stars were created, and when those stars died millions of years later — or billions, depending on the size of the star, as smaller stars live longer — they exploded, releasing all of the elements in the universe and creating everything as we know it, from planets, to new stars, and eventually life.

And now here we are, just beginning to understand our place in the vast scheme of things, using language to share ideas and change the world around us.

If this kind of thought fills you with excitement, you might enjoy the cosmic documentary “Journey of the Universe” now streaming on Netflix. Hosted and co-written by teacher and scientist Brian Swimme, author of the companion book of the same name, “Journey of the Universe” takes the viewer on a brief but intellectually stimulating tour of the “journey” the universe took to get where it is today. The film includes a revealing discussion of the nature of how life arose, and what it means to be alive in a universe where life is so exceedingly rare. Through explanations of cosmic phenomena and historical accounts of famous people, Swimme eloquently shares the story of how everything we know came to be.

Exploring the entire history of the universe and life in 50 minutes is no easy task, but Swimme handles it with grace and a surprising amount of nuance given the film’s short length. A scientist and teacher at Yale, he uses clever analogies and an amiable voice to show how humans have gone from being shaped by life to taking control of it. All of the concepts explored in this film are incredible, not just on a scientific level, but a philosophical and humanistic one as well. One of the most enjoyable aspects about the film is the taming of the wild science concepts with a humanistic touch. The fact that life has gotten to the point where it is self-aware and can speak and share ideas is one of the most, if not the most, beautiful outcomes of the big bang and evolution, a prospect outlined wonderfully by the film.

And yet, this evolution is not without its darker sides — another thing “Journey of the Universe” explores. For better or worse, humans now have such a command over nature that they are profoundly altering the composition of the planet that birthed them. As mentioned in the film, humans, originating from nature, have come to see themselves as separate. This makes some small sense because surviving and thriving as a species required conquering nature. However, we now know more than we ever did then; we now have begun to grasp just how closely related we are to everything around us. It’s true that survival may require controlling nature, but if we are to continue living as we are, it’s important that we understand just how delicate the balance of life is.

As I mentioned, the movie’s short, and as a result may leave less of an impression than it would have were it longer. Since “Journey” is a companion to the book of the same name, also written by Swimme, one can imagine that the book has a broader exploration of the concepts brought forth in the film. Nonetheless, the film is a thought-provoking, entertaining philosophical and humanistic ride through space and time. From the big bang and solar explosions, to the

development of the first primitive life forms, and onward to the emergence of consciousness and language, this universe of ours has been on quite the journey. How fortunate we are to be here, to serve as active witnesses to the universe.

<http://mainecampus.com/2015/01/19/column-documentary-theater-film-journeys-into-the-cosmos-history/?ref=opinion>

January 19, 2015

Pope Francis will visit New York City, Washington, D.C. and Philadelphia during September visit to U.S.

The papal visit to the Big Apple would likely include an address at the United Nations and possibly a Mass at Madison Square Garden. The first U.S. visit by a Pope since 2008 will include a White House visit and an address at Philadelphia's World Meeting of Families. A trip to Boston may be included as well, a Vatican official told the Daily News.

By Sasha Goldstein
New York Daily News

Pope Francis may be the hottest ticket at Madison Square Garden this year.

The spiritual leader of the country's 78 million Catholics confirmed to reporters Monday he will visit New York City during a U.S. visit in September.

"We are overjoyed" at the impending visit, New York Archdiocese spokesman Joe Zwilling told the Daily News.

Zwilling was involved in prior papal visits in New York: when John Paul II visited in 1995 and Pope Benedict in 2008.

"Both were huge and full of excitement," Zwilling said. "I imagine that this visit will be as huge, if not bigger, than those two!"

The news has thrilled "New Yorkers of all faiths," City Council Speaker Melissa Mark-Viverito said Monday in a statement.

"Pope Francis has made fighting poverty and expanding social justice a crux of his papacy and I am excited that he will be bringing this message to New York City this fall," she said. "I thank Cardinal Dolan for his tireless advocacy in encouraging the Papal visit and look forward to working with him and the Archdiocese to ensure that Pope Francis gets to experience the wonder and beauty of New York City's diverse neighborhoods, communities and people."

A preliminary outline of the Pope's September visit would have him stop by the United Nations and celebrate Mass at Madison Square Garden during a three-city swing, according to a member of the organizing committee for the visit.

[The New York City Mass](#) would be a pared down version so as not to overshadow a Philadelphia stop where Francis will address the World Meeting of Families.

"He would arrive on the 22nd (of September) and he would leave the evening of the 27th. It's really a full six days, plus the travel, so it's really one week," Archbishop Bernardito Auza, a Philippines native and the Holy See's permanent observer to the UN, [told the Catholic News Agency on Sunday](#).

Details of the trip were discussed last week during a meeting of the U.S. trip organizers. Francis just wrapped up a four-day trip to Southeast Asia and is headed back to the Vatican after a Sunday Mass in front of an estimated 6 million people at Manila's Rizal Park in the Philippines.

Francis confirmed Monday to reporters aboard the papal plane that he will visit D.C., New York and Philly. But a Vatican official told the Daily News that the Pope may squeeze in a Boston visit as well.

Time constraints will prevent Francis from visiting California, but he plans to canonize 17th-century missionary Junipero Serra, who brought Catholicism to the West Coast, during the D.C. leg, likely at the National Shrine.

September's visit to the United States, the first papal trek stateside since Pope Benedict XVI appeared in 2008, will likely begin the evening of Sept. 22 in Washington, D.C. Pope Francis would visit the White House the next morning and meet President Obama during an official welcoming ceremony, [according to CNA](#).

Francis would celebrate Mass at Washington's Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception, according to organizers.

"And we might say really the highlight of the Washington visit might be his speech to the joint meeting of Congress, so the Senate and the House of Representatives," Archbishop Auza told CNA.

Then, it's off to the Big Apple, where Francis would likely arrive the afternoon of Sept. 24.

The next morning, the pontiff would likely address the UN General Assembly, where a three-day Post-2014 Sustainable Development Summit is set to open.

UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon is said to be "extremely thrilled" by the Pope's impending visit.

Francis would stop by St. Patrick's Cathedral at some point before celebrating Mass at MSG.

“Our plan is not to have a huge Mass outside of Philadelphia, because the focus will really be Philadelphia, because the Pope is going to the United States for the World Meeting of Families,” [Auza told CNA](#).

Francis may fit in a stop at Ground Zero to visit the scene of the 9/11 attacks and the newly opened memorial and museum.

Then, it’s off to Philadelphia, the only confirmed stop of the papal visit. There, Francis will hold a prayer vigil the evening of the 26th and Mass on Sunday, Sept. 27. He’d also likely include “a visit either to a children’s hospital or a juvenile prison,” Auza told CNA.

“But these are just proposals. At the end of February there will be the first organizational visit (from a Vatican delegation), and then we will see what we could really fill in,” [the archbishop told the outlet](#).

<http://www.nydailynews.com/new-york/pope-francis-visit-nyc-3-city-u-s-swing-report-article-1.2083682>

January 26, 2015

Change is slow but worth it

By Rachel Myslivy
Global Sisters Report

Change is slow but worth it.

A friend commented to me the other day that my environmental work is like a ministry. It was such a wonderful thing to hear. For me, raising awareness of our environmental crisis is a calling. That doesn't make it any easier. Sometimes it feels like I am pushing an enormous rock uphill on ever-shifting ground. Just when it seems I'm making headway, something happens and I have to redirect my efforts. Working for social change is slow-going and often feels like you're going backwards. It is important to take the long view.

Back in August, I was feeling crushed by the enormity of the problems we face. My efforts are so small, the problems so large. Still, so many do not understand. Why should I continue to put myself out there for the Earth time and time again with so little progress? I went to Mass alone, annoyed. The [first reading](#) began,

“You duped me, O LORD . . .
All the day I am an object of laughter;
everyone mocks me.”

Yep. I thought. That's just how I feel right now. I'm done trying to help others see the importance of conserving our resources. The reading played right along with my thinking but the ending changed the tune:

“But then it becomes like fire burning in my heart,
imprisoned in my bones;
I grow weary holding it in, I cannot endure it.”

Pictures flashed through my mind of children living off our wasted excess, turtles nearly cut in half by plastic rings, birds with stomachs full of plastic detritus. I am overwhelmed. I recalled my friend's comment that my environmental work is like a ministry. How can I help others see what she sees, that our faith directs us to care for the Earth; that our throw-away culture affects the poor – precisely those who we are to protect; that simple actions can make enormous impacts? How can we renew the face of the earth? I snapped back to attention in time to hear this in the [second reading](#):

“Do not conform yourselves to this age
but be transformed by the renewal of your mind,
that you may discern what is the will of God,
what is good and pleasing and perfect.”

Most likely, I was the only person in the church reeling through these readings – at least from the environmental perspective. I recalled Pope Francis's recent statements about throwaway culture and ecological sin as “the sin of our times.” I reflected on my deeply-held beliefs that we must care for creation to preserve life on Earth. It is all-too easy to get caught up in consumer culture and keeping up with the Joneses, but our addiction to stuff is depleting natural resources, polluting the air and water, and resulting in enormous piles of trash that will litter the Earth for

hundreds of years. I recalled a powerful statement by Sr. Miriam Therese MacGillis who [wrote](#), “Resist the lure of ‘House Beautiful’ marketing which amplifies the disparity between rich and poor, and demands enormous use of Earth’s materials.”

What is the will of God when it comes to “this age” and how can we renew our minds to understand what is good and pleasing and perfect from an ecological perspective? The [Gospel reading](#) provided an answer:

“You are thinking not as God does, but as human beings do.”

The sermon expanded upon the idea of thinking like a human being vs. thinking like God. Fr. Mike commented that you can quickly learn what thinking like a human being is by watching television. He offered several topics for thinking like a human being: beauty, pleasure, money, health, power. As I was listening, I distilled human thinking down to a simple truth: Human thinking is temporally limited. My life – my things, my health, my family – all of these are high on my list of priorities but they are all *short term* in the grand scheme of things.

Human thinking focuses on “the now” or at least the relatively-near-to-now. This short-term thinking is what allows us to pollute water sources (“*I still have clean water.*”), to fight carbon regulations (“*I need to make money now.*”), to consume resources unchecked (“*There is plenty for me.*”), and to embrace the disposable lifestyle (“*It’s so easy!*”). Considering that we are short-timers on the planet, this limited thinking is understandable – but the long-term environmental implications are staggering.

If there is one thing that I know for certain about God, it is that I do not know anything for certain about God. However, I assume that God has a much longer view of things. In the Gospel, Peter is worrying about losing Jesus in this life. He is focusing on the short-term while God, apparently, is taking the long view. I will never begin to fathom the way God sees our current predicament, but I can focus on the long view as much as I am able. In my own work, I can focus on the success, the positive steps, however small. I can educate others on the long-term impacts of their choices. I can have patience and hope and trust that all shall be well.

During that Mass, I heard something new that gave me motivation and strength to carry on. I heard what I needed to hear. Just a few days later, we established an Earth Care Committee at our parish – something I had hoped to see for years – years when it felt like I was pushing that rock uphill only to have it roll right back down to squash me time and time again. This time, something shifted, and now I am overwhelmed by the joyful success of our progress to promote environmental awareness in our parish and to be wise stewards of the Earth.

[Rachel Myslivy, M.A., conducted the [Green Sisters in Kansas Oral History Project](#) documenting the environmental activism of Catholic sisters in Kansas. She is involved in a number of Catholic and environmental organizations and runs a family farm.]

<http://globalsistersreport.org/environment/change-slow-worth-it-18626>

January 28, 2015

A New Paradigm for Catholic Energy Ethics

By Erin Lothes Biviano
Catholic Moral Theology

The following is a guest post by [Erin Lothes Biviano](#), who teaches theology at the College of St. Elizabeth.

2015 promises to be a watershed year for climate negotiations and Catholic environmental teaching. Pope Francis's [encyclical on the environment is already widely anticipated](#) and an [ambitious statement from global Bishops](#) has already appeared after the Lima COP-20. All this is good news in the wake of the latest news that [2014's global temperatures were the warmest ever](#).

Another resource is a new Vatican text that comprehensively lays out elements of the increasingly defined Catholic energy ethic. The Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace has just published the English translation of *Energy, Justice and Peace: A Reflection on Energy in the Current Context of Development and Environmental Protection* (Citta del Vaticano: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2014). This text incorporates, references, and builds upon clear themes of Catholic social teaching whose links to the environment and sustainable development are established—themes such as solidarity, rights to health and development, participation, the option for the poor, and the rights of future generations.

Energy, Justice and Peace conveys important notes in a “new paradigm” of energy ethics. As the secretary of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, Bishop Mario Toso has stated, “in view of the realization of peace – and peace includes several goods – it is necessary that energy be thought of, produced, distributed, and used, according to a new paradigm.” I [have described this new paradigm of energy ethics elsewhere](#).

Here I offer a brief introduction to *Energy, Justice and Peace*, published in Italian in 2013 as a result of a two-year study of energy by the Council with other experts. To detail some of the most evocative new messages of this text, I will highlight those that sound a new tone amidst familiar CST themes, or cast the CST themes in particularly significant form. Using the rubric of a “new paradigm of energy ethics,” I will address normative teachings, practical points, evangelical or theological themes, and exhortations- calls for action. I describe the theological messages as “evangelical” because they indeed pertain to the “good news”: the call to live out the love of neighbor in the concrete situation of the world today, a situation intersected at every dimension by the question of energy. My aim is to convey the resonances of this text with extended quotations from the document. The text's introduction reflects on the history of energy, its indispensable nature, and its complexity, then follow sections analyzing the relationship of energy to injustice, the obstacles to energy development, and critiques of the current profit-driven economic model. Discussions of governance and public responsibility, principles for energy management, and concrete proposals are offered before the conclusion.

Normative Teachings. The essential normative message is the centrality of the human person. Energy sources are “indissolubly linked with the development of man, society and culture. In short, the concept of energy being a secondary concept, in order to highlight the related ethical implications, one should always consider the primary reference from which it draws its meaning and importance: the person and his or her integral promotion. . . . Energy should be considered as a *common good*, as we will emphasize hereinafter, that must be guaranteed to all. *Inadequate and unequal access to energy must be, therefore, as an obstacle to the integral development of peoples and to a fair society.*

Practical points. Practical concerns include the competition that may result from demand for non-renewable energy sources, pitting strong economies against weak economies, “with the risk of severe penalties for the latter.” Many concrete details are reviewed, including the relationship of energy and geopolitical conflict, hazardous waste, association with cartels, biofuels, subsidies, cookstoves, the energy intensity of beef, and the water – energy – food nexus.

The Council observes that the model of development followed historically by industrial countries may not necessarily be the model for developing and rural areas. Distributed generation, small scale renewable projects, and even simple mechanical devices (replacing diesel pumps for irrigation, for example), and other local solutions must be explored.

Evangelical/ Theological Themes. The many profound theological notes within this book constitute its richest offering of an overall vision of the human meaning of energy. This vision permits the recognition of energy and energy ethics as a theme within evangelization.

First, the very cause of ecological devastation is theologically grounded. “Creation suffers because humanity does not yet live the novelty of Easter.” Humankind’s self-knowledge as a conscious moral agent is at the core of apprehending this theological message. “Taking energy into account means looking upon man, his self-perception in history and the possibilities for humanity to understand and increasingly fulfill his vocation to improvement.”

The document’s profound economic critique condemns seeking profit for profit’s sake with great pastoral sensitivity. While profit is a legitimate goal, it cannot be the sole aim of companies. Profitability may coexist with practices that allow for “the people to be humiliated, their dignity offended and the ecosystem compromised. Besides being morally inadmissible, this will have negative repercussions also on economic efficiency.”

Sustainability must therefore become an “ethical-moral sustainability,” a mode of development that “listens to nature,” and seeks an “economy of communion” — all consonant with the eschatological orientation of Christianity.

Exhortations. Many practical exhortations are offered in this volume. Increasing consumption is proscribed; energy sobriety is urged. Overall, the text calls for a new paradigm that provides “new behavioral patterns based on justice, responsibility, altruism, subsidiarity and the conception of the integral development of peoples with a view to the common good.” Toward that end, the Council advocates for “sustainable development based more on renewable energy sources than on non-renewable energy ones.”

Perhaps the most trenchant recommendation comes from the insistence that energy should “primarily solve the shortages of the most vulnerable and poorest populations, and, only subsequently, ensure greater consumption for those who already have plenty of energy.” The policy recommendation that follows is the uncompromising admonition that advanced countries have the “moral duty” of using complex energy technologies to limit and reduce their demand for energy sources that are easier to use. Poor countries will then have greater access to such sources. Advanced countries have “the moral duty of developing the use of the most complex and capital-intensive energy technologies, in order to allow poor countries to feed their development, resorting to simpler and less expensive energy technologies.”

Such strong recommendations are rooted not only in a firm call to solidarity, but the recognition of how energy intersects all forms of social, economic, technological, and political globalization. Among these multiple globalizations, *Energy, Justice and Peace* calls for increased awareness of the reality of moral globalization.

Thus a final exhortation points to the need for education and moral formation about the ethical implications of energy. Recognizing that governments may never prohibit “the use of a jeep to go to buy a superfluous item from a store around the corner,” this behavior is nonetheless labeled as aberrant. The awareness of energy choices as ethical choices must be developed in combination with the spread of the Gospel message. This evangelical education about energy seeks a “conversion of hearts and minds,” that understands the linkage of love with the universal destination of goods and the management of energy in an ethical-moral sustainability.

<http://catholicmoraltheology.com/a-new-paradigm-for-catholic-energy-ethics/>

January 28, 2015

US to Enlist Pope Francis' Help on Climate Change

Reuters

WASHINGTON—In a bid to bolster the Obama administration's "moral" case for combating climate change, the head of the Environmental Protection Agency will meet senior Vatican officials Friday to enlist papal support for its policies.

EPA Administrator Gina McCarthy said Pope Francis, who has become a vocal climate advocate since his 2013 election, can be an ally for President Barack Obama's Climate Action Plan.

"As one of the world's most respected and influential leaders, Pope Francis, and those who advise him, will play a crucial part in advancing climate change [action] domestically and overseas," McCarthy, a Roman Catholic, said in an e-mail.

This marks the second time the administration has sought the Vatican's help on a controversial issue. The pope helped mediate the effort by the United States and Cuba to reopen diplomatic relations.

Francis has become an emerging voice on climate change, saying on a recent trip to the typhoon-vulnerable Philippines that "man has gone too far damaging the environment."

The EPA is finalizing a series of regulations targeting carbon emissions and air pollution amid strong resistance from the Republican-led Congress and industry.

To counter that, McCarthy has done extensive public outreach to win support for EPA proposals, touting their economic and public health benefits. She said the pope could help make her case.

"Focusing our attention on the communities that need it most is at the core of EPA's mission to protect public health and the environment, and there is no voice more credible than the church's to speak to our moral obligation as stewards of our planet," McCarthy said.

In June, the pope is expected to issue an encyclical on environmental degradation and its effects on millions of people, especially the world's poorest. The encyclical is aimed at pressuring world leaders to secure a United Nations climate agreement in Paris next December that would require rich and poor countries to halt, slow or slash their carbon emissions.

Dan Misleh, executive director of the Catholic Climate Covenant, said the encyclical will "add some wind to the sails" of the Paris talks.

"What he says carries significant weight as he tries to live what he teaches," Misleh said. "There is moral authority to Pope Francis that is undeniable."

Added John Grim, a director of Yale University's Forum on Religion and Ecology: "It is very appropriate that Gina McCarthy is visiting with the pope. Francis I is so widely respected that he will change the dialog on this issue."

<http://www.voanews.com/content/reu-us-enlist-pope-francis-help-climate-change/2617824.html>

January 30, 2015

EPA chief at Vatican: Obama 'aligned' with Francis on climate change

By Joshua J. McElwee
National Catholic Reporter

Rome -- Explaining her visit Friday to the Vatican, the head of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency said she wanted to let Pope Francis know that President Barack Obama is "aligned with him" on the issue of climate change and is taking action.

"I think the pope knows his own beliefs," said EPA Administrator Gina McCarthy. "I want him to know that the president is aligned with him on these issues and that we are taking action in the United States."

McCarthy, who [is visiting the Vatican Friday](#) as part of a five-day European tour to promote the Obama administration's climate action plan, was speaking in a small meeting with press before heading to Vatican offices.

The administrator said she would be bringing a message of hope to Vatican officials that "this is not a challenge that human nature and human beings can't fix."

"This is not an issue that should be driving economic problems," said McCarthy. "It should be bringing economic solutions that [are] totally consistent with the efforts that the Catholic church with great pride has been doing ... to bring relief to folks that are most in need of relief, folks that are in poverty."

"Those are the ones that are going to be hit and we have to take the action now," she said.

McCarthy, who was speaking alongside U.S. Ambassador to the Holy See Ken Hackett, said she would be meeting Friday with Cardinal Peter Turkson, president of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace. She also said she will also be meeting during the day with Msgr. Antoine Camilleri, an undersecretary at the Vatican's Secretariat of State.

Hackett said the U.S. embassy to the Holy See would be hosting a reception for McCarthy and other Vatican officials Friday night.

The administrator is also to tour some of the work the Vatican has done to better its environmental impact, including solar panels that have been installed in the city-state and an air filtration system that has been put in place at the Sistine Chapel.

Asked about Francis' expected encyclical on environmental issues, which the pope [has indicated](#) will be published in June or July, McCarthy first joked: "It's certainly not my place to dictate to the pope what he should be doing in an encyclical."

But she also said the pontiff's message on climate change has already been "very powerful."

That message, she said, "is to face up to the challenge of climate change, to recognize that it is a challenge how we can serve those most in need and protect them."

"One of the challenges that I think we face in the U.S. is that climate change is very often viewed as a political issue," said McCarthy. "And environmental issues are not political."

She continued: "I think we need to get this out of the political arena and get it back to the arena we work most effectively on: What's right for our kids, for our families, for public health, and what solutions do we bring to the table that are going to address those?"

McCarthy was also asked about [Francis' remarks on the papal plane](#) while traveling to Manila, Philippines, Jan. 15 that he was disappointed by a "lack of courage" by world leaders at the U.N.'s last meeting on climate change, held in December in Peru.

Referring to the next U.N. Climate Change Conference, to be held in Paris this November and December, McCarthy said: "We think there is a bit of change happening now that is making the atmosphere as we lead up to Paris more hopeful."

"Clearly, the pope wants actions and he wants real commitments and we do as well and we're providing them," she said.

"I think the pope's continued push to try and get the resolutions to the table that we need -- if that's where he wants to be -- I think that's great," said McCarthy. "It just continues to provide visibility."

Before concluding her remarks, McCarthy thanked both Catholic Relief Services and the U.S. bishops' conference for their work on climate change, saying both organizations had been "amazing" on the issue.

McCarthy also thanked the Catholic Climate Covenant, a coalition of dozens of Catholic organizations, dioceses, religious communities and colleges working on the issue.

"The faith community's voice is going to be very important here because EPA can talk about the science and reach only so far," said the administrator. "We need to get this to the point where people are as comfortable talking about this as they are other international public health threats."

"Everybody is just looking for the pope to continue to make signals that this is an issue that is important to the Catholic church and should be important to all of us," said McCarthy. "Then we can take it from there ... in terms of what it means to translate [that] into effective strategies to get the word out and to start the actions."

[Joshua J. McElwee is *NCR* Vatican correspondent. His email address is jmcelwee@ncronline.org. Follow him on Twitter: [@joshjmac](https://twitter.com/joshjmac).]

<http://ncronline.org/blogs/eco-catholic/epa-chief-vatican-obama-aligned-francis-climate-change>

Winter 2015

Solutions

Environmental Defense Fund Newsletter

Vol. 46, No. 1

http://www.edf.org/sites/default/files/content/solutions_winter2015.pdf

Winter 2015

Capsules - Creation Justice Ministries Newsletter

<http://www.creationjustice.org/capsules.html>

February 2015

Eco-Congregation Scotland Newsletter

<http://us9.campaign-archive1.com/?u=a37b4ff760ffcc7fd1c3611b4&id=b5c8080e5b&e=709fe41ec4>

February 2015

Earth Keeper Newsletter

Southern African Faith Communities' Environment Institute

<http://us6.campaign-archive2.com/?u=887c3de8b0&id=41a7b0f836&e=a758405790>

February 2015

Green Church Newsletter

http://egliseverte-greenchurch.ca/green/index.php?option=com_acymailing&ctrl=archive&task=view&mailid=57&key=0adb4156f253d07aa655966554bc601f&subid=189-dbe0c9b642707e4c37fc810b1cf1134f

February 2015

Ceres Newsletter

<http://view.exacttarget.com/?j=fe5d11737562047e7d1d&m=fe6415707461007b7613&ls=fde713777c61037575107777&l=fe891779766d0d7e77&s=fe201673766c0378701d75&jb=ffcf14&ju=fe2310757263007a741174&r=0>

February 2, 2015

Pope Francis and Climate Change: A Catholic Tradition

By Carolyn Woo
Huffington Post

In taking up the important issue of climate change, Pope Francis is acting in the long tradition of the Catholic Church to decry threats to the world God has created and entrusted to us as well as injustices that endanger humanity and disproportionately affect the poor.

In 1891, Pope Leo XIII issued a document called *Rerum Novarum* which addressed the moral dimensions of economic life in light of the Church's tradition dating back through Sacred Scripture. This teaching reminds us that the goods of Creation are meant to benefit all humankind. Private property and the free market system must advance the well-being of all and the earth that sustains us. The document uplifted the sanctity of the individual, responding to the many collectivist ideologies proposed to redress the inequities wrought by the industrial revolution.

In subsequent generations, Popes have added to this body of work that came to be known as Catholic Social Teaching. That is what Francis is doing today, building on the established teaching of the Church and relying on the Catholic belief that science illuminates and reveals the creation of our Lord and shapes the actions of mankind.

One theme throughout Catholic Social Teaching is a respect for free markets as necessary for individual dignity along with a recognition of the injustice and despair that can result from the excesses of capitalism. It is in this tradition that Francis takes on climate change, not to constrict the entrepreneurial spirit that God has placed in humanity, but to ensure that the changes wrought by the overreliance on fossil fuels do not damage our world and its communities and countries in a way that does not allow their citizens to retain their dignity, their autonomy, their God-given rights.

At Catholic Relief Services, we are very aware of the impact of climate change on the poor around the world; that those who have contributed the least to this problem are suffering -- and will suffer -- the most from it.

In Bangladesh, rising sea levels make flooding more frequent and severe. A continued rise will send millions fleeing, affecting not just those who must leave their homes but also neighboring communities and countries that will receive them. In Central America, scientists see that temperature changes are threatening the future of traditional cash crops, sending many more into cities to seek work. There they will encounter the conditions -- poverty, violence -- that motivate thousands to embark on dangerous journeys to the United States as refugees. In the Philippines, ferocious typhoons are hitting unprepared areas that have never seen such storms before. In the Sahel region of Africa, droughts are becoming more frequent and of longer duration.

Pope John Paul II recognized that we must take responsibility for such consequences, stating, "We face a fundamental question which can be described as both ethical and ecological. How can accelerated development be prevented from turning against man? How can one prevent disasters that destroy the environment and threaten all forms of life, and how can the negative consequences that have already occurred be remedied?"

He said that, "the stronger and richer nations must have a sense of moral responsibility for the other nations, so that a real international system may be established which will rest on the

foundation of the equality of all peoples and on the necessary respect for their legitimate differences."

Pope Francis knows that God calls us to act. And that in acting, we will not only save so many poor from the sufferings brought about by climate change, but, as Leo XIII understood 123 years ago, will also preserve the role of the free market as necessary for the dignity and progress of mankind, saving it from its own excesses.

Carolyn Woo is president of Catholic Relief Services, the official overseas humanitarian agency of the Catholic community in the United States.

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/catholic-relief-services/pope-francis-and-climate_b_6595036.html

February 2, 2015

Pope Francis: cultivate and preserve Mother Earth

Vatican Radio

Pope Francis on Saturday received members of Italy's National Federation of Farmers, who are this year celebrating the 70th anniversary of their foundation.

Pope Francis told the farmers present in the Clementine Hall that there is no humanity without the cultivation of the earth, as there is also no life without good food that is produced for men and women of every continent.

This shows, underlined the Holy Father, that agriculture has a pivotal role.

In his prepared remarks to the farmers, the Pope reflected on as he put it, two critical points. He said, "the Second Vatican Council recalled the universal destination of the goods of the earth," but, Pope Francis added, "in fact the dominant economic system excludes many from their correct use." The Holy Father went on to say that, "absolutizing market rules, a culture of waste and waste that in the case of food has unacceptable proportions, together with other factors, cause misery and suffering for many families." Therefore, the Pope continued, the system of production and distribution of food must be radically rethought.

In his second point, the Holy Father said it was important to remember that man is called not only to cultivate the land, but also to preserve it. In a time of climate change the Pope noted, this is difficult, that is why, he said, it is so vital that nations are able to work together to protect creation.

Finally, Pope Francis invited the farmers, in the spirit of St Francis, to love the land as Mother earth, and proposed that they make an alliance with it, so that it can continue to be, the source of life for the entire human family.

February 3, 2015

Faculty Spotlight: John Grim

Notes from the Quad
Yale University

In the midst of humanity's divisions and convulsions, John Grim is watching the world slowly wake up to the urgency and ethics of Earth care. At Yale he feels that he joins with others to help make that happen.

"The question is: What values do we human communities share?" says Grim, co-director of the Forum for Religion and Ecology at Yale with his wife, Yale scholar Mary Evelyn Tucker.

"Ultimately, while we can distinguish ourselves, we are not separate. We have different ways of making a similar point: We are interwoven with the natural world, and thus need an ethic of care, an ethic of respectful use. No one personality or community or denomination will trigger the ecological changes needed. I think it's 'a hundred flowers blooming' across the world. Many communities, many relationships will make it happen."

"We are not naïve to the problems of religion – its intolerance, its violence," he says. "Despite some very sharp difference, we've seen the possibility of dialogue. Mary Evelyn and I are both hopeful that religions can make a contribution to a sustainable future."

The wisdom of Native peoples

Like Tucker, Grim is a Yale senior lecturer and research scholar with appointments in the Divinity School, the School of Forestry and Environmental Studies, and the Department of Religious Studies.

For five decades he has been particularly drawn to the wisdom of Native American peoples and what they can teach us about mutually enhancing human-Earth relations. He has a longtime relationship with the Crow tribe in Montana, where he and Tucker have been adopted into a Crow family.

"Adoption is a pathway into ritual life," he says. "Certain doors open through this pathway. Through their rituals there's a re-creation of the cosmos in order to renew nature and animals and themselves. Native people are trying to preserve values that are essential to their survival. I want to convey their resilience. Indigenous knowing is a moving balance of life-taking and life-giving relationships. In this spirit, indigenous peoples are really speaking out in the face of climate change and standing up to degradation in many places across the continent."

Grim's long immersion in Native American traditions has positioned him for larger, global conversations unfolding rapidly in the 21st century. His work these days is helping articulate ecological ethics at the frontier of interreligious dialogues. His teaching embraces many styles of learning – classroom, filmmaking, books, online.

Online pioneer

Grim and Tucker are pioneering hybrid online classes at Yale in religion and ecology. Students do the work online but also meet the professors once a week in class. This semester they are teaching Yale's first online six-week course on East Asian religions and ecology. It is open only to Yale students for now, but they hope to expand the course offering to other interested universities – and eventually offer 10 online courses on ecology and other religious traditions. They are teaching Introduction to Religion and Ecology online this semester as well.

Grim and Tucker are also teaching “Law, Environment, and Religion” this semester with Doug Kysar, the Joseph M. Field '55 Professor of Law at Yale Law School.

The class brings together eight divinity students, eight forestry school students, eight law students, creating much cross-fertilizing discussion, Grim says.

“We discuss how economic development can proceed with attention to the precautionary principle so that there is mutual flourishing of human beings within natural systems,” he says.

“There's great interest in learning how to quantify the *benefits* of nature, not just the value of its exploitation. Does a river have value to us besides being a place for dumping? What about its role in the ecosystem, its value as a source for fresh water? What about its aesthetic value? Behind all our class discussion is a looming question: What values are driving us today? Do these values include social justice, eco-justice? These questions flow like a current through the class.”

Journey of the Universe

Then there's the Emmy award-winning “Journey of the Universe” PBS film and companion book (published by Yale University Press). Grim and Tucker are executive directors of the film. Tucker and Brian Swimme are authors of the book. Together they present a fresh story about the origins of the universe, its principles of self-organization and emergence, and the hopes for an evolving Earth community of mutual concern.

The film has built a following. Some 66,000 viewers have rated it on Netflix over the past year. Grim and Tucker will be presenting the film in South Korea this summer. The film has been translated into Korean and Spanish. They have also shown it to audiences in Europe, Latin America, and China.

Grim was raised in North Dakota in a progressive Roman Catholic household, which gave him an openness to the spirit of Vatican II, other Christian traditions, as well as evolutionary theory, he says.

He went to St. John's University in Collegeville, Minn., as an undergraduate. He received an M.A. and Ph.D. degrees in the history of religions from Fordham, conducting research in shamanism and its healing practices in Native American Anisinabe traditions.

Fateful friendship

At Fordham he met historian of religions Thomas Berry (1914-2009), a comprehensive thinker who endeavored to weave the findings of science with the insights of religious traditions. Berry became a lifelong friend and mentor who also saw evolution as a cosmic story that envisioned a participatory role for humans.

Grim also met his future wife at Fordham, and soon he and Tucker would forge a remarkable partnership as university professors, authors, book editors, conference organizers and conversation starters on the ever-widening relations between religion, science, and care of the Earth.

“This life work has taken us out of the silo mentality,” says Grim, who came to Yale with Tucker in 2006. “The issues are too pressing to remain isolated in particular disciplines only.”

A pivotal moment in his career came in the mid-1990s. From 1996 to 1998 they organized a series of 10 conferences on world religions and ecology at the Center for the Study of World Religions at Harvard. From those conferences Grim and Tucker edited a series of 10 volumes on particular religions and their ecological perspectives distributed by Harvard University Press.

“That was a decisive turn – it allowed us to see a multidisciplinary picture in the religious ecologies and religious cosmologies of particular traditions,” Grim says.

West meets East

His perspectives on world religions give him a glimpse of what different traditions can bring to each other. Asia can teach the West, and vice versa, he feels. Modern western worldviews and religions honor individualism, rights language, and forms of rationalism. East Asian traditions value community and holism. They see continuity in reality expressed by concepts such as *qi* (or *ch'i*). Qi is a circulating force of matter-energy foundational to life. In South Asian thought, community is also valued. For example, *dharma* points toward an inherent duty and responsibility to the larger community of life.

New understandings open up in his classroom when Divinity and Forestry students mingle. In one class, Grim reads from the work of a Hopi elder on the importance of blue corn within his culture in the southwest.

“It's interesting to see how divinity students and forestry students react differently to the reading. The FES students will talk about the nutrient flow and other technicalities of root systems and soil. Divinity students pick up on the power of the symbolism of the corn. In the class, their conversation moves into peer learning. They begin to teach one another.”

For John Grim, such teaching moments inside and beyond the classroom will eventually inspire more empathetic and humanizing principles of environmental practice and community values. Religions, he feels, must find a way to be central to the conversation, realizing that they may not be sufficient but are necessary for environmental solutions.

<http://notesfromthequad.yale.edu/notes/2015-02-03-131500/faculty-spotlight-john-grim>

February 3, 2015

Interfaith panel tackles global environmental problems at Dallas event

By Julie Ryan
Green Source DWF

Faith leaders of Buddhist, Hindu and Muslim traditions shared their views on climate change and responsibility this Martin Luther King Day, in a panel sponsors dubbed “Love, Justice, Care for Creation.” [Dallas Interfaith Power and Light](#), local affiliate of the national faith-based environmental group, hosted the panel at the Dallas Baha’i Center in Lake Highlands in Dallas.

Discussion spanned from teachings on the spiritual value of the Earth, to environmental degradation’s root causes, environmental justice, and solutions.

Striking differences in this forum versus others on climate change were, fossil fuels were not mentioned – but animal farming was. Raising animals for food causes almost one-fifth of global greenhouse gas emissions and extensive other environmental damage, said Buddhist priest Tashi Nyima, citing a 2011 study by Humane Society International summarizing 289 scientific reports.

Ven. Nyima of the New Jonang Buddhist Community in Dallas was joined by Dr. Hind Jarrah of the Texas Muslim Women's Foundation and Dr. Pankaj Jain, anthropologist at University of North Texas and author of the book *Dharma and Ecology of Hindu Communities: Sustenance and Sustainability*. The three also spoke from their personal knowledge of environmental conditions in developing nations around the world.

"One of the five pillars of Islam," said Jarrah, "is the unity with the Creator of all creation... Concern for one another and the environment is intrinsic to Islam."

Nyima, who is a spokesperson for [Dharma Voices for Animals](#), said "all sentient beings, all existence, is connected and interdependent" in Buddhist teachings. "Non-killing" is Buddhism’s first vow, and extends to animals as well as humans. Jain echoed the value of honoring animals as an Indian tradition.

A core value of Buddhism is “right view,' seeing things as they are," said Nyima. “World problems trace back to two wrong views: one, separation, that is, my separateness from the rest of the world, and two, the supremacy of the self.”

These views lead to consumerism. “We don’t think anything is enough.”

In 2015, according to Oxfam, 1 percent of the world's population owns as much as the bottom 50 percent of the world's population, he noted.

“India and China are the most sustainable nations in the world,” stated Jain, citing *National Geographic*’s eight-year Greendex project. Greendex is a scientifically derived sustainable consumption index of actual consumer behavior and material lifestyles in 18 nations. The United States ranks last.

"In the U.S., the birth of one child has the economic impact of 70 Indonesian children," said Jain. "In the U.S., a dog or cat is the equivalent of 12 Bangladeshi children."

“How can we overcome political and economic forces involved in [the climate crisis]?” an audience member asked.

“Change has to start with me,” said Jain. “Being more conscious of how I'm consuming.” Nyima seconded, “What we buy is primarily responsible for climate degradation.”

“Speak truth to power,” he added. “Get in the way. Stop our silent complicity... As people of faith, with dignity and constancy—not anger.”

“What use are all our churches if we cannot come together? We need to agree on what we agree... If we came together, we could do so much more.”

Jarrah added, “You have to address people based on what moves them. Weather events around the world are unbelievable, blizzards in the Middle East that have never been seen before... See what moves people and try to reach them in that manner.”

At the closing reception, audience member Sarah from Tarrant County commented: “You know, I agree with what was said about the churches coming together. There may be five of us in each congregation who are concerned about the environment. What would happen if we all connected?”

What if?

<http://greensourcedfw.org/articles/interfaith-panel-tackles-global-environmental-problems-dallas-event>

February 9, 2015

Pope Mass: Protecting Creation a Christian responsibility

Vatican Radio

Christians are called to care for God's creation. That was the Pope's message at Mass this Monday morning at the Casa Santa Marta. The Holy Father also spoke about the "second creation", the one performed by Jesus that he "re-created" from what had been ruined by sin.

God creates the universe but creation does not end, "he continues to sustain what he has created." That was the focus of Pope Francis' homily as he dwelt on a passage from Genesis, in the first reading, which recounts the creation of the universe. "In today's Gospel", the Pope commented, we see "the other creation of God", "that of Jesus, who came to re-create what had been ruined by sin."

We see Jesus among the people, he said, and "those who touched him were saved" it is the "re-creation". "This 'second creation' Pope Francis, is even more wonderful than the first; This second work is wonderful. "Finally, there is "another job", that of "perseverance in the faith" that which the Holy Spirit works on:

"God works, continues to work, and we can ask ourselves how we should respond to this creation of God, which is born of love, because he works through love. In the 'first creation' we must respond with the responsibility that the Lord gives us: 'The earth is yours, take it forward; let it grow '. Even for us there is a responsibility to nurture the Earth, to nurture Creation, to keep it and make it grow according to its laws. We are the lords of creation, not its masters. "

The Pope warned, however, that we must be "careful not to become masters of Creation, but to make it go forward, faithful to its laws." Therefore, he added, "this is the first response to the work of God: to be protectors of Creation":

"When we hear that people have meetings about how to preserve creation, we can say: 'No, they are the greens!' No, they are not the greens! This is the Christian! This is 'our response to the' first creation 'of God. And' our responsibility. A Christian who does not protect Creation, who does not let it grow, is a Christian who does not care about the work of God, that work that was born from the love of God for us. And this is the first response to the first creation: protect creation, make it grow. "

On the subject of the "second creation Pope Francis looked to the figure of Saint Paul saying, this Saint tells us to let ourselves be "reconciled to God", "go on the road of inner reconciliation, community reconciliation, because reconciliation is the work of Christ." And again, echoing the words of Saint Paul, the Pope said that we should be grieved that the Holy Spirit is within us, that he is within us and works in us. The Holy Father added that we "believe in the person of God": "the person is the Father, Son and the person of the Holy Spirit":

"And all three are involved in this creation, in this re-creation, in this perseverance in re-creation. And to all three of them our response is: to preserve and nurture Creation, let ourselves be reconciled with Jesus, with God in Jesus Christ, every day, and do not be grieved by the Holy Spirit, not drive it away: he is the host of our hearts, he who accompanies us, he who makes us grow. "

"May the Lord – Pope Francis concluded - give us the grace to understand that he" is at work
"and give us the grace to respond appropriately to this labour of love."

<http://www.news.va/en/news/pope-mass-protecting-creation-a-christian-responsi?fromt=yes>

February 9, 2015

Rediscovering the moral dimension of climate change

By Jonathon Porritt
The Ecologist

Pope Francis's forthcoming statement on climate change could just revitalise progress towards significant emissions cuts, writes Jonathon Porritt. But more than that, it will open up the space for a wider spirituality to guide our thinking, and campaigning, on climate and other key global challenges.

Which of the following publications will have the bigger impact on the all-important climate conference in Paris at the end of the year?

1. Individual statements from governments of their Intended Nationally Determined Contributions ('INDCs')?
2. The forthcoming encyclical from Pope Francis on the environment and climate change, rumoured to be in its final draft?

Of course *both* are of critical importance. If the INDCs from governments, indicating the scope of cuts in greenhouse gas emissions to be achieved over the next 15 years, demonstrate a high level of ambition, this will create the context for a hard-hitting global agreement in Paris.

And if the aggregated 'total' of all those country targets falls so far short of what the science tells us is now necessary, it will confirm for many that our politicians are incapable of understanding the true consequences of accelerating climate change for the whole of humankind.

But only Pope Francis can challenge 'Christian conservatism'

Should the Pope clearly spell out the all but inevitable consequences of today's BAAU (Business Almost As Usual) responses to accelerating climate change - especially regarding the impacts on the world's poorest people - it will force Catholic leaders the world to re-think their moral obligations.

With more than a billion Catholics all around the world, that's pretty important in its own right. Leadership from that source has been minimal, to say the least, and there are many Catholic politicians and climate change sceptics who play a very influential role in today's climate politics.

Especially in the USA, where they've formed what can only be described as an 'unholy alliance' with the evangelicals to stymie any effort by their respective churches to step up to the plate on the issue of climate change and personal responsibility.

And that's why I believe the impact of any papal edict in this area will be far, far greater than its immediate impact on the Catholic Church.

I believe such a broadside, framed essentially in the name of the world's poorest people, of all future generations, and of the rest of non-human creation, could just re-legitimise a deep and radical *moral* case for changing our ways before it's too late.

Doing what's expedient - or what's right?

For that's what's missing today. Governments are compelled, at every turn, to put national self-interest ahead of what's actually needed for humankind as a whole. Sovereign interests almost always trump the common good. In that respect, we're *all* prisoners trapped in a classic and potentially terminal dilemma.

By the same token, the business response to climate change is held back by companies' adherence to their tried-and-tested 'business cases', built up so rationally and mechanistically over the last decade, for fear of deviating in any degree from their unbending commitment to profit-maximising shareholder supremacy. No moral dimension here please!

Which in turn allows the world's media baronies to go on lying, distorting and obfuscating about climate change, ensuring that most citizens the world over end up confused and disempowered, just waiting for a different quality of leadership.

I have to admit that I feel a little odd saying that. I've spent most of my life inveighing against the Catholic Church's utterly idiotic views on procreation and family planning - and I'm not sure that Pope Francis's reminder to his believers that they 'do not have to breed like rabbits' goes quite as far as he so obviously needs to go.

However many times one comes back to the fact that there are two elements to the global metric of 'per capita emissions' - namely, emissions *and* heads - today's climate diplomacy still focusses *exclusively* on the emissions. And the Pope must realise that.

But who else is going to put that utterly critical moral dimension back into our deliberations? Prince Charles has laboured mightily to do exactly that, but 30 years on from the time when he first started urging politicians to get to grips with the threat of climate change, far too many people now set his continued advocacy to one side on the grounds of 'been there, done that, got the t-shirt'.

New politics, new economics

So what about the politicians themselves, in terms of reviving that kind of moral dimension? Until the recent triumph of Syriza in Greece, and the rise of Podemos in Spain, I would have

dismissed out of hand any suggestion that a generation of politicians totally in thrall to today's dominant neoliberal ideology would have anything at all to offer by way of moral guidance.

But the election of Syriza in Greece provides another very powerful reminder that there's a radically different way of doing politics. Writing in the *Financial Times* recently, Professor Mark Mazower pointed out the moral underpinning for Syriza's surge in popularity:

"With youth unemployment above 50%, an entire generation is being consigned to the scrapheap. At the same time, the notion of the common good is being sacrificed by forced sell-offs of state-owned lands, as well as businesses, with the prospect of ecological destruction as a result. If finance is to serve Europe rather than run it, a notion of the common good needs to be restored."

Today's economic orthodoxies are so transparently *not* for the common good. Yet with the full support of our self-serving, right-wing media, it's been possible for politicians to obscure the worsening impact of structural inequity on people's lives. But as that inequity bites deeper and deeper, even their obfuscatory skills can no longer paper over the cracks.

Time to develop the spiritual dimension

It is of course perfectly possible to define (and work for) the common good from an entirely secular perspective. But many would now argue that faith-based and spiritual perspectives can bring both a deeper and a more enduring dimension.

Which is why I was so fascinated to discover that the RSA (full name: Royal Society for the encouragement of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce), an organisation that presents itself as a bastion of rational and enlightened secularism, has just brought out a rather intriguing publication under the title of '*Spiritualise: Revitalising Spirituality to Address 21st Century Challenges*'.

As if to acknowledge that this might be a bit shocking to the RSA's empirically minded supporters, its Director, Matthew Taylor, was in somewhat sheepish mode in introducing the publication:

"The fact that the RSA - known for its work on policy issues like city growth, self-employment and public service reform - undertook this project is a sign of the growing importance being attached to spirituality as a source of motivation, meaning and creativity."

"Spirituality is coming into the mainstream. It could powerfully affect the way we approach major 21st century possibilities and challenges."

Only in the UK could you get away with the utterly absurd notion that spirituality is only just "*coming into the main stream*"! Blinded as we are by decades of de-spiritualised materialism in this little country of ours, we conveniently forget that the vast majority of human beings on this planet still lead lives informed (and, for the most part, enriched) by spiritual insights and practice.

Climate change is a moral issue

To be honest, I'm not sure that I either understood or ended up sympathising with the publication's explicit aim of *"giving spirituality an improved intellectual grounding and greater cultural and political salience."*

But I did find myself aligned with its explanation of how spirituality might help inform our deliberations about many of today's key issues: *"The overarching societal role of spirituality is to serve as a counterweight to instrumental and utilitarian thinking.*

"At an economic level, that means intelligently critiquing the fetishisation of economic growth as a panacea and global competition as the only game in town. At a political level, it means that citizens need to be the subjects of social change, not just its objects, with spiritual perspectives playing a key role in shaping and expressing the roots and values of democratic culture."

So can we now look forward to spiritual perspectives playing a bigger part in the debate about climate change?

Will the Pope's increasingly trenchant comments about the moral deficiencies (or even 'sinfulness') of much of today's politics encourage other religious and spiritual leaders to join the fray, to demand that we take a more morally-based approach to delivering the kind of radically decarbonised world that we now so urgently need?

Jonathon Porritt is Founder Director of Forum for the Future www.forumforthefuture.org. His latest book, *'The World We Made'* is available from [Phaidon](http://www.phaidon.com).

http://www.theecologist.org/ecologist_partners/2739744/rediscovering_the_moral_dimension_of_climate_change.html

February 9, 2015

Pope Francis: It's Christian to protect the environment

By David Gibson, Religion News Service
USA Today

VATICAN CITY — If you are a Christian, protecting the environment is part of your identity, not an ideological option, Pope Francis said Monday.

"When we hear that people have meetings about how to preserve creation, we can say: 'No, they are the greens!'" Francis said in his homily at morning Mass, using a common name for environmental activists.

"No, they are not the greens! This is the Christian!" he said.

"A Christian who does not protect creation, who does not let it grow, is a Christian who does not care about the work of God; that work that was born from the love of God for us," Francis continued. "And this is the first response to the first creation: protect creation, make it grow."

The pope — who took his name from St. Francis of Assisi, the patron saint of the environment — has made care for the environment a hallmark of his papacy since he was elected nearly two years ago.

In fact, the pontiff is preparing a major document, called an encyclical, on the environment. It is likely to reiterate his frequent calls for governments and individuals to take steps to combat climate change, a phenomenon he attributes in part to human activity.

That conclusion, and his focus on protecting creation, as he calls it, has angered some conservative Catholics in the U.S., who see it as further evidence that Francis is pushing a liberal agenda that slights traditional Catholic talking points on issues like abortion and gay marriage.

The issue is likely to get more heated in the coming months. The encyclical is expected by July, and Francis will be making his first visit to the U.S. in September.

In his homily Monday in the chapel at his Vatican residence, Francis dwelt on the first reading of the Mass, the passage from Genesis that recounts the creation of the universe.

"In the 'first creation,'" the pope said, "we must respond with the responsibility that the Lord gives us."

"Even for us there is a responsibility to nurture the Earth, to nurture creation, to keep it and make it grow according to its laws," he said. "We are the lords of creation, not its masters."

<http://www.usatoday.com/story/news/world/2015/02/09/pope-francis-environment-creation-christian/23132703/>

February 9, 2015

The Role of Religious Environmentalism

Speaker: Mary Evelyn Tucker, Codirector, Forum on Religion and Ecology, Yale University

Moderator: [Irina A. Faskianos](#), Vice President, National Program & Outreach, Council on Foreign Relations

Council on Foreign Relations

Listen to the audio:

<http://www.cfr.org/energy-and-environment/role-religious-environmentalism/p36105>

Read the transcript:

<http://www.cfr.org/energy-and-environment/role-religious-environmentalism/p36109>

OPERATOR: Thank you for downloading this Council on Foreign Relations podcast. CFR is an independent national membership organization and nonpartisan research center. For more information, please visit us online at [cfr.org](http://www.cfr.org).

FASKIANOS: Good afternoon from New York, and welcome to the Council on Foreign Relations Religion and Foreign Policy conference call series. I'm Irina Faskianos, vice president for the national program and outreach here at CFR. Thank you for joining us. As a reminder, today's call is on the record and the audio will be available on our website, www.cfr.org.

We're delighted to have Mary Evelyn Tucker with us today to talk about the role of religion and ecology and to explore how faith-based organizations and global efforts can address environmental issues. Mary Evelyn Tucker is co-director of Yale University's Forum on Religion and Ecology. The website for that is www.fore.research.yale.edu, and it really is a network and a place for religions to be in dialogue with other disciplines to seek solutions to both global and local environmental problems. She is also senior lecturer and research scholar at Yale, where she teaches in a joint master's program between the University School of Forestry and Environmental Studies and the Divinity School.

Dr. Tucker is the author or editor of numerous volumes on religious environmentalism, and most recently she completed a new overview of the field with John Grim entitled *Ecology and Religion*. You can find more of her work and information about the forum, the Web site, as well as sign for their monthly newsletter there. So Mary Evelyn, thank you very much for joining us today. It would be great if you could give us a glimpse into, or talk about, how you got into this field. And, over the course of your career, how you've seen it evolved and where you see it going.

TUCKER: Well, thank you very much, Irina, for this opportunity to speak with so many of you out there. And what a wonderful mixture of both academics and religious leaders, community leaders, laity, NGO organizations, media and many interfaith groups. So welcome.

And I know many of you have been doing this work for a long time, and I just wanted to give a little bit of an overview of the last twenty years to begin. Of course, I was very much inspired by Thomas Berry, whom many of you know is a historian of religion at Fordham. But it was about twenty years ago that a range of groups came together to try and insecure religious voices, religious concerns, ethics and values, theology with the pressing environmental problems of our day. And that included our work that began at Harvard from '95 to '98. But it also included the Alliance on Religion and Conservation from the U.K.; Religion, Science and the Environment that was a movement largely in the E.U. but spearheaded by the ecumenical patriarch, Bartholomew, the Greek Orthodox tradition.

Here in the U.S., the National Religious Partnership for the Environment began; the Coalition on the Environment in Jewish Life; the Islamic scholar, Seyyed Hossein Nasr was speaking widely on these issues; and the Baha'i, as well, for a long, long time. In Latin America, there was a very

interesting movement that brought together liberation theology with ecology, and that was spearheaded by Leonardo Boff in an Orbis book series on ecology and justice. Eco-feminists joined in the movement – Ivone Gebara in Latin America – but also people in North America – Mary Daly, Mary Hunt, Rosemary Ruether, Heather Eaton in Canada. And they engaged Buddhists, too; Gary Snyder, Joanna Macy, Ken Krafts (ph) and Stephanie Cozit (ph) here in the U.S. talking about that profound interconnectedness of all life that the Buddhists teach.

So in this period of '95 to '98, John Grim, my husband and I did this series, as many of you know, at Harvard to try and pick up on that energy and to try and explore and investigate what are the resources of the world's religions, the Abrahamic traditions of the West, the Asian traditions of India and China and Japan and Southeast Asia, and the indigenous traditions. So this series, over 3 years, brought several hundred scholars and laity and activists together. And out of that, over 7 more years, 10 volumes were published. So the spirit of these Harvard conferences was very much a sense of theory and practice. That theology and engagement had to go together.

In fact, that's what was already happening. But the traditions were reexamining their texts and their ritual practices, their symbolic ways of knowing and so on. But they also were doing movements on the ground; activism, new rituals, new prayers and so on. So the 10 volumes had this mix of theology and engagement. In fact, we call this "engaged scholarship," very much so. So the forum Web site, which we hope you'll find as a useful resource, has this presence of an academic and an activist integration. So on the Web site, there's bibliographies that are annotated of all the books that have been published over these last twenty years, and it's an astonishing explosion, actually. And there's syllabi and teaching and video materials.

But then there are listings of engaged projects. Of course, many of them have to be updated because so much has happened in each of these traditions. And there are statements of all the world's religions. None of this was here 20 years ago. So that is the marker of how far we've come: the explosion of books, the syllabi, the teaching, the engaged projects on the ground and the statements. What we were trying to do was retrieve and reevaluate and reconstruct these great wisdom traditions; to bring forward their beliefs and their practices for renewal and for engagement with these challenging problems of pollution, of biodiversity law, of climate change. How would these traditions, with their values and attitudes towards nature that have guided them through the millennium, begin to intersect their spiritual energy and their moral concerns with the most pressing problems facing all future generations and the planet as a whole.

We felt that we needed to create a field within academia, but also a force within society. And this has come of age just as of last year, in some ways, as a marker. The American Academy of Religion, the largest group of teachers of religion in North America -- about 10,000 largely college professors – came together in November in San Diego. And of the panels over the three or four days, a third of them were on the environment and religion, climate change, and ethics and so on. A major watershed. The force within society was also evident, I think we can say, with the People's Climate March in September in New York. It was an amazing event.

John and I were with there with our students from Yale; 400,000 people came, again, from all over North America and different parts of the world. But 10,000 of those have been attended by as (ph) most likely religious leaders and laity. There was a conference at Union Seminary, two

hundred religious leaders came. There was a major celebration ritual at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine that evening. So all of this is coming together right now in another kind of remarkable event. Which is the fact that in the middle of this year, sometime in the summer, the Pope will release an encyclical on the environment. This will be a major watershed.

As you know, he chose his name after Francis of Assisi, and he has been speaking for some time about the challenges we're facing that bring together the poor, social justice and the degradation of the environment. Now, 1.2 billion Catholics will be affected by this, but also two billion Christians. And it's not just religious people alone. We've already been getting calls for the media, which is why we have a frequently asked questions now up on our forum Web site. All of this is leading to the Pope speaking in New York at the General Assembly in September, calling together a community of religious leaders on this issue and leading up to the climate change negotiations in Paris in December.

Even our scientist dean at the School of Forestry and Environmental Studies here at Yale wants to do something this semester to highlight this important document, even before it's out, with a major panel at Yale. So taking a step back, how has this field grown and what were my early motivations. Well, as many of you know I went to Japan in the early '70s and traveled extensively throughout Asia in the last forty years. My living and traveling and studying in Asia made me realize that as China and India began to modernize, a billion people on each of those major continental masses, the whole world would be drawn into the need for resources and pollution issues, water shortages, food pollution issues. And we know this is already very much in our midst.

So what we wanted to do in those Harvard conferences was bring forward values that were culturally grounded in the religious traditions of these areas, regionally connected and yet globally significant. In India, for example, now Hindu temples are doing tree planting. And there are efforts to clean up sacred rivers like the Ganges and the Yamuna. We did a conference there on the Yamuna in 2012, bringing together scientists and religious leaders. And now not only Hindus, but interreligious groups are coming together. In 2013, the Karmapa, a major Tibetan Buddhist leader, held a conference on environmental protection for the Yamuna River. He has organized and been helped by the Kela Chimyapa (ph). He has organized sixty monasteries across the whole Himalayan region to be environmentally concerned, connected and teaching their lay people.

In China, amazing things are happening along with the relentless destruction of the environment. And in the 15 years that I've been going to China, it's hard to describe what has happened. But we are aware of the air pollution, water pollution, the soil damage, deforestation, et cetera. But against all odds and in the face of over 100,000 protests a year on environmental issues and land disputes in China, the Chinese government, academics and others are beginning to formulate what they are describing as the need for ecological civilization; drawing on the values of Confucianism and Taoism and Buddhism for their culturally-based environmental ethics.

The Harvard conference books have been translated into Chinese. There is now a statement in the constitution of this need for ecological civilization. The prime minister and president reference it regularly in their speeches. And in 2008, we met Pan Yue, the deputy minister for the

environment. And he was one of the leading people pushing dissent of retrieving, reevaluating and reconstructing this ancient tradition for modernity; Confucianism being one of the lead restoration of ideas of how humans are embedded in the whole cosmic processes.

In Latin America, I've mentioned this amazing movement of liberation theology and ecology. But I also wanted to highlight the indigenous environmental network. And here in North America, native peoples in both the western parts of the U.S. and Canada have helped to stop Keystone Pipeline being actually built, and the processes and protests have been extraordinary; saying these are sacred lands, these are lands of our peoples, and they cannot be exploited. Now, I just want to conclude with some examples from the Christian churches and also from engaged projects here at home, and then open it up to some discussion.

You know, all of these traditions have, across the range of their various schools and – and denominations, like in Judaism, Conservative Orthodox Reform, Reconstructionists – each one is bringing to bear their own theological positions. So in the Christian churches, and we had these represented at the Harvard conferences, the Catholic nuns, for example, have created amazing eco-literacy centers and conservation of their lands. I can highlight Genesis Farm with Miriam McGillis, in New Jersey and Crystal Spring in Massachusetts. The Orthodox Church has led the way with the ecumenical patriarch, Bartholomew, and his Religion, Science, Environment conferences for 15 years on water issues across the European community and also in the Amazon and in Mississippi.

These angelical environmental networks have been extremely active in Katharine Hayhoe, a scientist and an evangelical herself, has been outspoken on these issues of care for creation. Protestant groups are abundant, and we'll highlight a few of those. But the Green Seminary Movement, led by Laurel Kearns and Beth Norcross and Fletcher Harper, has been bringing seminaries into this discussion; how can we educate future generations. And then we have leaders like Katharine Jefferts Schori of the Episcopal Church here in the U.S.

So these engaged projects across North America -- from Seattle Earth Ministry led by Lee Ann Barris; in Chicago, Safe in Place (ph); GreenFaith in New Jersey, with Fletcher Harper. And now moving towards our voices that he's combined with a movement around the world for prayers on climate change that Tessa Tennant and he are leading. Interfaith Power & Light with Sally Bingham out of San Francisco has almost all of the states in the U.S. involved in measuring their carbon footprint in churches and synagogues and mosques. It's an amazing movement. And this kind of interreligious work, interfaith work, I think can be highlighted, as well, in the Friends of the Earth Middle East in the Jordan River, where they are trying to restore the river to its full health once again.

So let me conclude by saying we now have what we didn't have 20 years ago: a field in academia. High schools are teaching this, colleges and universities and seminaries, as I've mentioned. We have a new and vibrant force in society, bringing together the three elements of The Earth Charter, of ecological integrity, social economic justice, and democracy, nonviolence and peace. And all of this is for the flourishing of the Earth's community, as we know, for present and for future generations. And I think there's so much we can bring to this issue.

But let me conclude by saying we're at a moment when we're searching for renewable energies of all kinds around the planet. But what religions can bring, in addition to their activism and moral concern for the planet and for people, they can bring a spiritual energy of renewal for the work that's to be done. And that's where all of you, I thank you for what you are doing already.

FASKIANOS: Thank you very much, Mary Evelyn. Let's open it up to group for questions and comments. If you want to share the work that you're doing and give us the best practices, we welcome all of that. So let's open it up.

OPERATOR: Thank you. At this time, we will open the floor for questions. If you would like to ask a question or if you have a comment, please press the "star" key followed by the "1" key on your touch-tone phone now. Again, that was "star-1". Questions will be taken in the order in which they are received. If at any time you would like to be removed from the questioning queue, just press "star-2." Please limit your questions to one at a time. Again, to ask a question please press "star-1"

QUESTION: Hi. Hello, Mary Evelyn. It's nice to be a part of this. A question about the relationship of local to global concerns. I know you have addressed that in the past, but can you just help us see how the interplay between the two of those is an important factor.

TUCKER: Thank you, and a shout out to you for your amazing work on the field of animal studies and broadening our concern from people to the whole mammalian bird, fish world and so on. So thank you for your amazing work with the more than human world.

I think this question of local and global is so essential. Because there's such a feeling, isn't there? Of disempowerment of what can I do, I think, often on the local level. But this is where some of the organizations that I've mentioned – Interfaith Power & Light and others – are giving people that sense that they can make a difference, they can make the changes. And, you know, to connect this sense of an energy revolution in our homes, in -- in our churches, in our schools, in our civic centers – new building codes and so on – you know, this is part of not just a protest against something. But it's part of an energy revolution.

And that's how Todd Stern put it, who's our chief negotiator for the U.S. to these climate conferences. He said we're in the midst of an energy revolution. So I think that's how we connect what we can do on a local level to the larger global scene. And he said, and I agree, we can't expect everything to happen in Paris, but we have to keep doing what we're doing. And the creativity of humans is remarkable, I think, frankly.

FASKIANOS: Thank you. Next question.

QUESTION: Thank you for providing this forum. My question is, considering that confined animal feeding operations contribute directly to global warming by releasing vast amounts of greenhouse gases into the atmosphere – more than the entire global transportation industry – how do you see religious institutions being involved in trying to minimize the negative impact from factory farming?

TUCKER: Thank you. That is -- that's one question. And as a vegetarian for almost 30 years, I'm very interested in this issue. And actually, I was part of the Humane Society Center for Respect of Life and Environment for many, many years, as was Thomas Berry. And Wayne Pacelli and HSUS is doing some remarkable work on this. And they have people there who've been drawing in the religious communities: Victoria Strang, Paul Waldau's (ph) daughter, is one of them. So I think, you know, the animal groups are realizing that religion is part of the change agent and so they're drawing them in.

But I also think your question brings us to, you know, how do we treat the world. Is it sentient or is it a commodity or is it a community? And I think our students here at Yale and all across the country are so keenly interested in food, in sustainability, in appropriate use, shall we say – I don't even like that word – but in – in careful, thoughtful, healthy food for all people; for people in inner cities, and so on. So the factory farming of animals, because of antibiotics and a number of things, I think is going to take its course. It has – it's not that old, it's spreading around the world and that's extremely worrisome.

But, you know, just two days ago Breyers said they will not have ice cream with, you know, antibiotics or hormones from the milk of cows. So these are major, major changes. And I thank you for your question.

FASKIANOS: Thank you. Next question.

QUESTION: Hi, thanks all. I really have two questions, and they somewhat connect. Following up on the local-global question – local and global organizing – obviously, a revolution, a movement isn't going to have one single umbrella that engages it. At the same time, my experience is that at the local level folks feel like where – which way do I turn, which place do I get connected? And then, of course, our response is connect somewhere, just pick one. But I think people are looking to be strategically additive. And I don't mean only people on the pews, but bishops and executives of the denominations. How do we think strategically about what's going to be most additive at what time, and where do we go to find that answer.

And then the second question that goes with it is, I'm wondering whether the National Religious Partnership for the Environment is part of this landscape.

TUCKER: Yes. Certainly, I mention them at the being of this National Religious partnership for the Environment under Paul Gorman. They did amazing work in bringing together the Jewish and Christian groups. And one of the things that I think we all hope that NRPE can do is, you know, be even more inclusive of the spectrum of religious groups in the U.S. So they've done good work and we hope they'll continue to do that, and Cassandra Carmichael is leading the way.

And your other question, again I think this is very important. I think you're asking about strategies and perhaps tactics. One of the things Thomas Berry used to say is, we need principles, and strategies and tactics. So I think there's a ray of strategies and there's a ray of tactics out there that are doable and already operational. As I've mentioned a number of them; what Earth Ministry's doing, what Faith in Place is doing in urban communities in Chicago is just

astounding. But, you know, I think we also have to get the principles, the world view shifts, the change of mind and heart behind these strategies and tactics.

Because that's what's going to dynamize (ph) the energy for these changes. That we're going to have to live differently is clear. But we can do that. You know, "sacrifice" is a word that people don't like to use. But that was used throughout the Second World War, when people had Victory Gardens, when people used less, when they did not waste and so on. We need to reinhabit that space of sacrifice, which actually means to make holy. And it could be "holy" with an H, or "wholly" with a W. That we are part of this interconnected world and we need that sense continually of that interconnection.

So the strategies, I think, are definitely there. We need communities, certainly, that can reinforce that. But I take my hope in this next generation of students that we teach as this School of Forestry and Environmental Studies. They have more strategies than you can imagine, and they want to bring the religious communities into their transforming work. It's very exciting, I think.

FASKIANOS: Thank you. Next question.

QUESTION: Hello. Thank you very much, Evelyn Tucker, for this talk. I want to ask one question. Politically, it might be very hard to break the package (ph) of growth because it's (inaudible) to vote (ph) in many areas. But would it be better to target consumers just like rain forest areas, alliance or fair trade did with a symbol associated with the movement? Would that be a better strategy? Just a question.

TUCKER: Yeah. I think I missed a few words, but can you just give me the final question again? Or, Irina, can you help? It was a little unclear.

QUESTION: Yeah. Instead of – instead of getting into the politics, wouldn't it be a better strategy to address to consumers, consumer products? And (inaudible) all over the (inaudible) or fair trade guys did with this? And maybe like a greenstate (ph) symbol or something for consumer products.

TUCKER: Yes, I see. Thank you. Yes, I think that's a great idea. Because clearly, as consumers we can make a difference. Consumers are beginning to speak out about GMOs, about antibiotics in food, and so on. And coming back to the food question, you know, all religions take food in both its growing processes, in its harvesting processes, as sacred. And this is, I think, where we have power to bring that back into the marketplace. I mean, we're poisoning ourselves with the amount of chemicals and so on in our food and in our soil.

So I think a consumer-based movement around food would be essential. And -- and, certainly, a whole range of other issues which can bring in justice for workers. You know, factory farming of animals has tremendous injustice in the meat industry and so on. So I think that's an excellent suggestion. There's a very interesting new graduate program being offered in the U.K. – actually, a full-funded PhD scholarship – on the impact of meat consumption and the idea of animals as resources. You know, this is where the religious communities can weigh in, in a very powerful way. Thank you for that question.

FASKIANOS: Thank you. Next question.

QUESTION: Hello. This is a very interesting conversation so glad to be part of it. One of the things, if we go back to principles, is starting to identify what – what do we want to really uphold. And those of us in the World Council of Churches and, indeed, an interface a grouping around the climate change talks have been upholding solidarity with those who are most affected, the most vulnerable, who are victims of climate change, for example. And as a result of that – trying to uphold that principle of solidarity – I don't know how many of you know, but some of you on this call do, we've started a fast, Fast for the Climate.

It's something that is individual as well as local and global. Anybody can do it. And we -- we have a concentration of that fasting on the first day of every month, from all the different religious traditions. It's a way to make the personal-political statement. And to fast and pray, but also to use that time for some political activity to make a difference. It's something that we can all do together. And so the question is, how can we find things like that, can galvanize so many religious traditions in North America and around the world in ways that can have an impact? We believe this one.

TUCKER: Well, thank you. That's terrific. And the Canadian churches are doing amazing things in their support of the indigenous people, and Idle No More is really so welcome. You know, again, on our Forum on Religion and Ecology Web site there's an ecumenical Lenten carbon fast, which picks up on your point. And that has been going for several years, and the WCC, of course, has led the way in these issues of especially of solidarity for the poor. And that's why I was trying to bring in the Latin American perspective of liberation theology and social justice and ecology.

That's why I think Pope Francis, frankly – from Argentina – will have that particular blend that we so need of eco-justice. You know, as well, there's this effort at preach-ins on global warming; again, some of it being led by Interfaith Power & Light. How does one preach about this issue of climate change, when in the U.S. and North America it's been so contested? I have to underscore this has not been so contested in other parts of the world. My friends in Japan understand the effects of typhoons and so on from global warming, et cetera.

But I take my hat off to people within the churches that you just highlighted who are helping people to know how to preach on this, how to do actions like fasting, how to do the divestment of the resources from fossil fuels. Like Jim Antel has led the UCC churches on this issue, and others are following. So I do think there's lots that can be done by religious leaders and lay people. So thank you very much for what you're doing.

FASKIANOS: Thank you. Next question or comment.

QUESTION: Hi. Thanks very much for your work. I'm interested where we can tune for expressly neo-Confucian and new Confucian experiments in eco – eco-social, the eco-social reinvention of the human, so to speak. You got any reading on that?

TUCKER: Well, thank you, as that happens to be my own area of, you know, research and writing and so on. And I'm going to a conference in Hong Kong this summer on Confucianism and the ecology. And one of the books, of course, in the Harvard Conference is exactly on that topic, Confucianism and ecology. And it certainly is the case, contrary to most people's impression, that Confucianism has amazing resources or situating the human in what they would call the "Trinity" or the "triad" of Heaven, Earth and human. So the whole cosmos, the whole Earth community. And the human completes that dynamic, creative process by the – by interacting with the flourishing and the fecundity of nature.

It's a very, very rich tradition, which I was mentioning as part of this recovery, if you will, revival of Confucianism that's happening on the mainland of China and, certainly, in Singapore and Hong Kong, as well. So, in fact, one academic in Beijing, a professor of sociology, did a book on Confucius and it sold 10 million copies. So this isn't something, you know, just on the -- in the political order of the prime minister or the constitution. But there's a popular interest in this, the academic conferences that I've mentioned. Duay Ming (ph), a good friend has headed up this new Institute for Humanities at Beijing University. And he is one of the leading thinkers of how neo-Confucianism can enter into modernity and not -- not just be apart from it, but tradition in modernity, to make a change.

And I can tell you, our students love Confucianism. And we have them listen to his talks online and do the readings of his books. I can recommend any of Duay Ming's (ph) book – books to you. So thank you for that question.

QUESTION: (Inaudible).

FASKIANOS: Thank you. Next question.

QUESTION: Hi. Thank you, Mary Evelyn. This – my question may have been addressed already with the carbon fasting and looking at ways that we can, you know, in a way model the behavior that we want to see. And one of the contradictions I've experienced in myself is air travel and, you know, choosing to travel by air even after I know the science on climate change. And especially now, when we're looking at a really urgent matter. You know, it's not as if we have a decade even to turn things around. You know, the change that we're looking at is really wants to be so immediate if we take into account what's happening in Antarctica with the decline of the West Antarctic ice sheet.

And so a question is, you know, with something like is happening in Paris, do we -- is this -- does this statement want to be we're not traveling there. We'll fly in, you know, we'll enter in through telecommunication. But to have our children who are standing for climate change – I'm thinking of the Climate Silence group – to tell them and to suggest that they – that the statement is that they fly to talk about this, maybe it's not that. Maybe it's nobody shows up and we're just – we're being real about what is. Yeah.

TUCKER: Yeah, well, I appreciate that question. And I appreciate your work on extinction and so on. The president of the American Academy of Religion, in November, Laurie Zoloth made exactly that point in her plenary address. To say, well, maybe we shouldn't have an American

Academy of Religion conference every year. And it's gotten quite a bit of discussion. You know, I think – I don't go to the top conferences for lots of reasons, one of them the carbon footprint. But I think we all have to choose what is appropriate for what we can contribute or what we feel is important.

I would not want to say to the people at the UN, you know, who are heavily invested in this just call it off, no carbon footprint. I do think the difficulty is, we can become, you know, somewhat moralistic. And that's part of the danger of religions and so on. But I think more and more people are taking up your point. Either they're paying into carbon offsets for sure, and there's, you know, native energy and lots of these carbon offsets. They're planting trees if they travel, and so on. But I do think that the networking that has happened in the last twenty years – and especially since '92 and the Earth Summit in Rio – has been astonishing.

So that the changes that are ahead of us are now on the tips of our tongues, in the centers of our minds, and are bursting from our hearts because everyone knows – and everyone on this conference call, I suspect, knows – the urgency of the changes that you are calling for. But I do think we need to breadth of each person makes that decision. We're doing online classes right now, you know, to get the information out and not travel as well. So thank you for the question, and let's keep going forward with careful discernment around that.

FASKIANOS: Thank you. Next question.

QUESTION: Yes, thank you. How can we, as an interfaith community build upon the momentum and also the opportunity of Pope Francis' upcoming encyclical on human ecology?

TUCKER: Wonderful question. And as I say, I think many of us are very much looking forward to it. I happen to come from the Catholic progressive tradition, I would say, and was very much affected by social justice teachings in my youth and especially in civil rights and the anti-Vietnam War and so on. And I see this as a movement, you know, way past Vatican II when the changes came flowing into the Catholic Church and a lot of tragedies and scandals, as well. But I do see this as a moment when laity, when theologians, when seminaries, when departments of religion, when churches and synagogues and mosques, et cetera need to pick this up.

It'll probably be, you know, maybe 50 pages or so. So it'll be a lengthy document. But if we can pick up parts of it, begin to study it, begin to take it in in terms of what does this mean, this new, vast sense of interdependence, of ecology, of justice and of peace I think that's going to be the message. And I would take this, like the Earth Charter, to be a new invitation into a declaration of interdependence. We had the Universal Declaration of Human Rights after World War II as, you know, the premier foundational document of the UN And – and that's a declaration that's independence. It's a modern document. It celebrates individual freedom.

But now we need to move towards interdependence, interconnectedness. And I think that's what the encyclical is going to invite us into. It's going to be very invitational, I think. And we can pick it up and literally nourish ourselves on some of these ideas, I think.

FASKIANOS: Thank you. Next question.

QUESTION: Yes, hello and thank you. I will – I'm just wondering if you have considered the interactions between religion and mental health and care for the ecology. Because, you know, the care that is required for the environment and issues of the environment has to come from mental health. And there are people who might not have that because of childhood abuse or other issues in their life. So I'm just wondering how religion and mental health, and also social health, might interact with the care for the environment.

You know, how -- for example, the breakdown of relationships, how many people are living in different homes and this increases consumerism because they cannot function together because they cannot live together, and so on. So I'm just wondering if you have been considering these factors. Thank you.

TUCKER: Yes. What a superb question. You know, the suffering in our world is immense, as you know. Every family, every one of us has tremendous suffering in our own families, whether addiction or abuse or whatever it might be. So I think this is absolutely critical. But I do think part of our mental health, both personal and collective, is reinhabiting these great cycles of nature, which are healing cycles, which are restoring cycles, which give us literally air and water and nourishment and food. So it's a very primal thing that this is about.

Yes, it's a sacred restoration of our connections to nature, yes it's an environmental recovery and restoration and so on. But there's something of our mental, spiritual soul capacity here that is being tremendously challenged. And I would also say that what we're finding is that environmentalists, be they studying extinct species or degraded landscapes or glacial melting, they are dealing with something like trauma. Because when I spoke to those who were dealing with the spotted owl, the extinction up in the Pacific Northwest, it was almost like listening to a great tragedy. I was in tears. And these are people who have to deal with this day in and day out. So I think that's part of the ministry that religions will have to develop.

We need to mourn what's being lost, and we need to have rituals of healing and restoration. Let me give you a final example. In China, the mental illness because of such rapid development and modernization is so huge that there are many young people who simply stay at home. They can't even cope with the society. But a whole range of other mental challenges. And there's an institute in California that is now setting up a collaborative project of counseling for Chinese, especially living in these cities of -- cities the size of thirty, thirty-four million people, some of them. It's inconceivable how big these cities are and how impersonal and how challenging that is to live with a sense of hope and purpose and stability.

FASKIANOS: Next question.

QUESTION: Hello, and thank you so much to the Council on Foreign Relations for this forum. And Mary Evelyn, for your great work. I'm just always deeply grateful. My question is in regards to investments. What advice or counsel or guidance can you give to religious congregations who continue to be invested in oil industry that are involved in the tar sands, even as we grow in our consciousness about them because these companies that we're invested in still pass our existing social screen?

TUCKER: Yes. Well, Maureen, thank you for your work, too, and for helping to coordinate Sisters of Earth and all that you do, that great organization of Catholic numbers across North America. And for your witness in the tar sands. It's really very, very moving. And, you know, the tar sands are largely going to China. That's why I mentioned that early on. And the -- that interconnection of this need, endless need, for energy around the world. But specifically to your question of divestment and so on, it's very complicated and it's going to take some time.

But I do think the moral issue that Bill McKibben and 350.org set before all of us is that this was a tactic that worked with apartheid in South Africa. And it is a tactic that seems to be having more and more traction, contrary to what some people first said. The New School in New York just announced yesterday that they are divesting. As I say, some religious communities have already, like UCC. Yale said they wouldn't divest, but they're going to move further and further towards sustainability, which is true. But their chief environmental officer, David Swenson, sent a message to all of his portfolio people with investment, and he said we have got to pay attention to this, we have got to think about this for the long term.

And you know what? He's one of the smartest investors in all the universities across the country. And someone at Goldman Sachs told me that alone has had such effect on the divestment movement. Also, of course, the price of oil is going down so it's going to be easier to divest, and so on. But I think we do need to raise it up as a moral issue. Certainly the students at Yale are doing that. And it's an issue that draws all of our conscious into this. I mean, the seas are rising. People at Yale, one geologist, said, "Well, they're building new colleges but, you know, we're right on the sound here, the Long Island Sound. And you go up to Boston on the train and the sound is five feet away from the train."

We are all subject to this relentless climate change, rising seas, the greenhouse gases and so on. And we've got to do something about divesting from oil and gas and reinvesting our creativity in alternative energies. We should've been doing this twenty years ago, of course, but that's where the religious communities can say go solar. You know, let's de-dam, which is happening in the Pacific Northwest, too. So thank you for your question, Maureen, and your great work.

FASKIANOS: Thank you. Next question.

QUESTION: Thank you, and thank you for this amazing program. My question has to do with how do we -- you mention the United Nations. And I had the privilege of sitting on a panel this past Sunday on a multi-religious partnership for sustainable development that was hosted by the President of the United Nations General Assembly as part of World Interfaith Harmony Week. Now, I know all the NGOs who are working on this. I'm a member of United Religions Initiative, as well. But outside the United Nations there's no communication that says this is what's going on in the United Nations, unless you go to un.org and start finding your way through it.

Is there a way that we can make it more public so that we invite more people to think that something can happen at the United Nations. Because I think, overall, the population of this country at least thinks the United Nations is a farce. How do we open that up to something that

says they could be an incredible partner on this, and this is how we might be able to do some work with them?

TUCKER: Right. Well, an excellent question. We have been working the UNEP, the United Nations Environment Program, since about 1987 on what was initially called the Environmental Sabbath. And we did a booklet for religious communities to use, I'm sure some of you did. We distributed about 50,000 of those. And we did a number of programs at the UN through that New York office. And I think you're absolutely right to say that we need to continue – and good for you for being on that panel and the other NGOs that are persistent there and raising the voice of ethics and spirituality and moral concern.

The issue, as you know well, is that the UN doesn't really like to engage religion because we all know, and we like to say over and over again, religion has its problems and its promise. And they don't know how to move past this problematic dimension of religion. So it's not easy to engage it. There's no formal representations there. I mean, the Vatican has – is somewhat represented, but there's no representation of the religions and there's been many efforts to do that. The Millennium Summit in 200 was one effort. But it's very hard to represent religions that are not as hierarchical as something like the Catholic Church. WCC, of course, is a very effective organization, as well.

But all I can say is, one of the things at the UN which I do think we can work best as religious communities is to try and overcome the immense distrust between the so-called "developing nations" and the so-called "developed nations." Because that barrier is over and over again what creates the blockage to climate agreements, the blockage to all kinds of cooperative issues. And I think if we identified that and if we work, as many of you do already, in relief services and education and aid overseas and so on, if we can build trust I think we have further grounds for saying the religions can be a positive contributing agency on the environment and development issues.

QUESTION: Thank you.

FASKIANOS: Thank you. Next question.

QUESTION: Thank you, Mary. That's – it's been great. And my PhD's actually focused on faith-based organizations in the U.K. and how they can impact climate change policy. And I wanted to ask, like, because FPOs in the U.K. are focused on political lobbying and advocacy – and I was wondering what you thought about the value of this as opposed to using resources for actually dealing with the challenges of climate change in a bottom-up program.

TUCKER: Yeah. Well, that's a good – very good question. And, of course, with limited resources it's why we all have to be asking it. You know, there's, I think, great lobbyists in the religious communities down in Washington. The Quakers, of course, have been at this for a long, long time on peace and justice and ecology in our Congress. And many other religious communities doing superb and relentless work against gray dogs. So I think that certainly has to be done. And I would say Todd Stern, or chief climate negotiator, who came to Yale in the fall and gave a remarkable talk, actually, and said climate change is a moral issue. And he said to

John and me directly, he said, "Send us more religious people because we need that force in – in terms of the negotiations.

So, you know, your issues in the U.K. are very complex, as well. But certainly, the Tony Blair Faith Foundation is trying to do some of this work, and I think that's terrific. But I think everything we can do to give people a sense of hope in very, very difficult times. And, you know, history does tell us – my grandfather was a historian at Columbia and he tried to understand the causes of the two world wars – anyone who lives through those wars knows tragedy of such immense proportions. But the human spirit can survive that. And if we can empower our churches, our mosques, or synagogues, our next generation in particular, that they can make a difference I think we have a good chance to go through this hourglass of extinction and diminishment into a new phase.

FASKIANOS: Thank you. Next question.

QUESTION: Yes. No, I thank you so much for this. I was going to mention, after 10 years of doing regenerative strategies on three continents we're proposing a mobilization of outreach between the western congregations and the most climate change-affected communities in the tropical belt for restoration and regeneration. And this is often framed in terms of food security and poverty alleviation and climate change resilience. But it also, I think as you know, has a powerful potential effect at scale on climate change mitigation, which has been mentioned, I think, too little.

So how to go beyond sustainability to regeneration with generativity and inherently religious imperative, and to really create any kind of mobilization that – that we're able to. I would just like any advice and any participation by anybody on this call.

TUCKER: Yeah, well, thank you. I love the language that you're using, and it's very resonant with what we like to use; namely (inaudible) contested and so on. And we like to use, as Thomas Berry did, the word "flourishing." And we love the word "resilience" and "resiliency," "regeneration" and so on. Because it's exactly that that taps into, I think, what a spiritual, ethical religious perspective can offer. And I think you're quite right, you know, mitigation and adaptation of climate change are still themselves being contested. But you are so right – and I'd love to hear more about your work, you know, in terms of food security and stability. And connecting up these varied issues of the food, of water, of human security is Earth security.

And I think, again, more and more people are seeing this. I mean, the Pentagon issue, the major report on climate change as a security issue, there's – there's no doubt about it. So I applaud the language that you're using. As I say, I like to think of the flourishing of the whole earth community for future generations.

QUESTION: Thank you.

FASKIANOS: Thank you. Let's to try to sneak in one last question.

QUESTION: Hi, thank you so much. And I was particularly interested in your comment about educating the next generation because that's where my question is. Getting your head around climate change is difficult for adults and students in higher education. And I was wondering what advice or resources that you might have that would highlight efforts to educate younger students, particularly in the kindergarten through 12th grade years. If there's anything in particular that you might recommend or suggest.

TUCKER: Yes, well, thank you. This is so important. And it's one of the reasons why we made this film *Journey of the Universe*, which is also a book from Yale Press. And *Journey of the Universe* went on PBS, as you may know, and it's now on Netflix. You know, and in one year 66,000 people rated it, which was astonishing to Brian Swimme and John and I who were involved in this project. And John – Brian is a great narrator, of course. But this perspective – that we're part of a vast evolving universe – this is a fourteen billion-year, amazingly creative process. And the Earth, you know, is six billion years old, and we as humans are only about 200,000 years old.

This perspective, I think, awakens awe and wonder and beauty, and therefore transformative action. And we have found, of course, even high schools are very, very keen on this. Because it brings together science and ecology and biology with the humanities, and – and ethics and so on. And there's – this has been adapted by Montessori teachers who've been very, very keen on this universe story perspective of Thomas Berry and Brian Swimme and – and ourselves. And Jennifer Morgan has done three books, which I highly recommend for young people. And she does workshops for early childhood and – education on this, and especially with the Montessori teachers who are deeply inspired. Maria Montessori's had a vast feeling for the cosmos.

And maybe I'll just end with Rachel Carson. We took our students to the Beinecke Library here at Yale last week to see Rachel Carson's papers on *Silent Spring*. And, you know, she brings together so much of what we're talking about. She brings together the sense of awe and wonder and beauty and complexity, but she also brings metaphor and poetry into her science and her deep understanding of these processes.

Silent Spring is a metaphor, you know, that captures our – our imagination and speaks to our whole person. So I think this is part of what we need to do for younger people; bring in the whole person. And that is certainly being done in a lot of wonderful environmental education. Like Richard Louv, who is also inspired by Thomas Berry, *Last Child in the – in the Woods*.

So I thank you all for this conversation. And I especially thank you for the work that is ahead for all of us. Let us know about your work. Please join the forum. Email list, if you like, it just goes out once a month. But I hope this will be a network of continuing conversation. And I especially thank the Council on Foreign Relations and Irina for organizing this. Thank you.

FASKIANOS: Thank you very much, Mary Evelyn Tucker. We really appreciate your spending the hour with us. And to all of you for your really great questions and comments. I think this is an invaluable hour, and we hope as Mary Evelyn said, that you will check out her Web site at www.fore.research.yale.edu as well as follow our religion and foreign policy on Twitter, @CFR_Religion for announcements about upcoming events and information about the council's

latest resources. And I also just would welcome you all, or invite you all, to email us with questions or suggestions of topics and speakers we can cover in the future to outreach@cfr.org.

So thank you all, and thank you to Mary Evelyn Tucker.

TUCKER: Thank you, Irina.

OPERATOR: Thank you for listening to this Council on Foreign Relations podcast.

<http://www.cfr.org/energy-and-environment/role-religious-environmentalism/p36109>

February 11, 2015

Religious Leaders Confronting Climate Change

Yale Climate Connection

Podcast with Mary Evelyn Tucker

Most of the world's religions — including Christianity, Judaism, Islam and Buddhism — have said that protecting vulnerable people and the earth are moral imperatives. These values are inspiring religious leaders to speak out on climate change.

TUCKER: “Clearly this is already adversely affecting vulnerable people of lower incomes be it in the first world or the 3rd world. So there is an environmental justice issue here.”

That's Mary Evelyn Tucker, co-director of the Yale Forum on Religion and Ecology. She says religious organizations have a special role to play, given their size, power and unique voice.

TUCKER: “Right now the climate discussions are driven by science, by economists, and by policy makers, all of which are absolutely crucial. But the behavioral changes, the moral sense of what is happening to the planet, is something that only the religions can bring in a certain way. Religions can raise a moral voice.”

Tucker believes science, policy and religion — working together — can achieve global action on climate change.

<http://www.yaleclimateconnections.org/2015/02/religious-leaders-confronting-climate-change/>

February 12, 2015

Anticipation building for papal encyclical on environment

By Mark Pattison
Catholic News Service

WASHINGTON (CNS) — The much-anticipated encyclical by Pope Francis on the environment, expected sometime this spring or early summer, is generating a lot of buzz in Washington and elsewhere.

At the Catholic Social Ministry Gathering, a Feb. 9 panel discussion on climate change and other environmental issues had to be moved to a larger room.

“We usually get 15, 20 people,” said Dan Misleh, executive director of the Catholic Climate Covenant, prefacing his remarks. Surveying the scene in the larger room, he added, “It’s never been this full.”

In St. Paul, Minnesota, in November, there were hopes that an address by Ghanaian Cardinal Peter Turkson, president of the Pontifical Institute for Justice and Peace, at Catholic Rural Life’s “Faith, Food and the Environment” symposium would give listeners an early glimpse into the mind of the pope in hopes that the cardinal and the pope were of like mind on the topic. However, Cardinal Turkson was reassigned to coordinate the Vatican’s response to the Ebola crisis and never made an address.

But in Washington, like-mindedness can be hard to come by. “Already there are people criticizing the pope” over the encyclical “and they haven’t even seen it,” Misleh said.

Franciscan Sister Ilia Delio, director of Catholic studies at Jesuit-run Georgetown University in Washington, noted one remark by Pope Francis: “This is our sin, exploiting the earth.”

“Do we really love the earth that is our home?” Sister Ilia asked, noting the pope’s reference to sin. “It’s a collective sin. We have become radically disconnected from the earth and from the poor,” she said.

Sister Ilia acknowledged “a little bit of ambiguity” in the biblical injunction of humans to have “dominion” over the earth. “Does nature exist for the sake of human life, and what does that mean for us?” she asked.

She also noted a separate remark by Pope Francis, in which the pope said, “One of the greatest challenges of our time (is) to convert ourselves to a type of development that respects creation.” Sister Ilia said the comment harks back to the papal namesake, St. Francis of Assisi, who moved his orientation “from a self-centeredness to a cadre-centeredness.”

“We tend to hold on to things as if they are ours, as if we own them,” she added. “According to (St.) Francis, anything we cling to or hold on to prevents us from letting God in.”

Sister Ilia described sin as “the exile of living in non-relatedness,” in which a person acts as if “I don’t want to live in relation to the earth or to the poor.”

“We have become such capitalists,” she added, “we have lost sight of what money is for.”

Misleh quoted Cardinal Oscar Rodriguez Maradiaga of Tegucigalpa, Honduras, who said, “Man finds himself to be a technical giant and an ethical child,” and asked the audience to consider how that applies to environmental ethics.

If only 5 percent of the estimated 75 million U.S. Catholics got involved in environmental matters, Misleh said, that number would be three times the size of the World Wildlife Fund’s 1.3 million members.

Climate change is gaining attention in different and unexpected quarters, he added. “The Pentagon and insurance companies are looking into it. So there must be something to this,” Misleh said. “There’s going to be some pain as we transition to a more sustainable future.”

Eric Garduno, senior legislative specialist in Washington for Catholic Relief Services, pointed to a map of countries colored by the suspected impact of climate change on their populations. Sub-Saharan Africa fared worst of all nations, with those nations directly south of the Sahara the worst of the worst.

The U.S. Agency for International Development is dealing with adaptations to climate change with poor farmers, helping with such initiatives as clean energy programs and dealing with deforestation,” Garduno said.

A CRS project in Ethiopia stymied the cycle of topsoil-eroding downpours on barely arable farmland by developing terraced plots that retain the rainfall and help the crops planted on the terraced land to grow.

CRS, the U.S. bishops’ overseas relief and development agency, prepared a report, “Tortillas on the Roaster,” about the potential for climate change to take out land for cultivation in Central America. “We don’t want folks, in Central America or anywhere, to have to make that decision” between fewer crops to plant or trees felled to find new cropland.

Misleh said the Catholic Climate Covenant was preparing for the encyclical’s issuance with the help of a 12-week program on the encyclical developed in conjunction with Renew International, and taking part in joint events with interfaith groups that are keeping their eye out for the encyclical.

“Our ecumenical and interfaith partners seem even more excited (about the encyclical) than we are on some days,” Misleh said.

<http://catholicphilly.com/2015/02/news/national-news/anticipation-building-for-papal-encyclical-on-environment/>

February 12, 2015

Deep in the Amazon, a Tiny Tribe Is Beating Big Oil

The people of Sarayaku are a leading force in 21st century indigenous resistance, engaging the western world politically, legally, and philosophically.

By David Goodman
Yes! Magazine

Patricia Gualinga stands serenely as chaos swirls about her. I find this petite woman with striking black and red face paint at the head of the People's Climate March in New York City on September 21, 2014. She is adorned with earrings made of brilliant bird feathers and a thick necklace of yellow and blue beads. She has come here from Sarayaku, a community deep in the heart of the Amazon rainforest in Ecuador.

Behind Gualinga, 400,000 people are in the streets calling for global action to stop climate change. Beside her, celebrities Leonardo DiCaprio, Sting, and Mark Ruffalo prepare to lead the historic march alongside a group of indigenous leaders. Gualinga stands beneath a sign, "Keep the Oil in the Ground." She has traveled across continents and cultures to deliver this message.

"Our ancestors and our spiritual leaders have been talking about climate change for a long time," she tells me in Spanish above the din, flashing a soft smile as photographers crush around the celebrities. She motions to the throngs around her. "We are actually speaking the same language right now."

A year earlier, I traveled to her village in the Ecuadorian Amazon to research the improbable story of a rainforest community of 1,200 Kichwa people that has successfully fended off oil companies and a government intent on exploiting their land for profit. How, I wondered, has Sarayaku been winning?

This is not the story most people know from Ecuador. Headlines have focused on northern Ecuador, where Chevron is fighting a landmark \$9.5 billion judgment for dumping millions of gallons of toxic wastewater into rivers and leaving unlined pits of contaminated sludge that poisoned thousands of people.

Sarayaku lies in southern Ecuador, where the government is selling drilling rights to a vast swath of indigenous lands—except for Sarayaku. The community has become a beacon of hope to other indigenous groups and to global climate change activists as it mobilizes to stop a new round of oil exploration.

What I found in Sarayaku was not just a community defending its territory. I encountered a people who believe that their lifestyle, deeply connected to nature, holds promise for humans to save themselves from global warming and extinction. They are fighting back by advancing a

counter-capitalist vision called *sumak kawsay*—Kichwa for “living well”—living in harmony with the natural world and insisting that nature has rights deserving of protection.

Naively romantic? Think again: In 2008, Ecuador’s constitution became the first in the world to codify the rights of nature and specifically *sumak kawsay*. Bolivia’s constitution has a similar provision, and rights-of-nature ordinances are now being passed in communities in the United States.

Sarayaku residents describe *sumak kawsay* as “choosing our responsibility to the seventh generation over quarterly earnings, regeneration over economic growth, and the pursuit of well-being and harmony over wealth and financial success.”

The people of Sarayaku are the face of 21st-century indigenous resistance. Sarayaku may be a remote, pastoral community, but it is engaging the Western world politically, legally, and philosophically. Patricia Gualinga and other Sarayaku community members have traveled to Europe to meet with foreign leaders and warn energy company executives about their opposition to oil extraction from their lands, produced their own documentary film about their struggle, filed lawsuits, leveraged their message with international groups such as Amazon Watch and Amnesty International, marched thousands of kilometers in public protest, and testified at the United Nations. Sarayaku’s resistance has angered the pro-development Ecuadorian government—which bizarrely hails *sumak kawsay* while selling hotly contested oil drilling leases—but has inspired other indigenous communities across the globe.

Defending life and land

I climb aboard a four-seater Cessna parked at a small airstrip in the town of Shell, a rambling settlement on the edge of the Amazon rainforest in southeastern Ecuador. The town is named for Shell Oil Company, which established operations here a half century ago.

Our plane flies low over the thick green jungle. The dense growth below is broken only by rivers the color of chocolate milk, the sinewy arteries of the rainforest.

The forest canopy parts to reveal a grass airstrip and clusters of thatched huts. This is Sarayaku. Moist jungle air envelops me as I step out of the plane. The villagers escort me and my daughter, Ariel, who has been living in Ecuador and is translating for me, past a large communal hut where a woman tends a small fire. Gerardo Gualinga, Patricia’s brother and one of the community leaders, arrives dressed in jeans, a T-shirt, and knee-high rubber boots, the signature footwear of the rainforest. He carries a tall, carved wooden staff, a symbol of his authority.

“The community is in the middle of a three-day meeting to plan our political and development work for the next year. Come along—I think you will find it interesting,” he says, motioning for us to follow him down to the edge of the broad Bobonaza River.

We board a motorized canoe and head upstream, passing slender dugouts propelled by men pushing long poles. In 10 minutes, we clamber out on the river bank and hike up to a sandy village square.

Inside an oval building with a thatched roof, we find José Gualinga, another of Patricia's brothers, who was then president of Sarayaku. He is holding his ceremonial staff and wearing a black headband and a Che Guevara T-shirt. Gualinga is leading a discussion of how the community should pressure the Ecuadorian government to comply with the judgment of the Inter-American Court on Human Rights, which ruled in 2012 that the Ecuadorian government should have obtained the consent of the native people when it permitted oil drilling on Sarayaku's territory. Following hearings in Costa Rica, the court ordered the government to apologize and pay Sarayaku \$1.25 million, plus attorney's fees.

The court decision, declared Mario Melo, attorney for Sarayaku from the Quito-based Fundación Pachamama, is "a significant contribution to a more profound safeguard of indigenous peoples' rights, and it is an example of dignity that will surely inspire many other nations and peoples around the world."

At a lunch break, Mario Santi, Sarayaku's president until 2008, explains the history of the struggle here.

In the early 2000s, "The government let oil businesses exploit and explore for oil in this territory. There was no consultation. Many communities sold out to the oil companies. Sarayaku was the only pueblo that didn't sell the right for oil companies to explore."

Ecuador's government ignored the community's refusal to sell oil-drilling rights and signed a contract in 1996 with the Argentinian oil company C.G.C. to explore for oil in Sarayaku. In 2003, C.G.C. *petroleros*—oil workers and private security guards—and Ecuadorian soldiers came by helicopter to lay explosives and dig test wells.

Sarayaku mobilized. "We stopped the schools and our own work and dedicated ourselves to the struggle for six months," says Santi. As the oil workers cleared a large area of forest—which was community farmland—the citizens of Sarayaku retreated deep into the jungle, where they established emergency camps and plotted their resistance.

"In the six months of struggle, there was torture, rape, and strong suffering of our people, especially our mothers and children," Santi recounts. "We returned with psychological illness. All the military who came ..." He pauses to compose himself. "This was a very, very bad time."

In their jungle camps, the Sarayaku leaders hatched a plan. The women of the community prepared a strong batch of chicha, the traditional Ecuadorian homebrew made from fermented cassava. One night, a group of them traveled stealthily through the jungle, shadowed by men of the village. The women emerged at the main encampment of the petroleros. They offered their chicha and watched as the oil workers happily partied.

As their drinking binge ended, the petroleros fell asleep. When they awoke, what they saw sobered them: They were staring into the muzzles of their own automatic weapons. Wielding the guns were the women and men of Sarayaku.

The Sarayaku residents ordered the petroleros off their ancestral land. The terrified workers called in helicopters and fled, abandoning their weapons. The oil workers never returned. An Ecuadorian general came later and negotiated with community leaders— five of whom had been arrested and beaten—for the return of the weapons.

I ask Santi why Sarayaku has resisted. His tan, weathered face breaks into a gentle smile even as he recounts a difficult story.

“Our fathers told us that for future generations not to suffer, we needed to struggle for our territory and our liberty. So we wouldn’t be slaves of the new kind of colonization.

“The waterfall, the insects, the animals, the jungle gives us life,” he tells me. “Because man and the jungle have a relationship. For the Western capitalist world, the jungle is simply for exploiting resources and ending all this. The indigenous pueblos without jungle—we can’t live.”

Sarayaku now wants to help indigenous people around the world resist and defend their way of life. “Our message that we are also taking to Asia, Africa, Brazil, and other countries that are discussing climate change, we propose an alternative development—the development of life. This is our economy for living—sumak kawsay—not just for us but for the Western world. They don’t have to be afraid of global warming if they support the life of the jungle.

“It’s not a big thing,” he says understatedly. “It’s just to continue living.”

Indigenous climate change warriors

The Sarayaku story is just the latest in a long-running battle over Ecuador’s natural resources. Oil extraction began in northern Ecuador in 1964, when the American oil giant Texaco set up drilling operations in indigenous lands (Chevron later purchased Texaco). When the oil company exited in 1992, it “left behind the worst oil-related environmental disaster on the planet,” according to Amazon Watch, a nonprofit organization that defends indigenous rights. The devastated and poisoned region is known as the “rainforest Chernobyl.”

Despite pursuing Chevron for damages, the Ecuadorian government of President Rafael Correa has embarked on an aggressive new round of oil development in southern Ecuador, opening thousands of acres to exploration. The government has cracked down on resisters, recently ordering the closure of the Quito headquarters of CONAIE, Ecuador’s national indigenous organization, attempting to stop Ecuadorian activists opposed to oil drilling from attending a U.N. climate summit in Peru, and closing Fundación Pachamama, an NGO supporting indigenous groups. Most of Sarayaku’s land has been excluded in the new round of oil drilling, though nearby communities, including those of the neighboring Sápara people, are threatened. Sarayaku is joining the protests of its neighbors.

José Gualinga says these struggles have bigger implications. “We are doing this to stop carbon emissions and global warming. This struggle of indigenous pueblos is a doorway to saving *Pachamama* [Mother Earth].”

Women have been at the center of the indigenous resistance. Patricia Gualinga tells me, “The women have been very steadfast and strong in saying we are not negotiating about this. We are the ones who have mobilized for life.” She recounts how, in 2013, 100 women from seven different indigenous groups marched 250 kilometers from their jungle communities to Quito, where they addressed the National Assembly. In the 1990s, Patricia’s mother embarked on a similar march with thousands of other indigenous women.

Sarayaku community members travel widely around Ecuador and beyond, but most return to their pastoral village.

“We want to continue living a good life within the forest,” Patricia tells me. “We want to be respected, and we want to be a model that could be replicated.”

The living jungle

I follow Sabino Gualinga, a 70-year-old shaman, as he walks lightly through the dense tangle of growth. He deftly flicks his machete to make a path through the jungle for me and Ariel. He stops and points up toward a tree.

“The bark of that tree helps cure gripe [flu]. This one,” he says, pointing to a weathered, gray tree trunk, “helps to break a fever. That one,” he motions to a fern-like plant, “helps with psychological problems.”

That night, Sabino’s sons, Gerardo and José, join us in front of a flickering fire to talk about Sarayaku’s journey. They are unwinding after a long day of meetings. José wears a white soccer jersey and his long black hair hangs loosely at his shoulders.

José, president of Sarayaku from 2011 to 2014, led his community to take its fight to the Inter-American Court on Human Rights. Part of the court judgment required Ecuadorian government leaders to apologize to Sarayaku. I doubted this would occur, but José was insistent that it would.

In October 2014, Ecuador’s Minister of Justice, Ledy Zuniga, stood in Sarayaku’s sandy community square and delivered an extraordinary message: “We offer a public apology for the violation of indigenous property, cultural identity, the right to consultation, having put at serious risk their lives and personal integrity, and for the violation of the right to judicial guarantee and judicial protections,” she declared.

The court decision and official apology appear to have given Sarayaku an extra measure of protection from new oil exploration. The government must now secure at least the appearance of consent, contested though it may be, lest they get dragged back into court.

Sarayaku may be a remote, pastoral community, but it is engaging the Western world politically, legally, and philosophically.

“We’ve shown that laws can change,” reflects Gerardo. “We’ve won not only for Sarayaku, we’ve won for South America.”

A key element in Sarayaku's success is telling its story everywhere it can. Sarayaku resident Eriberto Gualinga trained in videography and made a film about his community, *Children of the Jaguar*, which won best documentary at the 2012 National Geographic All Roads Film Festival. Sarayaku has also embraced social media. Community members showed me to a thatched hut. Inside, young people were clustered around several computers updating Facebook pages and websites via a satellite Internet connection.

Now, says José, "When the state says, 'Sarayaku, we are going to destroy you,' we have international witnesses. We can tell people the truth."

José draws a distinction between Sarayaku's struggles and those led by leaders such as Nelson Mandela and Che Guevara. "They wanted their freedom. We don't need to win our freedom. Here in Sarayaku, we are free. But we take from the experience of these leaders. It strengthens us."

A steady rain falls on the thatched roof overhead. The fat raindrops make a hard thwack on the broad leaves of the trees. A guitarist strums softly in another hut. Chickens and children run free.

"We are millionaires," says Gerardo, motioning to the jungle that embraces us. "Everything we need we have here." José peers into the fire. "We are a small pueblo, but we are a symbol of life. Everyone must come together to support the life of human beings and Earth."

David Goodman wrote this article for [Together, With Earth](#), the Spring 2015 issue of YES! Magazine. David is a journalist, a contributing writer for Mother Jones, and author of 10 books. He and his sister Amy Goodman, host of Democracy Now!, have co-authored three New York Times bestsellers.

http://www.yesmagazine.org/issues/together-with-earth/deep-in-the-amazon-a-tiny-tribe-is-beating-big-oil?utm_source=YTW&utm_medium=Email&utm_campaign=20150213

February 16, 2015

Historic Catholic Climate Lenten Fast To Be Held in 45 Countries

Global Catholic Climate Movement
Press Release

The Global Catholic Climate Movement (GCCM) announced on February 16 that more than 45 countries will take part in a 40-day Lenten fast for climate justice, from Ash Wednesday, February 18, to March 28. Participants in the Lenten fast are praying for unity on climate change within the Catholic church and asking world leaders to take all steps possible to meet the goal of a global temperature increase of less than 1.5 degrees Celsius (relative to pre-industrial levels),

by means that include a fair, ambitious, and legally binding global agreement in the COP 21 summit in Paris.

On a personal level, the GCCM 40-day fast encourages participants to fast from both food as well as reduce their use of carbon i.e. reduce their use such as oil, electricity, plastic, paper, water, and toxins and recycle during Lent.

The movement chose fasting for its first worldwide action because, “Pope Francis made it clear from the start that all people need to act as ‘protectors of creation.’ We encourage Catholics around the world to unite, pray and fast in solidarity with those who are most affected by the changing global climate,” stated Patrick Carolan, Executive Director of the U.S. based Franciscan Action Network.

Yeb Saño, who is the Climate Commissioner from the Philippines who captured the world’s attention with his own fast during U.N. meetings following Typhoon Haiyan, said: “The power behind fasting lies in its purity of purpose and the sense of selflessness necessary to embark on fasting. This is the power of the fast—because it is meant for our aspirations of a better world.”

Jacqui Rémond, Executive Director of Catholic Earthcare Australia added: “It is important that we call for a strong climate agreement that keeps global temperatures from rising more than 1.5 °C – this threshold was in the first three Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) assessments and also in the IPCC Fifth Assessment report (AR5). A world even at 1.5°C warmer would mean more severe droughts, flooding and sea level rise, increasing the risk of damage from storm surges and crop loss, as well as food and water security issues. Vulnerable human coastal communities and species across the world especially need to be protected.”

Ciara Shannon, coordinator of Our Voices in Asia stated: “Amidst our busy, consumption led lives – fasting during Lent is a great opportunity to reflect and abstain. The GCCM Lenten Fast also includes the option to do a carbon fast. This gives us a great opportunity to think about the food itself, how it is grown, how much water is used, how it is transported and then packaged. It always shocks me the amount of emissions that are involved.”

The GCCM 40 day Climate Justice Fast is part of the 365 day [#FASTFORTHECLIMATE](#) which has been happening since the 1st of December 2014 the start of COP20 in Lima and will continue until the 30th of November 2015, at the beginning of COP21 in Paris. The GCCM Climate Justice Fast is also in collaboration with the Green Anglicans Carbon Fast and Our Voices Climate Fast.

Further information on [#FASTFORTHECLIMATE](#) can be found at: www.fastfortheclimate.org

Further information on the Carbon Fast at: www.greenanglicans.org/carbon-fast-lent-2015/

Further information on Our Voices can be found at: www.ourvoices.net

<http://www.scny.org/historic-catholic-climate-lenten-fast-to-be-held-in-45-countries/>

February 17, 2015

Catholic group launches global climate-focused Lenten fast

By Brian Roewe
Eco Catholic
National Catholic Reporter

Forty days of Lent this year will equate to 40 days of fasting for Catholics in 40-plus countries in a push for greater unity and action around the issue of climate change.

The Global Catholic Climate Movement, which formed in January, officially announced on Monday the Lenten Fast for Climate Justice. The goal is to raise awareness on climate change as well as for Pope Francis' Lenten call to confront "a globalization of indifference," and to spur world leaders to work out a binding agreement to stave off a temperature rise above 1.5 degrees Celsius (2.7 degrees Fahrenheit), compared to pre-industrial levels. Climate scientists and politicians have regularly pointed to maintaining an increase of no more than 2 degrees Celsius to avoid the worst effects of climate change.

"The essential message is reduce our carbon footprint and increase our spiritual footprint," said Jacqui Rémond, director of Catholic Earthcare Australia, which is coordinating the fast there.

The climate justice fast is one of several similar efforts worldwide. The Fast for the Climate is an interfaith campaign that began Dec. 1 -- the start of the United Nations climate negotiations in Lima, Peru -- and will continue through the end of November when the talks resume in Paris. The interfaith group Our Voices and the Anglican church in South Africa are also holding climate-focused Lenten fasts.

So far, Catholics from 44 countries and one U.S. territory (Guam) have signed onto the climate justice fast. Support for it has picked up in recent days, with climate movement members activating their broad network to spread the word.

"Two weeks ago, we had six countries signed up," Patrick Carolan, executive director of the U.S.-based Franciscan Action Network, told *NCR*.

Rather than asking each country to hold a continuous 40-day fast, the climate fast will operate in a pass-the-baton fashion, with a different country -- represented by a group of people or, in some cases, an individual -- observing it each day before giving way to the next nation in line. In keeping with church tradition, all Catholics are asked to fast on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday.

The U.S. fasting date is set for March 16.

Organizers are asking Catholics on their country's day not only to abstain from food, but also to incorporate carbon-limiting behaviors, as well: walking, biking or using public transportation in lieu of a car; working from home; using less electricity or water.

They have also encouraged fasters in each country to share statements and videos explaining why they fast and how climate change has affected their homelands. The Global Catholic Climate Movement will then share the testimonials on its website as a way for people to follow the fast.

The first country up Thursday is Peru, the site of the most recent round of U.N. climate talks. From there, the fast moves east, stopping in Zambia (Friday) and Kenya (Saturday) in Africa, before heading to Hong Kong (Feb. 23) and Japan (Feb. 25).

In all, nine African nations and seven Asian countries will participate -- more than a third of all partaking. In addition, the fast will feature seven countries in South America, 11 in North America and the Caribbean, and nine in Europe.

The reasons for the climate fast are both unique and shared. In Australia, Rémond said it would call Catholics, as citizens of the highest per capita emissions country, "to play our part" in addressing climate change. For many, the act is one in solidarity with those who have and will suffer from the negative impacts of climate change.

Allen Ottaro, director of the Kenyan-based Catholic Youth Network for Environmental Sustainability in Africa, described severe flooding in Malawi and Mozambique "that has killed hundreds and left thousands homeless," in addition to the destruction of crops and farmlands that has affected food security.

On a continent that has contributed the least to climate change but expected to be struck the hardest, Ottaro said it's important for Catholics to lead on climate justice, as it has on other peace and justice issues.

"Besides fasting from food, it will also be a time of prayer for and with these communities," he told *NCR* in an email.

In his [2015 Lenten message](#) [3], the pope described a tendency for healthy and comfortable people to become unconcerned with others and their problems, and called on Christians to confront "a globalization of indifference" by forming more merciful hearts.

"Every Christian community is called to go out of itself and to be engaged in the life of the greater society of which it is a part, especially with the poor and those who are far away," Francis said.

Ottaro, who has seen the gap between rich and poor grow in his hometown Nairobi, believes the climate fast is an opportunity for Christians to examine ways they can live simpler, but also how they can challenge structures that perpetuate such globalized indifference.

“Very often we are caught up in our own worries and activities and have no time to pause to reflect and pray. Fasting offers us the opportunity to stop and reflect, and to feel the absence of things we might consider ‘normal,’ like three meals in a day,” he said.

Plans are still in the development phase for the U.S. fasting day, but Franciscan Action Network is hoping to recruit Catholic members of Congress, both Democrats and Republicans, to join the fast, “to raise awareness that climate change is a moral and spiritual issue, not a political issue,” Carolan said.

Already on board is former Maryland Gov. Martin O’Malley. “Uniting people of all faiths is the principle that we are called upon to be good and responsible stewards of God’s creation,” he said in the climate fast press release.

During the 2013 Fast for Families on immigration reform, Carolan said the communal fasting experience led to a strong spiritual connection among the participants.

“We started out each day in that fast in a circle, and we started out in prayer and shared our stories ... And really built that sense of connectedness, that we’re all part of the one,” Carolan said.

Carolan hopes the global climate fast, in addition to the upcoming papal encyclical on the environment, has a similar effect in uniting Catholics behind the need for serious action on climate change -- not for political or environmental purposes, but on moral and ethical grounds.

“Maybe that changes people’s hearts and helps more with the transformation of our society and into a society of interconnectedness, not a society of separation. And that includes connected to all of creation,” he said.

[Brian Roewe is an *NCR* staff writer. His email address is broewe@nronline.org [4]. Follow him on Twitter: [@BrianRoewe](https://twitter.com/BrianRoewe) [5]. Map of fasting nations created by *NCR* Bertelsen intern Mick Forgey ([@mcforgs](https://twitter.com/mcforgs) [6]).]

Editor's note: Want more stories from Eco Catholic? We can send you an email alert once a week with the latest. Just go to this page and follow directions: [Email alert sign-up](#) [7].

Source URL (retrieved on 02/17/2015 - 16:23): <http://ncronline.org/blogs/eco-catholic/catholic-group-launches-global-climate-focused-lenten-fast>

Links:

[1] <http://ncronline.org/blogs/eco-catholic/lima-accord-reached-climate-attention-turns-toward-2015>

[2] <http://ncronline.org/blogs/eco-catholic/un-report-climate-warms-poverty-will-grow>

[3] http://m.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/messages/lent/documents/papa-francesco_20141004_messaggio-quaresima2015.html

[4] <mailto:broewe@nronline.org>

[5] <http://ncronline.org/www.twitter.com/brianroewe>

[6] <http://ncronline.org/www.twitter.com/mcforgs>

[7] <http://ncronline.org/email-alert-signup>

<http://ncronline.org/blogs/eco-catholic/catholic-group-launches-global-climate-focused-lenten-fast>

February 17, 2015

Will the Vatican Become a New Leader Against Climate Change?

By Kevin Mathews
Care2

As political leaders make only moderate concessions in the name of fighting climate change, will anyone emerge to apply the pressure necessary to enact legitimate policy change? Surprisingly, the planet's savior could wind up being the Pope. The latest rumors indicate that the [Vatican is planning to take a serious leadership role](#) in trying to avoid our disastrous climate change problem.

While nothing has been made official, Father Federico Lombardi confirmed that an international group of cardinals assembled privately to discuss forming a new environmental think-tank of sorts. "We see a growth in the awareness and in the importance of reflection, commitment, and study of environmental issues and their relation to social and human questions," Lombardi said. A formal announcement about the next steps the church will take is expected by this summer.

Say what you will about the Catholicism, but even environmentalists without a religious affiliation should be excited at this potential new alliance. With over one billion people in the world identifying as Roman Catholic, a papal decree could theoretically enliven the largest bloc of eco-activists yet.

Pope Francis isn't dancing around the subject either. He's not only acknowledging that climate change is real, he's also assigning humans with the majority of the blame for said climate change. "It is man who continuously slaps down nature," Francis said. It is expected that he will instruct Catholics to take care of the earth that God created. Assuming the pope's followers take it as a legitimate, God-endorsed call-to-action, that's the kind of sway that results in actual change.

Environmental advocacy by the pope is not unusual – even John Paul II encouraged his followers to take care of the environment [back in the '90s](#). However, Francis appears poised to actually challenge the status quo. While he may have as many as a billion faithful Catholics in his corner, Francis' call will directly oppose the agendas of powerful political and moneyed interests, which means that the Vatican is probably going to be in for a fight with this one.

Given that [it took 350 years](#) for the Vatican to acknowledge that the earth does in fact revolve around the sun and not the other way around, it's nice to see the Catholic Church

(comparatively) ahead of the game this time by accepting the overwhelming scientific evidence even when it's not necessarily "convenient" for everyone involved. With the stakes of climate change so high, environmentalists need every advocate on their side as they can muster, including some unexpected ones like the folks at the Vatican.

<http://www.care2.com/causes/will-the-vatican-become-a-new-leader-against-climate-change.html>

February 17, 2015

Tonga's King talks climate change with Pope Francis

King of Tonga discusses environment with the Pope, as Vatican gets its first Tongan Cardinal

By Sophie Yeo

Responding to Climate Change

Tonga's King has taken the environmental challenges facing the small island states in the Pacific to the Vatican.

King Tupou VI, a Methodist, and his wife, Queen Nanasipau'u Tuku'aho, discussed the topic with Pope Francis during a tour of Rome and London.

A statement from the Vatican press office said that the Pope and the King had an "exchange of opinions on the international situation, with particular reference to the insular States of the Pacific and the environmental problems that some of them are compelled to face."

These small island states are among the most vulnerable nations in the world when it comes to climate change.

As global warming causes sea levels to rise, the low lying nations face coastal erosion and increased flooding.

According to the [2013 World Risk Report](#), Tonga is the second most vulnerable country to natural disasters in the world after Vanuatu, another small island state.

Green Pope

Pope Francis' discussion with the King of Tonga is the first time that he has explicitly addressed the climate concerns of the small island states.

Yet the Pontiff has become increasingly vocal on climate change since he was elected as head of the world's 1.2 billion Catholics in March 2013.

This has been combined with a concern for the poor and underrepresented.

Ahead of a trip to Tacloban – the area of the Philippines hardest hit by the deadly Typhoon Haiyan – Francis [described](#) environmental neglect as a betrayal of the “noble calling” to be stewards of God’s creation.

Francis’ decision to appoint Tongan bishop Soane Patita Paini Mafi as Cardinal has been [regarded](#) as an attempt to reach out to the fringes.

Mafi – who was formally elevated to the College of Cardinals at St Peter’s Basilica on Saturday – has previously expressed his concern over the damage that climate change is causing to the Pacific islands.

In an [interview](#) with America magazine, he described “our permanent vulnerability to the impact of climate change and global warming, especially to our low lying areas in the Pacific” as one of the most pressing issues facing his community.

<http://www.rtcc.org/2015/02/17/tongas-king-talks-climate-change-with-pope-francis/>

February 18, 2015

Bigger Than Science, Bigger Than Religion

We’re closer to environmental disaster than ever before. We need a new story for our relationship with the Earth, one that goes beyond science and religion.

By Richard Schiffman
Yes! Magazine

The world as we know it is slipping away. At the current rate of destruction, tropical rainforest could be gone within as little as 40 years. The seas are being overfished to the point of exhaustion, and coral reefs are dying from ocean acidification. Biologists say that we are currently at the start of the largest mass extinction event since the disappearance of the dinosaurs. As greenhouse gases increasingly accumulate in the atmosphere, temperatures are likely to rise faster than our current ecological and agricultural systems can adapt.

It is no secret that the Earth is in trouble and that we humans are to blame. Just knowing these grim facts, however, won’t get us very far. We have to transform this knowledge into a deep passion to change course. But passion does not come primarily from the head; it is a product of the heart. And the heart is not aroused by the bare facts alone. It needs stories that weave those facts into a moving and meaningful narrative.

We need a powerful new story that we are a part of nature and not separate from it. We need a story that properly situates humans in the world—neither above it by virtue of our superior intellect, nor dwarfed by the universe into cosmic insignificance. We are equal partners with all that exists, co-creators with trees and galaxies and the microorganisms in our own gut, in a materially and spiritually evolving universe.

This was the breathtaking vision of the late Father Thomas Berry. Berry taught that humanity is presently at a critical decision point. Either we develop a more heart-full relationship with the Earth that sustains us, or we destroy ourselves and life on the planet. I interviewed the white-maned theologian (he preferred the term “geologian,” by which he meant “student of the Earth”) in 1997 at the Riverdale Center of Religious Research on the Hudson River north of New York City. Berry spoke slowly and with the hint of a southern drawl, revealing his North Carolina upbringing.

“I say that my generation has been autistic,” he told me. “An autistic child is locked into themselves, they cannot get out and the outer world cannot get in. They cannot receive affection, cannot give affection. And this is, I think, a very appropriate way of identifying this generation in its relationship to the natural world.

“We have no feeling for the natural world. We’d as soon cut down our most beautiful tree, the most beautiful forest in the world. We cut it down for what? For timber, for board feet. We don’t see the tree, we only see it in terms of its commercial value.”

It is no accident that we have come to our current crisis, according to Berry. Rather, it is the natural consequence of certain core cultural beliefs that comprise what Berry called “the Old Story.” At the heart of the Old Story is the idea that we humans are set apart from nature and here to conquer it. Berry cited the teaching in Genesis that humans should “subdue the Earth ... and have dominion over every living thing.”

But if religion provided the outline for the story, science wrote it large—developing a mind-boggling mastery of the natural world. Indeed, science over time became the new religion, said Berry, an idolatrous worship of our own human prowess. Like true believers, many today are convinced that, however bad things might seem, science and technology will eventually solve all of our problems and fulfill all of our needs.

Berry acknowledged that this naive belief in science served a useful purpose during the formative era when we were still building the modern world and becoming aware of our immense power to transform things.

Like adolescents staking out their own place in the world, we asserted our independence from nature and the greater family of life. But over time, this self-assertion became unbalanced, pushing the Earth to the brink of environmental cataclysm. The time has come to leave this adolescent stage behind, said Berry, and develop a new, mature relationship with the Earth and its inhabitants.

We’ll need to approach this crucial transition on many different fronts. Scientific research has too frequently become the willing handmaiden of what Berry called “the extractive economy,” an economic system that treats our fellow creatures as objects to be exploited rather than as living beings with their own awareness and rights. Moreover, technology, in Berry’s view, potentially separates us from intimacy with life. We flee into “cyberspace”—spending more time on smart phones, iPods, and video games than communing with the real world.

Science and technology are not the problem. Our misuse of them is. Berry said that science needs to acknowledge that the universe is not a random assemblage of dead matter and empty space, but is alive, intelligent, and continually evolving. And it needs to recognize that not only is the world alive, it is alive in us. “We bear the universe in our beings,” Berry reflected, “as the universe bears us in its being.” In Berry’s view, our human lives are no accident. We are the eyes, the minds, and the hearts that the cosmos is evolving so that it can come to know itself ever more perfectly through us.

It’s a view that has been winning some surprising adherents. Several years ago, I had dinner with Edgar Mitchell, one of only a dozen humans who have walked upon the lunar surface. Mitchell, the descendant of New Mexico pioneers and an aeronautical engineer by training, spoke precisely and almost clinically—until he related an experience that happened on his way back to Earth during the Apollo 14 mission. At that point, his voice brightened with awe.

“I was gazing out of the window, at the Earth, moon, sun, and star-studded blackness of space in turn as our capsule slowly rotated,” he said. “Gradually, I was flooded with the ecstatic awareness that I was a part of what I was observing. Every molecule in my body was birthed in a star hanging in space. I became aware that everything that exists is part of one intricately interconnected whole.”

The Overview Effect

In a recent phone chat, Mitchell called this realization “the Overview Effect,” and he said that virtually all of the moon astronauts experienced it during their flights. In his case, it changed the direction of his life: “I realized that the story of ourselves as told by our scientific cosmology and our religion was incomplete and likely flawed. I saw that the Newtonian idea of separate, independent, discrete things in the universe wasn’t a fully accurate description.”

In pursuit of a holistic understanding, Mitchell founded the Institute of Noetic Sciences (IONS) to explore the nature of human consciousness. The question of consciousness might seem remote from issues like climate change. But it is central to the question of how we treat the world. At the core of our abuse of nature is the belief that we humans are essentially islands unto ourselves, alienated from the world beyond our skins. A little god locked within the gated community of his or her own skull won’t feel much responsibility for what goes on outside.

“The classical scientific approach says that observation and consciousness are completely independent of the way the world works,” IONS Chief Scientist Dean Radin told me. But physics has known for decades that mind and matter are not as separable as we once supposed. Radin cites as an example Heisenberg’s discovery that the act of observation changes the phenomenon that is being observed.

Moreover, quantum physics has shown that subatomic particles that are separated in space are nevertheless responsive to one another in ways that are not yet fully understood. We are discovering that there is “some underlying form of connection in which literally everything is connected to everything else all of the time,” asserts Radin. “The universe is less a collection of objects than a web of interrelationships.”

As we come to grasp how inextricably embedded in this vast web of cosmic life we are, Radin hopes that humans will be persuaded to move beyond the idea of ourselves as masters and the world as slave to embrace an equal and mutually beneficial partnership.

Another prophet of a new scientific paradigm is renowned Harvard biologist Edward (E.O.) Wilson. Wilson is best known for his biophilia hypothesis, which says there is an instinctive emotional bond between humans and other life forms. Evolution has fostered in us the drive to love and care for other living beings, Wilson says, as a way to promote the survival not just of our own kind but of life as a whole.

Darwin's theory of natural selection is invoked to argue that we humans are conditioned by nature to struggle tooth and nail for access to limited resources. But Wilson contends that evolution does not just promote violent competition but also favors the development of compassion and cooperation—traits that serve the interests of the group as a whole.

He calls this radical new idea “group selection.” Groups of altruistically inclined individuals have an evolutionary advantage over groups that are composed of members pursuing only their own survival needs. This collective advantage, he argues, has helped to promote powerful social bonds and cooperative behaviors in species as diverse as ants, geese, elk, and human beings.

In championing the evolutionary importance of love and cooperation in the flourishing of life, Wilson is not just revolutionizing biology. He is also venturing into territory usually occupied by religion. But, like Berry, Wilson argues that we need a story that cuts across traditional boundaries between fields to present a new, integral vision. “Science and religion are two of the most potent forces on Earth,” Wilson asserts, “and they should come together to save the Creation.”

A thousand-year worldview

At its heart, the new story that Wilson and Berry advocate is actually a very old one. Indigenous spiritual traditions taught that all beings are our relatives long before the science of ecology “discovered” the seamless web of life that binds humans to other creatures. “The world is alive, everything has spirit, has standing, has the right to be recognized,” proclaims Anishinaabe activist and former Green Party candidate for vice president Winona LaDuke.

“One of our fundamental teachings is that in all our actions we consider the impact it will have on seven generations,” LaDuke told an audience at the University of Ottawa in 2012. “Think about what it would mean to have a worldview that could last a thousand years, instead of the current corporate mindset that can't see beyond the next quarterly earnings statement.”

When LaDuke speaks of Native values, people sometimes ask her what relevance these have for us today. She answers that the respect for the sacredness of nature that inspired people to live in harmony with their environment for millennia is not a relic of the past. It is a roadmap for living lightly on the Earth that we desperately need in a time of climate change.

This ethic has spread beyond the reservation into religiously inspired communities, like Genesis Farm, founded by the Dominican Sisters of Caldwell, New Jersey. Set on ancestral Lenape lands amidst wooded hills and wetlands and within view of the Delaware Water Gap, Genesis has served for the last quarter century as an environmental learning center and working biodynamic farm grounded in Berry's vision.

I spoke to the community's founder Sister Miriam MacGillis, a friend and student of Berry, in a room studded with satellite images of the farm and its bioregion. MacGillis told me that she underwent decades of struggle trying to reconcile Berry's 13-billion-year vision of an evolutionary cosmos with the ultimately incompatible biblical teachings that "creation is finished: Humans were made, history began, there was the fall, and history will end with the apocalypse." She says, "The pictures I had of God were too small, too parochial, too much a reflection of the ways humans think. We made God in our image!"

Taking the long view fundamentally transforms the basis for environmental action, says MacGillis: "We need to realize that we are the universe in the form of the human. We are not just on Earth to do good ecological things. That is where the religious perspective takes us with the stewardship model—take care of it; it's holy because God made it. That hasn't worked real well ... The idea of stewardship is too small, it's too human-centered, like we can do that. It's really the opposite. Earth is taking total care of us."

Genesis Farm has propagated these ideas through its Earth Literacy training, which has now spread to many places throughout the world. Their work is a small part of a larger greening of religion, says Yale religious scholar Mary Evelyn Tucker, co-creator with Brian Swimme of *Journey of the Universe*, an exhilarating trek through time and space portraying an evolutionary universe.

Tucker expects that the upcoming encyclical on climate change and the environment that Pope Francis will issue in early 2015 will be "a game changer" for Catholics. She adds that Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew has also been outspoken, labeling crimes against the natural world "a sin." The Dalai Lama, for his part, has been speaking about the importance of safeguarding the environment based on Buddhism's sense of the profound interdependence of all life. China has recently enshrined in its constitution the need for a new ecological civilization rooted in Confucian values, which preach the harmony between humans, Earth, and Heaven.

"All civilizations have drawn on the wisdom traditions that have gotten people through death, tragedy, destruction, immense despair," says Tucker, adding that we are currently in a perilous rite of passage. "We will need all of the world's religions to help as well as a shared sense of an evolutionary story to get us through this."

Richard Schiffman wrote this for [Together, With Earth](#), the Spring 2015 issue of YES! Magazine. Richard is an environmental journalist whose work has been featured on National Public Radio, in The Guardian, The Atlantic, and many other publications. He is the author of two biographies, and a poet whose collection What the Dust Doesn't Know is forthcoming from Salmon Poetry.

February 18, 2015

Catholics Fast for Lent in Support of Pope Francis' Call for Climate Action

By Cole Mellino
EcoWatch

Today marks Ash Wednesday, the beginning of Lent for Catholics. The 40-day period leading up to Easter is a time when Catholics fast, and many try to give up something as a way to deepen their faith. This Lenten season, the [Global Catholic Climate Movement](#), which formed in January, officially announced today the Lenten Fast for Climate Justice.

The goal is to “raise awareness on climate change” and to challenge Catholics to confront what Pope Francis has called “a globalization of indifference,” [according to the *National Catholic Reporter*](#) (NCR). “The essential message is reduce our carbon footprint and increase our spiritual footprint,” Jacqui Rémond, director of [Catholic Earthcare Australia](#), told NCR.

So far, Catholics from 44 countries have signed up for the climate justice fast. Global Catholic Climate Movement hopes that the faithful’s unified front on climate will “spur world leaders to work out a binding agreement” to avoid the worst effects of [climate change](#). The organizers are not asking anyone to fast for all 40 days. Instead they are asking each country to fast for one day. In keeping with church tradition, they are asking all Catholics to fast on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday.

Along with fasting from food, organizers are asking Catholics to do a “carbon fast” by incorporating carbon-limiting behaviors, such as [walking, biking or using public transportation](#), working from home, and [using less electricity or water](#). The organizers are also asking participants to share statements or a video explaining why they are fasting and “how climate change has affected their homelands.”

Fasting has become a theme for climate activists. Filipino delegate, Yeb Sano, [initiated a fast](#) during the UN’s 2014 climate talks in Lima to protest the lack of progress. Climate activists have also been holding a 365-day fasting chain, “which began on the Dec. 1, 2014 and will run until the Dec. 30, 2015 when the UN’s climate negotiations kick off in Paris,” [according to *Responding to Climate Change*](#) (RTCC).

“The power behind fasting lies in its purity of purpose and the sense of selflessness necessary to embark on fasting,” Sano told RTCC. “This is the power of the fast—because it is meant for our aspirations of a better world.”

Catholics have been fasting for centuries as part of Lent. Why make this one about climate change? “The fast is partially to respond to a lot of the Pope’s call to have a conversion on this

issue,” Rhett Engelking, director of the Franciscan Earth Corps and coordinator of the U.S. Day of Fasting, [told VICE News](#).

The Pope has been making headlines right and left with statements like [taking action on climate is essential to faith](#). In January, the pontificate visited the Philippines and met with survivors of Super Typhoon Haiyan, and on Feb. 14 he [met with Tonga’s king and queen](#) at the Vatican to discuss the damage that climate change is causing to the Pacific island.

Pope Francis is already living up to his promise to [escalate his demand for climate action](#) in 2015. Last week, church officials met to consider creating a new environmental think tank, which would “influence the opinion of the world’s 1.2 billion Roman Catholics on such thorny issues as climate change,” [according to Reuters](#).

The pope’s highly awaited encyclical on the environment is due in early summer, and his visit to the U.S.—particularly his address to a joint session of Congress—this September is already getting a lot of attention. It will be the first time a pope will address the U.S. Congress, a third of whose members are Catholic.

<http://ecowatch.com/2015/02/18/catholics-fast-lent-support-pope-francis-climate-action/>

February 20, 2015

Solar energy’s new best friend is ... the Christian Coalition

By Chris Mooney
Washington Post

The [politics of solar power](#) keeps getting more and more interesting.

In Indiana, a fight over [net metering](#) — basically, whether people with rooftop solar can return their excess power to the grid and thereby lower their utility bills — has drawn out groups ranging from the state [chapter of the NAACP](#) to the [conservative TUSK](#) (Tell Utilities Solar won’t be Killed) in favor of the practice.

Arrayed on the other side of the issue, meanwhile, are the [Indiana Energy Association](#), a group of utilities, and Republican Rep. Eric Koch, sponsor of a [bill](#) that would potentially change how net metering works in the state. The legislation, in its [current form](#), would let utility companies ask the Indiana Utility Regulatory Commission to include various “tariffs, rates and charges, and credits” for those customers generating their own energy at home.

Net metering advocates charge that this would reduce how much money rooftop solar installers save on their electricity bills. But the bill’s supporters [say](#) it will “level the playing field to ensure that all of those who use the electric grid — whether consuming or generating power — are paying for its upkeep,” in the words of the Indiana Energy Association.

Forty-three states and the District of Columbia [currently allow net metering](#) — among them, Indiana. The fight is important because the solar industry in the state, and the number of people installing rooftop solar, is expected to grow in coming years — that is, so long as solar remains a good deal financially.

What's particularly fascinating is how this debate has mobilized the religious community. Solar panels are [going up on church rooftops](#) in Indiana, and on Wednesday, the head of the Christian Coalition of America wrote a [blog post](#) favoring solar and referring specifically to the Indiana fight (although without getting into the technical details of net metering).

[Roberta Combs](#), president of the group, titled her post “For God and Country, Indiana and America Need Better Energy Policies,” writing,

Indiana's utilities are interested in keeping us reliant on traditional fuel sources that hurt our national security and weaken our economy. We must allow homes, businesses, public organizations, and churches to create local, American power by installing solar.

As conservatives, we stand up for our country's national security and the health of our economy. And, as Christians, we recognize the biblical mandate to care for God's creation and protect our children's future.

This is not the first time that Combs has come out for an initiative that might be described as “green.” She [previously supported](#) efforts by Secretary of State John F. Kerry, former senator Joe Lieberman and Sen. Lindsey Graham (R-S.C.) to battle global warming. Her daughter, [Michele Combs](#), is the founder of a group called Young Conservatives for Energy Reform, which [stands for](#) “weaning our nation from foreign oil, boosting efficiency, and developing homegrown alternatives from natural gas to biofuels to wind and solar.”

“This whole concept of [conservative support for solar](#) has certainly gotten a lot of attention, but this is the most remarkable chapter in the story,” said Bryan Miller, who co-chairs the [Alliance for Solar Choice](#), which advocates in favor of net metering across the country. “We've seen a lot of grass-roots activism for sure, but we haven't seen a major national group, associated with the far right of American politics, coming out on a renewable energy issue.”

The reason this has happened in Indiana, suggests Miller, is that “we've had houses of worship who have gone solar, speaking out about this for weeks.” The South Carolina Christian Coalition has also [supported solar power](#) in the state.

The Christian Coalition did not immediately return requests for comment.

Energy in the United States is changing so fast, it seems, that politics barely knows how to adapt to it.

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/news/energy-environment/wp/2015/02/20/solar-energys-new-best-friend-is-the-christian-coalition/>

February 23, 2015

Religious leaders urge action to combat climate change

By Mark Pattison
Catholic News Service

WASHINGTON (CNS) -- Religious leaders from across the faith spectrum gathered Feb. 20 at the Capitol to seek action to combat climate change and to mitigate its effects, whether it be at the federal level or in local communities.

The ongoing buzz about the forthcoming encyclical from Pope Francis on the environment was addressed by Archbishop Thomas G. Wenski of Miami, chairman of the U.S. bishops' Committee on Domestic Justice and Human Development.

"This is the first time a pope has addressed the issue of the environment and climate change with an encyclical -- and for us Catholics and not only for Catholics, this is a big deal," Archbishop Wenski said, noting, "Encyclicals are an important way for popes to exercise their teaching office."

Archbishop Wenski added, "Although I am not privy to what the pope will say, I think he will insist that the 'natural ecology' is inseparably linked to 'human ecology.' In other words, we have to recognize the interrelatedness of the various social, economic, political or environmental crises that confront the human family today."

The archbishop made the comments as part of a panel sponsored by the National Religious Partnership for the Environment and held in a meeting room at the U.S. Capitol Visitor Center in Washington.

Given what Pope Francis has said in the past on the environment, "I think that he will call us to prudent action that promotes the common good for present and future generations and respects human life and dignity while always giving priority to the poor and vulnerable," Archbishop Wenski said.

"Care for creation should engage us all -- and thus I also think that the pope will tell us also to be mindful of and heed the voices of poor who are impacted most by climate change and certainly will be impacted either for good or ill by the policies proposed to address climate change."

At their essence, the archbishop said, "these all are moral crises which require new rules and forms of engagement -- in other words, a rethinking of the path that we are traveling down together."

Bishops are not scientists, Archbishop Wenski cautioned, "but we are pastors -- and insofar as climate change affects concrete human beings, it is a moral issue; and, pastors in exercising their care of their flocks do weigh in -- and appropriately so -- on moral issues. Also, as Catholics, we

firmly believe that the poor have a first claim on our consciences in matters pertaining to the common good."

Archbishop Wenski alluded to past statements on the environment by Pope Benedict XVI and the U.S. bishops' own 2001 statement, "Global Climate Change: A Plea for Dialogue, Prudence and the Common Good," in which "we expressed our concern that disproportionate and unfair burdens not be placed on poor, developing nations. We called for collective action for the common good."

The Rev. Emilio Marrero, vice president of national programs at Esperanza, an umbrella group for Hispanic evangelicals, said evangelicals "believe that salvation bears fruit," and that God wants to see "evidence" of faith "through our actions."

Rev. Marrero cited Matthew 25:36 as saying that Christians should be "concerned for the least of these," as climate change tends to more adversely affect those with less means to adapt to its impact. "In Mexico, 1 million people have been forced to leave their land because of climate change and the desertification of their pastures," he added.

Rabbi Fred Dobb, chair of the Coalition on Environment and Jewish Life, said the struggle over climate change is one of "hubris vs. humility." People, he added, should search within themselves to understand "how much are people at the center, vs. how much God is at the center, vs. how much the earth is at the center" of their lives.

Rabbi Dobb said he is the father of two children, ages 10 and 5. "I have stewardship over them," he said, "but that does not mean I can frack them, or strip-mine them." The same is true, he said of the earth: "The earth is God's and the fullness thereof."

The Rev. Carroll Baltimore, first vice president of the Progressive National Baptist Convention, quoted the Rev. Martin Luther King, who also was a Baptist, as saying, "An injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere." African-Americans, Rev. Baltimore said, make up only 12 percent of the U.S. population, but suffer disproportionately from the effects of climate change.

"Majorities of blacks and Hispanics live in counties with a bad quality of air," he said. And he cited U.S. Census statistics showing "there are 65 percent fewer African-American women living in New Orleans" than there were before Hurricane Katrina struck in 2005.

<http://www.catholicnews.com/data/stories/cns/1500810.htm>

February 25, 2015

Sacred Water, Klamath People and the Struggle for Cultural Survival

Press Release

(Upper Klamath Basin, Oregon) -- Entangled in the heart of an arduous century long battle over

water rights in the Upper Klamath Basin, is the struggle of the Klamath, Modoc, Yahooskin Peoples for cultural survivance.

Our elders have always told us that water is life, water is priceless. Our water is so sacred it should never be quantified, compromised or negotiated. But what happens to the future of a culture, whose spiritual foundation is water, when even to tribal negotiators, the priceless becomes a mere commodity?

In a world where some believe everything has its price, many of us as Klamath, Modoc, Yahooskin descendants hold strong to the values of our ancestors.

The values of our ancestors have taught us that water, above all else, is essential to our way of life as Indigenous People.

Our water sustains all our sacred foods and medicines, which have supported us since time immemorial in the Upper Klamath Basin.

Without it, we cease to be a People.

We are the descendants of Kientpoos, Captain Jack, who refused to be tamed by the United States and their destructive colonial agenda to tap our aquifers, irrigate our beautiful homelands and degrade them into barren farm lands.

On October 3, 1873 the US government sentenced Kientpoos (Captain Jack), Schonchin John, Black Jim, and Boston Charley to death by hanging at Fort Klamath. 9 years later in 1882, farmers introduced irrigation to the Klamath area.

In 1905, the Bureau of Reclamation's massive project, otherwise known as the Klamath Reclamation Project, replumbed the region.

Today, seven dams, 45 pumping stations, 185 miles of canals and 516 miles of irrigation ditches stretch like a watery web over the land. Less than 25 percent of the original wetlands remain. Some 25,000 acres of those wetlands have been leased to farmers while another 200,000 acres have been turned into farmland. Agricultural runoff has altered the chemistry of the lakes and wetlands and waterfowl populations have declined by two-thirds. It is a familiar story in the arid West – water moved from where it was to places where it should not be.

“What we have,” explains former Klamath Tribe Water Attorney Bud Ullman, “is an over-commitment of the water resource and general ecosystem degradation. There have been promises of water initially to Indians in the Treaty..., then there were promises to the farmers in a big irrigation project..., then promises for water to other farms. This all adds up to more water than nature gives us to work with. (Winona Laduke, Klamath Water, Klamath Life 2002)

The irrigable lands of the Klamath Project are in south-central Oregon (62 percent) and north-central California (38 percent). The Project currently provides full service water to approximately 210,000 acres of cropland.

The two main sources that supply water for the project: Upper Klamath Lake and the Klamath River; and Clear Lake Reservoir, Gerber Reservoir, and Lost River, which are located in a closed basin. (www.usbr.gov)

An over commitment of water paired with climate change is hastily altering the water cycle in the Klamath Basin. Snow pack levels melted out 2-4 weeks early in 2014. In November 2014, Gerber Reservoir was reported to be 99 percent dry.

In an attempt to resolve conflicts between Indigenous senior water rights holders and junior rights holders, the Klamath Basin Restoration Agreement (KBRA) was introduced in 2009 and the final document was signed on February 18, 2010 in Salem, Oregon.

Since then, two more agreements have been drafted and introduced, the Klamath Basin Hydroelectric Settlement (KHSA) on February 18, 2010 and the Upper Klamath Basin Comprehensive Agreement (UKBCA) on March 4, 2014.

While the Klamath Basin has glorified these agreements as a historical reconciliation, Indian Water Settlement agreements similar to the KBRA have been on the rise, and since 1989 congress has ratified at least 30.

Spring 2014, Klamath Tribal members were notified at a series of community meetings in Portland, Eugene, Chiloquin and Klamath Falls that the UKBCA had been finalized and referendum ballots would be mailed the following week. This left tribal members only 19 days to review over 100 pages of legal and scientific documentation and cast a vote to approve (or deny) and direct the Klamath Tribal chairman, Donald Gentry, to sign the proposed legislation. According to the Klamath Tribes Referendum Official Ballot, "all ballots must be received by the US Post Office in Chiloquin by 9:00 a.m. Wednesday, April 9, 2014. Or they will not be counted."

Many tribal members, primarily those who live out of area, either did not receive their ballots or received their ballots after the deadline for submission. 564 Tribal members voted yes, in favor of the Agreement, and 419 voted no. Less than one third of eligible voters cast a vote.

Lack in ethical leadership has affected business at home and many have not been given the opportunity to exercise their right to vote. Administration is not updating addresses for tribal members to tribal departments. Members who live out of area have also had their ballots rejected because addresses didn't match elections. There were two tribal newsletters in 2014 which some still have not received. This has left countless tribal members disenfranchised.

Numerous tribal members have now been questioning the motives of their own tribal government and the tribal negotiators of these water agreements.

As of last week, Fidelity National Financial Ventures announced it had sold the assets of Cascade Timberlands, LLC to Whitefish Cascade Forest Resources, LLC, based in Singapore. The sale included the Mazama Tree Farm, which is a key component in the Klamath Tribes negotiations regarding the KBRA. This may now give the Klamath Tribes a special circumstance

to file for withdrawal from the agreements as outlined in section 33.2.2. in the KBRA. This option is not currently being shared or discussed with Tribal members. And the actions of Klamath Tribal negotiators regarding this issue are yet to be determined.

Within this last year we have watched the UKBCA, turn into Senate Bill 2379 and witnessed it die in Senate at the end of 2014.

Every time a new document is drafted, new language is introduced. On January 8th 2015 Senator Ron Wyden of Oregon reintroduced the agreements as Senate Bill 133.

Direct quote from SB 133:

“Prohibits water allocations for fish and wildlife and National Wildlife Refuge purposes from adversely affecting water allocations for irrigation purposes..”

There were originally 80,000 acres of seasonal marshes in the Lower Klamath National Wildlife Refuge. On average the Refuge served about 10 million birds and had a large winter population of threatened Bald Eagles. At the current status, the Refuge will essentially be a cracked lake-bed.

Now a year after the signing of the UKBCA, for us as Tribal People whose primary interest is to protect all sacred things that are outlined in the 1864 Treaty that pertain to our survivance as a culturally distinct People, more is coming to light in regards to these documents along with various reasons to not support them. These “agreements” do not secure that which is necessary to protect what is promised under the Treaty. These agreements do not protect that which is crucial to our spirituality and way of life.

“The adverse effects of KBRA on water needed for fish became much clearer during the dam removal EIS stage than they were earlier. Buried in the klamathrestoration.gov list of engineering studies is a definitive report showing that KBRA means less water during many key times than is currently required by the BiOps protecting Coho Salmon., e.g., during dry year months. The irrigators like this outcome but no one who wants Salmon to thrive should be satisfied.” Tom Schlosser, legal counsel for Hoopa Valley Tribe.

Signatory tribes, such as the Klamath, Yurok, and Karuk Tribes have hailed the agreements as a path toward dam removal and fisheries restoration. Through the KBRA and Upper Basin agreement those Basin Tribes with water rights, or which have advocated for Salmon, have been promised funding for restoration and economic development in exchange for not pressing for increased flows in the Klamath River.

Klamath Tribal Members have been told the agreements do not relinquish any rights, however, the agreements irrefutably contain language that limits the federal trust responsibility. Both the Affiliated Tribes of Northwest Indians (ATNI) and the National Congress of American Indians (NCAI) have resolutions opposing any action that limits or abolishes the federal trust responsibility. Nevertheless, signatory tribes have chosen to proceed into the agreements.

The Hoopa Valley, Quartz Valley and Resighini tribes did not sign. They argued the agreement subordinates priority tribal water rights and the Endangered Species Act. They argued the lack of water effects Chinook and Coho Salmon health and future salmon runs in the Klamath Basin. They argued that the inexpensive, direct path to dam removal is restarting the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission process for these facilities. The Klamath agreement has blocked this process for years.

The government is frequently conflicted in their obligation to protect Tribes but often chooses to protect irrigators that have created a large economy based on Tribal resources. The crux of the dispute is the United States government has been involved by providing assets and paying for resources to advance the cases (sell-out our rights), when they have a fiduciary duty as trustee to protect Tribes.

Clearly, the Bureau of Reclamation is also pulling levers behind the scenes with the Pacificorp power company. In 2014, salmon were sick and dying in the Klamath River and BOR prompted Pacificorp to provide water, with the promise to pay back that water the following year. Though residents complain about the toxic river conditions, Pacificorp continues to operate outside the guidelines of the clean water act.

The Klamath Basin long term plan for 2015 provides no water for the environment.

In Sec. 2.5.1 footnote 8 and 4.3.1 n. 14 of the KBRA indicate that Upper Klamath water will not be used to address lower Klamath fish health; the Upper Klamath will be managed by the KID BiOp.

As it stands now, the most senior water right goes to support agriculture and to the flooding of fields to prove usage, for increased farm subsidies in the Upper Basin.

The KBRA and associated agreements are not at all an exercise in self-determination but advocating for a blood oath from Tribes. Although, we are faced with drought, contamination and over-consumption, the Klamath Tribal council and Klamath Tribes Negotiation Team continue to support an agreement that permits destructive acts against our culture, environment, and our future as Klamath, Modoc, Yahooskin Peoples.

Honor The Treaty of 1864 is a group of like minded individuals who want to honor our ancestors and our 7th generation by protecting our resources and our rights. While these ideas are not new and many people before us stood for the same things we do, our group was officially formed in 2014. We welcome all people who support our cause.

Press contact:

Willa Powless: (307)-757-7970

Kayla Godowa: (541)-735-1793

February 25, 2015

Teens Sue Government for Failing to Address Climate Change for Future Generations

By [Cole Mellino](#) | [EcoWatch](#) | News Report
Nation of Change

Many young people feel they have too much at stake to wait for our leaders to get their act together and take meaningful action on [climate change](#). In the words of one young climate activist, Alec Loorz, [we need to demand](#) our political leaders “govern as if our future matters.” With their future at stake, many youth have taken their case to the courts in the hopes that the judiciary will require the legislature to take action.

“We are all in imminent danger,” Loorz, who founded the nonprofit [Kids vs. Global Warming](#), told *Outside Magazine*. “Scientists have said we have 10 years to make changes if we want to stabilize the climate by 2100—and that was back in 2005 ... We care more about money and power than we do about future generations. The judicial system is the only branch of government not bought out by corporate interests.”

On [Bill Moyer’s show](#) last month, Mary Christina Wood, law professor at the University of Oregon and author of *Nature’s Trust: Environmental Law for a New Ecological Age*, explains what is being called the “Children’s Climate Crusade.”

What exactly are these young people asking for? “Every suit and every administrative petition filed in every state in the country and against the federal government asks for the same relief,” Wood says. “And that is for the government ... to bring down carbon emissions in compliance with what scientists say is necessary to avoid catastrophic climate change.”

The young plaintiffs simply want the courts to require “the legislatures and the agencies to do their job in figuring out how to lower carbon emissions,” says Wood. Do these litigants have any legal grounds to stand on, though?

Turns out, yes. “You find it in case law going back to the beginning years of this country,” says Wood. “The U.S. Supreme Court has announced the Public Trust Doctrine in multiple cases over the years and it’s in every state jurisprudence as well.”

The Public Trust Doctrine says “the government is a trustee of the resources that support our public welfare and survival,” according to Woods. The doctrine “requires our government to protect and maintain survival resources for future generations.” Relying on this long-standing legal principle, young plaintiffs have cases at the state and federal level.

At the federal level, five teenagers, and two non-profit organizations—Kids vs. Global Warming and [WildEarth Guardians](#)—partnered with [Our Children’s Trust](#) to file a federal lawsuit. Their

petition for their case to be heard by the U.S. Supreme Court was denied in December, but the [plaintiffs vow “to advance their climate claims](#) in lower federal courts until the federal government is ordered to take immediate action on human-made climate change.”

At the state level, [there are cases pending](#) in Oregon, [New Mexico](#), Pennsylvania, Massachusetts, Washington and Colorado. Courts in Alaska, Texas, Arizona, Kansas, Montana and Pennsylvania have issued “developmental decisions on which the pending cases are in part based.” Youth plaintiffs supported by Our Children’s Trust have filed administrative rule-making petitions in every state in the country.

“I think there are a lot of kids here in Colorado and around the world who would be so excited to get the gift of clean air and water, snow in the mountains, abundant wildlife and safe communities,” [said](#) Xiuhtezcatl Martinez, one of the young plaintiffs in the Colorado anti-fracking case, after learning the [court rejected the Colorado Oil and Gas Conservation Commission’s request](#) for dismissal of their lawsuit. “New York showed us all [by banning fracking] that a state can value the health of kids as a top priority. That’s what this whole thing is about, making Colorado a safe place to live for ours and future generations.”

Oregon’s and Massachusetts’ cases are moving forward. Legal arguments began last month in Oregon’s case and will culminate in a court hearing before Judge Rasmussen once again on March 13.

The Oregon Court of Appeals [ruled last summer](#) that “The court must decide whether the atmosphere is a public trust resource that the state of Oregon, as a trustee, has a duty to protect along with recognized public trust assets such as estuaries, rivers and wildlife.” Now the plaintiffs will argue in the Circuit Court that not only does the state have a duty to protect the atmosphere, “but that it is violating its trustee obligation to present and future generations if it does not.”

Kelsey Juliana, one of the young plaintiffs in the Oregon case, said, “As a youth, and therefore someone on the front lines of climate change chaos, I have everything to gain from taking action and everything to lose from not.”

In Massachusetts, Judge Gordon [will hear oral arguments](#) on March 9 in a case brought by four young litigants who say that the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection is “failing to fulfill its legal obligations to reduce Massachusetts’ greenhouse gas emissions, as required by the Massachusetts Global Warming Solutions Act.”

Watch these videos from the iMatter campaign, an initiative of Kids vs. Global Warming and Our Children’s Trust to see what’s at stake for young people and how they are driving change.

<http://www.nationofchange.org/2015/02/25/teens-sue-government-failing-address-climate-change-future-generations/>

March 2015

Forum: The Climate Change Crisis

The Episcopal Church

The Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society presents **The Climate Change Crisis**, a 90-minute live webcast originating from Campbell Hall Episcopal School in North Hollywood, California, in partnership with Bishop J. Jon Bruno and the Diocese of Los Angeles.

The webcast begins March 24 at 11 a.m. Pacific time (12 p.m. Mountain/1 p.m. Central/2 p.m. Eastern/10 a.m. Alaska/9 a.m. Hawaii). Video will be available on-demand here following the live webcast.

The webcast is in support of [Mark 5](#) of the [Five Marks of Mission](#).

The Climate Change Crisis will feature Presiding Bishop Katharine Jefferts Schori delivering the keynote address followed by two panel discussions: *Regional Impacts of Climate Change* and *Reclaiming Climate Change as a Moral Issue*.

The panel discussions will be moderated by well-known climatologist Fritz Coleman of KNBC 4 news.

Panelists include:

- *Bishop Marc Andrus*, Bishop of the Diocese of California. Climate change has been a focus of his work as a bishop.
- *Princess Daazhrai Johnson*, former Executive Director of the Gwich'in Steering Committee, one of the oldest Indigenous non-profit groups in Alaska focused on protection of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. She currently serves on the SAG-AFTRA Native American Committee, the Dancing with the Spirit committee and is active in her community.
- *Dr. Lucy Jones*, seismologist with the US Geological Survey and a Visiting Research Associate at the Seismological Laboratory of Caltech since 1983. She currently serves as Science Advisor for Risk Reduction in the Natural Hazards Mission of the US Geological Survey.
- *Mary D. Nichols, J.D.*, Chairman of the California Air Resources Board. She is responsible for implementing California's landmark greenhouse gas emissions legislation as well as setting air pollution standards for motor vehicles, fuels and consumer products.

The Climate Change Crisis forum will kick off [30 Days of Action](#)—activities, advocacy and education that will culminate on Earth Day, April 22, 2015.

Watch the webcast at
<http://www.episcopalchurch.org/page/climate-change-crisis>

March 1, 2015

Faced with human aggressions, the Earth responds with flowers

By Leonardo Boff
Opinion Sur, N. 139

More than being in the center of a crisis of planetary proportions, today, we face a nonreversible process. The Earth will never be the same again. It has been transformed in its physical-chemical-biological base in such a profound way that it ended up losing its internal equilibrium. It entered a process of chaos, i.e., it lost its sustainability and affected the continuity of what has been doing through millennia: to produce and reproduce life.

Every chaos has two sides: one, destructive and, another one, creative. The destructive one represents the dismantling of one type of equilibrium and implies the erosion of part of the biodiversity and, at the edge, the reduction of the human species, that is produced either by the incapacity to adapt to the new situation or by being unable to mitigate the lethal effects. Finalized such purification process, chaos begins showing its generative face. It creates new orders, equilibrates the weathers, and lets surviving human beings build another type of civilization.

The Earth's history teaches us that she went through fifteen great destructions, like that of the cambric, 480 years ago, that destroyed 80-90% of the species. But as she is a generous mother, she slowly rebuilt life diversity.

Nowadays, the majority of the scientific community alerts us about an eventual collapse of the life-system that can threaten the own future of the human species. We can all perceive the changes that are occurring before our eyes. Great extreme effects: on the one side, prolonged summers associated with large water shortage that affect the ecosystems and the society as a whole, as it is happening in the South-Eastern part of our country (Brazil). In other parts of the planet, as in the United States, harsh winters not seen since tenths and even hundreds of years. The fact is that we have reached the physical limits of planet Earth. By forcing them as our consumerist and productivist voracity does, the Earth responds with hurricanes, tsunamis, devastating floods, earthquakes and an uncontrollable raise in global warming. If we were to increase the temperature by two degrees Celsius, the situation would still be manageable. But if we do not do our homework, by drastically reducing greenhouse gas emissions and we do not reorient our relationship with nature towards collective self-restraint and the respect of the supportable limits of each ecosystem, then it is foreseen that the weather might elevate between four and six degrees Celsius. Then, we will meet the "Great Tribulation", to use a biblical expression, and most of the life forms we know, even parts of the humanity, could not survive.

The renowned magazine Science has just published (January 15, 2015) a paper on planetary limits written by 18 scientists (*Planetary Boundaries: Guiding human development on a changing Planet*). They identified nine main dimensions for the continuity of life and our civilizing experiment. They are worth citing: (1) climate changes, (2) changes in the biosphere integrity with the erosion of the biodiversity and accelerated extinction of species, (3) diminishing of the stratospheric ozone layer that protects us from the lethal solar rays, (4) growing acidification of oceans, (5) disruptions in the biogeochemical flows, (6) changes in the use of soil such as growing deforestation and desertification, (7) threatening shortage of fresh water, (8) concentration of aerosols in the atmosphere (microscopic particles that affect the weather and living beings), (9) introduction of synthetic chemical agents, radioactive materials, and nanomaterials that threaten life. From these nine dimensions, the first four have already surpassed their limits and the rest are at a high level of degeneration. This systematic war against Gaia can lead to the collapse as it occurs with people.

Despite this dramatic scenario, I look around and watch in ecstasy the woods full of violet lent trees, yellow cassias, and at the corner of my block amaryllis belladonnas in blossom, toucans resting on the trees in front of my window and macaws nesting under my roof. Then, I realize that the Earth is a truly generous mother: faced with our aggressions, she still smiles with flora and fauna. And she instills us hope that this is not the apocalypse but rather a new genesis on its way. The Earth is still going to survive. As it is written in Jewish-Christian Scriptures: “God is the ruler lover of life” (Sab 11.26).

<http://opinionsur.org.ar/Faced-with-human-aggressions-the>

March 2, 2015

Christians pray and march together to urge that it is time to act on climate change

Operation Noah

The Christian environment charity, Operation Noah, will be hosting an ecumenical climate service before the ‘Time to Act’ national climate march this Saturday, 7 March, at [St Mary le Strand](#) Church, starting at 11.30am. As party leaders make pledges to tackle climate change ahead of the election in May, civil society – including the Christian community – is marching to demand action not words. They will be joined at the climate service by longstanding peace activist Scott Albrecht of the Catholic Worker Farm, who will share his insights into what we can learn from the Christian peace movement.

Scott has said, ‘The powerful are only beginning to accept the reality of climate change and still doing too little too late. We have a responsibility, given to humanity by the Creator, and that is to tend to the Earth like one would to one’s own Mother; for indeed it is. She has treated us with kindness for aeons: feeding us, clothing us and providing for our every need. We need to develop a relationship of mutuality, love and respect and nurse her back to health!’

Westley Ingram, one of the organisers of the service, adds, ‘The Church says it is the community devoted to changing its ways. What does it mean for the Christian community to act faithfully as we watch the devastation of God’s beloved creation? Since “Peace on Earth” must be our call for this election season, perhaps we can learn something from the example of the Christian peace movement.’

After the service, the congregation will join other faith groups to march through London as a multi-faith block.

Further details of the climate service can be found [here](#). For further information about the climate march see the [Time to Act](#) website.

<http://operationnoah.org/news-events/press-release-2-march-2015-christians-pray-march-together-urge-time-act-climate-change/>

March 3, 2015

Canadian government pushing First Nations to give up land rights for oil and gas profits

By Martin Lukacs
The Guardian

The Harper government is trying to win support for its pipelines and resource agenda by pushing First Nations to sideline their aboriginal rights in exchange for business opportunities, documents reveal.

The news that Canada’s Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs is working to this end by collaborating with the Assembly of First Nations (AFN) is sparking strong criticism from grassroots Indigenous people.

Funded by the federal government, the Working Group on Natural Resource Development held private meetings in Toronto and Edmonton in the fall of 2014 that were attended by several invited Chiefs and representatives from Enbridge, Syncrude and other oil corporations, as well as mining companies and business lobby groups.

In one email, a government official writes that it was “widely agreed” at the meetings that “unlocking resource development projects is squarely in the national interest,” a suggestion that will be contested by many First Nations involved in mounting protests against pipelines and other industrial projects around the country.

It was “noted repeatedly” that “we can no longer afford the investment uncertainty created by issues around Aboriginal participation,” the official writes. The transcripts of the meetings were redacted in the documents, which were obtained through access-to-information.

The documents cite \$600 billion of investment that the Harper government hopes will flow in the next decade into mining, forestry, gas and oil projects. As of March 2013, 94 of 105 projects under federal review were “located on reserve, within an historic treaty area, or in a settled or unsettled claims area”.

In response to these pressures, considerations for the groups’ mandate include “reducing uncertainty and investment risk” and “advancing business-to-business partnerships rather than through a rights-based agenda.”

The federal government has been criticized for trying to minimize or ignore the land rights of First Nations, including refusing to implement the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. It has been doing extensive risk evaluations, increasingly [worried](#) that the growing power of indigenous rights could hamper its aggressive resource extraction plans.

One document suggests that “case studies have shown that separating rights-based agenda (politics) from economic development (business) is key to wealth generation in First Nations communities.”

The case studies cited from “expert bodies” include a Fraser Institute report entitled “Opportunities for First Nations Prosperity Through Oil and Gas Development.” The right-wing think tank has been heavily funded by the American Koch brothers, who are one of the [largest owners](#), purchasers and refiners of the Alberta tar sands.

Also referenced is a report by envoy Douglas Eyford, whose appointment by Harper in late 2013 was seen as strategic shift to increasingly woo First Nations in the path of planned pipelines in British Columbia with an economic stake in resource plans. Eyford warned that the federal government’s failure to build good relationships with First Nations had set back the chances for their energy projects.

“Opposition to these projects by aboriginal groups may doom the development of oil, and natural gas pipelines and related infrastructure because neither industry nor our trading partners are prepared to idly stand by to wait out the results of judicial proceedings that can take a generation to complete,” Eyford [said](#) in a speech last year.

“The Harper government and resource corporations are keenly aware that Indigenous rights movements are standing in the way of their polluting, destructive projects,” said Clayton Thomas Mueller, Indigenous Extreme [Energy](#) Campaigner with 350.org. “Harper is desperately trying to manipulate the Assembly of First Nations and some of our Chiefs into sacrificing our rights and our lands at the altar of profit. But respect for our rights must be a basis for economic decision-making – indeed our rights offer a pathway to a more sustainable economic order for everyone in this country.”

The group was launched in December 2013, its creation among the pledges made by Prime Minister Harper at a January 2013 meeting with former National Chief Shawn Atleo, a meeting triggered by Theresa Spence’s hunger strike and the Idle No More movement.

It has two representatives from the Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs and two from the Assembly of First Nations, an organization which has been accused of being out of touch with grassroots Indigenous concerns. According to the documents, the representatives discussed renaming the group to “downplay” the connection between the Assembly of First Nations and the government and to make clear that it operates at “arms-length.”

The documents acknowledge that Indigenous community members are increasingly resisting those Chiefs who “try to establish and advance a “business to business” relationship with industry proponents.”

Included are detailed charts of economic opportunities that some First Nations located near oil and mining operations have been able to access.

The documents say that the group may propose that Canada’s largest corporate lobby, the Canadian Council of Chief Executives, be “engaged to champion a new approach including through formal statements at First Minister’s Meetings or major political events.”

Other suggestions include a “centre of expertise on resource development” and a national roundtable, emphasizing the need to get more aboriginal organizations involved.

The group is releasing a final report on Tuesday with recommendations to the federal government and the AFN.

The Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs was unable to respond to a request for comment.

<http://www.theguardian.com/environment/true-north/2015/mar/03/documents-harper-pushing-first-nations-to-shelve-rights-buy-into-resource-rush>

March 3, 2015

The Sacrament of Creation: What Can We Expect from Pope Francis’s Ecological Encyclical?

By Clive Hamilton
ABC Religion and Ethics

Pope Francis has made no secret of his conviction that human-induced climate change, along with other forms of environmental degradation, represents a grave threat to humanity's future.

At times he even speaks in [quasi-apocalyptic terms](#): "Let us not allow omens of destruction and death to accompany the advance of this world!"

His [forthcoming "ecological encyclical"](#) - expected around the middle of this year - is shaping up as a decisive intervention. We can surmise that he hopes it will help turn the world away from a path of self-destruction.

I want here to try to anticipate the message and the meaning of the encyclical by considering what appear to be the principal influences feeding into its preparation - namely, Francis's own public statements, previous encyclicals on the environment, the science as expressed by the Pontifical Academy of Science, the example of Saint Francis of Assisi and the eco-theology of Brazilian theologian Leonardo Boff.

The encyclical is anticipated with excitement by climate change campaigners and [dread](#) by some Catholic conservatives. But beyond the immediate political impact, a more enduring implication could lie in the theological shift it may represent.

In a [valuable contribution](#), Irish theologian Donal Dorr has shown that Francis's formal starting point will almost certainly be the encyclicals of [John Paul II](#) and [Benedict XVI](#).

After two decades of rising environmental concern around the world, John Paul's 1991 encyclical, *Centesimus annus*, can be read as designed to keep the Church relevant to the times. The core of the theological question is the relationship between humans and the natural world, and John Paul cleaved to theological tradition in representing nature as separate from man and to be used, albeit more prudently, as his instrument. Thus: "It is through work that man, using his intelligence and exercising his freedom, succeeds in dominating the earth and making it a fitting home."

Eighteen years later, in *Caritas in Veritate* Benedict shifted Church teaching more firmly in the direction of environmental protection while weakening the language of domination. In a pregnant turn of phrase, Benedict described the laws governing the natural world as a "grammar ... which sets forth ends and criteria for its wise use." He reaffirmed that the natural world is "God's gift" to humankind, and rejected the drift towards the "total technical domination over nature" that is manifest in practice and still defended by some theologians. Nevertheless, neutralizing any accusation of "neo-paganism," Benedict retained an essentially anthropocentric theology of man in nature that deprives the natural world of any value in itself.

[Donal Dorr](#) expresses the hope that Benedict's successor will initiate a theological conversion "situating us humans ... within the wider context of nature." In his public statements, Pope Francis has already raised the stakes considerably. [Catholics are](#) "called to care for creation not only as responsible citizens but as followers of Christ." And, perhaps revealing the inner motive behind the forthcoming encyclical, [he has said](#) that to protect creation is a service that "the Bishop of Rome is called to carry out."

In a [departure](#) from those conservatives who denounce the greens as the new pagans, Francis has affirmed that those who work to preserve creation are Christians, [adding in strong language](#): "A Christian who does not protect creation, who does not let it grow, is a Christian who does not care about the work of God."

Admittedly, the call to let creation "grow" rather than merely protect it, includes the idea of humans as builders and transformers and so marks out Francis's Catholic vision as incompatible with that of deep greens, for it endorses what the pontiff calls "a positive judgment about the

legitimacy of interventions on nature" (although he stresses that they must always be beneficial ones, performed responsibly).

The message of creation

Politically and theologically, Francis's starting point is always solidarity with the poor. If we examine his various statements on the environment, we find he consistently links ecological decline to the immiserisation of the poor and vulnerable, sometimes referring to the destruction of South American forests as an example.

For Francis, environmental preservation is linked directly to Catholic Social Teaching (CST), a link that makes his position less vulnerable to criticism from conservatives. Certainly, as the scientific evidence has mounted, the fundamental principles of CST - solidarity with the poor and vulnerable; the protection of the life and dignity of the human person - demand that the Church take a stronger position on the harms from anthropogenic climate change, which [promises to visit](#) widespread and long-lasting suffering on the world's poorest. There can be no economic justice without environmental justice.

Francis has several times stressed that nature is God's gift to humankind. In his ecological encyclical, he may well point out the obvious implications: those who exploit nature are spurning the most precious gift, and by exploiting nature for themselves they are depriving the poor of God's gift. Denying future generations the fruits of God's gift is surely a sin in any language.

I will suggest that, theologically, Francis seems to leading the Church towards a contemporary recovery of a pre-modern understanding of the creation. What, though, is he thinking of when he speaks of *creation*? What, exactly, are we called to protect?

Of course, a simple answer can be given in scientific terms. Yet when Francis speaks of creation as the common gift to humanity, "entrusted to our protection" and not our property to rule over, he is not speaking of the world in a *material* sense - that is, a collection of interdependent ecosystems and resources, although he sometimes seems to equate it with "nature." Creation is the place created by God for us to inhabit and which embodies His divine plan for us.

Yet there are many ways humans can dwell in their environment, and in the history of Christianity there are precedents for overturning the idea of separation from nature and domination over it. As [Giovanni Monastra](#) shows, the idea of domination came into Christian dogma not from the Old Testament but at the threshold of modernity in the Renaissance. As Europeans acquired the power to manipulate and control nature, they looked for a warrant to do so in their sacred texts.

In [Caritas in Veritate](#), Benedict did stress that we should not think of the natural world in purely "naturalistic" - that is, scientific - terms, for creation has an "intrinsic balance." This idea is not so much the ecological one of the environment as a fragile balance of the forces of nature, but imagines nature as invested with a teleological purpose, as essential to God's plan for humanity. And yet the two exist together, as the outer dimension and the inner dimension. By disturbing the

ecological balance we upset God's plan, we deny Him his purpose of making a habitable place in which humans, His chosen creatures, may flourish.

Is there room in such a theology for allotting any *intrinsic* value to animals or other element of the natural world? For his part, Benedict gave three kinds of reason for protecting the environment, each of which was human-centred: destroying the environment causes suffering for the poor and powerless and harms the prospects of future generations; harming the environment shows disrespect for the creation whose purpose is to serve human ends; and, exploitative attitudes to the natural environment reflect and spill over into exploitative attitudes to other humans.

However, judging by several of his public utterances and his deep admiration for Saint Francis, it may be that Pope Francis is tempted to go significantly further than Benedict, and introduce a theological break by both situating humans within nature and ascribing to nature an uncontrollable, autonomous and even divinely-infused dimension. Consider these comments:

- Francis [adopts Benedict's emphasis](#) on the "grammar" inscribed in nature and the idea that interventions in nature are legitimate if they are meant to "be beneficial and are performed responsibly" so that the environment is used wisely for the benefit of all. Yet he hints that humans must abide by the grammar in the sense of living within ecological limits and respecting natural laws. These injunctions are undoubtedly reinforced by those around him in the Pontifical Academy of Science.
- In a remarkable statement, Francis said, "God sometimes forgives, but when mistreated nature never forgives." If accepted, this thought would represent the deathblow for all understandings of dominion as domination. For Francis is saying that, far from being a passive domain in which man asserts his mastery, nature has her own agenda, is more powerful than man and will punish us if we push her too far. It is a view of nature consistent with the emerging understanding of Earth system science and captured by eminent palaeoclimatologist [Wallace Broecker](#): "The palaeoclimate record shouts out to us that, far from being self-stabilizing, the Earth's climate system is an ornery beast which overreacts even to small nudges."
- In his [message for the 2014 World Day of Peace](#), Francis called on all people to respect not just the usefulness of every living thing but its "beauty" and "finality" - descriptors loaded with theological meaning and suggesting some intrinsic value to non-human life that departs from the more utilitarian attitudes of his predecessors.
- In a radical break from all theology consistent with nature's disenchantment - that is, theologies that view nature in purely secular terms, with God displaced from the earth to another realm - Francis may be reintroducing a theology of God's being-in-the-world. He decries the loss of an attitude of wonder towards nature in favour of an instrumentalist one. He [laments](#) that we are no longer "listening to creation," implying that nature has a message for us. More strikingly, [he writes](#): "Thanks to our bodies, God has joined us so closely to the world around us that we can feel the desertification of the soil almost as a physical ailment, and the extinction of species as a painful disfigurement."

This last is, of course, the essence of the message of Saint Francis of Assisi. Indeed, behind the pope's various declarations one can detect the spirit of the saint in homage to whom the new

pontiff chose his name. So what could he have derived from Saint Francis that may provide clues to the forthcoming encyclical?

The spirit of Saint Francis

Saint Francis is remembered for the simplicity and loving-kindness of his life rather than for theological disquisitions. He was renowned for speaking of animals as his brothers and sisters, arising out of intense spiritual experiences of oneness with all creation. In his divine *Canticle of the Sun*, he famously wrote of Brother Sun and Sister Moon, and of "our sister Mother Earth, who feeds us and rules us."

It would be easy to interpret these familial passions as no more than poetic license, but a view [more consistent with his life and words](#) is that Saint Francis saw divine perfection in all created things, in stones as well as birds and trees. As all things are created by the one Father, reasoned Francis, they are brothers and sisters in a real sense. His theology was thus "horizontal" rather than hierarchical; instead of the divine order moving down from God on high to man to ever more lowly creatures, God's investment in nature displaces belief in His remote sovereignty from above.

Yet Saint Francis says here something even more striking, one that breaks from the tendencies of much Catholic theology. In writing that Mother Earth "rules over us," he diverges from all notions of human dominion over Earth, wherever the notion may fall on the spectrum from full mastery to the most respectful stewardship. For here Saint Francis tells us that Mother Earth rules over us, not merely because we depend on her for sustenance, but because it is in the order of things - the order created by God.

In intimating that God as Father and Creator is in all things, Saint Francis adopts a kind of incipient pantheism. "Everything in God, God in everything." God does more than overlook His Creation; He revealed Himself in it from the outset and shines forth from it - that is why one can *experience* God directly and overwhelmingly in nature, as many Christians have attested.

Chiding humankind who "continuously slaps down nature," Pope Francis recently [channelled his namesake in lamenting](#) how we lord it "over Sister Earth, over Mother Earth." So could Pope Francis bring a "Franciscan" revolution to Catholic theology? If there are definite hints in his public statements to date, it would be another thing to enshrine them in an encyclical. So how far might he go?

The trend in official Vatican thinking is away from the view, adhered to by many conservative Catholics and Protestants, that God and humans must be placed at the centre of the physical world, so that, in the [blunt words of one](#): "only God and human persons are ends in themselves. God gives us nature to serve man, not man to serve nature." However, the shift from domination to stewardship and an obligation to care for the Earth is now entrenched in the Church's teaching, and can be justified by various readings of the scriptures.

While Francis appears to view nature as intrinsically valuable, with its own path that resists any attempt at total human mastery, and which is invested with some kind of divine spirit, he has

never gone so far as to say that the Earth is *sacred*. He is unlikely to do so for both theological and political reasons. Politically, it would provoke conservatives, opening him up to accusations (however unfounded) of neo-paganism.

Theologically, there is a subtle but decisive difference between pantheism and the Catholic view of creation to which Francis cleaves. As God's creation the natural world is not God; it is the other. Yet He is invested in it. God's transcendence is not remoteness from creation but familiarity and intimacy with it. By implication it has a *telos*, and that *telos* is to provide "the setting for our life" - the conditions in which humans may live and flourish.

Moreover, that *telos* means that God respects the created order, allowing it to grow and evolve according to its own "grammar" and nature. The unbridgeable gap between a secular natural world and sacred human life is now an anachronism. The bridges have been built.

So if the Earth is not sacred, one can nevertheless see Francis moving towards a position in which the Earth becomes *sacramental*, indicative of God's presence and a channel for His grace. Such a theology finds explicit development in theologians after Saint Francis, particularly the Franciscan Bonaventure (1221-1274).

For Bonaventure, "the created world is a kind of book reflecting, representing, and describing its Maker." In her excellent commentary, [Ilia Delio](#) explains that, for Bonaventure, the world is the external expression of God so that "we know the Word of God through the world ... All of creation ... in some way reflects the power, wisdom, and goodness of the Trinity. God shines forth through creation ..."

The sin of exploitation

On [several occasions](#), Pope Francis has spoken of the contrast between the way humans are greedily exploiting the environment and the imperative for us to act towards it responsibly - that is, in a way that protects the interests of the poor and future generations and respects the integrity of the natural world as a whole.

As one would expect from a Latin American bishop with radical social doctrines, economic development is essential to draw people out of poverty and so Francis says our duty is not only to protect creation but also to improve it. We are not put on Earth merely to live with nature, but to transform it. Here he identifies with a particular kind of environmentalism - pale green rather than deep green - and avoids some of the more ideologically charged criticism he is likely to encounter from conservatives.

So the essence of his message, and the heart of the forthcoming encyclical, will be *how* we transform nature, whether we exploit it greedily or care for it responsibly. He calls for a [new model of development](#), one that "knows how to respect creation" in place of the growth-at-any-cost mentality used to justify the wholesale degradation of the natural world.

Whereas deep greens might stumble if asked from where our responsibility to protect the Earth comes, for Francis there is no doubt. If the natural world is God's gift to us, then to "nurture the

Earth [is] to nurture creation." Thus environmental protection becomes not a self-interested act nor even a moral duty, but a divine calling. Degrading the Earth is, [he declares](#), a sin: "This is our sin, exploiting the Earth and not allowing her to give us what she has within her."

What about population growth?

If Francis's encyclical calls on humankind to tread more lightly on the earth, it will be met with the objection that his appeal would carry more weight if he acknowledged the way population growth adds pressure on the environment.

The [facts are clear](#). The growth in greenhouse gas emissions is driven by the combined effect of economic growth per person and population growth, and is offset by improvements in energy efficiency and shifts from high- to low-emissions energy sources. Continued population growth could, however, undermine all efforts to reduce emissions, sending the world beyond a tipping point into catastrophic warming, with massive ecological devastation and loss of human life.

The pope's scientific advisers understand these facts. We know he takes expert advice seriously and so he is conflicted on the question because his commitment to the Church's long-held prohibition on contraception seems firm.

There are signs, however, that he may believe there is a way out of the trap. In January 2015 he caused a stir by saying that good Roman Catholics do not need to ["breed like rabbits"](#) and should practice "responsible parenting." Drawing on the authority of "population experts" he advised Catholic families to limit the number of their children to three. So the big Catholic family no longer has papal endorsement.

To add force to this position, he spoke of how he had chided a woman for "irresponsibly" falling pregnant after she had already had seven children by caesarean section. He seemed to be saying that if some pregnancies cannot be justified medically, other pregnancies cannot be justified environmentally.

If Pope Francis is not going to lift the ban on artificial forms of contraception, he is urging Catholics to use natural ones more effectively. Perhaps he is hinting that Catholics who do not abide by the ban on artificial contraception (most of them) may now feel less guilty about it. At any rate, the most important test will be whether the Church eases up on its efforts to block the spread of family planning around the world, in the same way that Francis has attempted to [soften the Church's hard line on same-sex relationships](#).

The temptation of geoengineering

Pope Francis is said to be [corresponding with Leonardo Boff](#), asking to see all of his writings on eco-theology. The former Brazilian Franciscan priest was in 1992 forced to leave the Church for his liberation theology activism. (Ironically, he was forced out by Cardinal Ratzinger, who had been Boff's doctoral supervisor in Germany.) In books published in the 1990s Boff began to locate liberation theology within a wider ecological context. Those who oppress the poor are those who exploit nature, and for the same reason, he wrote.

The title of his 1997 book, [Cry of the Earth, Cry of the Poor](#), reflected the close connection between social justice with environmental protection, a link often made by Pope Francis and certain to feature in the encyclical. Like the new pope, Boff was deeply influenced by Saint Francis whom he called "the purest figure of Western history." Boff has argued for a radical Christian eco-theology representing a return to a pre-Cartesian reverence for the Earth, a living world created by the Father as home for all things. For him, ecological destruction is a sin.

[Boff sees the world today](#) as dominated by a "vast scientific-technological apparatus" that contains a compulsion to turn always to the technological on the principle that "if we can do it, we must do it." It is a mentality in which we define ourselves in opposition to nature and that inevitably gives rise to its exploitation.

The belief that the system instinctively responds to problems with more technology instead of a change in orientation raises another issue that Francis may need to grapple with in his ecological encyclical: *geoengineering*. Sometimes known as Plan B - to differentiate it from the Plan A of cutting greenhouse gas emissions - geoengineering covers a number of technologies designed to counter global warming or offset some of its effects.

While some approaches are relatively benign, the scheme attracting most interest involves spraying the upper atmosphere with a layer of sulphate particles in order to reduce the amount of solar radiation reaching the Earth. The particle shield would mimic the global cooling effect of large volcanic eruptions. Some climate scientists are so alarmed by the unfolding climatic consequences of the world's failure to reduce carbon emissions that they expect this kind of planetary intervention, with all of its perils, to be almost inevitable within the next few decades.

As I have written [elsewhere](#), for some, instead of global warming being proof of human failure, engineering the climate would represent the triumph of human ingenuity. While climate change threatens to destabilize the system of exploitation, geoengineering promises to protect it. It would not only entrench the prevailing idea of man's domination of nature but radically extend it.

There could be no more vivid illustration of Boff's "vast scientific-technological apparatus" turning to technology to escape a social conundrum than the proposal for humans to take control of and regulate the Earth's climate system, probably in perpetuity. Controlling the climate would be an expression of human mastery consistent with the most hubristic reading of Genesis and its call to "have dominion."

Pope Francis would be expected to see this kind of geoengineering as an abdication of our responsibility to care for creation - even as an invitation to an "unforgiving" nature to take revenge on us. Indeed, he may see it as humankind attempting to play God, thereby tempting fate.

How much difference will Francis's ecological encyclical make? Daniel DiLeo has written a [helpful essay on the question of the authority of papal encyclicals](#) and the interpretation of the one due soon. It is a murky doctrinal area but, noting the passionate rejection of climate science

by some conservatives in the Church, DiLeo concludes: "Catholics will only be able to disagree with him in good conscience after serious reflection and the determination that the pope has reasoned incorrectly." That is a low hurdle for deniers of climate science, some of whom have rejected the encyclical already.

But what will it mean for the majority of the world's 1.2 billion people who call themselves Roman Catholics? Despite today's widespread disinclination to view the official pronouncements of the Vicar of Christ as infallible, and despite even the resistance of conservative bishops and laity, the pontiff's words still carry considerable authority, and the weight attached to the office can be augmented by the personal qualities of its occupant.

As a much-loved pope, Francis has influence, not least among the bishops [many of whom are hoping](#) the Vatican will take a stronger stance on climate change. Ironically, on becoming Bishop of Rome [Francis set about denouncing the dangers of authoritarian leadership](#) and reforming the entrenched curial culture of the Vatican, yet his humility as the "people's pope" is likely to lend his exhortations in the ecological encyclical more authority rather than less.

While Francis seems to be absorbing Leonardo Boff's eco-theology, we can be sure that his encyclical will pull back theologically from the radicalized Franciscan vision to which Boff tends, one in which God is present in the world in the form of the "energy" that is the Holy Spirit. What remains to be seen though is how much Francis himself has been gripped by the [apocalyptic anxiety in Boff's writing](#): "We are on a fast moving train headed towards an encounter with the abyss ahead, and we do not know how to stop it." It is a vision that would be endorsed by most climate scientists, including the [Pontifical Academy of Sciences](#): "If current trends continue, this century will witness unprecedented climate changes and ecosystem destruction that will severely impact us all."

If humans and their institutions are unwilling to do what is needed to avoid catastrophe, where can those who see the looming danger turn? [Boff turns to Martin Heidegger](#) and his startling prophecy, "Only a God can save us." If modern humans have driven God from the natural world and then trashed it, will He be inclined to appear as our saviour? Between the lines of Francis's encyclical, will he be asking us to prepare ourselves for the appearance of the saviour while at the same time bracing ourselves for the end if He declines?

Clive Hamilton is Professor of Public Ethics at the [Centre for Applied Philosophy and Public Ethics](#), Charles Sturt University, Canberra. His most recent book is [Earthmasters: The Dawn of the Age of Climate Engineering](#). He wishes to acknowledge his debt to Canon Scott Cowdell for his advice and comments, as well as to the Right Reverend Stephen Pickard and Professor Wayne Hudson for their helpful discussions.

<http://www.abc.net.au/religion/articles/2015/03/03/4190521.htm>

March 6, 2015

Papal envoy to UN: Climate change 'an issue of justice for everyone'

By Brian Roewe
National Catholic Reporter

Addressing climate change is “an issue of justice for everyone” and one requiring global cooperation, the Vatican envoy to the United Nations told the international body Friday.

“No one is exempt from either the impacts of climate change or our moral responsibility to act in solidarity with one another to address this global concern,” said Archbishop Silvano Tomasi, the Holy See’s permanent observer to the United Nations in Geneva.

Tomasi’s comments came during the 28th session of the Human Rights Council, during a full-day discussion on human rights and climate change.

“Solidarity with the most vulnerable nations and peoples that are experiencing the impact of climate change in a more prominent and immediate way impels us to contribute to improving their situation and defending their right to development.

“Poverty and climate change are now intimately linked,” he said.

The connection between poverty and climate change was also made by Administrator Gina McCarthy of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency [during her January meeting](#) with Vatican officials, as did the [fifth assessment report](#) from the U.N. Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change.

The archbishop cited statistics that estimate 600 million people will face malnutrition as a result of climate change, with particularly high rates in South Asia and sub-Saharan Africa. In addition, he said that the estimated 1 billion people worldwide living in urban slums, fragile hillsides and flood-prone river banks -- all areas vulnerable rising sea levels and storm surges -- have “the human right to adequate housing.”

Tomasi’s address comes as the latest strong statement from the Vatican on the issue of climate change. Pope Francis has stated he has timed the release of his encyclical on the environment, which will likely address climate change, so it can be discussed before the next round of U.N. climate negotiations, scheduled for December in Paris.

"There was a lack of courage," the pope [told journalists in January](#) of the negotiations in Lima, Peru. "Let’s hope that in Paris, they are more courageous."

The encyclical is expected to be released in June or July.

Tomasi described the Paris climate talks as offering “a significant opportunity to make two ethical decisions”: first, for all nations to commit to curbing carbon emissions at the minimum level “to avoid dangerous anthropogenic interference with the climate system,” and second, for them to fund adaptation measures, such as the Green Climate Fund, in order to assist nations and people facing the greatest dangers.

“While science continues to research the full implications of climate change, the virtue of prudence calls us to take the responsibility to act to reduce the potential damages, particularly for those individuals who live in poverty, for those who live in very vulnerable climate impact areas, and for future generations,” he said.

The first deadline for countries to submit their individual carbon-cutting plans -- a result of the Lima Accord [reached last December](#), and fueled by pledges made before international negotiations by the U.S., China and the European Union -- comes in March. A second follows in June.

Together, those commitments will serve as the basis for a potential internationally binding agreement to address climate change for world leaders to sign in Paris.

In his speech, Tomasi stressed that the new agreement include binding measures and that it rest on the idea that “climate change is, in fact, an issue of justice for everyone.”

“Both developed and developing countries have a responsibility to protect: they constitute the one human family of this earth with an equal mandate to manage and protect creation in a responsible manner to ensure that also our future generations find a world that allows them to flourish,” he said.

[Brian Roewe is an *NCR* staff writer. Follow him on Twitter: [@BrianRoewe](#).]

Editor's note: Want more stories from Eco Catholic? We can send you an email alert once a week with the latest. Just go to this page and follow directions: [Email alert sign-up](#).

<http://ncronline.org/blogs/eco-catholic/papal-envoy-un-climate-change-issue-justice-everyone>

March 6, 2015

Cardinal Turkson sheds light on Pope Francis's environmental encyclical

By Bob Gronski
Catholic Rural Life

On March 5 at Saint Patrick's Pontifical University in Maynooth, Ireland, Cardinal Peter Turkson [spoke at length](#) about Pope Francis's intention this year to publish an encyclical letter on human ecology. The Vatican has made clear that global inequality and the destruction of the environment are interrelated.

Cardinal Turkson is President of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace and was invited to deliver the Trócaire 2015 Lenten Lecture. [Trócaire](#) is the overseas aid agency of the Irish Catholic Bishops' Conference, and their focus for Lent this year is the growing problem of drought as a result of climate change.

Cardinal Turkson stressed the idea of “integral ecology” — the intertwining of social development, concern for the poor, and responsibility for the environment.

“Pope Francis intends to publish an encyclical letter later this year on the theme of human ecology,” Cardinal Turkson said. “It will explore the relationship between care for creation, integral human development and concern for the poor.”

Cardinal Turkson went on to say that the timing of the encyclical is significant because “2015 is a critical year for humanity.” Later this year, the U.N. General Assembly is expected to agree on a new set of sustainable development goals running until 2030.

In December, the Climate Change Conference in Paris will receive the plans and commitments of each Government to slow or reduce global warming. “The coming 10 months are crucial, then, for decisions about international development, human flourishing and care for the common home we call planet Earth,” Cardinal Turkson said.

In the evening lecture at Saint Patrick’s Pontifical University in Maynooth, just west of Dublin, Cardinal Turkson focused on four principles related to integral ecology. He described these in detail as reflected in the ministry and teaching of Pope Francis. The basic principles are:

1. The call (to all people) to be protectors is integral and all-embracing.
2. The care for creation is a virtue in its own right.
3. It is necessary to care for what we cherish and revere.
4. A new global solidarity is a key value to direct our search for the common good.

On this last principle, Cardinal Turkson explained that everyone has a part to play, no matter how small, in order to make the changes needed. These actions reach to the fundamental pillars that govern a nation, he said: “life, family, integral education, health, including the spiritual dimension of well-being, and security.”

In responding to the threats that arise from global inequality and the destruction of the environment, Cardinal Turkson reiterated that every action counts. “We all have a part to play in protecting and sustaining what Pope Francis has repeatedly called our common home.”

An integral approach to ecology, he said, is not limited to scientific, economic or technical solutions.

“At the heart of this integral ecology is the call to dialogue and a new solidarity, a changing of human hearts in which the good of the human person, and not the pursuit of profit, is the key value that directs our search for the global, the universal common good.”

Early on in lecture, Cardinal Turkson spoke of mercy.

Misericordia in Latin, or *trócaire* in Irish or mercy in English: this has become a keyword in the ministry of Pope Francis. As in the Scriptures, Pope Francis often associates mercy and tenderness. Indeed, in his Apostolic Exhortation, *Evangelii Gaudium*, he appeals to all of us to bring about a ‘revolution of tenderness’, a revolution of the heart. For ‘there is no longer room for others, no place for the poor’ when our interior life becomes caught up in its own interests, or when our national life and economy become caught up in their own interests.

At the conclusion of his address, Cardinal Turkson said it plainly: “Let us become artisans of the revolution of tenderness.”

Catholic Rural Life is working closely with Cardinal Turkson and the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace to incorporate the Church’s teachings on “human ecology” into a faith-based approach to agriculture. This project, entitled *Faith, Food & the Environment: The Vocation of the Agricultural Leader*, continues to unfold, with an international gathering taking place in Milan in June 2015. Cardinal Turkson is expected to be in attendance.

To learn more about the *Faith, Food & the Environment* project, [please visit the dedicated website.](#)

<https://catholicrurallife.org/cardinal-turkson-sheds-light-on-pope-franciss-environmental-encyclical/>

March 7, 2015

The Environment’s Pope

By John L. Allen Jr.
Time

Francis is making the environment a top concern and speaking out against the ‘sin’ of ‘exploiting the Earth’

This month marks the second anniversary of Pope Francis’ election. The following is taken from [THE FRANCIS MIRACLE: Inside the Transformation of the Pope and the Church](#) by John L. Allen Jr.

It was probably inevitable that the first pope named Francis—inspired by a saint who preached to birds and gave pet names to the sun and the moon—has turned out to be a strong environmentalist. In fact, Francis has said that concern for the environment is a defining Christian virtue. (The young Jorge Bergoglio trained as a chemist, so he has a foundation to appreciate the scientific issues involved.) This element of the social gospel bubbled to the surface as early as his inaugural mass, when Francis issued a plea to “let us be ‘protectors’ of creation, protectors of God’s plan inscribed in nature, protectors of one another and of the environment.”

St. Francis's imprint on this pope is clearly strong. In unscripted comments during a meeting with the president of Ecuador in April 2013, he said, "Take good care of creation. St. Francis wanted that. People occasionally forgive, but nature never does. If we don't take care of the environment, there's no way of getting around it."

The two previous popes were also environmentalists. The mountain-climbing, kayaking John Paul II was a strong apostle for ecology, once issuing an almost apocalyptic warning that humans "must finally stop before the abyss" and take better care of nature. Benedict XVI's ecological streak was so strong that he earned a reputation as "the Green Pope" because of his repeated calls for stronger environmental protection, as well as gestures such as installing solar panels atop a Vatican audience hall and signing an agreement to make the Vatican Europe's first carbon-neutral state.

Francis is carrying that tradition forward. Among other things, he told French President François Hollande during a January 2014 meeting that he is working on an encyclical on the environment. (An encyclical is considered the most developed and authoritative form of papal teaching.) The Vatican has since confirmed that Francis indeed intends to deliver the first encyclical ever devoted entirely to environmental issues.

In a July 2014 talk at the Italian university of Molise, Francis described harm to the environment as "one of the greatest challenges of our times." It's a challenge, he said, that's theological as well as political in nature. "I look at . . . so many forests, all cut, that have become land . . . that can [no] longer give life," the pope continued, citing South American woodlands in particular. "This is our sin, exploiting the Earth. . . . This is one of the greatest challenges of our time: to convert ourselves to a type of development that knows how to respect creation."

Not so long ago, the idea of Catholic environmentalism would have struck some as a contradiction in terms. In the 1960s and 1970s, it was fashionable among pioneers of the environmental movement to fault the entire Judeo-Christian tradition for humanity's savage indifference to the earth. Lynn White, Jr., of the University of California published an influential article in the journal *Science* in 1967 in which he blamed the Bible for making Westerners feel "superior to nature, contemptuous of it, willing to use it for our slightest whim." While acknowledging contrary currents in Christian history such as St. Francis, White nonetheless ended with a sweeping indictment: "We shall continue to have a worsening ecological crisis until we reject the Christian axiom that nature has no reason for existence save to serve man."

Today things are virtually upside down, with Pope Francis seen as an important environmental advocate. Writing in *The Atlantic Monthly*, Tara Isabella Burton praised Francis for "publicly—with the dizzying reach granted to a man in his position—emphasizing an understanding of nature that, in contrast to the combative dichotomy so prevalent in mainstream politico-religious discourse, is intrinsically positive in its treatment of the physical world." Burton called the pope's vision one "that is, radically and profoundly, pro-life." Burton's reference to "pro-life" connotes that Francis is leading Catholics to view environmental concern as part and parcel of what it means to foster a "culture of life," and therefore of equivalent importance as resisting abortion and gay marriage.

In the argot of contemporary environmental thinkers, if Benedict XVI was the Green Pope, then Francis may be remembered as the “Dark Green Pope”—a figure who intensifies the Church’s commitment to the environment by linking it to the corrosive effects of consumerism and runaway global capitalism. Before Francis arrived on the scene, the American political theorist Jeremy Rifkin forecast that issues such as GMOs and climate change would dissolve the old left-right divisions, creating a new “biopolitics” in which defenders of nature on the left and defenders of human life on the right would find themselves allies, standing against a 21st-century hyper-industrialism that sees everything, including nature and organic life, as a commodity. Francis, the pope of the social gospel, could develop into the leader who makes Rifkin’s prediction come true.

Excerpted from [THE FRANCIS MIRACLE: Inside the Transformation of the Pope and the Church](#) by John L. Allen Jr., published by TIME Books, an imprint of Time Home Entertainment Inc.

<http://time.com/3729925/francis-environment/>

March 10, 2015

Turkson talks papal encyclical, 'integral ecology' at Irish lecture

By Brian Roewe
National Catholic Reporter

Offering a possible glimpse into the upcoming papal encyclical on ecology, a top Vatican official stated that disagreements over the cause of climate change do not preclude the need for action, and that religion plays a vital role in bringing about meaningful and lasting solutions.

Cardinal Peter Turkson, president of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, spoke Thursday at St. Patrick’s Pontifical University in Maynooth, Ireland, [at a Lenten lecture for Trócaire](#), the overseas aid agency of the Irish Bishops’ Conference. The conference has made the growing problem of drought due to climate change its Lenten theme.

The Ghanaian cardinal began by addressing the idea of *trócaire* (“mercy”), described as a keyword of Pope Francis’ ministry, and ended by calling for all to “become artisans of the revolution of tenderness,” in a move toward a new global solidarity among all people.

Global inequality and the destruction of the environment “are the greatest threats we face as a human family today,” he said.

As for the encyclical, expected to be released in June or July, Turkson said it would explore the relationship among care for creation, integral human development and concern for the poor -- what he described as “integral ecology.” According to Catholic News Service, the cardinal -- who provided the pope a first draft of the teaching document in August -- added that many

people continue to work on it, and that it would be a “sciocchezza” (foolishness) to guess at what it might say.

The encyclical’s timing, Turkson said, was significant, in that 2015 is “a critical year for humanity.”

In addition to the United Nations climate change conference in Paris in December -- where world leaders could sign a binding agreement toward reducing global greenhouse gas emissions -- he listed as key events the Third International Conference on Financing for Development in July in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, and the U.N. General Assembly’s meeting in September, where they are expected to agree to a new set of sustainable development goals that would carry into 2030.

“The coming 10 months are crucial, then, for decisions about international development, human flourishing and care for the common home we call planet Earth,” he said.

Turkson said the pope “has echoed the sense of crisis that many in the scientific and development communities convey” about the state of the planet and the poor. What Francis seeks to contribute, he said, is the “warmth of hope ... in the midst of those he has called the ‘Herods,’ the ‘omens of destruction and death’ that so often ‘accompany the advance of this world.’”

The cardinal outlined four themes of the pope’s teachings on integral ecology:

- The call to be protectors is integral and all-embracing
- Care for creation and humanity are virtues in their own right
- We will -- we must -- care for what we cherish and revere
- A need for dialogue and “a new global solidarity,” where all have a part to play

“We are called to protect and care for both creation and the human person,” he said in describing the first principle. “These concepts are reciprocal and, together, they make for authentic and sustainable human development.”

Turkson pointed out that Francis moved the protection of creation “to the very forefront of his own ministry and the vocation of every Christian” in addressing the issue as [part of his inaugural Mass](#), celebrated on the feast of St. Joseph (March 19). On that day two years ago, the pope outlined the vocation of the protector, saying it requires the care of the earth and all creatures, in addition to showing loving concern for all people, especially children, the elderly and those in need.

“Clearly this is not some narrow agenda for the greening [of] the Church or the world. It is a vision of care and protection that embraces the human person and the human environment in all possible dimensions,” Turkson said.

When Francis has described environmental destruction as a grave sin, or criticized an economy that kills and places money ahead of people, Turkson said that “he is not making some political comment about the relative merits of capitalism and communism. He is rather restating ancient Biblical teaching.”

“He is pointing to the fact that being a protector of creation, of the poor, of the dignity of every human person is a *sine qua non* of being Christian, of being fully human. He is pointing to the ominous signs in nature that suggest that humanity may now have *tilled* too much and *kept* too little, that our relationship with the Creator, with our neighbour, especially the poor, and with the environment has become fundamentally “un-kept,” and that we are now at serious risk of a concomitant human, environmental and relational degradation,” Turkson said.

On climate change, the cardinal acknowledged debate exists about its origins, despite consensus among the majority of scientists within the U.N. Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change that human activity has played a primary role.

“Is it the outcome of cyclical processes of nature, of human activities (anthropogenic), or perhaps both? What is not contested is that our planet is getting warmer,” he said before describing the latest U.N. climate change report “as stark as it was challenging.”

“For Pope Francis, however, this is not the point. For the Christian, to care for God’s ongoing work of creation is a duty, irrespective of the causes of climate change. To care for creation, to develop and live an integral ecology as the basis for development and peace in the world, is a fundamental Christian duty,” he said.

While binding regulations to address climate change and poverty are necessary, they will likely fail “without moral conversion and a change of heart,” said Turkson. He noted that the Millennium Development Goals have come up short, with more than 1 billion people still living in extreme poverty, while the wealth held by the world’s richest has continued to grow. At the same time, international efforts to reduce carbon emissions has so far not slowed their growth, while deforestation, species extinction and water sources continue as challenges.

“Certainly international agreements are important, they can help. But they are not enough in themselves to sustain change in human behavior,” Turkson said.

The cardinal pointed to St. Francis of Assisi’s reverence for the world and Pope John Paul II’s idea of “ecological conversion” as important contributions to sustainable development discussions. Leaving faith outside such conversation, he said, “undermines a vital and powerful source of meaning and action in the common effort to address both climate change and sustainable development.”

“Giving space to the religious voice and to its ancient experience, wisdom and insight therefore can transform our attitudes to creation and to others in a way that purely scientific, economic or political approaches are less likely to achieve.

“What more radical and comprehensive charter for sustainable development and environmental care do we have after all than the Beatitudes, than the call to generosity that permeates *Evangelii Gaudium*: the command to go the extra mile, to give to the least, to give our tunic as well as our cloak to the one who asks us,” he said.

[Brian Roewe is an *NCR* staff writer. His email address is broewe@ncronline.org. Follow him on Twitter: [@BrianRoewe](https://twitter.com/BrianRoewe).]

Editor's note: Want more stories from Eco Catholic? We can send you an email alert once a week with the latest. Just go to this page and follow directions: [Email alert sign-up](#).

<http://ncronline.org/blogs/eco-catholic/turkson-talks-papal-encyclical-integral-ecology-irish-lecture>

March 11, 2015

Hispanics Lead U.S. Catholics on Climate Change

By Katie Rose Quandt
Commonweal

A 'Moral Duty' to Preserve the Planet

“A Christian who does not protect creation, who does not let it grow, is a Christian who does not care about the work of God.”

Pope Francis made this [call to care for the earth](#) in a homily early last month. In December, he made an even stronger appeal for environmental action. “There is a clear, definitive and ineluctable ethical imperative to act,” he wrote in a message for the [U.N. Convention on Climate Change](#). “The consequences of environmental changes...remind us of the gravity of negligence and inaction.”

Francis, whose much-anticipated encyclical on the environment will be released before this year’s [U.N. climate change conference](#) in Paris, isn’t alone in viewing faith and environmental justice as inherently linked. In a [study](#) last November, the Public Religion Research Institute (PRRI) found that 73 percent of Hispanic Catholics in the United States are “very” or “somewhat” concerned about climate change, higher than any other religious/ethnic group in the study’s breakdown.

Such high levels of climate awareness do not extend to all American Catholics, however: Just 41 percent of white Catholics report climate change concern, lower than every religious group but Evangelical Christians. Is indifference consistent with church teaching? “The Catholic teaching on care for creation goes back to Genesis,” says Dan Misleh, executive director of the Catholic Climate Covenant, citing St. Francis and St. Thomas Aquinas, and the three most recent popes, as environmental advocates.

Misleh’s organization coordinates the Catholic Coalition on Climate Change, a network of thirteen [organizations](#) [.pdf] that includes the United States Council of Catholic Bishops (USCCB). The coalition teaches that [all seven principles](#) [.pdf] of Catholic social teaching support and inform a mindset of climate concern and activism.

“Catholic perspectives are distinct from that of other major stakeholders in this debate,” the [coalition states](#). “*An authentically Catholic* response to climate change must be about both the care of creation and protection of those most vulnerable to climate impacts.”

Perceived vulnerability to the impact of climate change may explain the level of concern expressed by Latinos. Close to half (43 percent) of Hispanic Catholics—higher than any other religious group—told PRRI they expect to experience personal, substantial harm from climate change. Only 13 percent of white Catholics said the same.

“Many Latinos work in construction jobs and agriculture, where air quality and heat are really big factors,” says Adrianna Quintero, executive director of Latino environmental advocacy group Voces Verdes. “When it comes to agriculture, they’re more exposed to pesticides and air pollutants.... You also have drought, which is a direct way that impacts whether or not they’re able to work.”

Studies show American Latinos are disproportionately exposed to air pollution and human-caused environmental damage. Hispanic children are [40 percent more likely](#) to die from asthma than non-Hispanic, white children. And nonwhites breathe [38 percent higher](#) levels of a pollutant linked to heart disease, low birth-weights, and asthma and decreased lung function in children.

In another poll, [83 percent of American Latinos](#) told the National Resources Defense Council (NRDC) they believe climate change is hurting low-income communities in Latin America.

Latinos are motivated by a “deep personal sense of our global interconnectedness,” Quintero [has written](#), “not only to our family members who join us for dinner around the table every night, but for our extended network of cousins, aunts and grandparents whether they live here in the U.S. or abroad.” That could be why 86 percent of Latinos in the NRDC study cited a “moral duty” to preserve the planet for children and to respect ancestors’ legacy of care for the earth.

This climate concern translates into desire for action: [90 percent of Latinos](#) told the NRDC the government should take action against climate change. And in another study, conducted by *The New York Times* last month, Hispanics showed higher levels of support for climate change action—such as greenhouse gas taxes or U.S.-funded initiatives in poorer countries—than non-Hispanics. The researchers suspect this support for action is [partially driven](#) [.pdf] by a “heightened level of perceived personal vulnerability to global warming.”

Latino Catholics are also more likely than any other religious group to say their congregation sponsors climate change-related activities, and that their clergy discuss the issue (white Catholics, unsurprisingly, hear the least about climate change in the pews). Those who hear climate change discussed frequently in sermons are 13 percent more likely to believe it is real and caused by human activity.

Quintero says when the NRDC uncovered high levels of Latino climate concern in its first poll on the topic, “It really confirmed what we suspected, which was that Latinos were a force to be reckoned with on environment.” She says it was clear the concern “went beyond just a fad. It’s something very culturally part of the Latino community.”

Will climate concern and action become a larger part of the wider church community? Pope Benedict XVI spoke frequently on climate change and environmental destruction, [writing that](#) “preservation of the environment, promotion of sustainable development and particular attention to climate change are matters of grave concern for the entire human family.” When Pope Francis was asked about climate change last month, [he said](#): “I don't know if it [human activity] is the only cause, but mostly, in great part, it is man who has slapped nature in the face. We have, in a sense, taken over nature.”

Statements like these are encouraging to activists like Misleh. “I have great hopes for the encyclical,” he says. “I think it's going to move the needle.”

Miami Archbishop Thomas Wenski spoke of the upcoming encyclical at a briefing on religion and climate change sponsored by the National Religious Partnership for the Environment (NRPE) in Washington, D.C., last month. He [predicts the pope](#) will discuss the “interrelatedness of the various social, economic, political, or environmental crises” faced by humans today.

The NRPE briefing aimed to educate and influence members of Congress. In January, the U.S. Senate [voted down an amendment](#) (fifty to forty-nine) acknowledging that “human activity significantly contributes to climate change,” thanks in part to a number of Catholic climate-denying officeholders.

“Bishops are not scientists,” Archbishop Wenski said at the briefing, turning climate deniers’ often-invoked [“I’m not a scientist”](#) plea of ignorance on its head. “But we are pastors—and in so far as climate change affects concrete human beings, it is a moral issue.”

His statement mirrors the sentiment of the USCCB, whose 2001 [Global Climate Change: A Plea for Dialogue, Prudence, and the Common Good](#) states: “We make no independent judgment on the plausibility of ‘global warming.’ Rather, we accept the consensus findings of so many scientists and the conclusions of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change as a basis for continued research and prudent action.”

Both Misleh and Quintero hope to harness Latino climate concern into political action. Misleh’s Catholic Climate Covenant is working to “enfranchise the Hispanic Catholic population to influence legislators.” Quintero says the country’s changing demographics could make a Latino climate movement a powerful political force. “We need many voices. We need a multitude of voices talking about it from their own perspectives.”

She says the reality of lower-income, globally minded Latino climate activists belies the stereotype of the “Prius-driving, Whole Foods-shopping” environmentalist. “If we really look at environmentalism as a value—and I think this is where religion really comes in—if you look at the fact that protecting our surroundings will determine a lot of how our children will live, then you can really start to understand why this is such an important issue for the Latino community.

“It’s not a political issue for Latinos. It’s a values issue.”

<https://www.commonwealmagazine.org/hispanics-lead-us-catholics-climate-change>

March 12, 2015

Cardinal hints at main themes in Pope's climate change encyclical

Leader of Catholic church will offer leaders hope, says official, and address causes of poverty and environmental degradation

By Ed King
RTCC

A senior Vatican Cardinal who helped craft Pope Francis' expected encyclical on the environment has offered some clues on what it will contain.

It will, said Cardinal Peter Turkson, head of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, "explore the relationship between care for creation, integral human development and concern for the poor."

The Pope will seek to bring the "warmth of hope" to the wider debates on climate change and development, he said, while steering a path away from the "Herods" and "omens of destruction and death."

Turkson, who was speaking at a conference in Ireland, added the next 10 months were "crucial" to determine the stability of the environment.

We've picked out some of his key comments below – you can read the full address [here](#).

"The timing of the encyclical is significant: 2015 is a critical year for humanity. In July, nations will gather for the Third International Conference on Financing for Development in Addis Ababa. In September, the U.N. General Assembly should agree on a new set of sustainable development goals running until 2030.

"In December, the Climate Change Conference in Paris will receive the plans and commitments of each Government to slow or reduce global warming. The coming 10 months are crucial, then, for decisions about international development, human flourishing and care for the common home we call planet Earth."

On science

"Compelled by the scientific evidence for climate change, we are called to care for humanity and to respect the grammar of nature as virtues in their own right. This is the second principle that underpins Pope Francis' approach to integral ecology as the basis for authentic development.

“In an aeroplane interview while returning from Korea last August, the Holy Father said that one of the challenges he faces in his encyclical on ecology is how to address the scientific debate about climate change and its origins.

“Is it the outcome of cyclical processes of nature, of human activities (anthropogenic), or perhaps both? What is not contested is that our planet is getting warmer. The UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) has undertaken the most comprehensive assessment of climate change.

“Its November 2014 Synthesis Report was as stark as it was challenging. In the words of Thomas Stocker, the co-chair of the IPCC Working Group I: “Our assessment finds that the atmosphere and oceans have warmed, the amount of snow and ice has diminished, sea level has risen and the concentration of carbon dioxide has increased to a level unprecedented in at least the last 800,000 years.”

Challenging sceptics

“Yet even the compelling consensus of over 800 scientists of the IPCC will have its critics and its challengers. For Pope Francis, however, this is not the point. For the Christian, to care for God’s ongoing work of creation is a duty, irrespective of the causes of climate change.

“To care for creation, to develop and live an integral ecology as the basis for development and peace in the world, is a fundamental Christian duty. As Pope Francis put it in his morning homily at Santa Marta on 9 February, it is wrong and a distraction to contrast “green” and “Christian.”

“In fact, “a Christian who doesn’t safeguard creation, who doesn’t make it flourish, is a Christian who isn’t concerned with God’s work, that work born of God’s love for us.”

Addressing injustice

“So when Pope Francis says that destroying the environment is a grave sin; when he says that it is not large families that cause poverty but an economic culture that puts money and profit ahead of people; when he says that we cannot save the environment without also addressing the profound injustices in the distribution of the goods of the earth; when he says that this is “an economy that kills” – he is not making some political comment about the relative merits of capitalism and communism.

“He is rather restating ancient Biblical teaching. He is pointing to the fact that being a protector of creation, of the poor, of the dignity of every human person is a *sine qua non* of being Christian, of being fully human.

“He is pointing to the ominous signs in nature that suggest that humanity may now have *tilled* too much and *kept* too little, that our relationship with the Creator, with our neighbour, especially the poor, and with the environment has become fundamentally “un-kept”,

and that we are now at serious risk of a concomitant human, environmental and relational degradation.”

Hope

“The wealth of the top 1% has grown 60% in the last twenty years, and it continued to grow through the global economic crisis. Despite the UN Framework Convention of Climate Change signed in Rio in 1992 and subsequent agreements, global emissions of carbon dioxide (CO2) continue their upward trend, almost 50 per cent above 1990 levels.

“The concentration of CO2 in the atmosphere has reached a level last seen 3 million years ago – when the planet was significantly warmer than it is today. Millions of hectares of forest are lost every year, many species are being driven closer to extinction, and renewable water resources are becoming scarcer.

“As we confront the threat of environmental catastrophe on a global scale, I am confident that a shaft of light will break through the heavy clouds and bring us what Pope Francis describes as *the warmth of hope!*”

These are a series of excerpts from a [longer address](#) made by Cardinal Turkson at the Catholic Irish Bishop’s conference on March 5.

<http://www.rtcc.org/2015/03/11/cardinal-hints-at-main-themes-in-popes-climate-change-encyclical/#.dpuf>

March 14, 2015

Fracking will ruin sacred, preserved sites in the ‘American cradle of civilization’ - lawsuit

RT

A Navajo advocacy group has asked a federal judge to halt hydraulic fracking permits in the San Juan Basin of New Mexico, claiming that drilling threatens a historic UNESCO heritage site considered sacred by Navajo, Hopi and Pueblo peoples.

Diné Citizens Against Ruining Our Environment and three other groups have sued the US Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and US Department of Interior, calling on a federal judge to vacate the 130 fracking permits issued by the BLM and enjoin fracking activity in the Mancos Shale of the San Juan Basin until the BLM adheres to the National Environmental Policy Act and the National Historic Preservation Act, [according](#) to Courthouse News.

The 4,600-square-mile San Juan Basin of New Mexico's Four Corners region is home to [Chaco Culture National Historical Park](#), which includes the Anasazi ruins and other archeological remains of structures that were among North America's largest around 1,000 years ago.

Chaco and the surrounding areas, known as the “*American cradle of civilization*,” are considered a [UNESCO World Heritage site](#). The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization calls the area “*remarkable for its monumental public and ceremonial buildings and its distinctive architecture – it has an ancient urban ceremonial centre that is unlike anything constructed before or since.*”

Chaco is on top of the Mancos Shale, believed to harbor crude oil and natural gas supplies. The Diné – meaning 'Navajo' in their Athapaskan language – say the horizontal drilling and fracking could damage historic sites in the area, both inside and outside the national park, as well as contaminate the nearby groundwater.

The Diné – along with the San Juan Citizens Alliance, Wildearth Guardians, and the Natural Resources Defense Council – claim that BLM studies on fracking’s impact in the region have been shielded from the public. Without transparency, the drilling should not go on as planned, they said.

To unleash oil or natural gas from shale or other areas, the hydraulic fracturing - or [fracking](#) - process requires blasting large volumes of highly pressurized water, sand, and other chemicals into layers of rock. Once used, toxic fracking wastewater is then either stored in deep underground wells, disposed of in open pits for evaporation, sprayed into waste fields, or used over again.

Fracking sites have proliferated immensely across the US amid the current oil and gas boom in North America. Though the costs of fracking - including groundwater [contamination](#), heightened [earthquake](#) activity, exacerbation of [drought](#) conditions, and a [variety](#) of health concerns for [humans](#) and the local [environment](#) - have given many Americans pause, as they must deal with the effects while government regulators allow industry to drill like mad.

The BLM’s [management plan](#) for public lands in the Four Corners region triggered a wave of resistance, as [173,000 people](#) urged Department of Interior - the parent agency to the BLM - to “*protect these unique places from oil and gas development*,” [according](#) to Earth Island Journal.

“The land in the Chaco Canyon area has lots of sacred places. The corporations don't care. They come and go and tear up the places. They do their thing and away they go—and somebody else, somewhere else is getting rich off this land, not us,” Sarah Jane White, a Diné environmental activist, [told](#) DeSmogBlog in January.

“Fracking doesn’t benefit the Native American people.”

[According](#) to The Daily Times, the BLM's Farmington, New Mexico Field Office district manager Victoria Barr said her staff is expected to finalize the area’s resource management plan sometime later this year.

<http://rt.com/usa/240581-fracking-anasazi-chaco-navajo/>

March 17, 2015

FBOs disappointed by exclusion, yet still committed to DRR

Act Alliance

More than ten international faith based networks attending the Third World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction have expressed their disappointment at the exclusion of a reference to the contribution of faith communities in times of disasters.

[In a statement](#) released in Sendai, Japan, Tuesday, the organisations said:

“We are disappointed that this reference has been deleted from the draft of the new framework. This has left many faith based organisations and local faith communities feeling excluded from an area of work that is very close to their hearts and to their calling of service to communities.”

In the initial zero draft of the new post-2015 disaster risk framework, reference had been made to the role of faith based organisations in the context of disaster risk reduction.

“No one can deny that in the wake of every disaster, people look to their faith for hope and encouragement; in fact, faith structures such as churches, mosques, temples and other places of worship are often the very first place people seek refuge,” said John Nduna, General Secretary of ACT Alliance.

ACT Alliance, and many other faith based groups are actively involved in humanitarian response, disaster risk reduction and in building resilience of communities and have many good examples and lessons learned to share with the world.

The joint statement further says: “From our own experience in this work around the globe including the Ebola crisis in West Africa, conflict in South Sudan and Central African Republic, flooding in Southeast Asia, and the Cyclone Pam in Vanuatu, we bear witness to how faith in the most at-risk of communities helps prevent and reduce risks, contribute to resilience and inspire hope to rebuild better in a post-disaster context.”

“ACT Alliance is committed to play a role in the successful implementation of the new framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, particularly for communities at the local level. Together with the other international faith-based networks we call upon governments to recognize and affirm the unique role of Local Faith Communities and Faith-Based Organisations and to prioritize the engagement and collaboration with FBOs and LFCs in the implementation of the post-2015 framework on DRR,” Says John Nduna.

ACT Alliance approved a commitment to DRR during its General Assembly late 2014, which was submitted as an official input for the World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction in Japan. See: <http://www.wcdrr.org/preparatory/commitments/105>

[The statement](#) has been signed by ACT Alliance, Tearfund, Islamic Relief, Soka Gakkai International, Japan Religion Coordinating Project for Disaster Relief, Humanitarian Forum of Indonesia and its members including Muslim Aid, Dompot Dhuafa, Yakkum among others.

<http://www.actalliance.org/stories/fbos-committed-to-drr>

March 18, 2015

SGI Joins FBOs in Events on Disaster Risk Reduction at WCDRR

Soka Gakkai International

From March 14-18, the Third UN World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction (WCDRR) was held in Sendai city in Miyagi Prefecture, Japan. As a side event, on March 15, a symposium titled "Community based DRR from a faith-based perspective – sharing best practices" was co-organized by ACT Alliance and SGI in cooperation with the Japan Religion Coordinating Project for Disaster Relief (JRPD). The symposium was held at Sendai Civic Auditorium.

In his opening speech, Reverend John Nduna, general secretary of ACT Alliance, stated that the role of faith-based organizations (FBOs) in disaster risk reduction (DRR) is not always recognized and that international frameworks such as the Hyogo Framework for Action(HFA) only have impact when they benefit the people at the grassroots level. Nobuyuki Asai, chair of the Soka Gakkai Youth Peace Conference, spoke on the capacity of FBOs to mobilize existing community networks and to protect the vulnerable in times of emergency.

Presentations were given by Soka Gakkai member Kimio Ohashi, a 71 year-old survivor of the March 11, 2011, Great East Japan Earthquake, and Rachel Kyoziira of the Inter-Church Organization for Development Cooperation (ICCO), an ACT Alliance member.

Mr. Ohashi shared his experience of employing dialogue to build bonds of community and trust between people living in evacuation centers, temporary housing or the fledging communities of permanent housing built for those displaced by the disaster. Ms. Kyoziira gave a talk titled "Realities of Resilience" about her work with faith communities in Ethiopia.

After the presentations there was also a Q & A session.

This was the second symposium on the role of FBOs in DRR organized by SGI and ACT Alliance. The [first](#) was at the 6th Asian Ministerial Conference for Disaster Risk Reduction (AMCDRR) held in June 2014 in Bangkok, Thailand.

On March 16, as an outcome document of the symposium, 13 FBOs issued a [statement](#) in which they called on governments to recognize the unique role of Local Faith Communities (LFCS) and FBOs and to prioritize the engagement and collaboration of both in the implementation of the post 2015 framework on DRR.

On March 18, Kimiaki Kawai, Program Director of Peace Affairs for SGI, gave a presentation at the WCDRR's IGNITE Stage on Soka Gakkai's relief efforts in Tohoku following the Great East Japan Earthquake. He highlighted the ability of FBOs to utilize their existing networks of communication and their local facilities in disaster response. He emphasized that the strengths and resources of FBOs could complement those of other DRR stakeholders.

SGI also co-organized another side event at the WCDRR, a March 16 panel bringing together civil society representatives from China, South Korea and Japan titled "[Strengthening Resilience in Northeast Asia through Cooperation for Disaster Risk Reduction](#)". The Soka Gakkai Tohoku Youth Peace Conference co-organized a symposium on "The Power and Potential of Youth in Disaster Risk Reduction and Recovery" on March 14. Tohoku Soka Gakkai members also organized an exhibition of images and stories of survivors of the Great East Japan Earthquake and tsunami titled "The Light of Humanity" from March 14-17.

[Adapted from reports from the SGI Office of Public Information (SGI-OPI); photos courtesy of Seikyo Shimbun and SGI-OPI]

<http://www.sgi.org/news/h-relief/relief2015/sgi-join-fbos-in-events-on-disaster-risk-reduction-at-wcdrr.html>

March 19, 2015

4 easy ways to support Earth Hour

Southern African Faith Communities' Environment Institute

Dear Friend of SAFCEI,

We write to you with an appeal to support WWF's upcoming [Earth Hour](#) initiative with your faith community.

This year, WWF is calling on its hundreds of millions of annual Earth Hour supporters in over 160 countries around the world to send out a clear message to global leaders: *people across the world want action on climate change*. **We urge everyone in your community to register their support online** at wwwf.org.za/earthhour so that their voices can be counted, and noted ahead of the next major international climate conference in Paris at the end of the year.

Climate change is the biggest human rights issue of our time. In South Africa, particularly food, energy and water security are affected by climate change – the very foundations required to guarantee a stable society and thriving future for our growing population.

The campaign culminates on **Saturday, 28 March 2014, 8.30pm** when you are called upon to take part in the symbolic moment of unity by switching off your lights and celebrating in the true spirit of Earth Hour. The idea is not only to save energy during Earth Hour, but it is also a time to reflect on and renew commitments to protect Creation beyond the hour.

Faith communities have a powerful role to play

Please appeal to your faith leaders and congregation to join the movement to change climate change and to take tangible action to make a difference. **Your support can help ensure a more responsible custodianship of the earth for the generations to come.**

4 easy ways to get involved

1. **Encourage your congregation to join the movement against climate change by registering their personal details** on the [Earth Hour website](#)
2. **Communicate using the resources on the ‘Toolkit’ page** – add them to your community’s social media, website and newsletter using the available images. Display posters in your meeting place.
3. **Plan an Earth Hour event for your congregation and then register it on the ‘Act’ page** . **Why not consider holding a short, candlelit Earth Hour gathering on Saturday evening to pray, reflect and share on the issue?** Use the Greening Your Event Guide on the [‘Toolkit’ page](#)
4. **Showcase the Earth Hour 2015 video in your community to help raise awareness** – view the video on [Youtube](#) or download it by inserting the URL (www.youtube.com/watch?v=6GxRiMm9qjY) into www.keepvid.com. For access to higher resolution video files, please send WWF an [email](#).

Share your stories or photos with [SAFCEI](#) as well so that we can showcase them to inspire other faith communities. Send them to sarah@safcei.org.za

Wishing you a special Earth Hour!

The SAFCEI team

<http://us6.campaign-archive1.com/?u=887c3de8b0&id=ee6869aa29&e=a758405790>

March 21, 2015

'Water man of India' Rajendra Singh bags top prize

By Roger Harrabin, BBC environment analyst
BBC

An award known as "the Nobel Prize for water" has been given to an Indian campaigner who has brought water to 1,000 villages.

The judges of [the Stockholm Water Prize](#) say his methods have also prevented floods, restored soil and rivers, and brought back wildlife.

The prize-winner, Rajendra Singh, is dubbed "the Water Man of India".

The judges say his technique is cheap, simple, and that his ideas should be followed worldwide.

Mr Singh uses a modern version of the ancient Indian technique of rainwater harvesting.

It involves building low-level banks of earth to hold back the flow of water in the wet season and allow water to seep into the ground for future use.

He first trained as a medic, but when he took up a post in a rural village in arid Rajasthan he was told the greatest need was not health care but drinking water.

Groundwater had been sucked dry by farmers, and as water disappeared, crops failed, rivers, forests and wildlife disappeared and people left for the towns.

Are we running out of fresh water?

- Our planet does contain over a billion trillion litres of water. But very little of that is safe to drink. Over 97% of water on Earth is salt water.
- Nearly two million people die from a lack of safe drinking water every year.
- In just 15 years time, half the world's population could be living in areas of high water stress - where there isn't enough water to go round.

"When we started our work, we were only looking at the drinking water crisis and how to solve that," Mr Singh said.

"Today our aim is higher. This is the century of exploitation, pollution and encroachment. To stop all this, to convert the war on water into peace, that is my life's goal."

The Stockholm International Water Institute, which presented the prize, said his lessons were essential as climate change alters weather patterns round the world.

Its director, Torgny Holmgren, said: "In a world where demand for freshwater is booming, we will face a severe water crisis within decades if we do not learn how to better take care of our water. Mr Singh is a beacon of hope."

In its citation, the judges say: "Today's water problems cannot be solved by science or technology alone. They are human problems of governance, policy, leadership, and social resilience.

"Rajendra Singh's life work has been in building social capacity to solve local water problems through participatory action, empowerment of women, linking indigenous know-how with modern scientific and technical approaches and upending traditional patterns of development and resource use."

The award was applauded by Katherine Pygott, a leading UK water engineer who has drawn on Mr Singh's work [to help prevent flooding in the UK](#).

<http://www.bbc.com/news/science-environment-32002306>

March 23, 2015

Pope: Future of humanity depends on protecting, sharing water

By Carol Glatz
National Catholic Reporter

Vatican City -- The future of humanity depends on safeguarding and sharing potable water around the world, Pope Francis said.

"I encourage, therefore, the international community to make sure the planet's water is adequately protected and no one is excluded or discriminated against" in the fair use of this resource, which is "the most essential element for life," he said Sunday after reciting the Angelus with visitors gathered in St. Peter's Square.

"The future of humanity depends on our ability to safeguard and share" clean water, the pope said, in marking World Water Day, an annual United Nations celebration to promote sustainable water management.

In his remarks before reciting the Angelus prayer, the pope said Catholics can offer people three things: the Gospel, the crucifix and the example of living out their faith.

In the Gospel, "we can encounter Jesus, listen to him and know him," he said, while the crucifix is the "sign of the love of Jesus, who gave himself for us."

Catholics should also translate their faith into "simple gestures of brotherly love" and charity in which the most important thing is to practice what one professes; one's faith and life, words and actions must be consistent.

About 50,000 free copies of a pocket-sized Gospel were distributed to those gathered in the square. The pope said he was offering people the gift so that they could carry it with them wherever they went and "read it often."

"The word of God is the light for our journey. It will do you good," he said, adding that the many volunteers handing out the books included hundreds of homeless people.

He said this, too, was a "beautiful gesture that is pleasing to Jesus: the poorest are those who give us the word of God."

Meanwhile, a Vatican spokesperson said the pope had cut back his schedule for the week in order to finish working on his encyclical on ecology, saying it was the stage of "final revision."

Passionist Fr. Ciro Benedettini said Monday the pope had no meetings or major events planned through Saturday except for the general audience Wednesday and morning Mass in the chapel of his residence.

During a news conference with journalists Jan. 15 onboard the papal plane from Sri Lanka to Manila, Francis had said he had sent a third draft of the encyclical to the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, the Secretariat of State and the papal theologian for review "so that I would not say anything 'foolish.'"

He said he received a thick packet of their responses and that he planned to take an entire week in March "to complete it" with the hopes of finishing it by the end of the month.

Then if the translations go smoothly, he said, "it can come out in June or July," enough time to "make a contribution" to the United Nations Climate Change Conference meeting in Paris Nov. 30 through Dec. 11.

Editor's note: Want more stories from Eco Catholic? We can send you an email alert once a week with the latest. Just go to this page and follow directions: [Email alert sign-up](#).

<http://nronline.org/blogs/eco-catholic/pope-future-humanity-depends-protecting-sharing-water>

March 23, 2015

Pope puts climate heat on GOP

By Tom Krattenmaker
USA Today

With Catholic advances in Republican Party hierarchy, will papal views hold sway?

It comes as bad news to many that Pope Francis' tenure at the Vatican might be short. But there are probably some Catholics in this country who gave a silent cheer when Francis intimated recently that "[the Lord has placed me here for a short time](#)" — especially the surprisingly [numerous Catholics](#) who are leaders in the Republican Party.

Francis had already antagonized monied interests in the GOP with his populist admonitions against economic inequality and the excesses of capitalism. Now, in the run-up to this summer's greatly [anticipated encyclical on climate change](#), the pontiff is making things even more awkward for Catholic Republicans.

If you're a progressive and you like a little schadenfreude with your politics, you're probably enjoying the obvious squirming that many high-profile Republicans are doing when the climate

issue comes up. Outright denial seems to have been replaced by the currently favored ["I'm not a scientist"](#) talking point, which seems at best a stalling tactic.

Francis is not a scientist either, but that has not stopped him from leaning on something very close to scientific consensus and speaking confidently about global warming as a reality with dire moral implications — [especially for the poor and vulnerable](#) who are at the heart of Catholic social teaching.

Pulls no punches

"A Christian who does not protect creation," Francis says, "is a Christian who does not care about the work of God."

The relationship between the GOP and Vatican looked a lot different when it was mainly Protestants playing lead roles in the Republican Party, and when popes were placing more emphasis on things, such as the dangers of secularization and sex, or back in the Ronald Reagan years, the evils of communism.

But a funny thing happened on the way to 2015. Francis became pope. And Catholics came to greater prominence in the Republican Party. There are the presidential prospects — Jeb Bush, Marco Rubio, Bobby Jindal, Chris Christie and Rick Santorum. In Congress, there's [House Speaker John Boehner](#) and other influential Catholic Republicans [such as Rep. Paul Ryan](#).

Doesn't Francis, with his wild popularity and liberal-sounding rhetoric, have these Catholic conservatives in a bind?

Yes. And optimists can savor the possibility of something better than that — a breakthrough on this crucial issue.

[Reports are circulating](#) that some Republicans in Congress are looking for a lifeline on the issue. Who better than the widely respected pope to provide one?

There are reasons for skepticism, too. As Catholic Democratic leaders have shown for decades, U.S. politicians can always find a way to tune out their least favorite papal exhortations and church teachings. Consider the liberal Catholic giants of recent decades, [such as Sen. Edward Kennedy](#) and New York [Gov. Mario Cuomo](#), and high-ranking Democrats of today, such as [House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi](#) — all committed to the legal availability of abortion despite the church's hard line against it.

Boehner's take on pope

Boehner, for one, seems to be following a similar tack when it comes to Francis and the climate. Sure, the House speaker has waxed positive and enthusiastic about the pontiff. Boehner has even [invited Francis to address Congress](#). But he has yet to signal any change of heart or strategy on climate.

In January, several weeks after the news that Francis would issue his environment encyclical, [Boehner pulled out the standard](#) "job killer" line in response to the latest White House action against carbon emissions. As to the reality of human-caused climate change, Boehner said he would leave that to the scientists to debate and resolve, as if they hadn't already.

Also sobering, [polling data show](#) the climate issue occupies relatively low status on Americans' lists of concerns, even though [a majority accept](#) that something is happening with the climate.

That's where the pontiff's exhortation can make the biggest difference. If the upcoming encyclical is transformative the way many hope, public opinion will swing, perhaps dramatically. Perhaps so much so that the House speaker and his GOP colleagues will realize that addressing climate is an imperative they can neither tune out nor wait out, regardless of how long Francis remains in the Vatican.

Tom Krattenmaker is a writer specializing in religion in public life, a member of USA TODAY's Board of Contributors and communications director at Yale Divinity School. His latest book is [The Evangelicals You Don't Know](#).

In addition to its own editorials, USA TODAY publishes diverse opinions from outside writers, including our [Board of Contributors](#).

<http://www.usatoday.com/story/opinion/2015/03/22/pope-climate-change-gop-column/25192839/>

March 24, 2015

Climate denial is immoral, says head of US Episcopal church

Climate change is a moral challenge threatening the rights of the world's poorest people and those who deny it are not using God's gift of knowledge, says presiding bishop Katharine Jefferts Schori

By Suzanne Goldenberg
The Guardian

The highest ranking woman in the Anglican communion has said climate denial is a "blind" and immoral position which rejects God's gift of knowledge.

Katharine Jefferts Schori, presiding bishop of the Episcopal church and one of the most powerful women in [Christianity](#), said that climate change was a moral imperative akin to that of the civil rights movement. She said it was already a threat to the livelihoods and survival of people in the developing world.

"It is in that sense much like the civil rights movement in this country where we are attending to the rights of all people and the rights of the earth to continue to be a flourishing place," Bishop

Jefferts Schori said in an interview with the Guardian. “It is certainly a moral issue in terms of the impacts on the poorest and most vulnerable around the world already.”

In the same context, Jefferts Schori attached moral implications to climate denial, suggesting those who reject the underlying science of climate change were turning their backs on God’s gift of knowledge.

“Episcopalians understand the life of the mind is a gift of God and to deny the best of current knowledge is not using the gifts God has given you,” she said. “In that sense, yes, it could be understood as a moral issue.”

She went on: “I think it is a very blind position. I think it is a refusal to use the best of human knowledge, which is ultimately a gift of God.”

The sense of urgency around the issue has been deepened by Pope Francis [forceful statements on global warming](#), which he is expected to amplify in a papal encyclical in June and during an address to the US Congress in September.

The Episcopal church will host a [webcast](#) on 24 March to kick off a month-long action campaign designed to encourage church members to reduce their own carbon footprints and lobby government and international corporations to fight climate change.

An oceanographer before she was ordained at the age of 40, Bishop Jefferts Schori said she hoped to use her visibility as a church leader to help drive action on climate change.

As presiding bishop, she oversees 2.5m members of the Episcopal church in 17 countries, and is arguably one of the most prominent women in Christianity. The two largest denominations in the US, Roman Catholics and Southern Baptists, do not ordain women.

“I really hope to motivate average Episcopalians to see the severity of this issue, the morality of this issue,” she said. “Turning the ship in another direction requires the consolidated efforts of many people who are moving in the same direction.”

She acknowledged that the challenge was deepened by the strain of climate denial in American politics, and by continued resistance to science in American classrooms.

“It’s hard work when you have a climate denier who will not see the reality of scientific truth,” she said.

However, she, like a number of church leaders, said they had seen an uptick in climate activism in recent months, spurred by the pope’s comments last January, and the conjunction later this year of United Nations conferences on development and climate change.

Evangelical churches – once seen as a conservative force – were now taking up the climate cause, largely because of growing awareness of its threat to the poor.

“One of the significant changes in particular has been the growing awareness and activism among the evangelical community who at least somewhat in the more distant past refused to encounter this issue, refused to deal with it,” Jeffers Schori said. “The major evangelical groups in this country have been much more forward in addressing this issue because they understand that it impacts the poor.”

A number of denominations have also joined the [growing fossil fuel divestment movement](#) which is encouraging organisations to [move their investments out of coal, oil and gas companies](#). The United Methodist church, the third largest denomination, dumped coal companies from its pension fund.

The Unitarian church and the United church of Christ have also voted to divest, according to Reverent Fletcher Harper of [Green Faith](#). And the [World Council of Churches has pledged](#) not to invest in fossil fuels. A number of individual congregations have also divested from fossil fuels.

The Guardian launched a campaign on Monday to encourage the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and the Wellcome Trust to divest from fossil fuels.

The Episcopal church has also come under pressure to withdraw its fossil fuel holdings. A number of diocese are pressing for divestment, and will bring the issue to a vote at the church’s annual convention this summer.

Jefferts Schori opposes fossil fuel divestment. “If you divest you lose any direct ability to influence the course of a corporation’s behavior,” she said. “I think most pragmatists realise that we can’t close the spigot on the oil wells and close the coal mines immediately without some other energy source to shift to.”

<http://www.theguardian.com/environment/2015/mar/24/climate-change-denial-immoral-says-head-episcopal-church>

March 26, 2015

Press Release on Centre’s Report on the Ethics of Animal Experiments

Nobel Laureate J. M. Coetzee Backs a New Report which Describes Animal Experiments as Morally ‘Unthinkable’

Oxford Centre for Animal Ethics

More than a hundred and fifty academics, intellectuals, and writers, including Nobel Laureate J. M. Coetzee, have backed a new report calling for the de-normalisation of animal experimentation. Titled ‘Normalising the Unthinkable’, the report is the result of a working party of the Oxford Centre for Animal Ethics.

Other signatories to the report include the Rt Revd John Pritchard, former Bishop of Oxford, Professor Keith Ward of Oxford University, Professor Stanley Hauerwas of Duke Divinity School, and Professor Conor Gearty of the London School of Economics.

The report finds that ‘The deliberate and routine abuse of innocent, sentient animals involving harm, pain, suffering, stressful confinement, manipulation, trade, and death should be unthinkable. Yet animal experimentation is just that: the ‘normalisation of the unthinkable’. ‘It is estimated that 115.3 million animals are used in experiments worldwide per annum. In terms of harm, pain, suffering, and death, this constitutes one of the major moral issues of our time.’

Comprised of 20 leading ethicists and scientists, the working party concluded that animal experiments are both morally and scientifically flawed. The report of more than 50,000 words is probably the most comprehensive critique of animal experiments ever published.

Commissioned by the BUAV and Cruelty Free International as an independent ethical review, members of the working party are keen to point out that the BUAV in no way influenced its conclusions.

‘The moral arguments in favour of animal testing really don’t hold water’ says Professor Andrew Linzey, co-editor of the report and a theologian at Oxford University. ‘We have looked at the central arguments in official reports and found them wanting. If any of them were morally valid, they would also justify experiments on human beings.’

The report concludes that the ‘normalisation’ of animal experiments:

- flies in the face of what is now known about the extent and range of how animals can be harmed. The issue of the complexity of animal awareness, especially animal sentience (the capacity to experience pain and pleasure), cannot be ignored. Unlike our forebears, we now know, as reasonably as we can know of humans, that animals (notably, mammals, birds, and reptiles) experience not only pain, but also shock, fear, foreboding, trauma, anxiety, stress, distress, anticipation, and terror.
- is based on the discredited idea that animals are just tools for human use, means to human ends, fungible items, and commodities who can be treated and dispensed with as humans think fit.
- is challenged by new moral thinking which holds that sentient beings are not just things, objects, machines, or tools, but have value in themselves and deserve respect.
- is augmented by a range of regulations and controls, which in reality do very little to protect animals and indeed often do the reverse.
- is justified by the oft-repeated assertion that human interest requires such experiments, whereas it has to be questioned whether humans are ever benefited by the abuse of animals.

BUAV and Cruelty Free International CEO, Michelle Thew, said: *“We greatly welcome this new report, which should spur on new ethical thinking about animals and question some of the lazy assumptions about how animal research benefits humans. This independent report is a milestone in ethical thinking about animals and puts the ethics of animal research back on the agenda.”*

Academics are invited to debate the report at a special Summer School on the Ethics of Using Animals in Research at Oxford on 26-29 July 2015. Details about the Summer School can be found [here](#).

The full report can be found [here](#).

The executive summary can be found [here](#).

The full list of signatories can be found [here](#).

ENDS

For further information, please contact Martin Mallon on +44 (0) 20 7619 6978 / +44 (0) 7850 510 955 or email martin.mallon@buav.org

Notes to editors

- The Oxford Centre for Animal Ethics, founded in 2006 by its director Professor Andrew Linzey, is an independent Centre with the aim of pioneering ethical perspectives on animals through academic research, teaching and publication. The Centre has more than 90 Fellows drawn from a variety of academic disciplines from throughout the world. See www.oxfordanimaethics.com.
- The Centre is an independent think tank, and is not under the aegis, control, or sanction of the University of Oxford.
- Founded in 1898, the BUAV is the world’s leading organisation working to create a world where nobody wants or believes we need to experiment on animals.
- Established by the BUAV, Cruelty Free International is the leading organisation working to end animal testing for consumer products worldwide.

<http://www.oxfordanimaethics.com/2015/03/press-release-centres-report-ethics-animal-experiments/>

March 26, 2015

Papal ecology: Protecting all God's creatures, respecting God's plan

By Cindy Wooden
Catholic News Service

VATICAN CITY (CNS) -- The Catholic Church supports the efforts of scientists to study the causes and effects of climate change and insists governments and businesses must get serious about specific commitments for protecting the environment.

But Pope Francis, like his predecessors, does not pretend to have a technical solution to the problem. However, he does feel a responsibility to remind Christians of their religious obligation to safeguard creation, beginning with human beings who are created in the image and likeness of God.

Clearing his calendar for a week in late March, Pope Francis rolled up his sleeves to put the final touches on an encyclical letter about the environment; building on what he and his predecessors have said, the document -- planned for publication early in the summer -- is expected to present ecology as the ultimate pro-life, pro-poor, pro-family issue.

For Pope Francis, like Pope Benedict XVI, safeguarding creation is not simply about protecting plants and animals, or just about ensuring the air, water and land will support human life for generations to come. Those things are part of the task.

"We need to see -- with the eyes of faith -- the beauty of God's saving plan, the link between the natural environment and the dignity of the human person," Pope Francis wrote in a speech prepared for young people in the Philippines in January.

Christianity teaches that God created the world and everything in it with a certain order and proclaimed it good. As stewards of God's creation, Pope Francis has said, people have an absolute obligation to respect the natural order.

Defending marriage as the lifelong union of a man and a woman, Pope Francis told a conference in November, "the crisis of the family has produced a human ecological crisis, for social environments, like natural environments, need protection."

"Human ecology" was a phrase often used by retired Pope Benedict XVI, who was known for "green" initiatives, including installing solar panels at the Vatican. He taught that "the book of nature is one and indivisible; it includes not only the environment but also individual, family and social ethics. Our duties toward the environment flow from our duties toward the person, considered both individually and in relation to others."

In his 2009 encyclical, "Caritas in Veritate," Pope Benedict wrote that the church "must defend not only earth, water and air as gifts of creation that belong to everyone. She must above all protect mankind from self-destruction. There is need for what might be called a human ecology, correctly understood."

The "decisive issue," he wrote, "is the overall moral tenor of society. If there is a lack of respect for the right to life and to a natural death, if human conception, gestation and birth are made artificial, if human embryos are sacrificed to research, the conscience of society ends up losing the concept of human ecology and, along with it, that of environmental ecology."

Echoes of Pope Benedict's thought can be found in Pope Francis' frequent denunciations of the "throwaway culture." He sees people increasingly at ease throwing away not just plastic and paper, but wasting food at a time when so many people are starving. Even more seriously, he has said, people have a similar "throwaway" attitude when it comes to people they don't find useful - including the unborn, the sick and the elderly.

Meeting with U.N. officials in May 2014, Pope Francis insisted the defense of the family, the defense of the poor and protecting the environment are part of the same agenda of ensuring the survival and thriving of humanity.

The international community, he said, must address "the structural causes of poverty and hunger, attain more substantial results in protecting the environment, ensure dignified and productive labor for all and provide appropriate protection for the family, which is an essential element in sustainable human and social development."

As often happens when things go wrong, Pope Francis has said, the poor pay the highest price for the destruction of the environment: the seas and rivers no longer provide fish; landslides send their makeshift homes tumbling down hillsides; the deserts expand, robbing sustenance farmers of even a meager diet.

Flying from Sri Lanka to the Philippines in January, Pope Francis told reporters accompanying him that Cardinal Peter Turkson, president of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, and a team from his office had prepared drafts of the ecology document.

During an early March visit to Ireland, Cardinal Turkson spoke about the principles underlying the pope's upcoming letter, insisting "this is not some narrow agenda for the greening of the church or the world. It is a vision of care and protection that embraces the human person and the human environment in all possible dimensions."

All people are called to be "protectors" of the environment and of one another, especially the poor, the cardinal said. The responsibility and obligation of care is both a matter of justice and a matter of faith; it is the natural result of being in a right relationship with God, with others and with the earth.

"When Pope Francis says that destroying the environment is a grave sin; when he says that it is not large families that cause poverty but an economic culture that puts money and profit ahead of people; when he says that we cannot save the environment without also addressing the profound injustices in the distribution of the goods of the earth; when he says that this is 'an economy that kills' -- he is not making some political comment about the relative merits of capitalism and communism," Cardinal Turkson said. "He is rather restating ancient biblical teaching."

At the heart of the "integral ecology" Pope Francis is calling for, he said, "is the call to dialogue and a new solidarity, a changing of human hearts in which the good of the human person, and not the pursuit of profit, is the key value that directs our search for the global, the universal common good."

March 31, 2015

Ash Wednesday Declaration bears fruit on Good Friday

Operation Noah

Twenty Anglican bishops have just released a statement entitled [The World is our Host](#) for Good Friday, which calls Churches to urgent prayer and action for climate justice and ‘sets a new agenda on climate change for the 85 million-strong Anglican Communion.’ Operation Noah welcomes this strong and positive statement, with its clear emphasis on the need for practical and prayerful action by Christians everywhere.

The Bishops met in South Africa in February, hosted by Archbishop Thabo Makgoba, to plan their report. Their statement notes the scientific basis for action and urges the Church to urgently find its collective moral voice. They note that, ‘God committed the care of creation to us, God’s children but we have been care-less. Therefore climate justice for us as Christians demands a faith response.’

Revd Chris Halliwell, co vice-chair of Operation Noah, says, ‘The release of this statement on Good Friday 2015 reinforces an earlier call to Christians issued by Operation Noah in 2012 under the title *Climate change and the purposes of God: a call to the Church*, also known as the [Ash Wednesday Declaration](#). The Declaration encourages Christians to engage prayerfully and practically with some of the key issues of climate change, including a call to seek justice and to act with hope.’

‘Three years ago, church leaders from all the major Christian denominations in the United Kingdom personally supported the Ash Wednesday Declaration. This week, in *The World Is Our Host*, these twenty Anglican bishops have brought timely and personal reminders that climate change is an issue of global justice that demands practical and prayerful Christian responses.’

‘The Good Friday and Easter narrative unites Christians everywhere in the Lord Jesus who embraces the tragedy, pain and suffering of the whole of creation and brings hope, transformation and reconciliation to all through the power and love of the resurrection. It is with a deep conviction of the hope that Christ sets before us that Christians are empowered to engage with the pain of the present.’

Given the crucial climate talks in Paris this December, Operation Noah longs for a powerful, hope-filled agreement to result. We trust that the collective prayers and actions of people all around the world will bring pressure on world leaders and will result in a climate agreement that protects all our futures.

<http://operationnoah.org/news-events/press-release-ash-wednesday-declaration-bears-fruit-on-good-friday/>

March 31, 2015

The Greening of Pope Francis

By Charles J. Reid, Jr.
The Huffington Post

Pope Francis is poised, within the next two or three months, to announce one of the signature documents of his papacy, an encyclical on climate change. And we can hope and pray that it will be "world-changing" in the very best sense of that expression.

If he sticks to the schedule he has publicly announced, he should, at this very moment, be putting the finishing touches on the final version. It will then be forwarded to translation teams that will prepare official texts in a number of different languages for publication in June or July.

The encyclical has yet to appear, but we can still surmise some of its main themes in light of Pope Francis' own statements on the environment. First, it seems that the Pope is not a newcomer to environmental concerns. He has said that events in Latin America years ago forced him to confront the catastrophe of environmental degradation. [Bishops in Brazil, he has said, first explained to him the deforestation of the Amazonian rain forest.](#) Deeply moved by this tragedy, Pope Francis now sees the rain forest as "one of the world's lungs." For a man who is missing part of a lung himself, this is a meaningful metaphor. He knows, more than most, how essential a lung is to life.

The Pope is surely right to warn the world about the on-going loss of the rain forest. National Geographic estimates that in the last forty years around 20 percent of the rain forest has been cut and the land cleared for other uses. This is a disaster both regionally and globally. Regionally, natural habitat for animals and plants is wiped out, causing a loss of biodiversity. But globally, the loss of forest canopy accelerates the process of climate change. The Pope knows this and means to do something about it.

But Pope Francis has hinted that his thoughts now go well beyond a concern with deforestation, as important as that is, and embraces something more profound. In a homily preached in February, he connected environmentalism with the Christian faith. God made the world and all that is in it out of an act of love. If creation is an act of love, the proper way for Christians to reciprocate is to tend to the world. ["A Christian who does not protect Creation, who does not let it grow, is a Christian who does not care about the work of God, that work that was born from the love of God for us."](#)

Taken seriously, what the Pope is saying is that environmentalism is not an option for the Christian, but a requirement of heart and mind and conscience. It is a primary demand of the Christian faith. The environment, Pope Francis emphasizes, is not an issue that belongs to a single party or faction. It is not something that can be neatly labeled "the greens." No, he has said, it belongs to the world and is the responsibility of every Christian.

Pope Francis has also made it clear that he takes seriously the science of human-induced climate change. To members of the scientific community, to the world's knowledge classes, this may not come as big news. They may be tempted to shrug and say, "well, everybody knows that."

Except that is not the case. In the United States, the dominant voices of one of two major political parties -- the Republicans -- are on record as expressing their doubts about human-caused climate change.

John Boehner, the Republican Speaker of the House and a professed Catholic, has publicly declared that he is agnostic on the subject of climate change, which he considers a debatable topic. Ted Cruz, the colorful Texas Senator running for President, has theatrically denounced climate change as deceitful and false and compared climate scientists to flat-earthers. In saying these things, Republican politicians are in lockstep with their fundamentalist Christian base, who reject the science of climate change out of hand.

It is significant, therefore, and of benefit to the health of the planet, that the leader of the world's largest Christian movement accepts human-induced climate change as scientifically established and will issue a call to action on that basis. And that summons to act will take into account, first of all, the threat climate change poses to humanity. The Pope has talked to farmers displaced from their fields by flood or drought, and he has visited typhoon victims in the Philippines and elsewhere. He knows first-hand -- he has toured the devastation -- the impact climate change is having on coastal communities. And he knows that human-induced climate change is an affront to God's loving gift of Creation.

The summons to act will likely have yet another dimension, and that is economic. For Pope Francis, most of the ailments of the contemporary human condition are traceable back to the inhumane uses of capital. We have become a throwaway society. We discard unwanted people, whether they be convicts in prison, or the elderly, or the poor, or the handicapped, or the infirm. Those who are unable for whatever reason to serve the interests of capital have no place in the modern dispensation.

My guess is that Pope Francis is prepared to extend this line of reasoning to the degradation of the planet. Runaway capital is not only destroying individual lives, but is jeopardizing the health and well-being of all of humanity.

And Pope Francis is prepared to go "big," as they say. He has indicated that he will invite leaders of other religious faith to join him in meetings. He will not issue the encyclical as part of a joint declaration with other faiths, he has made that clear. But he hopes to form a world-wide network of believers, Christian and non-Christian alike, dedicated to a greener earth. He is even making

plans to present his case to the United Nations. I can hardly wait. For Pope Francis' planned encyclical may be one of those rare papal documents that shift the public debate for generations.

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/charles-j-reid-jr/the-greening-of-pope-fran_b_6971366.html

April 2015

Southern African Faith Communities' Environment Institute Newsletter

<http://us6.campaign-archive2.com/?u=887c3de8b0&id=e0e1f9c015&e=a758405790>

April 2015

Green Church Newsletter

http://egliseverte-greenchurch.ca/green/index.php?option=com_acymailing&ctrl=archive&task=view&mailid=59&key=d733bd42629aa3b5e5c5c057930ecd99&subid=189-dbe0c9b642707e4c37fc810b1cf1134f

April 2, 2015

Catholics prep for Pope Francis to tackle climate in upcoming encyclical.

Will Pope Francis' encyclical on global climate change find acceptance in his diverse flock?

By Marianne Lavelle
The Daily Climate

ARLINGTON, Va.—Dan Misleh, director of the Catholic Climate Covenant, found himself facing a skeptic recently after he outlined the coalition's preparations for Pope Francis' upcoming encyclical on global warming.

The woman didn't doubt the science. She just wasn't sure of the bishops.

Why wouldn't U.S. bishops record messages on climate change to be played in all churches, just as they often do for annual Lenten fundraising drives, she asked. Why not distribute cards in the pews, urging parishioners to sign pledges to care for creation and the poor, through personal action and advocacy on global warming?

"So what you're asking for," Misleh deadpanned, "are miracles?"

Actually, Misleh expects Pope Francis' message on climate change—anticipated in June or July—to resonate far beyond social justice-oriented Catholics like the ones in his audience that day at an annual symposium by the Peace and Justice Commission of the Diocese of Arlington, Va., in the suburbs of Washington, D.C.

The climate coalition Misleh leads includes mainstream voices like Catholic Charities USA, the Association of Catholic Colleges and Universities, and the church leadership itself through the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, as well as progressive religious groups. The Catholic Climate Covenant already is laying the groundwork for sermon outlines and news conferences and events in the wake of the pope's encyclical, "to keep it in the public eye for as long as we can," Misleh said.

A papal encyclical is meant to provide spiritual guidance to the world's 1.1 billion Roman Catholics, but among advocates of climate action hopes are high that this one will resonate far beyond the church. They are hoping the pope's moral authority can help break the intractable global political gridlock over reducing fossil fuel emissions.

That may be a lot to ask of a message designed to find acceptance in a huge and diverse religious flock. But many have faith that this particular pope—who is timing the letter to influence this year's crucial climate treaty talks in Paris—has the leadership skills to deliver.

"Arguably, Pope Francis is one of the most interesting moral voices on the planet," said Shaun Casey, the special representative on religion and global affairs at the U.S. Department of State, in an interview. "People are listening to him who never paid attention to a Roman Catholic pope, because of his charisma and because of his courage.

"Here you have the leading voice in the largest Christian tradition issuing an explicit call to engagement," Casey said. "I think that's going to have a galvanizing effect on global politics. You cannot ignore a moral issue when a pope of Pope Francis' stature focuses on that. I think it's going to be huge."

Science and faith

Among those eagerly awaiting the pope's message is Veerabhadran Ramanathan, a pioneering atmospheric physicist at the Scripps Institution of Oceanography, UC San Diego. Ramanathan, who discovered the super-greenhouse effect of chlorofluorocarbons in 1975, co-authored an [essay in Science last fall](#) calling for religious leadership on climate change.

"Humanity is at a crossroads," the essay said. "Natural and social scientists have done their part in documenting the irreversible environmental damage we have inflicted, and in spelling out specific mitigation actions. The transformational step may well be a massive mobilization of public opinion by the Vatican and other religions for collective action to safeguard the well-being of both humanity and the environment."

In a recent interview, Ramanathan said that he believed religious leaders can provide insight on climate change that neither scientists nor national leaders could command. "Climate change has

become sort of a moral and ethical issue," said Ramanathan in a recent interview. "We are asking people to change their behavior. I think that religious leaders have much more authority to speak about that than scientists or political leaders."

Although Ramanathan said he has no idea what Pope Francis will say on global warming, he is closer to the process than most, as a member of a little-known but prestigious group of scientists, the Pontifical Academy of the Sciences. Members of the non-sectarian Academy of 80 scientists, which includes several Nobel laureates, receive lifetime appointments from the Vatican, but do not take direction from the church. Their mission is to promote progress in science, and to stimulate an interdisciplinary approach.

Ramanathan, who was appointed to his post by Pope John Paul II, took the task to heart last year and convened what he said was an unprecedented joint meeting of both the Academy's natural and social scientists, as well as philosophers and theologians, to focus on sustainable development, climate change and economic justice.

Participants in the four-day workshop in May 2014 [agreed on a statement](#) pointing out the disruption caused by fossil fuel use at the heart of the global energy system, and calling for cooperative, collective action to find a more sustainable engine of development.

At the end of the meeting, Ramanathan said they had an opportunity to brief Pope Francis, a meeting he expected would be short in any case. But because of his busy schedule that day, the pope actually met the group in the parking lot. They were allowed to say two sentences—the ultimate “elevator” speech.

“I cheated. I gave three sentences,” Ramanathan recalls. “I said this entire gathering is concerned about climate change, and there are 3 billion poor people who had little to do with climate pollution who will suffer its worst effects. Because of that, I said we would like to ask people to be good stewards of the planet.”

Pope Francis is expected to build on the statements his predecessors made on the environment, especially Pope John Paul II's plea in his 1990 World Day of Peace speech that Catholics regard the natural world as God's creation: "We cannot continue to use the goods of the Earth as we have in the past," he said. Pope Benedict, who had solar panels put on the Vatican, said in 2010, "If we want justice and peace, we must protect the habitat that sustains us."

Walter Grazer, who served as the director of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops' environmental justice program from 1993 to 2007, said it is important to see the pope's upcoming statement in the context of this history. Previous papal teachings on the environment, as well as many statements by the U.S. bishops on climate change, draw on the creation stories of the Catholic tradition, in which humans are stewards of the world of peace and harmony created by God.

"It's both in our scripture, and in our theology; Pope Francis is not going to be coming from outer space," Grazer said. "He has got such a fabulous way of cutting through all the jargon. "He will

have a way of saying it that I think will be unique, but he's going to be following up on these themes from Pope John Paul II and Pope Benedict."

Vatican-watchers see signals that Pope Francis plans to offer the strongest papal statement on the environment yet. In a homily he offered last November on All Saints' Day, Pope Francis [gave a possible preview of his encyclical](#) when he decried environmental destruction and the culture of waste.

"We are capable of devastating the Earth far better than the angels," he said. "And this is exactly what we are doing, this is what we do: we destroy creation, we devastate lives, we devastate cultures, we devastate values, we ravage hope."

How far will the pope go

The pope must steer clear of pronouncements that are seen as overtly political, or he will undercut the support he has so far maintained among conservatives in the church.

In a [speech delivered last month](#) at Saint Patrick's Pontifical University, in Maynooth, Ireland, a Vatican official said Pope Francis' agenda is not "greening the Church or the world."

"It is a vision of care and protection that embraces the human person and the human environment in all possible dimensions," said Cardinal Peter Turkson, who gave the speech and helped Pope Francis with the first draft of his encyclical.

Cardinal Turkson repeatedly states in the speech that the pope's foray into environmental matters is biblically – not politically – rooted.

Samuel Gregg, research director of the conservative Michigan-based Catholic think tank, the Acton Institute for the Study of Religion and Liberty, said he doubts that the pope will weigh in on the science of climate change or on any particular political course of action.

"Individual Catholics—lay people, as well as bishops—have a variety of views on the science of climate change, and as citizens, they're quite entitled to hold those views," he said. "It's not the church's responsibility, nor does it have the authority to say that Catholics must support this treaty, that treaty, or any treaty. It doesn't fall into the area of faith and morals. And this is often a distinction not understood outside the Catholic Church, or even by a good number of Catholics themselves."

The Acton Institute counts young clerics and religious people from the developing world among attendees at its annual seminars on the virtues of unfettered free markets. (A sampling of upcoming Acton University courses: "The Moral Case for Economic Growth," "The Invisible Hand from Adam to Adam Smith," and "The Spiritual Dangers of Doing Good.")

Kishore Jayabalan, director of Acton's Rome office, already has laid the groundwork for courteous disagreement with Francis. "It is one kind of problem if a Catholic disagrees with

papal teaching on the Trinity or abortion; that Catholic's eternal soul would be considered at risk," he wrote in a recent blog.

"It is an altogether different kind of problem if a Catholic disagrees with the pope on his diplomatic efforts or environmental views... The Church wisely respects differences of opinion on such matters."

Prepared for opposition

Catholics who believe the church has an important role to play on climate change are prepared for opposition to the pope's message.

"Some people are going to gloat: 'The Pope has finally joined the Democratic party,'" Misleh said at the Arlington symposium earlier this year. "Others are going to grumble. They're going to attack the pope: 'He's divisive. He's from Argentina. What do you expect?' Or they're going to try to minimize the importance of an encyclical letter, which is really hard to do if you know what an encyclical letter is."

"I hope a lot more people will say, 'Wow, I didn't even know the church cared about this issue.'" Misleh said.

<http://www.dailyclimate.org/tdc-newsroom/2015/03/pope-encyclical-climate-change-green-religion>

April 2, 2015

San Francisco Bay Area Refinery Corridor Healing Walks

Women's Earth and Climate Action Network (WECAN International) Blog

In the San Francisco Bay Area of California, the Chevron refinery in Richmond is a familiar sight and one that is a constant reminder of the negative health effects that has plagued the community as a result of its presence. Residents living near refineries experience a myriad of health issues ranging from asthma, cancer and various auto immune and respiratory diseases. Unfortunately, this refinery is only one of five in the Bay Area and there is a proposal for a WesPac oil terminal in Pittsburg. In addition to the health risks associated with living near a refinery the people living there are also in close proximity to rail lines that carry crude oil through their communities. These trains travel past schools, community centers, shopping areas and playgrounds. The trains carry potentially explosive crude oil and have a blast radius of one mile, meaning they are continuously threatening the health and livelihoods of the community.

A serious fire at the Chevron refinery in Richmond on August 8, 2012 hospitalized 15,000 people, then a little over two years later a train derailment occurred on December 3, 2014 near an elementary school in the same town. Although the train had not been carrying any crude oil, it is

an example of the grave outcomes that could occur as a result of careless planning and an example of how some communities are turned into sacrifice zones. In response, the community has risen with many successful resistance efforts including in January of 2014, a series of healing walks along the San Francisco Bay Area refinery corridor, which were inspired by the many healing walks and runs which included the Tar Sands Healing Walks in Alberta, Canada, the Longest Walks, and the Peace & Dignity Journeys. The walks were held to bring attention and awareness to the health and environmental impacts of the fossil fuel industry. These walks are rooted in old resistance tactics that Indigenous people have used over the years to protest the taking and polluting of their lands. The main organizer of the walks is long time activist, Pennie Opal Plant of Idle No More San Francisco and Movement Rights.

Idle No More began in Saskatchewan as a small series of teach-ins that would help people protest bills that would strip away at native cultures and has now become one of the largest indigenous mass movements in Canadian history. This movement spread around the world from the Americas to Australia, Europe, Asia and Africa as groups in solidarity began to conduct their own Idle No More type actions in December 2012. A group of Native America grandmothers, mothers, fathers and grandfathers formally created Idle No More San Francisco Bay. They are one of the most active groups in the movement and are comprised of allies from many different backgrounds. Movement Rights is an organization that works to help local communities exercise their legal rights' over corporations that threaten the future of the residents' ability to live in the community in a sustainable and healthy manner.

The two organizations inspired people to fight and protect their land while also empowering communities to exercise their legal rights' over corporate entities. Last year, front-line activists living along the corridor joined them and created the Bay Area Refinery Corridor Coalition (BARCC) and together they are working to host their second annual Connect the Dots: Refinery Corridor Healing Walks. The 2015 walks are held in a four part series, once a month from April through July, they are as follows:

Saturday, April 18th – Pittsburg to Martinez

Sunday, May 17th – Martinez to Benicia

Saturday, June 20th – Benicia to Rodeo

Sunday, July 19th – Rodeo to Richmond

The Walks begin and end with prayers for the water which are conducted by Native American women, and are led by Native American elders and others in prayer following a sacred staff. Walkers stop at the refineries and toxic sites along the way to pray for the land, water and air, as well as creatures living near the refineries and those yet to be born. Support vehicles follow the walkers with water and medics. Participants are asked to sign an agreement to be nonviolent and walkers are encouraged to envision a just transition to a clean and safe energy future and an economy that supports everyone. They are then invited to write or draw these ideas on muslin squares which are sewn together to create a quilt.

To learn more about the Healing Walks and participate in them, please see <http://www.refineryhealingwalks.com/walk1.html>

The Women's Earth and Climate Action International's (WECAN) is honored to have Pennie Opal Plant on our USA Initiative Steering Committee as we continue to support frontline communities. To read more about WECAN's work to mobilize efforts in the USA please see <http://wecaninternational.org/north-american-regional-convening>

<https://wecaninternational.wordpress.com/2015/04/02/san-francisco-bay-area-refinery-corridor-healing-walks/>

April 4, 2015

What the climate movement must learn from religion

By George Marshall
The Guardian

When preaching to the unconverted, activists need to offer the road to Damascus, not guilt and blame

Last September 40,000 people attended London's largest ever climate march. This was a big achievement for an issue that struggles to catch people's attention. After all, as psychologists point out, it is notoriously hard to mobilise people around issues that are invisible, uncertain, set in the future and require them to make sacrifices.

Or is it? This Easter, more than [2 million people will attend church in Britain](#) to celebrate the Christian resurrection. They will agree to constrain their most primal drives in return for long-term rewards that are not just uncertain but fundamentally unknowable.

Put this way it seems obvious that the climate movement might learn some important lessons from religions – the world's oldest and, in many countries, fastest growing movements. But to say so is anathema and contravenes two rigidly policed boundaries: one between science and faith, and the other between liberal environmentalism and conservative religions. Climate scientists are particularly keen to keep well away from the language of belief. Australia's chief scientist, Ian Chubb, complains: "I am asked every day 'do you believe in climate change?' But it's not a belief. It's an understanding and interpretation of the evidence."

Evidence, though, comes in many forms. Social research shows clearly that the scientific data of climate change has proven unable to galvanise action. Cognitive psychology, supported in recent years by brain neuro-imaging, provides plentiful evidence that our analytic reasoning may accept the data but that we are only compelled to act by emotional triggers based on our values and core identity.

“Belief” is a poisoned word, mocked by sceptical pundits like Nigel Lawson who calls climate change a “new religion” Comparing empirical science with spiritual revelation is absurd and denigrates both sides. [Climate change](#) is not a belief. But it is a conviction: a condition of strongly held opinion, attained through a process of evaluation, leading to a commitment. We know virtually nothing about how people achieve their climate conviction because scientists and activists always assume that it is absorbed, as though through osmosis, by reading a book or watching a documentary. If Christianity were promoted like climate change, all it would need would be a few Gideon’s Bibles and a website.

However, religions understand the process of conviction very well. They have to. The world’s great religions are the winners from thousands of competing religions that managed to find the formulae for moving, exciting and persuading people.

Few have continued the experiments more consistently than the evangelical preachers who compete every day in the cultural marketplace for new converts and donors. Among them is Joel Hunter, the charismatic pastor of Northland church, the 30th largest “megachurch” in the USA.

Hunter preaches often, over the objections of his conservative church members, that climate change is a threat to God’s creation, which he shares with them as a personal “epiphany”. Hunter is an exceptionally skilled social organiser – having built his own congregation to over 15,000 – and enthusiastically accepted my invitation to draw out some key lessons for the climate movement.

For Hunter conviction needs to be carefully nurtured. The creation of a supportive community is essential. Only with this can people openly express their doubts and be offered help to “walk through it together”. He then brings people to a moment of choice and invites them to make a public commitment. In evangelical crusades people are called upon to step forward to accept a change in their life – what Billy Graham called the “altar call”. Finally, Hunter says, demonstrating this commitment to the unconvinced should then become a central part of people’s activism.

John Houghton is the founding co-chair of Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change and a Methodist lay preacher. In 2002 he created an “altar call” for US evangelical leaders – many of them deeply sceptical about climate change – following a week of scientific study and prayer at Oxford University. Among those attending was Richard Cizik, then the lead political spokesperson for the National Association of Evangelicals, and one of the most powerful figures in the Christian right. To the horror of his colleagues, when Cizik returned he began talking about his “road to Damascus conversion to climate change” [all over the US media](#). Like Houghton, Professor Brian Hoskins, the director of the [Grantham Institute for Climate Change](#), [argues that scientific information needs this transformative moment](#). “Often what we do is provide the landscape in which Saint Paul can have his moment. We are creating the ether in which people can have that illumination.”

Illumination? Conversion? Witness? Epiphany? These words never appear in the discussions of how we might engage people with climate change. Campaigners adopt some of the components – attending a march is a form of public commitment – but without understanding the entire

package. Our websites and blogs proliferate, but we invest little in building a real-life community. We talk incessantly with each other but avoid looking beyond our own tribe.

Because environmentalists do not recognise conviction, we do not recognise despair or grief. We have contempt for doubt and no one is ever at hand to “walk through it together”. We expect people to deal with their hopes and fears in isolation, constrained by a socially policed silence and given no encouragement other than a few energy-saving consumer choices and the odd petition. Nor is there any discussion of forgiveness for ourselves or our forebears. As Hunter pointed out to me, we give people a heavy moral load of guilt, responsibility and blame, but no way out. The critics are right in this regard – if climate change really were [a religion, it would be a wretched one](#), offering guilt, blame and fear but with no recourse to salvation or forgiveness.

Our understanding of climate change is built on scientific evidence, not faith. The faith displayed in the churches, mosques, and temples on every street is built on a deep understanding of human drives and emotions. Only when we put these different parts of our psyche together can we achieve change; to say to anyone who will listen: “I’ve heard the science, I’ve weighed up the evidence. Now I’m convinced. Join me.”

<http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2015/apr/04/climate-change-campaigners-evangelism-religion-activism>

April 8, 2015

The Church Should Lead, Not Follow on Climate Justice

By [Tim DeChristopher](#)
EcoWatch

Recently, there has been a growing discussion of [climate change](#) as a moral issue, both in academia and in religious communities. This past fall I spoke at three religion and climate change conferences in as many months, including a conference at Harvard Divinity School, “Spiritual and Sustainable: Religion Responds to Climate Change,” and in June 2015 I will join many global thinkers at a process theology conference on climate change in Claremont, California.

The highly anticipated encyclical from [Pope Francis](#) on climate change will undoubtedly contribute and bring attention to this discourse. Frequently, however, the acknowledgment that climate change is a moral issue on which religious people should engage is the end of the conversation. There has not been nearly enough discussion about what it means to engage with this moral challenge. We have not yet answered how and where we should be taking our stand in response to climate change. I argue that when religious people answer the call of the climate crisis, we must bring real moral leadership to the climate justice movement.

The first kind of engagement with the climate crisis is usually a change in consumer behavior, reducing one's personal carbon footprint. In our consumer-focused society, it is not surprising that the first obvious role to which we turn is that of a consumer. We see thousands of advertisements a day that remind us we are consumers. So when we seek to make an impact, we immediately think of our power as consumers. After first changing our personal carbon footprints, we then turn to our collective consumption and try to impact our organizational carbon footprint. In the buildup to the pope's encyclical, I've already heard some talk about getting Catholic churches to weatherize their buildings and put solar panels on their roofs.

This is useful and important work, but, as the history of the climate movement demonstrates, this obsession over consumer behavior has limited benefit and tends to reinforce the mindset that created the problem in the first place. We got to this point of environmental crisis by "buying" into the notion that our value as people lies in our role as consumers. Furthermore, this focus on consumer activism naturally becomes a rich person's movement. The mantra of "vote with your dollars" means that those without many votes (dollars) don't matter very much.

Part of the role of the church is to remind us that we are more than consumers. Like many organizations, churches can bring to life our role as citizens, community members and family members. In addition, churches are uniquely suited to develop our identities as children of God, pieces of an interdependent web of existence, or bearers of divine sparks of creativity. Connecting with these nonconsumer ways of being in the world is an adequate definition of empowerment, which is the basis of any social movement. A movement empowered by the elevation of these nonconsumer identities is a necessity for the revolutionary change that the climate crisis demands of our energy, political and social systems.

Thus far, religious communities have primarily engaged with climate activism by getting behind the climate movement. When 350.org launches a divestment campaign, churches and denominations get on board to divest their endowments. When [Bill McKibben](#) asks clergy to participate in civil disobedience, they show up with their collars on. But waiting to be told what to do is not moral leadership. As a veteran of the climate movement, I suggest that we don't need religious communities merely to join the climate movement. We need religious communities to lead, challenge and deepen the climate movement.

The first imperative of moral leadership in the climate movement is to speak the hard truths about the nature of our challenge. Implicit in the idea of climate justice is the goal of keeping most fossil fuel reserves in the ground. There may be a way to do that while still ensuring the profits of the corporations that expect to extract those fossil fuels, and certain misguided initiatives like the United States Climate Action Partnership have pursued that agenda. But what separates the climate justice movement from other climate-related players is the mission of keeping those fossil fuels in the ground *without* guaranteeing future profits to the corporations who have already profited from exploitation.

This means that our agenda in the climate justice movement involves costing the richest and most politically powerful corporations in the world trillions of dollars in lost future profits. Keeping those fossil fuels in the ground also means costing some of the individuals at the top of that industry, like the Koch brothers, billions of dollars in expected profits. It is worth

remembering that because of its structural nature, this is an industry that has killed for profit throughout its history. In my home state of West Virginia, which has been extracting fossil fuels longer than anywhere else in this country, coal has cost countless lives and has left the state as the [least livable in the nation](#). As the impacts of climate change are increasingly felt, fossil fuels cost more lives around the world every year.

Not only has the fossil fuel industry continued trading human lives for profit, but, since it is difficult to convince free people to poison their own water sources or blow up their own backyards, it has increasingly killed democracy in order to keep killing people for profit. The exploits of the [Koch brothers](#) in this area are well known, and we as a nation have normalized the way that oil companies leverage our government to launch wars and overthrow governments that are not conducive to extraction. In Colorado, where [citizens launched a ballot initiative](#) to give local municipalities a say about fracking in their towns, Anadarko and other fracking firms pledged \$50 million to fight the push for local democracy. From Nigeria to Ecuador, the oil industry has proven itself willing to assassinate activists who stand in the way of exploitation.

In short, the fossil fuel industry has made it quite clear that they will not relinquish those trillions in future profits without an intense fight. To be at all serious about climate justice means being willing to engage in a real struggle that will inevitably demand real sacrifices. Moral leadership in this movement requires admitting the truth that if we are at all successful in undermining the future profits of the fossil fuel industry, there will be a backlash that will likely cost some of us our lives. Regardless of what roles we play in the movement or what tactics we use, if we are to be truly effective, we will be drawing a target on our backs at which the fossil fuel industry will take aim. If we intend to take a stand against that kind of structural evil, we will have to be standing on solid rock.

Compounding this challenge of getting in the way of the profits of the richest and most ruthless corporations is the fact that we need to do so during a time of corporate ascendancy, when both parties of the United States government are beholden to corporations. As Naomi Klein argues so forcefully in her 2014 book, [This Changes Everything: Capitalism vs. the Climate](#), the ideological victory of free-market fundamentalism is our major obstacle to making the changes that are necessary to address the climate crisis. Part of the reason that mainstream climate organizations have embraced false solutions is that adequate climate solutions are politically unfeasible in our current system of corporate rule. The work of revolutionizing our energy economy must also involve ending corporate personhood and creating a democracy in the process. If we are going to take a stand for that kind of revolutionary change, we will have to be standing on solid rock.

In addition, we are no longer tackling this challenge from the position we were in in 1992, when we had the opportunity to make a smooth transition to an ideal, healthy world. We are doing this work in 2015, after decades of emissions increases, despite the warnings. This means that, even if we are as successful as possible at reducing emissions, we will still face massive impacts and hardships on a scale likely to be catastrophic to our global civilization. If history is any guide for these times of desperation, those in power will probably use desperate measures to hold on to their power by scapegoating certain classes of people and by pitting us against one another. I am convinced that our greatest vulnerabilities to climate change are not physical conditions like low-

lying cities, but rather our social divisions—classism, racism, and sexism. These divisions make us vulnerable to responding to crisis with fear and hatred rather than solidarity, with competition rather than cooperation. These are the scenarios that turn hardship to horror. This means that even as we revolutionize our energy, economic, and political systems, we must do so in a way that also dismantles classism, white supremacy, patriarchy, xenophobia, and other social evils. If we are going to stand against that kind of structural evil, we will have to be standing on solid rock.

These necessary goals are so bold as to seem unreasonable. As has been the case in every social movement that has struggled for fundamental change, there will undoubtedly be setbacks and points at which there can be no reasonable expectation of success. The movements that persevere are those which find a form of hope, a reason to continue the struggle, even in those dark times. The conventional wisdom of the climate movement is that optimism is the only form of hope, for without optimism people will have no reason to continue the struggle. But optimism is a silly and fragile kind of hope. This is the most important point around which religious leaders must not *follow* the movement, but must provide moral leadership. I believe that a major reason why religious communities have played an important role in so many social movements is that in those moments of despair, when optimism is ridiculous, religious people base their hope on faith and continue the struggle. In those dark moments we continue to struggle for justice, because that is what it means to be faithful to the people we love, to be faithful to the world we love, and to be faithful to a God who loves the world.

Reconnecting and reaffirming those loves is the critical work of moral leadership in this movement. As much as we need to fully recognize the harsh truth of the nature of our challenge, we must just as fully affirm with gratitude the goodness and beauty that we love in the world, in God, and in each other. Our faithfulness to this love becomes the bedrock of a more resilient kind of hope, a hope that doesn't bend to the winds of political feasibility. As Katy Allen, a rabbi and chaplain at Brigham and Women's Hospital, said at the recent HDS conference, "There's never a time when it's too late to redefine your hope."

As religious leaders, we are not called to be optimistic; we are called to be faithful to our love. We are called to the climate movement, not merely to add respectability with our signatures on a petition. We are called not just to provide photo ops with collars out front. As people of faith, we are called to be the rock of the climate justice movement, the solid rock of hope that remains strong on the darkest days. Let us pray we are up to the challenge.

Tim DeChristopher's article was originally published in [Harvard Divinity Bulletin](#), Winter/Spring 2015 issue. DeChristopher is a second-year master of divinity student at Harvard Divinity School, studying for Unitarian Universalist ministry. The story of his 2008 act of civil disobedience disrupting a Bureau of Land Management oil and gas auction is chronicled in the film Bidder70.

<https://ecowatch.com/2015/04/08/tim-dechrisopher-climate-change/>

April 11, 2015

Anticipating Pope Francis' Forthcoming Encyclical on the Human-Earth Relationship

By Jame Schaefer
Forum on Religion and Ecology at Yale

Momentum is building for the first encyclical dedicated to ecological and planetary problems caused by human activities. Forthcoming this summer from Pope Francis, speculation is ongoing about what he will write. According to Cardinal Peter Turkson, President of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace who prepared a first draft of the encyclical, it will focus on “human ecology” and “explore the relationship between care for creation, integral human development and concern for the poor.” The cardinal underscored the importance of Pope Francis' encyclical in light of events that are occurring this year--the Third International Conference on Financing for Development in Addis Ababa in July, the United Nations' General Assembly consideration of goals for sustainable development in September in New York City, and the Conference of the Parties to the Framework Convention on Climate Change in December in Paris. Apparently Pope Francis intends to influence these proceedings.

Read full essay:

http://fore.yale.edu/files/Schaefer--Anticipating_Francis_Encyclical.pdf

April 15, 2015

Pope Francis throws the weight of his office behind tackling climate change

By [David Gibson](#)
Religion News Service

NEW YORK (RNS) The Vatican is set to host a major conference on climate change this month that will feature leading researchers on global warming and an opening address by U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon.

The meeting, which the Vatican detailed on its website late Tuesday (April 14), is another sign of Pope Francis' “green agenda” and another potential red flag for conservatives who are already alarmed over an expected papal teaching document on the environment that is scheduled for release this summer.

The one-day summit on April 28 will also include participants from major world religions and aims to “elevate the debate on the moral dimensions of protecting the environment in advance of the papal encyclical,” as the papal document is known.

Another goal, says [a statement on a Vatican website](#), is to highlight “the intrinsic connection between respect for the environment and respect for people — especially the poor, the excluded, victims of human trafficking and modern slavery, children, and future generations.”

In addition to the keynote speech by Ban, participants will hear from Jeffrey Sachs, a prominent American economist and director of the Earth Institute at Columbia University. Church sources said that leading scientists in the climate change field will also take part.

Cardinal Peter Turkson is leading the drafting process of Francis' encyclical on the environment, which is expected to come out in June or July.

http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Cardinal_Tukson_987.jpg

Also addressing the conference will be Cardinal Peter Turkson of Ghana, a top Vatican official who is leading the drafting process of Francis' encyclical on the environment, which is expected to come out in June or July.

An encyclical is one of the most authoritative documents a pope can issue, and church sources say this one has been [the focus of intense lobbying](#) by Catholics, especially American conservatives who believe that climate change is being overhyped or that human activity is not a factor and that remedies may do more harm than good.

Others simply believe that Francis — who signaled that environmental protection would be a hallmark of his papacy when he took the name of the unofficial patron saint of ecology, Francis of Assisi — should not be weighing in on issues that touch on technical and scientific matters that some contend are still debatable.

Francis “is an ideologue and a meddlesome egoist,” Maureen Mullarkey wrote in [an especially trenchant column](#) at the conservative journal First Things about what she called the pope's “premature, intemperate policy endorsements” on the environment.

Other Catholic conservatives have delivered similar critiques, while some, such as [author George Weigel](#) and Princeton political philosopher [Robert George](#), have sought to downplay the import of any statements the pope might make on the environment.

The Vatican's Council for Justice and Peace, which is led by Turkson and is spearheading the drafting of the encyclical, has been a special focus of lobbying by climate change skeptics who hope to influence the final version, church sources say.

Liberals and environmentalists, [as well as the Obama administration](#), have embraced the pontiff's “green” agenda and are hoping Francis will give support to their side.

Francis himself does not appear to have heeded the critics so far.

Though his two immediate predecessors, Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI and St. John Paul II, also spoke out strongly on the Christian duty to protect the environment, Francis has done so more frequently and forcefully, and at a time when climate change has become a hot-button political issue.

“(I)t is man who has slapped nature in the face,” [Francis told reporters in January](#). “We have in a sense taken over nature,” he said, adding that he believed global warming is “mostly” the result

of human activity. In February, he [said](#) “a Christian who does not protect creation ... is a Christian who does not care about the work of God.”

Francis has also expressed disappointment in the last round of international negotiations to reduce greenhouse gases, calling them “nothing much.” He has said he wants his encyclical to come out in time to influence the next round, set for Paris in November.

This month’s Vatican summit on the environment appears to be another effort to try to press the pope’s agenda, and it’s a topic that’s likely to remain on the front burner as Francis prepares to make his first U.S. visit in September, which will include an address to the U.N. General Assembly in New York.

<http://www.religionnews.com/2015/04/15/pope-francis-throws-weight-office-behind-tackling-climate-change/>

April 15, 2015

Panel contemplates why the papal encyclical on the environment will matter

By [Jamie Manson](#)

National Catholic Reporter

[New Haven, Conn.](#) - As anticipation builds in progressive Catholic circles about [the forthcoming papal encyclical on the environment](#), Mary Evelyn Tucker and John Grim, co-directors of the Yale Forum on Religion and Ecology, are busy contemplating its potential impact on stakeholders outside of the Catholic church, including environmental scientists, lawmakers, and leaders of world religions.

To explore the possibilities, Tucker and Grim gathered a panel of experts across various disciplines to discuss "[Pope Francis and the Environment: Why his new climate encyclical matters](#)" last week at Yale University.

"This encyclical is by no means the first word the Catholic church has spoken on the environment," Teresa Berger, professor of Catholic theology at Yale Divinity School, reminded the audience in her introductory statement. "But it has not been spoken of before in an encyclical."

The church's previous teachings seem to have borne some fruit in the consciences of Catholics in the United States. Peter Crane, dean of the Yale School of Forestry & Environmental Studies, said that [70 percent of U.S. Catholics believe](#) that global warming is happening versus 57 percent of non-Catholic Christians. Catholics also express higher support for climate change policies than other Christians.

Crane also noted that the timing of the encyclical is of crucial significance to the global discussion of the environmental crisis. It will appear just months before the pope addresses the United Nations during his visit to the U.S. in late September and, even more importantly, before a U.N. climate change conference, to be held in early December in Paris.

Crane said the encyclical does not come in isolation, but is part of a process of putting the pieces back together after the 2009 U.N. climate conference in Copenhagen "did not live up to what we hoped it might."

The encyclical, he said, will "give new prominence to the ethical and moral dimensions of environmental degradation," moving it beyond the usual focus on science, technology and economics.

Speaking to the ethical dimensions of the forthcoming document, Margaret Farley, Gilbert L. Stark Professor Emerita of Christian Ethics at Yale Divinity School, told the audience that encyclicals do not necessarily teach absolute doctrine, but rather offer an articulation of religious and moral understandings and aim to clarify religious beliefs and ethical issues.

While not every reader may want to act in accordance with the encyclical's teaching, Farley said, "attention will be paid to what is offered. Dialogue may ensue. New experiences of moral claims will awaken within us." It also has the potential to be a significant contribution to the church's 125-year-old tradition of Catholic social teaching, she said.

The encyclical may even impact the way in which the hierarchy views the environmental degradation caused by overpopulation, as well as "women's burdens which escalate with the devastation of resources of water and food."

Though Farley refrained from saying that a change in the Catholic church's teaching on contraception would be key to addressing overpopulation, she did note that the encyclical could go a long way to understanding and remedying these kinds of challenges facing women and families.

"If it fails to do so, the crisis before us may only increase," she concluded.

More than two-thirds of the world's population lives in Asia, which is where Tucker has spent much of her career as an expert in world religions and ecology. She said watching the rapid changes in industrial development in China and India over the past 40 years has motivated her passion for environmental justice.

"There are over 2 billion people yearning for the fruits of modernization, but the cost has been immense: pollution of water, air and soil," she said. "The health of our planet is gravely stressed, especially our ecosystems."

Tucker said she believes the encyclical "will awaken an even broader religious response among world's traditions," including Hinduism, Jainism, Buddhism and Confucianism.

Pope Francis, she said, will "urge leaders to join him in speaking out about the human suffering being caused by climate change, especially for the poor. This will encourage religious leaders to address these issues in the language of their own traditions."

In places like the Himalayas, religious leaders are already taking significant action to address climate change, said Dekila Chungyalpa, a visiting fellow at the School of Forestry and Environmental Science.

Seven major rivers are sourced from the Himalayas, including the Ganges, Indus, Yangtze and Yellow. As a result, its inhabitants are keenly aware of the impact that climate change is already having on flooding, wildlife, and tree-line shifting.

Unlike in the U.S., where there is still significant doubt and disbelief about climate change, Chungyalpa says that in the Himalayas, there is "too much awareness."

"In most places I've worked around the world, people believe it is climate change that is causing these problems," she said.

This often leads to what she called "a state of paralysis" because people do not know who should be responsible for the crisis. In order to empower communities, Chungyalpa has been educating Buddhist monks and nuns in monasteries throughout the Himalayas with information about global warming and environmental science.

Some of these monasteries have 5,000 monks and nuns, which creates a massive carbon footprint, she said.

As a result of Chungyalpa's project, 55 monasteries are now participating in this "eco-monastic" movement. And their moral leadership, she said, has had a ripple effect: When monasteries in Nepal decided to put solar panels on top of their temples, neighboring shops and restaurants did the same.

The encyclical, she said, is important because it widens the community of support around fighting climate change. This is a "moment of convergence" among religious leaders, she noted: "We're seeing a chorus of voices coming together around the world."

One place we haven't seen voices come together to confront climate change is in the U.S. Congress. Douglas Kysar, a law professor at Yale Law School, said he hopes Pope Francis' encyclical will help our elected officials seriously consider our obligation to planetary stewardship, particularly the pope's idea of an "integral economy that encompasses the concerns of economic justice, true human development, and global solidarity."

Policies meant to address climate change have failed, Kysar said, because "the process has been held hostage by this country, which has found its own political process held hostage by economic interests."

An economic system centered on the value of money "needs to plunder nature," Kysar told the audience. The current system, he said, "destroys creation and ravages hope."

For the struggle against global warming to be effective, therefore, we need both a transformed economic system and a transformation of human consciousness.

"This encyclical will hope to diagnose and minister to those underlying pathologies," Kysar concluded. "So that if we do indeed heal the planet, we may also have a humanity worthy of inheriting it."

The full video of the panel discussion is available [on the website of the Yale Forum on Religion and Ecology](#).

[Jamie L. Manson is *NCR* books editor. She received her Master of Divinity degree from Yale Divinity School, where she studied Catholic theology and sexual ethics. Her email address is jmanson@ncronline.org.]

<http://ncronline.org/blogs/grace-margins/panel-contemplates-why-papal-encyclical-environment-will-matter>

April 27, 2015

Pope Francis Steps Up Campaign on Climate Change, to Conservatives' Alarm

By Coral Davenport and Laurie Goodstein
New York Times

WASHINGTON — Since his first homily in 2013, [Pope Francis](#) has preached about the need to protect the earth and all of creation as part of a broad message on the environment. It has caused little controversy so far.

But now, as Francis prepares to deliver what is likely to be a highly influential encyclical this summer on environmental degradation and the effects of human-caused [climate change](#) on the poor, he is alarming some conservatives in the United States who are loath to see the Catholic Church reposition itself as a mighty voice in a cause they do not believe in.

As part of the effort for the encyclical, top [Vatican](#) officials will hold a summit meeting Tuesday to build momentum for a campaign by Francis to urge world leaders to enact a sweeping United Nations [climate change](#) accord in Paris in December. The accord would for the first time commit every nation to enact tough new laws to cut the emissions that cause global warming.

The [Vatican](#) summit meeting will focus on the links between poverty, economic development and climate change, with speeches and panel discussions by climate scientists and religious leaders, and economists like Jeffrey Sachs of Columbia. The United Nations secretary general, Ban Ki-moon, who is leading efforts to forge the Paris accord, will deliver the opening address.

Vatican officials, who have spent more than a year helping Francis prepare his message, have convened several meetings already on the topic. Last month, they met with the administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency, Gina McCarthy.

In the United States, the encyclical will be accompanied by a 12-week campaign, now being prepared with the participation of some Catholic bishops, to raise the issue of climate change and environmental stewardship in sermons, homilies, news media interviews and letters to newspaper editors, said Dan Misleh, executive director of the Catholic Climate Covenant in Washington.

But the effort is already angering a number of American conservatives, among them members of the Heartland Institute, a libertarian group partly funded by the Charles G. Koch Foundation, run by the billionaire industrialist Koch brothers, who oppose climate policy.

“The Holy Father is being misled by ‘experts’ at the United Nations who have proven unworthy of his trust,” Joseph Bast, the president of the [Heartland Institute](#), said in a statement. “Though [Pope Francis](#)’ heart is surely in the right place, he would do his flock and the world a disservice by putting his moral authority behind the United Nations’ unscientific agenda on the climate.”

The institute plans to hold a news conference and panel event in Rome on Tuesday in protest of the Vatican summit meeting.

But climate policy advocates see a scheduled address by the pope to Congress in September as a potent moment — about 30 percent of members of Congress are Catholics, more than belong to any other religion, according to [a study published this year by the Pew Research Center](#).

Speaker John A. Boehner, Republican of Ohio, invited the pope to speak to Congress, but some Catholics say that Mr. Boehner should prepare for some uncomfortable moments. Mr. Boehner, who is Catholic, has often criticized the Obama administration for what he calls its “job killing” environmental agenda.

“I think Boehner was out of his mind to invite the pope to speak to Congress,” said the Rev. Thomas Reese, an analyst at the National Catholic Reporter. “Can you imagine what the Republicans will do when he says, ‘You’ve got to do something about global warming’?”

In addition, a number of Catholics — including Jeb Bush, Marco Rubio, Bobby Jindal, Chris Christie and Rick Santorum — are gearing up to compete for the Republican presidential nomination, and most of them question the science of human-caused climate change.

Several conservative Catholic intellectuals who expect the pope’s message to bolster the vast majority of scientists who hold that climate change is induced by human activity, including Robert P. George, a Princeton law professor, have published articles reminding Catholics that papal pronouncements on science are not necessarily sound or binding.

Maureen Mullarkey, a painter and writer, said in the conservative journal [First Things](#) that “Francis sullies his office by using demagogic formulations to bully the populace into reflexive climate action with no more substantive guide than theologized propaganda.”

Timothy E. Wirth, vice chairman of the United Nations Foundation, said: “We’ve never seen a pope do anything like this. No single individual has as much global sway as he does. What he is doing will resonate in the government of any country that has a leading Catholic constituency.”

Francis, however, is not the first pope to push an environmental message. His predecessor, Pope Benedict XVI, called the “green pope” by some, wrote about the environment and the impact of climate change in documents that have been collected in a book, “The Environment.” But Catholic and climate policy experts acknowledge that those works had little substantive impact on global warming policy.

Francis’ policy moves on climate change, particularly his use of the encyclical, go far beyond what has come before. Catholics point to other papal encyclicals that have had public policy impacts: Pope Leo XIII’s 1891 encyclical on labor and workers’ rights is believed to have spurred the workers’ rights movement and led to the creation of labor unions.

“I think this moves the needle,” said Charles J. Reid Jr., a professor at the University of St. Thomas School of Law. “Benedict was an ivory-tower academic. He wrote books and hoped they would persuade by reason. But Pope Francis knows how to sell his ideas. He is engaged in the marketplace.”

Francis, who chose the name of St. Francis of Assisi, the patron saint of animals and the environment, has had far more influence on the church and public. Born in Argentina, Francis draws cheering crowds from around the world and millions of followers to his social media accounts. He has been embraced for his humility, antipoverty agenda, progressive statements on social issues and efforts to reform the Vatican bureaucracy.

This month he said in a Twitter post: “We need to care for the earth so that it may continue, as God willed, to be a source of life for the entire human family.”

The pope’s influence on the Paris climate accord may be strongest in Latin America. In past years, Latin American countries have resisted efforts to enact climate policy, arguing that developing economies should not have to cut emissions while developed economies continue to pollute.

But over the past year, some Latin American governments have signaled a willingness to step forward on climate policy, and this year Mexico became one of the first nations to submit a plan ahead of the Paris talks.

“This pope is more than just a church leader — he is a political leader, particularly in Latin America,” said Romina Picolotti, president of the [Center for Human Rights and Environment](#) in Argentina. “Youth in Latin America are really following him closely.”

http://www.nytimes.com/2015/04/28/world/europe/pope-francis-steps-up-campaign-on-climate-change-to-conservatives-alarm.html?emc=eta1&_r=1

April 27, 2015

Pope Francis poised to weigh in on climate change with major document

By Michelle Boorstein
Washington Post

The largely secular climate movement is about to get what some predict will be a historic boost from an intriguing source: Pope Francis.

Francis is putting the final touches on what may be the most authoritative papal teaching ever on the environment, a topic bound up with economics, global development and politics and thus very controversial. Even though no one outside Francis's inner circle has seen the document — called an encyclical — it's already being lambasted by some religious and political conservatives and held up by environmentalists as a potential turning point in their movement.

The encyclical is expected to be published in early summer and, church historians say, represents the first time in memory that such an important papal writing is being timed by a pope to influence a civil process — in this case, a major U.N. summit in December on climate change.

Based on remarks and writings by the pope and his close advisers, most pope-watchers think Francis will raise urgent concerns about global warming and highlight human impact on climate change. More broadly, they expect Francis to frame with new emphasis the Earth's health as a core Catholic social justice concern, up there with topics such as poverty and abortion.

Global inequality and the destruction of the environment “are the greatest threats we face as a human family today,” [Cardinal Peter Turkson](#), a Vatican official who helped write the first draft of the encyclical, said in a March lecture seen as a preview of the document. The pope, Turkson said, “is not making some political comment about the relative merits of capitalism and communism. . . he is pointing to the ominous signs in nature that suggest that humanity may now have tilled too much and kept too little. ”

After decades of secular campaigns that failed to move the needle significantly, environmentalists are optimistic about the potential of having religious groups more fully on board in combatting global warming. They have spent years courting skeptical evangelicals, many of whom have begun using the term “creation care.” The recent film “Noah” was seen by many as bringing environmental religion to the big screen, but nothing has been as sweeping as a papal encyclical.

“This has the outreach potential that nothing else has had,” said Mary Evelyn Tucker, co-director of the Forum on Religion and Ecology at Yale University, one of the biggest in a cluster of new groups aimed at connecting faith communities with environmental concerns.

The environmental movement, Tucker said, has been until now largely focused on finding secular solutions in law, science and politics – not ethics and religion. “This is a new moment, when scientists, lawyers and policy people are saying: We need this moral transformation.”

Environmentalism and global warming are not new topics for the Catholic Church. Church leaders — including Pope Benedict — in the last couple decades have been slowly connecting the environmental, moral and economic costs of globalization. However, these connections have never been put forth fully in an encyclical, considered uniquely authoritative in Catholicism.

But it remains to be seen *how* Francis will link the environment to ethics and theology. That's where controversy may ensue.

Theologians say he's likely to place environmental issues into a broader framework he and Benedict have been calling integral ecology, the idea that God wrote a plan for how all living things fit together, a plan that calls for not only less waste, pollution and income disparity but for traditional marriage and sexual mores.

But will Francis vaguely mention sex and family as part of the "integral ecology" or hit it explicitly, as Benedict did? How strongly will he make the case that humans are causing global warming - a case that many Republicans and many conservative Christians don't buy, think is dangerous to the free market and don't think a priest - even a pope - is qualified to make? And will he break new theological ground in how he frames care for the environment - describing it not only as a means of helping man (who Genesis says God meant to have "dominion" over other living things) but with value independent of humans?

These are sweeping, controversial questions. And because Francis is a figure not only for Catholics his answers have the potential to impact development and politics way outside the Catholic community.

Also unknown is how, specifically, Francis will urge his church to respond. Will bishops be expected to prioritize the topic in their investments, political efforts, sermons?

Indeed, Catholicism has a big stake in this encyclical. Such documents are considered among the most authoritative teachings of the church, but in recent decades Catholics regularly blow off their mandates on topics like contraception and divorce. Francis's writing will push the question: How much influence can even this pope have on modern behavior — Catholic and otherwise?

Skeptics have been speaking out for months on both theological and scientific fronts.

Among the most prominent U.S. Christian conservatives is Princeton University Professor Robert George, a Catholic who wrote in the well-respected Christian conservative journal *First Things* that Catholics are required to follow the pope's general message on morals — in this case, to care for the environment — but not when he wanders into areas such as scientific fact.

"The Pope has no special knowledge, insight or teaching authority pertaining to matters of empirical fact of the sort investigated by, for example, physicists and biologists." [George wrote in a widely cited article](#) earlier this year. "Pope Francis does not know whether, or to what extent, the climate changes (in various directions) of the past several decades are anthropogenic — and God is not going to tell him."

[Maureen Mullarkey](#), another First Things writer, put it more bluntly: “He is an ideologue and a meddling egoist,” she said, citing Francis’s involvement in the Middle East and US-Cuba relations. “Megalomania sends him galloping into geopolitical – and now meteorological – thickets.”

While polls show significant [concern about](#) global climate change in most countries, researchers have found that [a country’s level of religiosity](#) has almost no relationship to environmental views.

That’s not as true for more traditional believers, particularly evangelical Christians, who have long been wary of environmentalism, which they worry is Earth-worship that has gone overboard and become essentially its own religion.

Christiana Peppard, a theologian who focuses on environmental ethics at Fordham University, predicted Francis may break ground in potentially two areas.

He will frame environmental concerns other popes have voiced in recent decades in an extremely focused way: how they impact the poor. This could include references to the ways in which woes like poor water quality and weather disasters disproportionately harm the world’s poor. And, Peppard predicted, he may take existing church teaching on the environment, which has always been focused on “effects on the human and the dignity of the human” and possibly posit that the environment “is a gift from God, and that humans have duties to creation as such, not just in light of human concerns.”

These are the areas that have the potential for controversy – how strongly he links human behavior to climate change and whether he sets forth an idea of creation that doesn’t have humans alone at the center.

Chad Pecknold, a theologian at Catholic University, predicted Francis will do neither, particularly the former.

“The moment he would make a strong scientific claim about humans’ role, those Catholics who would dissent from that view would have a claim within the tradition to say the pope has overstepped his bounds,” which would squander a chance to broaden how believers think about the environment, Pecknold said.

He believes Francis will characterize “the human role” in global warming in Biblical terms: That our disconnect with the environment began with Adam and Eve, and the “turning away from our dependence on the order of Creation.” That turning away would include divorce, gay marriage, “and most especially abortion and euthanasia as evidence of a ‘throwaway culture,’” Pecknold said, using a term Francis often says about everything from treatment of the elderly to addicts.

However given Turkson’s and Francis’s previous comments about the human impact on climate change, it seems likely the pope will prescribe both policy and spiritual remedies.

U.S. politics-watchers are anxious to see how top Catholic Republicans from House Speaker John Boehner to potential presidential contenders including Jeb Bush, Rick Santorum and Marco Rubio respond to the encyclical, which will be typically Catholic if it emphasizes as expected major limits to the free market.

Robert Nelson, a University of Maryland economist who focuses on environmentalism and religion, predicted the encyclical “will go over well everywhere except with Republicans.” However, he said, a group that often talks about ethics being too absent from public life could find themselves tempted by a pope putting care for creation back into a traditional framework.

Anthony Annett is a climate change advisor and Catholic writer brought on to the prominent Earth Institute at Columbia University to help bridge the gap between environmentalists and religious communities. Considering Francis chose to name his papacy after the patron saint of animals and the environment and is the most retweeted person on the planet, expectations among environmentalists are soaring.

“I’ve never seen such buzz about a papal document in my life,” he said. “There are a lot of expectations about a document no one has actually seen. And with Francis, expect the unexpected.”

Michelle Boorstein is the Post’s religion reporter, where she reports on the busy marketplace of American religion.

http://www.washingtonpost.com/local/pope-francis-poised-to-weigh-in-on-climate-change-with-major-document/2015/04/27/d5c268b2-df81-11e4-a500-1c5bb1d8ff6a_story.html

April 28, 2015

Vatican presses politicians on climate change

By Roger Harrabin, BBC environment analyst
BBC

The Vatican Science Academy has challenged politicians to end their "infatuation" with a form of economic growth that is ruining the Earth.

The academy said that nations were measuring their wealth by GDP (Gross Domestic Product), taking no account of the harm caused by business practises.

It urged countries to act as stewards of God's creation.

The statements are likely to influence the Pope's coming Encyclical on climate change.

An Cambridge Economics professor, Partha Dasgupta, told the academy's climate conference in St Peter's Basilica: "GDP is a disgraceful index because it does not count depreciation of our assets - including damage to Mother Nature, the most fundamental asset we have."

Cardinal Peter Turkson, who helped write the coming Encyclical - an official statement - said: "For humans to degrade the integrity of the Earth by constant changes in its climate; by stripping its natural forests; to contaminate Earth's water, land and air with poisonous substances - all of these are sins.

"There is an all-embracing imperative to protect our garden, our hope. We must move away from our unthinking infatuation with GDP."

Uncertainties

The academy heard speech after speech urging the moral case for protecting the climate for future generations.

Meanwhile, a small group funded by a US climate contrarian body in Chicago has been in Rome rallying against the Vatican's climate drive. One of the participants, Christopher Monckton, said the Pope "should listen to both sides of the scientific argument... not only people of one, narrow, poisonous political and scientific viewpoint".

Inside the conference itself, the astronomer Lord Rees, former President of the UK's Royal Society, was putting just such a balanced view.

He acknowledged uncertainties over climate science, especially over how water vapour and clouds would react to warming.

He said some people were willing to bet on a low level of warming, mitigated later in the century by new technologies more affordable in a richer economy. But, he said, the risks of triggering an irreversible catastrophe lasting thousands of years was too great.

"It would be shameful if our inheritance was a depleted and hazardous world," he said.

The Church is hoping to make an impact in a year of key UN meetings on Sustainable Development Goals, development finance and climate.

The Encyclical is expected to describe action to cut emissions as "a moral and religious imperative, highlighting the intrinsic connection between respect for the environment and respect for people - especially the poor, children, and future generations".

The Pope is hoping to build agreement among all religions on the moral obligation to protect the environment.

Bishop Marcelo Sanchez Sorondo, who heads the Academy, said the Encyclical would not be the highest level of proclamation from the Pope, which is reserved for issues of Faith.

But he said it was important for all the world's 1.2 billion Catholics to take it seriously. If any Catholic wanted to ignore it they would need "very good reasons - based not on personal or political opinion, but on science".

For some Catholics, this may prove an unwelcome Papal intervention into a highly politicised subject.

But the aid agency Cafod said its poll with YouGov showed the vast majority (70%) of Catholics say their community will heed the message of the Pope on climate change.

Whether it will prove persuasive for American Republican lawmakers - around a third of whom are Catholic - is yet to be seen.

<http://www.bbc.com/news/science-environment-32487874>

April 30, 2015

Should the Thirty Meter Telescope Be Built?

PBS Hawaii

Construction of a Thirty Meter Telescope on Mauna Kea has been brought to a temporary halt as protests over building the 18-story high telescope stretch across the globe. Plans to build the \$1.4 billion telescope have been seven years in the making, but opposition only gained momentum recently amid growing concern over further astronomy-related development on land Native Hawaiians consider sacred. Malia Mattoch moderates the discussion.

Tonight's panelists include (In alphabetical order):

Paul Coleman, Astrophysicist, Institute for Astronomy, University of Hawaii-Manoa

Richard Ha, Hawaii Island Farmer and Businessman

Jon Osorio, Board President, KAHEA, a Hawaiian-Environmental Alliance

Kealoha Pisciotta, President, Mauna Kea Anaina Hou

INSIGHTS ON PBS HAWAII is a live public affairs show that is also live streamed on PBShawaii.org. Your questions and comments are welcome via phone, email, Twitter or live blogging. You may also email your questions ahead of time to insights@pbshawaii.org.

Watch the recording:

<http://pbshawaii.org/insights-on-pbs-hawaii-should-astronomy-related-development-on-mauna-kea-continue/>

April 30, 2015

Pope Francis has given the climate movement just what it needed — faith

By Chris Mooney
Washington Post

This week — and it still feels strange to write this — the major climate change news story came out of the Vatican.

There, at the center of global Catholicism, church leaders joined with politicians, scientists and economists to draft a [statement](#) declaring not only that climate change is a “scientific reality” but also that there’s a moral and religious responsibility to do something about it. And an even more powerful statement is expected soon from Pope Francis himself, who is slated to release a major papal encyclical on the environment this summer.

All of this is enough to make environmentalists, members of a traditionally secular movement, nearly rhapsodic. After a history of being rather too [technocratic and wonky](#), there seems to be a growing realization in green circles about the importance of an alliance with the world of faith.

This has been a long time coming. The effort to mobilize religious believers to worry about climate as part of a broader, biblically grounded “[creation care](#)” mandate has a long history (though it has traditionally focused more on evangelicals than Catholics). [Books have been written about it](#), and one of its major spokespeople — Katharine Hayhoe, an evangelical climate scientist at Texas Tech University — was named one of Time magazine’s [100 most influential people](#) last year.

And then there’s the 2014 biblical epic film “Noah,” whose director, Darren Aronofsky, called its subject the “first environmentalist.” It [grossed more than \\$300 million worldwide](#) with a message about the relationship between faith and saving the planet.

Despite all that, having Francis on board takes it all to a much higher level (pun intended). The reason, as David Roberts of Vox has written, is that it [makes the climate debate moral](#), not scientific or technocratic. And when issues are moralized, people feel before they think and refuse to compromise. It may not be what we strictly call “rational,” but it is politically powerful.

Roberts notes that there has been a long history on the left of failing to adequately moralize the climate issue — and contrasts this with the growing movement across the country in which students are pushing their universities to divest from fossil-fuel stocks (which, Roberts argues, is an inherently moral stance). Actually, though, there is another important and [oft-discussed example](#) of a time when a leader chose not to moralize the climate issue — President Obama in 2008-2010.

Those were the days, during the Great Recession, when the White House tried to persuade the world to act on climate change through a message about “green jobs.” This was about the economy, the White House told us. And, it was about advancing new technologies — smart meters and wind farms and solar panels.

What happened is that we largely got the technology — and the ever-greening economy. Many would say it was politically impossible no matter the argument, but the fact was that climate solutions couldn’t make it through Congress.

Obama II on climate change, though, has often adopted a moral framing, making sure to talk about “[our children](#),” our “[grandchildren](#)” and “[future generations](#).” It still may not be enough to get any legislation through this Congress — and in his second term, the president may be less guarded and more frank in his approach — but it also reflects a broadly shifting message. And that’s important: Obama is pursuing controversial executive action to stem climate change, and winning the public on the question will be part of the battle.

The question remains, however, why this has been so long in coming. Why have environmentalists (and their scientific allies) been so focused on talking about policies like cap-and-trade, on tracking emissions targets and parts per million, rather than moralizing the issue?

Here, I think we need to turn to the research of social scientist Jonathan Haidt of New York University, famed for his insights about the different moral triggers and motivations of liberals and conservatives. One of the messages of Haidt’s book *The Righteous Mind* is that the left and the right tend to have different moral “foundations,” by which he means that they get emotional and intense about different kinds of moral situations.

In Haidt’s analysis, it isn’t that the left (or environmental left) lacks emotionality, but rather that conservatives sense a broader suite of moral foundations related to loyalty, respect for authority, and disgust — as well as the more typically liberal moral foundations related to fairness and protecting the vulnerable from harm. Haidt suggests that this gives conservatives a political advantage — but liberals can access moral emotions, too, and that it can be very powerful when they do so.

The moral emotion that is probably most relevant to the environment is what Haidt would call [the “care/harm” foundation](#), and what many of us would simply call compassion or empathy. [Recent research](#) suggests that this emotion drives people toward environmental causes. There seems to be a deep connection between caring about other humans and then extending that to nature.

The Vatican, if the signs are to be believed, may blast this emotional channel wide open. Thus, the recent Vatican conference [statement](#) noted, “The poor and excluded face dire threats from climate disruptions, including the increased frequency of droughts, extreme storms, heat waves, and rising sea levels.” So it appears that a key part of the pope’s moral message may be that we must care for the environment because the very vulnerable depend on its sustainability and stability — for instance, how people living in low-lying areas will be exposed to greater flood risks in a future of rising seas and, maybe, stronger storms.

Another part of the moral message, as Yale Divinity School professor Teresa Berger [told me](#) recently, may involve “the pope condemning sins of exploiting the Earth.”

So it has been long coming, but pope watchers in the environmental world are watching now for very good reason. They know this is the most powerful chance in a long time to make people care, and to create political will.

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/news/energy-environment/wp/2015/04/30/pope-francis-has-given-the-climate-movement-just-what-it-needed-faith/>

April 30, 2015

Pope Francis' Encyclical on Global Warming

By Henry Auer
Global Warming Blog

Encyclicals. Pope Francis, the leader of the Roman Catholic Church, will soon issue a papal encyclical on global warming. An encyclical is a document transmitted through the church hierarchy to its 5,000 bishops, and from them to all 400,000 parish priests. In this way its contents are presented to the parishioners of every Catholic church throughout the world, about 1.2 billion people.

Encyclicals, wrote Pope Pius XII in *Humani generis*, can resolve discussion or controversy on a particular topic. [He declared](#) “...if the Supreme Pontiffs in their acts, after due consideration, express an opinion on a hitherto controversial matter, it is clear to all that this matter... cannot any longer be considered a question of free discussion among theologians.”

This statement indicates that an encyclical can resolve a controversy of doctrine by establishing the Church's position from that time forward.

Climate Change, The Loss Of Biodiversity And Deforestation. Pope Francis has consistently been concerned with the less fortunate among the world's people, including those adversely affected by climate change. For example in October 2014, speaking to landless peasants and others, [he stated](#)

“An economic system centred on the god of money needs to plunder nature to sustain the frenetic rhythm of consumption that is inherent to it. The system [is based on] an economy ... lacking in ethics.... Climate change, the loss of biodiversity and deforestation are already showing their devastating effects in the great cataclysms we witness.”

United Nations Climate Treaty. According to Bishop Marcelo Sorondo, the Vatican's Chancellor of the Pontifical Academy of Sciences, Pope Francis wants to exert a powerful influence on the convocation under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate

Change (UNFCCC) in Paris in December 2015, intended to finalize a worldwide climate treaty. It is intended to rein in emissions of greenhouse gases and provide for assistance to impoverished nations to enhance sustainable energy production. Bishop Sorondo stated

“Our academics supported the pope’s initiative to influence [upcoming] crucial decisions. The idea is to convene a meeting with leaders of the main religions to make all people aware of the state of our climate and the tragedy of social exclusion.”

Elsewhere [Bishop Sorondo ascribed](#) global warming to humanity’s use of fossil fuels.

Nurturing Creation. Pope Francis bases his concerns for the environment and global warming on the verses in Genesis dealing with creation. In May 2014 [he spoke in Rome](#), saying the “beauty of nature and the grandeur of the cosmos” are Christian virtues. He urged his listeners to

“[s]afeguard Creation, [b]ecause if we destroy [it], Creation will destroy us! ... Creation is not a property, which we can rule over at will; or, even less, is [it] the property of only a few: Creation is ... a wonderful gift that God has given us, so that we care for it and we use it for the benefit of all, always with great respect and gratitude.”

With these words the Pope distinguishes our husbandry of creation from exploitation of nature, especially by a minority that has little regard for humanity as a whole. In January 2015 [he attributed](#) global warming largely to manmade activities.

Vatican Symposium on Global Warming. The Vatican convened a meeting of world leaders including the United Nations Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon, world religious leaders and leading climate scientists, on April 28, 2015. [Mr. Ban told the assembly](#) “there is no divide whatsoever between religion and science on the issue of climate change.”

A [report](#) entitled “Climate Change and The Common Good”, prepared by clerical and lay scientists under the guidance of the Pontifical Academy of Sciences and the Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences was released at the same time as the symposium. It summarizes the historical context of global warming, ascribing it to human activity “involving the unsustainable exploitation of fossil fuels and other forms of natural capital”. It summarizes the detrimental effects already visited on human society as a result, and reviews the scientific projections of future warming and its further harmful consequences to our planet and human society.

The Role of the World’s Religions. The report emphasizes how the religions of the world can be instrumental in combating continued global warming and its harms:

“The Catholic Church, working with the leadership of other religions, could take a decisive role in helping to solve this problem. The Church could accomplish this by mobilizing public opinion and public funds to meet the energy needs of the poorest 3 billion in a way that does not contribute to global warming but would allow them to prepare better for the challenges of unavoidable climate change....[W]e have a responsibility not only towards those who are living in poverty today, but also to generations yet unborn.”

This moral imperative is expanded as follows:

“Generations to come will experience and will likely suffer from the environmental consequences of the fossil fuel consumption of the last two centuries. They are likely to wonder what took 21st century citizens of the world so long to respond to these frightening climate trends....”

In addition to the issue of inter-generational equity, climate change from fossil-fuel burning poses a major problem of intra-generational equity....We have to solve both [these] problems.”

Deniers of Global Warming. This Vatican meeting so captured the attention of global warming deniers that [they journeyed to Rome](#) to counter the Vatican’s stand. The President of the Heartland Institute wrote “The world’s poor will suffer horribly if reliable energy—the engine of prosperity and a better life—is made more expensive and less reliable by the decree of global planners.” The American Petroleum Institute wrote “fossil fuels are a vital tool for lifting people out of poverty around the world, which is something we’re committed to.”

By such statements we see that these apologists for maintaining the status quo cynically seek to shift guilt for the use of fossil fuels onto the heads of those, including the leaders of the world’s great religions, who themselves advocate for the rights of the poor. These cynics suggest that energy reformers are guilty of prolonging suffering of the poor by removing their access to fossil fuel-derived energy. The deniers critically fail to admit that alternative sources of energy that do not contribute to global warming can accomplish the required objectives.

The Papal Encyclical itself is expected to be issued in June 2015. It is likely to reflect the themes identified here that have already been expressed by the Church. Subsequently Pope Francis will address the United Nations General Assembly and the U. S. Congress in September 2015. His energetic activities with respect to global warming are focused on bringing his considerable influence, indeed that of all the world’s major religions, to bear on the climate meeting in Paris in December 2015. That gathering, under the UNFCCC, is intended to finalize ongoing climate negotiations. It should provide a worldwide agreement to reduce annual rates of emission of greenhouse gases, undertake measures to improve land use practices, and set up a major financing program to assist poor countries to adapt to the effects of global warming.

Discussion

Pope Francis is undertaking an unprecedented, energetic campaign as the leader of the Roman Catholic Church to convince the nations of the world to commit to meaningful measures to attack global warming, and to help them adapt to the changing climate. While some detractors may question whether the Church has a role to play in this largely secular, scientific matter, he has grounded his message in several aspects of Christian doctrine.

First, the Scriptures emphasize the role of humanity to serve as stewards of Creation. This includes first, avoiding exploitation of resources (such as fossil fuels) that rewards only a portion of humanity; second, avoiding exploitation of those resources because they are irreplaceable; and third, shunning activities in the energy economy that exclude the poorest among us from its

benefits. The Pope is concerned with our “intra-generational” responsibility for alleviating the disparities brought about by fossil fuel use. About 3 billion of the world’s people currently do not benefit from the advanced lifestyle that fossil fuel-derived energy provides to the rest of us.

And second, moral doctrines embedded in the Scriptures emphasize our inter-generational responsibility for the welfare of future generations: our children, their children, and further progeny whom we as yet do not know. This concern arises from Pope Francis’s accurate understanding that the effects of global warming, ascribed to our present burning of fossil fuels, will persist for centuries and affect future generations. In view of the changes already wrought, and the worsening of those changes as our use of fossil fuels grows, we are directly responsible, in his view, for the wellbeing of our progeny.

When issued, the message of the encyclical will reach all 1.2 billion Catholics in the world. According to the ecclesiastical significance of encyclicals proclaimed by Pope Pius XII, we expect that all Catholics will regard its conclusions as laying to rest any prior controversy surrounding this issue. To the world’s Catholics the question of global warming will not “any longer be considered a question of free discussion among theologians.”

[Update: In a letter to the New York Times Maciej H. Grabowski, Poland’s environmental minister, writes that the Pope’s forthcoming encyclical will significantly influence the negotiations on a new global warming treaty that will take place at the end of this year. He states “Pope Francis’s message will be greeted warmly in Poland.”]

In the United States, more than 160 representatives and senators [in the Congress are Catholics](#). This includes the Speaker of the House of Representatives. Yet a significant portion of these congresspersons, including the Speaker, to date have not publicly accepted the reality of global warming caused by human actions. To the extent that they consider themselves bound by their faith, we may expect that they will accept the forthcoming encyclical’s pronouncements as being beyond controversy. A change of heart by these legislators could lead to progress toward a legislated national energy policy whose goal should be a decarbonized energy economy.

Pope Francis envisions his encyclical and his promotion of sound energy policies as inspiring not only fellow Catholics around the world, but far more importantly as generating comparable actions in an ecumenical fashion among all the major faiths of the world. He is reaching out to leaders of other religions with the intention of developing a faith-based consensus for action among followers of most religions. This should lead to emboldened action by the world’s scientific and political leaders to reach early and meaningful agreement on a worldwide framework for the limitation of greenhouse gas emissions, appropriate changes in land use, and a well-funded resource to aid countries most in need of assistance in accommodating to climate change.

<http://warmgloblog.blogspot.com/2015/04/pope-francis-encyclical-on-global.html>
