

Religion and Ecology News Articles

January – February 2015

January 2015

Green Church Newsletter

http://egliseverte-greenchurch.ca/green/index.php?option=com_acymailing&ctrl=archive&task=view&mailid=56&key=415afdd1b9563923821fbc5ce9c0009a&subid=189-dbe0c9b642707e4c37fc810b1cf1134f

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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."

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://ncronline.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.

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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 a 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 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 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/>
