

## Religion and Ecology News Articles

January – February 2017

**January 2, 2017**

The lake lures me to pray

By Ellen Dauwer  
Global Sisters Report

When I entered religious life almost 40 years ago, living singly was not one of my expectations. Having grown up in a family that taught me to share, persuade and compromise, I had a bit of a head start adjusting to community life and have grown to love and value it deeply.

When I was a child and adolescent, my parents would call an occasional "family meeting" when the daily tensions of life mounted in our home. We each found a seat as well as a voice and were required to stay in the conversation until the issues at hand were resolved. In the democratic process, we each had a vote (including my parents), but plenty of persuasion was needed, as we were an even number. Perhaps this early experience helped me survive convent "house meetings"!

While all walks of life are marked by highs and lows, with most times somewhere in between, living in community with my sisters over the past four decades has been no different. There have been periods of loneliness as well as companionship, conflict as well as solidarity, and challenge as well as support. Overall, I have found that life in community encourages me to live honestly and authentically. It has taught me a lot about differences as well as how to decide which issues are critical and which are best left alone. Perhaps, along the way, it has dulled a few of my rough edges, too.

During this past year, community life has shifted significantly for me and finds me living singly. The year has seen two moves within seven months: first to Washington, D.C., and then to Chicago. In one city, I found a community with whom I shared life for the interim period, while in the second I floundered in the search.

Hence, I write this reflection from a postage-stamp-sized space perched 15 stories along the Chicago skyline. What it lacks in size, it possesses in view: a panoramic view of some of the Southside shores of Lake Michigan.

Both searches for housing stirred resistance within me. In the first, I fought homesickness for the community with whom I had lived for the past 14 years. I longed for evenings in the community room and the easy familiarity of home. In the second, I struggled with fears of the unknown: a

new city, unfamiliar geography, few connections, and no network. It was painful to have an unsuccessful search and it was tempting to turn inward with negative self-talk. What's the matter with me, I wondered?

Reluctantly, I settled on a small, furnished apartment in a high rise within walking distance to work. I've done my best to adjust and try to focus on the benefits rather than dwell on the deficits. Top among them is my view of the lake and my mornings spent contemplating it.

The lake lures me daily to pray. It draws me into its depths and across its expanse, whether it be lit by golden sun or dulled by gray clouds and fog. And when I travel, which I often do, I feel a gentle longing beckoning me home to this morning perch.

The view also reshapes my vision daily with its changing weather and seasonally with its accompanying shifts. In the summer, I looked out on treetops of various hues and shapes in the nearby park and lakeshore. The colors slowly rusted into shades of red, yellow and brown as the defoliating trees revealed their structures and shapes.

Now, in early winter, the vista is that of a black-and-white photo with a snow covering that edges the dark tree boughs and robs the color and variety from the line of parked cars, rendering them into a uniform row.

These days, the lake reflects the deep blue winter sky. Without the humidity of summer, clear days yield a cloudlessly perfect vista. Sometimes it is the only color in the black-and-white landscape. It speaks to me of longing, long for more: more color, more love, more peace, more justice, more God.

I still am not at peace in living singly and long for community and a greater sense of connection. Yet, within the resistance is a gift of morning contemplation that reshapes and recolors the rest of the day.

[Ellen Dauwer is a Sister of Charity of St. Elizabeth of Convent Station, New Jersey, currently living in Chicago. She spent 20 years in higher education, teaching educational technology and serving in administration. She recently completed eight years in congregational leadership and began as executive director of the Religious Formation Conference in January.]

<http://globalsistersreport.org/column/spirituality/lake-lures-me-pray-44151>

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**January 4, 2017**

Muslim environmentalists give their religion — and their mosques — a fresh coat of green

By Chris Bentley  
WCAI – NPR for the Cape, the Coast, and the Islands

The Koutoubia Mosque is one of the iconic landmarks of Marrakech's old city. Its first stone was laid in 1150, and almost 900 years later, renovations continue.

The latest can be found up a flight of stairs off the *sahn*, or courtyard, where the mosque's visitors wash their feet before they pray. On top of the north *riwaq*, or arcade, a sleek array of solar panels stretches along the roof to the base of the mosque's 253-foot, red stone minaret.

"This is enough for 100 percent of the consumption of the mosque, including also for the house of the imam," says Ahmed Bouzid, head of energy efficiency for SIE, Morocco's national energy investment company. "So this mosque is 100 percent powered by solar energy."

The 8-kilowatt panels were installed just before Marrakech played host to the latest United Nations climate summit in November, and Koutoubia is just one of 600 Moroccan mosques slated for similar solar installations over the next three years. Morocco's government owns 15,000 mosques, and eventually it wants to retrofit all of them with solar panels and energy efficient technology.

Bouzid says investments in solar power are an easy call here in Morocco. The payback period is typically less than five years. After that, the energy is essentially free.

But he says it's not just about saving the mosques money.

"We are increasing the awareness by showing some real solutions," Bouzid says. "When you try to sensitize somebody, first of all you try to get his brain. And from his brain you try to get his heart. When you go to a mosque, the first thing that you open is your heart."

Morocco is almost completely dependent on imported fossil fuels, but it has a lot of wind and sun. It's also already being hit by the effects of climate change, through droughts, floods and sea-level rise.

Overall, Morocco has pledged to get more than half of its electricity from renewable sources by 2030, and to cultivate more awareness about energy and climate change in general.

That's why the solar panels on Koutoubia's roof are about more than just cutting the state-funded mosque's energy bills. In this almost entirely Muslim country, the government believes that Islam could be a powerful vehicle for its environmental message.

### **Green mosques**

You can see the effort at work in other ways here as well, like in a classroom on the outskirts of Marrakech where 27 imams and *mourchidates*, female Muslim clerics, are huddled in small groups, poring over copies of the Quran.

That's hardly unusual in Morocco, but the subject of their study is. They're scouring the text for passages about environmental stewardship.

About 300 Muslim leaders from around Morocco have signed up in the last year for the government's "green mosques" program.

After this study group breaks up, a few imams take turns practicing *khutbahs*, or sermons, about environmentalism that they'll deliver to their congregations across the country during Friday prayers, stressing verses from the Quran and other Muslim holy texts.

Often-invoked passages include "corruption has appeared on the land and in the sea because of what the hands of humans have wrought," and "the servants of [Allah], the Most Gracious, are only those who walk upon the Earth softly."

Morocco's state-sponsored program to preach environmental stewardship through Islam may be unique, but Muslims in many countries are starting to connect their faith with climate change.

[Nana Firman](#) is from Indonesia, the world's biggest Muslim country, and is a co-founder of the [Global Muslim Climate Network](#). Firman came to Marrakech for the UN climate summit, and she believes that connecting Islam and environmental consciousness isn't a stretch.

"Over 700 verses in the Quran talk about nature and environment," Firman says. "For example there's a verse that says 'the human is the *khalifa* upon this earth. The word *khalifa* means guardian, so you're the maintainer, the protector, the one who takes care of the Earth."

Firman and her organization are trying to do globally what the Moroccan government is trying to do locally — encourage Muslims to take steps to reduce their own carbon footprints. But she also has a bigger goal. She wants Muslims to lead the global transition away from fossil fuels.

Making that happen won't be easy, of course. Like a lot of devout Christians, many Muslims don't believe that climate change is even happening, that humans could be responsible, or that their holy texts preach environmentalism.

"There's some deniers," Firman says, but hundreds of millions of Muslims also live in places that are already feeling the effects of climate change. And she says that's where her message is catching on.

"A lot of us are the victims of climate change, so they see it. When the disaster happens, when the drought happens, when the flood happens, they actually understand. Maybe they don't call it climate change, but farmers know they can't harvest."

In her native Indonesia, Firman worked on recovery efforts after the 2004 tsunami in the religiously conservative region of Aceh. She says it was hard to convince local people of the benefits of planting mangroves to reduce the impact of storm surges, until she remembered a verse in the Quran about planting trees. Firman says that's when she first realized Islam could help her increase environmental awareness in Indonesia.

Since then she's taken that message worldwide. Last year Firman helped draft the [Islamic Declaration on Global Climate Change](#). It calls on Muslims everywhere to take action, from

conserving water during the cleaning rituals of *wudu* to reducing plastic waste during the annual *Hajj* pilgrimage to Mecca.

The Islamic Declaration on Global Climate Change came out not long after [Pope Francis' climate encyclical](#), which said that Catholics have a “duty to protect the Earth ... for coming generations.”

[Saffet Catovic](#), an imam and teacher of religious studies from New Jersey, says the efforts among Muslims globally are part of a broad religious awakening on the climate crisis.

“Faith plays an important role not just for Muslim communities but for other communities, as well,” Catovic says. His [Noor Ul-Iman school](#) and mosque in Central New Jersey are part of the Islamic Society of North America, which recently announced it would divest from fossil fuels and is pushing other Muslim organizations to do the same.

Catovic also helped write the Islamic declaration on climate change. Since then, he says he’s heard from priests, rabbis and all kinds of religious leaders.

“With this climate change issue, especially these last two years, religious leaders around the world are not praying against each other,” says Catovic, “they’re praying with one another for a common cause. Because the realization has set in that we’re gonna have nothing left.”

So far most of the steps are small, like Morocco's green sermons and solar-powered mosques.

But together they could be a recipe for how religious leaders might help tackle climate change: through a mixture of political will, private investment, and a little faith.

<http://capeandislands.org/post/muslim-environmentalists-give-their-religion-and-their-mosques-fresh-coat-green#stream/0>

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## January 6, 2017

Amazon Indigenous REDD+: an innovative approach to conserve Colombian forests?

By Eliana Garzón  
Mongabay

Summary:

\* The Amazon Indigenous REDD+ (RIA) initiative led in Colombia by the indigenous organization OPIAC is being implemented in the departments of Amazonas and Guainia, territories made up of 169 indigenous reservations of 56 different villages, not counting the populations that are in voluntary isolation.

\* In 2012, the reservation of the Upper Basin of the Inírida River (CMARI), inside the Puinawai Nature Reserve, was chosen as the location of the first pilot implementation project of RIA in Colombia, which had its official presentation at COP18, the 18th meeting of the UN Climate Change Conference.

\* For indigenous communities in the Amazon, it is important that their ancestral traditions are recognized as the basis for the implementation of RIA and used as a mechanism to safeguard Amazonian biodiversity.

Some indigenous communities in South America have been working on a way to participate in REDD+ (Reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation) on their own terms. In 2009, Colombia began to create the National Strategy for Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (ENREDD+), an offshoot of REDD+. Currently 64 countries use REDD+ as a national strategy for climate change mitigation. It aims to reduce greenhouse gas emissions caused by deforestation in developing countries by offering financial incentives in exchange for the protection of forest resources and their sustainable use.

Some communities in Colombia didn't agree to participate in the REDD+ process over fears of losing territorial sovereignty. Thus, the coordinator of the [Indigenous Organizations of the Amazon River Basin \(COICA\)](#) joined the ENREDD+ strategy and adapted it based on their ancestral knowledge. COICA opted to “adjust this initiative to our life without losing autonomy,” according to Mateo Estrada Córdoba, the Territory and Environment Coordinator of the Organization of Indigenous Peoples of the Colombian Amazon (OPIAC), and a member of the Siriano del Vaupés village.

From there, the Amazon Indigenous REDD+ (RIA in Spanish) was born, which operates in Peru, Colombia, Brazil and Ecuador.

“[It is] a model that seeks to incorporate, in an equitable and culturally appropriate way, indigenous territories, Amazonian peoples and organizations to the national REDD+ initiatives,” Pía Escobar, government and social development officer of World Wildlife Fund (WWF) Colombia, said in an interview with Mongabay. WWF provides technical support to this process in Ecuador, Peru and Colombia.

“RIA has to do with broader ecosystem development. The integral part of indigenous peoples, the way of life that goes in harmony with natural resources and the environment [...] this is a proposal according to indigenous life plans. We manage governance, the empowerment of the territory and the adaptation of public policies to our context,” Córdoba said.

The initiative led in Colombia by the indigenous organization OPIAC was launched in a region that has “169 indigenous reservations of 56 different villages and 52 languages, not counting the populations that are in voluntary isolation,” according to Córdoba. It seeks to be a model of conservation that can be replicated, not only in other ancestral territories but all national forests.

## **Pilot plan: reservation of the basin of the Inírida River**

In the department of Guainía, inside the Puinawai Natural Reserve, is the reservation of the Upper Basin of the Inírida River (CMARI). It's inhabited by 17 indigenous communities of the Puinave and Curripaco peoples. It contains 2,762,000 hectares of a variety of ecosystems, and provides habitat for many species of fauna and flora.

In 2012, the CMARI area was chosen as the location of the first pilot implementation project of the Amazon Indigenous REDD+ (RIA) in Colombia, which had its official presentation at COP18, the 18th meeting of the UN Climate Change Conference.

For Arcángel Agapito Luzardo, a member of the Puinave people and leader of the RIA initiative at CMARI, "this pilot carries the indigenous vision. It is a proposal that is born from the communities and has as its baseline the governance of the reservation, the social structure and the context of the territory." Luzardo added that the area's deforestation is connected, "to the fact that the governance and conservation traditions have been followed in order to avoid displacement and strengthen education, health, communications, housing, infrastructure, public services, means of transportation." He says that the result has been an improvement in the livelihoods of indigenous communities.

Luzardo said shifting cultivation is part of the indigenous peoples' ancestral knowledge, and should be valued.

"We call our crops *conucos*," he said. "We use [the land] for three years and then we abandon the land so it can naturally recover. During that period the last uses of the products are made. After the end of this period, following traditional knowledge another area is sought, where the land is fertile and productive for the family. If they do not make a strategic selection, their food security could be in danger."

Luzardo adds that the scale of use is also small.

"These products are used for family consumption, in the case of wood it is only used to build houses, it is not commercialized," Luzardo said.

OPIAC's Córdoba says the approach puts an emphasis on balance. To preserve the environment, indigenous people use resources without the purpose of making a profit; "we do not accumulate resources or have greed," he said.

Luzardo hopes that the RIA will help future generations to "know their territory, appreciate it and take care of it." It is also about balance for him.

"Let them develop in harmony with the planet and thus improve the communities' livelihoods so that they do not have to migrate from the place they live today," he said.

## **Preservation of cultural traditions in La Chorrera**

La Chorrera is an administrative district located in the department of Amazonas, part of the Predio Putumayo reservation, an area of 5,869,447 hectares. Indigenous people of the communities of Witoto, Mirañas, Boras, Andoques, Ocainas, Muinanes, Nonuyas, and others live in the territory.

In this reservation, the Zonal Association of Traditional Authorities of the Chorrera (Azicatch) is developing the second RIA process.

“It is a pilot that is producing technical inputs, community monitoring, safeguards and ecosystem services studies. Information that we could replicate in other territories and serve for decision making,” Córdoba said.

He added that it is important for these communities to “recognize traditional authorities for the construction and implementation of the RIA as a mechanism to safeguard Amazon biodiversity.” It is also necessary to highlight governance and the strengthening of technical capacities, according to the [presentation document of the RIA mechanism in Azicatch](#).

That is why WWF Colombia has been lending technical help. As Pía Escobar points out, “indigenous organizations are very strong in their political advocacy capacity, but sometimes they need additional support in the technical components.”

That technical support includes cartographic and carbon content information, ecosystem services, threats to the territory and other issues essential for demonstrating the value that indigenous territories have in mitigating climate change and complementing policy proposals.

## **The future of the RIA in Colombia**

OPIAC’s Córdoba continues to look to the future in hopes of future success.

“Our knowledge must be applied,” he said. “We expect the RIA to be included in the national REDD strategy as a special chapter. This is being done by the Indigenous Amazonian Environmental and Climate Change Bureau and the Amazon Regional Bureau, a space for legitimate dialogue that we have with the Colombian state.”

For indigenous communities and organizations, RIA is an important step towards the conservation of their territories, but above all, of their ancestral knowledge.

“We dream that the territories can be preserved as they are, with the abundance that exists, because the quality of life of the indigenous people is not measured in how much I have, but if hunting, fishing and medicinal plants are nearby or not,” Córdoba said. “We dream that schools have a curriculum where the center of education is the culture and the environment, [and] that communities have sustainable public services and that municipalities are green. What we can leave as teaching is a harmony between man and nature and between both: spirit; in addition to integrity among peoples. We have conflicts, but we do not live in war.”

*Eliana Garzón is a freelance journalist based in Colombia.*

<https://news.mongabay.com/2017/01/amazon-indigenous-redd-an-innovative-approach-to-protect-colombian-forests/>

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**January 7, 2017**

Ecuador's leading environmental group fights to stop forced closure

NGO Acción Ecológica responds to the government's attempt to close the organization down

By David Hill  
The Guardian

Members of one of Latin America's most well-known environmental organisations, [Acción Ecológica](#), are fighting for their survival against a controversial attempt by Ecuador's government to shut them down.

The move by the government came six days after violence between soldiers, police and indigenous Shuar people opposed to a Chinese-run copper development, Panantza-San Carlos, in the Cordillera del Condor region, and just two days after Acción Ecológica had called for a Truth Commission to be set up to investigate events there. The attempt to close the organisation has sparked severe criticism from [UN human rights experts](#) and outrage from numerous civil society organisations in Latin America and elsewhere.

On 20 December the Vice-Minister for Internal Security, Diego Torres Saldaña, requested the Minister of Environment, Walter Garcia Cedeño, to begin the process to "immediately dissolve" the Quito-based organisation. According to Torres Saldaña, Acción Ecológica has been using social media to express support for violence by Shuar against soldiers and police, to claim that extractive operations will negatively affect the environment, and to allege "supposed human rights violations", including "unjustified militarisation", against the Shuars. Such behaviour has been "repeated", Torres Saldaña wrote, and also included mobilising the public and organising demonstrations, making it clear that the NGO "rejects any kind of natural resource exploitation."

Torres Saldaña's conclusion was that, by allegedly promoting and committing violence, Acción Ecológica has strayed from its legally-constituted objectives and poses a threat to national security.

The Ministry of Environment heeded Torres Saldaña's request and gave Acción Ecológica 24 hours to respond initially and then 10 days to respond in full. In its initial response the NGO denied it has ever supported any kind of violence and described claims that it represents a serious threat to Ecuadorian society as "disproportionate." It accepted it has denounced extractive operations on environmental and human rights grounds, as is permitted under its statutes, and carried out "different types of social mobilisations", as in accordance with the right to freedom of expression, freedom of association, and Ecuador's Constitution defending nature. It also

accepted it has made allegations of human rights violations in Shuar territory, pointing out that other Ecuadorian and international organisations have done likewise.

Acción Ecológica's initial response to the Ministry of Environment copied in various UN offices, an EU delegation, and the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights. "We're confident that what the Ministry of the Interior has stated is an error of interpretation or based on erroneous information obtained out of context," wrote Acción Ecológica legal representative Natalia Bonilla.

On 3 January a 27-page document authored by Torres Saldaña and three other functionaries from the Ministry of the Interior was sent to the Ministry of Environment elaborating on their allegations, providing 11 pieces of evidence for why Acción Ecológica should be shut down. These included three of the NGO's Facebook links, four of its website links, and two police reports.

Acción Ecológica's newly-elected president Alexandra Almeida dismisses Torres Saldaña's allegations. "We looked over the documents that they sent and, really, it is "evidence" that has no substance," she told the Guardian. "All this we're including in the document that we're going to submit on Friday 6 January."

That document was submitted to the Ministry of Environment yesterday following a public presentation in Quito by several Acción Ecológica representatives. Gloria Chicaiza said the claim they were promoting violence was "false", and the fact they have been making statements about human rights violations and the negative impacts of extractive operations means they are "fully complying" with their objectives.

Acción Ecológica's Natalia Bonilla and Esperanza Martinez also spoke. Bonilla said the attempt to dissolve the organisation was far from an isolated attack, but the latest in a long "chain" of "different types of aggression" dating back 10 years, most allegedly originating from the government. In a particularly impassioned speech, Martinez told the audience the government's accusations were "outrageous" and politically motivated, and compared its attempt to close them to trying to stop a jaguar from roaring:

You can't prohibit a civil society organisation from expressing and organising itself, from holding protests, from filing legal complaints, if those are its objectives. . . The possibility that they may close us pains us greatly. But this isn't just our problem, because it's not only against us. It's a problem that really involves everyone. . . We've been on this road for 30 years and we're going to continue. If they decide to close us, no doubt about it, we will be reborn, stronger, in greater numbers. This isn't just about defending nature or land, but the right to participate, the right to work together, the right to protest, the right to speak.

There were also contributions from constitutional lawyer Ramiro Ávila, from the Universidad Andina Simon Bolívar, and Ximena Reyes, from the International Federation of Human Rights (FIDH). Ávila argued the government has "no evidence" to close Acción Ecológica and it should abandon the process to do so, saying that the NGO has suffered from "systematic persecution"

and those responsible should be investigated instead. Reyes described the move to silence the NGO as part of “a regional and global phenomenon.”

Five UN human rights experts are also calling on [Ecuador](#) to backtrack closing Acción Ecológica and to reform its legislation, noting that two other organizations, Pachamama and Union Nacional de Educadores, have been shut down in recent years. The experts include the UN special rapporteurs on human rights defenders, the right to freedom of opinion and expression, and the right to freedom of peaceful assembly and association.

“It seems Ecuador’s government is systematically dissolving organisations when they become too vocal or challenge official orthodoxy,” the UN experts claim. “This strategy to asphyxiate civil society has been implemented through two decrees - 16 and 739 - that give the authorities power to unilaterally dissolve any kind of organisation.”

Ecuador’s Foreign Ministry responded to the UN claims by accusing the experts of “flagrantly violating” norms and a UN Code of Conduct, and effectively deceiving the Ecuadorian government. It argues that the UN statement is impartial, lacks objectivity, and makes “tendentious statements that misrepresent” events in Shuar territory. It also categorically disputed the assertion it is “systematically dissolving” organisations and “asphyxiating” civil society, and that current legislation is “restrictive.” It stated:

It’s important to highlight that there are more than 70,000 social organisations in our country which are testimony to an active, participative and organised citizenry. The Ecuadorian state fully complies with its human rights commitments.

Support for Acción Ecológica has poured in from around the world. US NGO Amazon Watch calls it a “pioneering” organisation “largely responsible” for Ecuador’s modern environmental movement, having worked on issues such as extractives, climate change, deforestation, trade and GMOs.

“Many of the [current president] Correa administration’s landmark environmental initiatives actually originated with Acción Ecológica, like the [2007 Yasuni-ITT Initiative](#), which sought to keep close to a billion barrels of crude in the ground underneath Yasuni National Park,” Amazon Watch states. “And the groundbreaking inclusion of the Rights of Nature in the country’s 2008 Constitution would not have happened without the organisation’s work.”

Ecuador’s government, under Correa, made an earlier attempt to close Acción Ecológica in 2009, but failed to do so. “Then 1,000s of people in Ecuador and around the world spoke out against that injustice,” reads a 20 December statement from the NGO saying it is “strictly” complying with Ecuadorian law. “This time we’re receiving new demonstrations of support. We know that, with this type of protest, we’ll be able to reverse the arbitrary and illegitimate closure of Acción Ecológica.”

To the south of Panantza-San Carlos is another copper project, Mirador, also in Shuar territory. Both are run by companies reportedly controlled by two Chinese state-owned firms: the China

Railway Construction Corporation and the Tongling Nonferrous Metals Group Holding Company.

Both projects have been marked by conflict. The violence in December left at least 2 soldiers injured, 5 policemen injured and one policeman dead, according to Torres Saldaña, and was followed by a government decision to militarise the region and send in tanks. In August soldiers and police forcibly evicted Shuar families, and houses and other community buildings have been destroyed. In 2014 José Tendetza Antún, a Shuar leader and leading critic of Mirador, was killed and secretly buried just days before he was due to denounce the project to the International Tribunal for the Rights of Nature held in Lima.

[The Guardian](#) reported that the results of an initial autopsy on Tendetza Antún were “unclear”, and that activists linked his death to his opposition to Mirador.

Torres Saldaña did not respond to questions from the Guardian sent via email. The Ministry of Environment could not be reached for comment.

<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/andes-to-the-amazon/2017/jan/07/ecuadors-leading-environmental-group-fights-forced-closure>

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## January 9, 2017

Native Americans fight Texas pipeline using 'same model as Standing Rock'

By Sam Levin  
The Guardian

*The Two Rivers camp, protesting the Trans-Pecos pipeline, is the latest sign that the Standing Rock movement is inspiring indigenous-led activism across the US.*

Indigenous activists have set up camps in the Texas desert to fight a pipeline project there, the latest sign that the Standing Rock “water protector” [movement](#) is inspiring Native American-led environmental protests across the US.

The Two Rivers [camp](#), located south of Marfa near the border, has attracted dozens of demonstrators in its first week to protest the Trans-Pecos pipeline, a 148-mile project on track to transport fracked natural gas through the Big Bend region to Mexico.

Citing concerns about damage to the environment and sacred indigenous sites, the camp parallels the high-profile effort to [block the Dakota Access pipeline](#) (DAPL) and is one of multiple Native American land campaigns building on the [momentum](#) of the demonstrations in North Dakota.

“We’re going to follow the same model as Standing Rock,” said Frankie Orona, executive director of the Society of Native Nations and an organizer at the Two Rivers camp. “This is a

huge historical moment for environmental issues, for protecting our water, protecting our land, protecting sacred sites and protecting treaties.”

Two Rivers emerged weeks after the Obama administration [denied a key permit for the Dakota Access pipeline](#), a major victory for the Standing Rock tribe and thousands of [indigenous and environmental activists](#) who spent months camped in Cannon Ball in hopes of thwarting the \$3.7bn oil project.

Though the fight against DAPL [is not over](#) – given that [Donald Trump is an investor](#) in the company and [supporter of the project](#) – the temporary win has energized ongoing indigenous environmental battles and inspired new ones.

The campaign against the Trans-Pecos project, which is also owned by Texas-based Energy Transfer Partners, has the closest connections to Standing Rock, with activists adopting similar tactics, including setting up spiritual camps in the region of construction and planning nonviolent “direct actions”.

“Our hope is that we can create a public pressure crisis,” said Lori Glover, a Big Bend Defense Coalition spokeswoman who owns the land in [Texas](#) where the camps are expanding. “I hope this helps us stop the pipeline long enough to get the government and Energy Transfer Partners’ attention and push them to do the right thing.”

Vicki Granado, ETP spokeswoman, said the Trans-Pecos pipeline is nearly 90% complete and defended the project in an email, claiming that “underground pipelines provide the most environmentally safe and the most efficient means to transport natural gas, crude oil or other carbon-based energy products that are critical to Americans’ daily lives, and to our economy”.

Standing Rock garnered support from [hundreds of indigenous tribes](#) in a collaboration that some said was unprecedented, and Yolanda Blue Horse, a Native American activist in Texas, said she hoped Trans-Pecos would attract a similarly diverse and unified group.

Reports of [intense police brutality](#) and [mistreatment](#) in North Dakota have also inspired people to fight back, said Blue Horse, a member of the Rosebud Sioux tribe.

“What happened up there could very well happen to any of our communities if big money gets involved. That’s a scary thing.”

The protests escalated in Texas the same week that the US department of justice [filed](#) a motion [against ETP](#) to dismiss the company’s [lawsuit challenging DAPL construction delays](#) – the latest sign that Obama is working to impede the pipeline in his final days in office.

Some DAPL demonstrators are now on their way to Texas, according to Orona.

Outside of Texas, indigenous activists involved with Standing Rock have also recently [turned their attention](#) to environmental battles in a number of states, including [Minnesota](#), [Florida](#), [Hawaii](#), [Washington](#) and [Wyoming](#).

Elliott Moffett, a Nez Perce tribe member from Idaho, who has been [fighting for the removal of dams](#) to save [wild salmon from going extinct](#), said the international attention on Standing Rock has helped the public better understand the intersection of indigenous rights and environmental activism.

“We’ve been here for thousands of years. We’ve had to deal with sustainability issues,” said Moffett, whose group [Nimiipuu Protecting the Environment](#) argues that dams in the Snake river impede tribal treaty rights.

In New Mexico, Native American groups have been fighting for [stronger fracking restrictions](#) after an [oil field explosion](#) affected a Navajo community. And after indigenous activists protested a proposed [oil pipeline](#), which some had labeled “[New Mexico’s DAPL](#)”, the operator [withdrew plans](#).

Lori Goodman, a Navajo activist and treasurer of Diné Citizens Against Ruining Environment, attributed the withdrawal to fears of a North Dakota-style protest.

“Standing Rock has really opened eyes. Now there’s no going back,” she said. “Enough is enough.”

After Standing Rock, some Native American activists said they hoped there would be broader support for protecting indigenous sites, even when there aren’t high-profile oil projects threatening the land.

“We’re still in a very perilous position regarding sacred places,” said Klee Benally, a Diné activist based in Arizona. “There is an awakening for indigenous resistance. It’s about cultural survival.”

<https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2017/jan/09/trans-pecos-pipeline-texas-protest-two-rivers-standing-rock>

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## January 10, 2017

Utah’s new national monument marks big win for the protection of Indigenous cultural sites

By permanently protecting an area rich in indigenous cultural history, Obama has shown that some things are worth more than money.

By Jacqueline Keeler  
Nation of Change

On Dec. 28, with only 22 days left in office, President Obama set aside nearly 1.35 million acres in southeastern Utah’s San Juan County as the Bears Ears National Monument. The [announcement](#) capped several years of work by a unique tribal coalition that proposed this first-in-the-nation monument to be comanaged by tribes and the federal government. Obama also

designated 300,000 acres at Gold Butte in Nevada, homelands of the Paiute people, ironically, near militant rancher Cliven Bundy's cattle operation.

The national monument – proposed by the Bears Ears Inter-tribal Coalition, which includes the Navajo Nation, the Pueblo of Zuni, the Ute Mountain Ute, Ute tribe, and Hopi tribe – will preserve an area rich in biodiversity and human history amid one of the country's most iconic landscapes. It, and the political battle that continues to stem from it, also raises a greater question for a nation at odds with itself: What is the value of land?

This is at the heart of land disputes from the Malheur Wildlife Refuge in Oregon to the Standing Rock Sioux Reservation in North Dakota. Does the value of unspoiled wildness, the cultural heritage of indigenous people, and their ancestral connection to the land outweigh the exploitation of oil, coal, timber, grassland, and water to create wealth?

“Every time I hear something new and great, like the rediscovery of a bean species or something our ancestors learned to grow during a great drought historically, [I know] we wouldn't make those discoveries if it all gets destroyed and thrown in a pile of rubbish,” said Regina Lopez-Whiteskunk, Ute Mountain Ute tribal councilwoman and coalition chairwoman. “It takes a page out of our history,” she said.

The name Bears Ears – called the same in the languages of each of the regional tribes – refers to a pair of red sandstone buttes that rise 2,000 feet above juniper-covered Cedar Mesa. The surrounding area encompasses some 100,000 culturally significant sites, including cliff dwellings, burial sites, and ancient roads that span thousands of years of human history.

Like the Fertile Crescent of the Middle East, Bears Ears has served as a nursery for many cultures in the Southwest and holds ancient remains dating back as much as 13,000 years. Examples include the stunning House on Fire and Moon House, built by Ancestral Pueblos around 800 years ago. These stone towers and multilevel cliff houses, as well as the more humble remains of early Navajo hogans, display the incredible ingenuity that this unique landscape has fostered. For Navajo people, Bears Ears also holds significance as the birthplace of the great 19th century Navajo leader Chief Manuelito, who led a resistance against the forced removal of his people.

Today, these sites are under threat of looting and destruction. Global positioning systems and social media sharing have made visible places that were previously only known to a few. All of the 1.35 million acres now protected were previously public lands owned by the American people and managed by the Bureau of Land Management. However, without the national monument designation, the BLM could afford only two law enforcement officers to patrol it. Under so little oversight, entire petroglyphs had been cut from canyon walls and trucked away.

In 2014, San Juan County Commissioner Phil Lyman joined forces with Ryan Bundy, son of Nevada rancher Cliven Bundy, to conduct an illegal, armed ATV ride over an ancient Puebloan village in Recapture Canyon, now within the monument's boundaries. The rally, about which Lyman expressed last minute apprehension to the gathered crowd of sagebrush militia and local media, was staged to protest the government's closure of a road to protect ancient artifacts and

graves. Lyman was later convicted of two federal misdemeanors, fined, and sentenced to 10 days in jail.

But in San Juan County, hostility toward Native Americans has not been isolated to historical sites. In early 2016, the Navajo Nation sued the county for violations of the Voting Rights Act. A U.S. district court sided with the Navajo, finding that “the county had race-based motives” in how it gerrymandered Navajo voters into a single district to prevent them from asserting influence over the county. The lawsuit included statements made by Lyman telling Navajos they had “lost the war” and had no right to comment on public land management.

In July, U.S. Reps. Rob Bishop, R-Utah, and Jason Chaffetz, R-Utah, introduced to Congress the [Public Lands Initiative Bill](#) as an alternative to the Inter-Tribal Coalition’s national monument proposal. Their bill not only proposed removing protections of 18 million acres of federal land in Utah, but also sought to take 100,000 acres of land from the Ute tribe and open it up to oil and mining companies without tribal consultation.

Ute leaders including Lopez-Whiteskunk said that Bishop and Chaffetz never mentioned this audacious land grab, written into a bill designed to protect Bears Ears, to the tribes. This disrespect is echoed at not only the county level of Utah government but also at the state.

“I was very, very shocked by the way I was treated by the Utah Legislature,” Lopez-Whiteskunk said. “I felt belittled and disrespected because the legislature, the committee cut me off ... I didn’t respond back in a negative manner. But it left me feeling very disrespected as a tribal leader.”

This lack of respect at the local level forced the Bears Ears Inter-Tribal Coalition to turn to Obama and seek national monument designation for lands that hold both historical and future potential for the five tribes.

“What we are seeking to do with the Bears Ears National Monument is to stabilize our community and to bring the youth back to the reality of the natural world,” said Willie Grey Eyes, Diné elder, president of the Utah Diné Bikeyah, and former tribal councilman. “We want to teach them how to utilize these resources in a way that not only benefits them in their pocket, but spirituality ... This circle of relationships continues a cycle where the youth know how to protect these natural resources and how to utilize it in a sustainable way.”

This desire for harmony – called *Hózhó* in Navajo – has been met with threats of violence. In an interview with the [Washington Post](#) in June, Sen. Orrin Hatch, R-Utah, warned, “I would hope that my fellow Utahans would not use violence, but there are some deeply held positions that cannot just be ignored.”

And yet, contrary to how Hatch may characterize his constituents, a clear majority of Utah voters supported protecting Bears Ears as a national monument in a 2016 survey commissioned by the Pew Charitable Trusts.

Despite this, newly minted Utah Attorney General Sean Rayes said he plans to file a lawsuit to fight what some view as an overreach of presidential power. Echoing this concern, a crowd of hundreds gathered in Monticello on Dec. 29 to protest the designation, calling on President-elect Trump to undo the decision. Previous courts, however, have upheld the Antiquities Act.

A glance west across the Colorado River may offer some insight into how these battles have played out previously. The Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument was controversial when it was designated under the same authority by then-President Bill Clinton in 1996. By 2008, job opportunities in the surrounding counties had grown by 38 percent, per capita income by 30 percent; Utahans now consider the designation to be a good thing for the state by a margin of more than 2 to 1.

Had Escalante's 1.8 million acres of unspoiled natural beauty been rolled over for resource extraction, scientists may not have discovered the tens of thousands of dinosaur fossils, 46 previously unidentified species of bees, or the ancient Anasazi sites that it holds.

"We're here to take care of it. We're here to look after it. We're here to preserve it," said Jonah Yellowman, a Navajo elder. "If you take care of it and look after it – it's going to take care of you, you're going to get healed from it, and you're going to heal the land, too."

This is at the heart of the unique monument proposal brought forward by five Native American nations, indigenous grassroots community members, and environmentalists. What worth does the past hold? Is there more value in mining, a quick dollar, and the right to ride an ATV unbounded?

This is the question Obama heard at Bears Ears and Gold Butte. Although Native Americans are still waiting to hear what will happen at Standing Rock and face the prospect of a combative Trump presidency, in this moment we can see an America where the future, the past, and the land are in harmony.

<http://www.nationofchange.org/2017/01/10/utahs-new-national-monument-marks-big-win-protection-indigenous-cultural-sites/>

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**January 10, 2017**

Face to face with Pope Francis: A reminder of why we must fight inequality and injustice everywhere

By Fred Krupp  
Environmental Defense Fund

It was one of those rare moments in life that crystallize your sense of purpose, at a most critical time.

We were in Rome at the *Fortune-Time Global Forum*, a gathering of business leaders tasked with brainstorming ways to help the world's poor. My job had been to lead a discussion about concrete actions companies can take to expand affordable clean energy and to shield impoverished communities from the worst [impacts of climate change](#) – and now I was in the Vatican, in line to meet with Pope Francis himself.

I felt humbled to be in his presence. People greeted him in different ways; I just clasped his hand with both of mine and thanked him for his leadership on climate change. It's clear the issue moves him greatly, and his global platform championing solutions has been invaluable.

I had seen from afar how the pope is able to move people toward a greater awareness of our [common bonds](#), and toward a deeper resolve to confront inequality, injustice and suffering. Now, in his presence, that is exactly where he moved me.

### **The human dimension of clean air and water**

Our presence in the room was a sign of hope, he told forum participants, because “it shows that you recognize the issues before us and the imperative to act decisively.”

In the context of my work at Environmental Defense Fund, this means trying to improve the human condition by [standing up](#) for cleaner air and water, public health, a stable climate, and sustainable stewardship of the resources on which all life depends.

At a time when a new White House administration is threatening to withdraw from global climate action and dismantle environmental protections that benefit all lives, including the poor, we will approach the human dimension and moral underpinning of our work with renewed purpose.

We have an obligation, as human beings, to meet the challenge of climate change and avert catastrophic impacts that will disproportionately affect those least able to protect themselves.

It's why we're:

- fighting to replace the lead pipes [in Flint](#) and beyond that deliver water and pose potential health risks to up to 10 million homes nationwide.
- pushing sharp reductions in dangerous pollution around our nation's ports.
- creating [innovative solutions](#) to bring new, cleaner equipment and smarter technologies to the Port of Houston and other ports around the country.
- using cutting-edge [sensor technology](#) to measure and address localized air pollution.

These and other efforts are focused on communities that have suffered painful legacies of environmental injustice, a reality that is unacceptable regardless of where one lives. As Dr. Martin Luther King said, injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere.

## How we get results

At EDF, we're committed to being as diverse and vibrant – in our people, our values and our work – as the communities we serve. We must recognize that being a force for good in the world also means heeding the pope's admonition to listen to, learn from and include the people we seek to help.

Regardless of background or belief, we need to find a way to look people in the eye, to recognize their true needs and priorities, and to roll up our sleeves and collaborate. This ethic guides EDF towards enduring [bipartisan alliances](#) and [unique partnerships](#) with diverse organizations, some of which don't fit the conventional mold of an environmental partner. It's how we get results and broaden the conversation.

As I stood facing Pope Francis on that early December morning, I thought of how critical it is that those who seek solutions and a path forward stand together resolutely.

Listening to the pope, it struck me that his diagnosis of the unrest and inequality in the world comes with a hopeful plea that humans be guided by the better angels of our nature – not by the dark forces of hatred, discrimination and exclusion.

His prescription is exactly what the United States and the world needs now: a call for benevolence and compassion, and for lifting people up rather than tearing them down.

It's why millions of people around the world, including non-Catholics like myself, are drawn to and get inspiration from this humble man who is a leader because he's able to connect the dots between economic prosperity and environmental stewardship – and to propel us to act.

<https://www.edf.org/blog/2017/01/10/face-face-pope-francis-reminder-why-we-must-fight-inequality-and-injustice>

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## January 12, 2017

Eucharistic prayer in the 21st century

By Thomas Reese  
National Catholic Reporter

One of the greatest liturgical challenges of the church in the 21st century is to figure out how to do liturgy in a way that is meaningful to people in a post-Darwin, post-Einstein, post-Hubble world.

Traditional liturgical prayer, based on biblical imagery, presumes a pre-scientific worldview where Earth is the center of the universe and the world was created quickly and perfectly. Everything was wonderful until Adam sinned.

In fact, the universe is some 13.8 billion years old, with organic life appearing about 3 billion years ago, and humans evolving relatively recently. Rather than appearing in an idyllic paradise, humans crawled out of the mud fighting, scratching out an existence in a brutal and highly competitive environment.

Current liturgical worship requires that we park our scientific minds at the church door and enter into the pre-scientific world of our ancestors when we pray. This schizophrenic existence is not viable in the long run. How do we do liturgy with people having a "quantum-cosmological, developmental-evolutionary worldview," asks Jesuit Fr. Robert Daly, who has been thinking about this question for a number of years.

This is no easy task. In truth, it is part of a larger task of theologians trying to figure out how to make Christianity intelligible to people in the 21st century.

Daly finds inspiration for his work in theologians like Elizabeth Johnson ([\*Ask the Beasts: Darwin and the God of Love\*](#)), Dawn Nothwehr ([\*Ecological Footprints: An Essential Franciscan Guide for Faith and Sustainable Living\*](#)), and Dennis Edwards ([\*Partaking of God: Trinity, Evolution, and Ecology\*](#)).

Here we see theologians grappling with ancient questions of Christology, ecclesiology and soteriology in the context of contemporary science.

These theologians are imitating the great theologians of the past — Augustine and Thomas Aquinas — who used the intellectual thought of their times to explain Christianity to their contemporaries. Augustine used Neoplatonism and Aquinas used Aristotelianism because these represented the intellectual worldviews of their times. Today's theologians who use science and contemporary thought are very traditional; they are simply following in the footsteps of Augustine and Aquinas.

But in some ways, Daly's challenge is even greater because what he wants to do will impact not only the thinking of the intellectually curious, but also the lived experience of worship of millions of Christians. If you think the translation wars were rough, you ain't seen nothing yet.

Daly recognizes this challenge and says his "goal has been to formulate prayer/praying in which both people comfortable in a pre-modern, pre-critical, pre-scientific worldview and people comfortable in a quantum-cosmological, developmental, evolutionary worldview can happily pray together."

He first presented his thinking in a March 2015 article in *Worship*, "Ecological Eucharology." Eucharology is a book of the Orthodox church containing Eucharistic rites and other liturgical matters.

Included in this article was a first draft of a Eucharistic prayer designed for contemporary worship. This draft did not include a "preface."

Last week, Father Daly presented a revised draft with preface to the Seminar on Eucharistic Prayer and Theology of the North American Academy of Liturgy ([NAAL](#)) meeting in Washington, D.C. Although the prayer has been discussed at the seminar for the last three years, he acknowledges that the prayer is still a draft.

"Its language, imagery and rhythms need to be honed by the praying and proclaimed experience of many mouths and communities," he wrote. "It betrays the awkwardness of an early attempt to pray in a language that is not only traditionally biblical in its allusiveness, but that is also ecologically sensitive."

It is "at least referentially expressive of the thoughts and feelings of a modern scientist," but at the same time not so obtrusive "as to alienate those not fully at home in that world of thought."

In short, he attempted to write "a poetic, Trinitarian song of praise and thanksgiving expressing the feelings and aspirations of a Judaeo-Christian faith that is also comfortable with a quantum-cosmological, developmental-evolutionary worldview."

Daly's Eucharistic prayer includes all of the traditional classical elements of a model Eucharistic prayer in the Basil/Chrysostom tradition: Introductory dialogue, preface, Sanctus, *anamnesis*, institutional narrative, acclamation, *epiclesis*, solemn petitions and doxology.

After the introductory dialogue ("The Lord be with you. ..."), he begins with words of praise in the preface:

Father, we praise you, with all your creatures  
great and small,  
from measureless galaxy  
to tiniest particle.  
They all came forth from your hand.  
Filled with your presence,  
they are signs of your undying love:  
Praise be to you!  
**A. Praise be to you!**

From the very first sentence, the Eucharistic prayer goes beyond an Earth-centric and visible world to include "measureless galaxy" and "tiniest particle." These are seen as "signs of your undying love," and the congregation responds with "Praise be to you!" The congregation gives praise not by itself but "with all your creatures."

With a Trinitarian focus, the prayer goes on to Jesus and the Spirit:

Word of God, Jesus, we praise you.  
Through you all these things were made  
and have their being.  
And when you took your bodily shape  
in the womb of Mary our mother,

you entered into the chaos of our lives  
to bring us to the beauty of your love:  
Praise be to you!

**A. Praise be to you!**

Holy Spirit, we praise you,  
who breathed over the primal chaos,  
spoke to us through the prophets' voices,  
hovered over Mary's womb  
and made us temples of your love:  
Praise be to you!

**A. Praise be to you!**

The scientifically literate would note references to "chaos theory" in this section of the Eucharistic prayer, but not in a way that marginalizes the scientifically illiterate.

After the Sanctus, the Eucharistic prayer continues with more images from contemporary understanding of creation:

Where once was nothing, your love  
brought matter into being and motion,  
thus creating time itself,  
and countless galaxies, each with its countless stars,  
and, to prepare a home for us,  
delicately circling round a single star,  
this one small globe, our mother earth.

And on this globe, aeons later,  
you brought forth, infinitely small, but inexorably growing,  
the beginnings of the life we share with all that lives.

And then, past billions of years,  
past aeons of seemingly random developments,  
past the seeming chaos of countless extinctions  
— but springing from those deaths ever new forms of life —  
your Word breathed not just life but Spirit too  
into man and woman, your image and likeness.

Thus, the creation of man is put into the context of the creation of not only galaxies and stars but matter and time itself. Nor does man appear in some idyllic Eden.

Past further countless generations you lovingly watched us grow,  
becoming part of the life-death-life  
of all that lives and grows on earth,  
until, at last, you made a rainbow covenant with us

bringing us to know you more clearly as our Maker  
and ourselves as your people.

Only then does the Eucharistic prayer connect us to Abraham, the prophets, and ultimately to Jesus, "born of the Spirit and of Mary's YES, to enter into the chaos of our earthly lives. ..."

After the institutional narrative, the acclamation is addressed to the Father, rather than to Jesus, which allows the congregation to not only remember the death and resurrection of Jesus but also to offer to the Father the sacrifice of this Eucharist:

Remembering his cross and death,  
and mindful of his loving words,  
we give you praise and thanks, O Lord,  
and offer you this bread and cup,  
while offering ourselves,  
until he comes again.

The prayer continues with calling down the Spirit in the *epiclesis*:

Mindful, then, of your loving gift,  
and in awesome praise of the chaos-beauty  
of the constant death-into-life  
of this your garden globe,  
and mindful too of your mandate to bless and keep it  
with the same loving care with which  
You bless and keep us, we pray:

Send down on us and on these gifts  
full portions of your Holy Spirit  
who with your Word and before all time  
brought forth the galaxies,  
breathed over the primal waters,  
came upon the prophets  
and hovered over Mary's womb.

The calling down of the Spirit in this *epiclesis* is the same Spirit that was present at creation and that has been active throughout time. In prayer, the congregation asks that this same Spirit may help us to "know our place in this your universe, on this your earth, and in this your Church." All of this "so that in and through our living, dying, and rising with your Son we may learn to till and keep this earth with the same love with which you till and keep us."

This Eucharistic prayer is a first attempt to imitate the early fathers of the church who wrote similar prayers to fit their historical and cultural contexts. Daley understands that the role of liturgists is not simply to learn from the past but also to speak to the present in prayer and song in a way that responds to our changed worldview.

The prayer, as Daly acknowledges, is not perfect. ([Click here](#) to read the full prayer.) For example, I find it impossible to proclaim the sentence beginning "Where once was nothing. ..." One of the seminar participants suggested it be split into shorter sentences.

Another questioned directing the prayer in the preface and doxology to the Trinity rather than only to the Father, as is traditional in Eucharistic prayers from the fifth century on. Most Eucharistic prayers are addressed to the Father, through the Son, in the Spirit. Some found breaking with that tradition disconcerting.

The most interesting comments came from members of the NAAL seminar on liturgy and the environment who joined the discussion.

One suggested having the prayer reflect the idea that the incarnation began with the Big Bang and using the language of energy when speaking of the Spirit.

Another suggested that when using the word "we," the prayer might include not only humans but all creation. Likewise, the Spirit would be described as inhabiting all nature, not just humans. One even suggested that when speaking of the Father sending the patriarchs and prophets to teach us, the prayer also recall the sending of locusts, floods and other natural phenomena.

Another participant suggested that the prayer be more explicitly environmental rather than solely scientific. In other words, reflect the thinking of environmentalists like John Muir rather than just scientists like Darwin.

Despite the suggestions, all participants agreed this is an admirable attempt to create a Eucharistic prayer for the 21st century, a prayer that can resonate with the scientifically literate and environmentally sensitive. Members of the seminar also acknowledged that no one prayer can include everything without becoming too long and too complicated. Rather than trying to get everything in one prayer, it would be better to have a number of prayers.

Immediately after Vatican II, many celebrants were writing their own Eucharistic prayers with little knowledge of what they were doing. In suppressing these excesses, the Vatican also shut down more intelligent experimentations. Liturgists concluded that it was a waste of time working on new Eucharistic prayers that would never get approved. Creativity continued in Protestant churches, but not in Catholicism.

With the papacy of Pope Francis, perhaps the church is ready for a period of limited experimentation by liturgical professionals working with congregations willing to be beta sites for new liturgical practices. This would allow for creativity, testing, and adjustments before any new practice is let loose on the entire church.

Meanwhile, liturgical professionals are doing the slow work of thinking about and discussing the how to do liturgy in the 21st century.

[Jesuit Fr. Thomas Reese is a senior analyst for *NCR* and author of *Inside the Vatican: The Politics and Organization of the Catholic Church*. His email address is [treesesj@ncronline.org](mailto:treesesj@ncronline.org).]

**January 16, 2017**

Women Are 'Backbone' of Native Actions Against Dakota Pipeline

teleSUR

*Several Native American women spoke with teleSUR about their role in the protests against the oil project in North Dakota.*

The actions and protests against the Dakota Access pipeline could not have yielded success if it had not been for the participation of the Native American women water protectors as they took on a leadership role in the months-long protests in North Dakota against the oil project.

“Our people always believe that the women are the backbone and with our warriors back in the day, the women would meet first, then the guys would act on our meeting,” Char bad Cob, a member of the Lakota people and a water protector, told teleSUR from the encampment at Standing Rock.

“It is more important than ever that we stay and we stand and prevent the Dakota Access pipeline from going through.” Cob said, adding that what pushed her to join the action is half a millennia of “oppression and genocide” against the Indigenous people in North America.

She has been there since the beginning of the protests back in August but when people ask her how long she has been in North Dakota she proudly responds, “I’ve been here for 500 years through every ancestor who has suffered. This can’t happen no more. Things have got to change.”

For Bernie Lafferty, a Lakota elder, the role of women against the pipeline is just as important as it used to be hundreds of years ago. “Like if the men went out and if they didn’t come back, then the women had to defend your camps, you had to defend your children and the elders. And to me, that’s how we are here.”

Women are the foundation of the fight against the Dakota Access pipeline, Catawba water protector Linda Black Elk told TeleSUR, echoing Lafferty’s sentiment, and adding that water protectors are there to protect the environment for future generations.

The action against the US\$3.8 billion pipeline has attracted more than 300 Native American tribes from across the United States in a show of unity that is being called historic.

They said the project will damage burial sites considered sacred to the Standing Rock Sioux tribe and pollute the area’s drinking water.

“In our blood memory, when something happens to the earth, when she's being dug into and extracted from, we physically feel that pain within our own bodies,” Kendi Mosset, a Lead Organizer with the Indigenous Environmental Network, told teleSUR, as protesters brave harsh winter conditions.

“So standing there watching them dig, as they did on Sept. 3 and Sept. 4 when they destroyed sacred sites. We couldn't just stand there and watch, we had to break down the fences and run out into the fields and stop them.”

The water protectors scored a victory in December when the Corps of Engineers decided to deny the route for the Dakota Access pipeline.

“I am from Standing Rock. As a child, I used to play along the Missouri River. It is 12,000 years old, and 17 million people benefit from it,” Waniya Locke, a Lakota water protector, said speaking her native language. “We are standing in opposition to the fossil fuel industry to protect the drinking water of 10 million people.”

After the victory, the Standing Rock Sioux tribe then called on those who are not locals to leave because it was hard for the tribe to accommodate the thousands of people who were there.

However, many worry that President-elect Donald Trump, who takes office in a few days, will reverse the decision and push for the completion of the project. The tribe asked people to come back after his inauguration in order to keep up the pressure.

Lafferty concluded by calling on people to keep supporting the Indigenous and native nations in their fight.

“Because we're not gonna give up. We're gonna stay here, even if it comes down to just a few of us, we are gonna still be here. And I just would hope everybody out there believes in what we're doing and supports us and prays for us, I guess that is all we would ask.”

<http://www.telesurtv.net/english/news/Women-Are-Backbone-of-Native-Actions-Against-Dakota-Pipeline-20170116-0028.html>

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**January 19, 2017**

American sisters tackling climate care resolve to stay the course

By Elizabeth Eisenstadt Evans  
Global Sisters Report

For decades — whether they are raising [heritage chickens](#), running [an organic farm](#) that provides food for local residents as well as their own community, or addressing the impact of climate change here and abroad — sisters around the United States have made care of creation a priority, incorporating it not only into their prayers but into the fabric of their community strategic plans.

Now faced with the presidency of Donald Trump, who has expressed doubts about the very underpinnings of environmental activism — threatening to cut clean energy and climate-change spending and roll back protections — some sisters say they are prepared to mobilize their communities to resist.

"What we're hearing [from members] is a rising concern," said Sr. Mary Pellegrino, president of the [Leadership Conference of Women Religious](#), which represents about 80 percent of the approximately 49,000 U.S. women religious. "We have seen some positive things happening to protect the climate, so we are concerned about what might happen in the future."

A Sister of St. Joseph of Baden, Pennsylvania, Pellegrino said that LCWR will continue to advocate for care of the environment, and be available to help member congregations seeking to do the same.

It can sometimes be hard to separate issues, Pellegrino said, because so many are so closely tied together. One example: "Addressing the climate issue and using sustainable development will help address some of the underlying causes of poverty and forced migration," she said.

Now prioress of the [Adrian Dominican community](#) in Michigan, Pat Siemen is also a lawyer and founder of the [Center for Earth Jurisprudence](#) at Florida's Barry University, where she taught for 10 years.

"We have a president-elect who doesn't have a basic understanding of the role the environment plays in sustaining all of life and the very ecological and biological foundations of it," she said.

"Maybe our worst fears will not materialize, but when one looks at his slate of cabinet nominees, they are [almost] all white men with a business background. I have nothing against that, but it usually comes with a certain business bias, and not necessarily a consideration of all of the needs that need to be addressed."

Jeanne Hagelskamp, a member of the leadership team of the Indiana-based [Sisters of Providence of St. Mary-of-the-Woods](#), said her fellow sisters are of the same mind — problems like environmental stress, the forced movements of populations, and poverty need to be addressed together.

"We really do believe at the core that these issues are related. The more we can look at these relationships the more we can address what's at the core," she said.

Though for many years the sisters have had an environmental education and retreat hub (the [White Violet Center for Eco Justice](#)), in July they decided that they would pay particular attention to the causes of environmental injustice — with an eye to assessing their current work and mobilizing sisters for new activities and partnerships.

The upcoming change of administration finds them engaged in a series of small-group meetings designed to report back to their newly formed Justice Coordinating Commission, said Hagelskamp.

But the discernment process in which they are engaged hasn't stopped them from looking past Inauguration Day, she said. "It's probably going to sound very Pollyannaish, but we're really hoping that he will back down on his statements about climate change. In the meantime, we're not sitting by passively." The sisters' plans include participating in rallies, continuing their partnership with the [Catholic Climate Covenant](#), and sending out petitions.

"We are taking an active stance, but we want to be nonviolent about it. For us that is key," said Hagelskamp.

Almost 2,000 miles away, nestled among the old-growth forests of Northern California, [Redwoods Monastery](#) Abbess Kathy DeVico, a Cistercian, echoes that sentiment. She referred to Pope Francis' message commemorating the 50th anniversary of the World Day of Peace on Jan. 1, in which he urged the faithful to be governed by charity and nonviolence in their interactions with others. "It is important not to polarize. We need to work with one another on behalf of God's creation: one heart, one mind holding before us the needs of our environment," DeVico said in an interview.

"As religious, even more so now, since Pope Francis' encyclical, *'Laudato Si'*, Care for Our Common Home,' we do have a responsibility to pray for the needs of our Earth and to voice our concerns in appropriate ways when and where God's creation is being misused and its resources being destroyed," she added in an email that followed.

In addition to growing much of their own food, the nuns at the monastery have a commitment to environmental stewardship of the pristine surroundings they inhabit.

Sr. Anne Curtis, who serves on the [Sisters of Mercy](#)'s leadership team, said that the congregation has pursued an approach that integrates environmental concerns with other commitments, like those to nonviolence and health-care access, since a pivotal chapter meet in the 1990s. The North American Mercy Institute is part of worldwide organization spanning South and Central America as well as Guam and the Philippines.

Like other religious interviewed for this story, Curtis credited Francis' encyclical on the environment with challenging them to "deepen significantly a commitment we have already made."

"We feel an urgency at this point as we look at what's happening with climate change. Our sisters in Guam are watching the islands suffer around them," while more locally, religious have witnessed the devastation wrought by Hurricanes Sandy and Katrina, said Curtis.

While remaining grounded in their spiritual tradition, the sisters are likely to take a multitude of approaches, including participating in Catholic groups like the Catholic Climate Covenant and maintaining relationships with the interfaith organizations in which they participate, she added. "Everyone is in a mode of 'What do we do?' There's no clarity about that. We have never experienced what we are facing right now. It doesn't seem like business as usual."

American political leadership that denies the impact of climate change on human lives and Earth causes Siemen and others with whom she has spoken "hesitation, concern and caution." Siemen noted that her Adrian Dominican community is pursuing a plan to lessen its dependence on fossil fuels, partner with the poor and vulnerable, and seek out new coalitions of those with similar concerns.

In California, the [Dominican Sisters of San Rafael](#) recently completed an in-depth study of the papal document on the environment directed by the Earth Committee, Sr. Carla Kovack, a member of the congregation's leadership team, wrote in an email. The group also partners with [Interfaith Power and Light](#) (a multistate coalition that promotes conservation and public-policy advocacy), as well as other like-minded organizations, she said.

After consulting with several sisters active on the Earth Committee and with the congregation's social justice coordinator, Kovack wrote, the San Rafael Dominican Sisters are taking a cautious, wait-and-see approach: "Until we exactly know what the new president actually does, we don't know how to resist."

As executive director of the [New Mexico branch](#) of Interfaith Power and Light, Joan Brown, a Franciscan from the [Rochester, Minnesota, community](#) (and a [Global Sisters Report contributor](#)), is actively charting the impact of climate change on her state. New Mexico, she said, now confronts the impact of continual drought, with snow from the higher elevations prone to run downstream fast without sinking in to replenish the soil.

New Mexico's long history of exploitation by extractive industries like uranium mining, its poverty and its colonialist legacy have forced her organization and others like it to be creative, said Brown. "We're faith-based and not partisan," she said. "We'll just keep doing our work. We believe that things can shift. We're called to keep moving forward and doing what's right."

For Brown and colleagues around the country, that mean participating in prayer vigils timed around the Jan. 20 inauguration as well as support for the [Green Climate Fund](#) (an anti-climate-change initiative supported by 194 countries), and ongoing local initiatives to alleviate air and water pollution, she said.

Whereas some are anxious about the future under a Trump administration, Brown, citing both the protests at Standing Rock and increased sensitivity to racial and urban and rural divisions, sees both the challenges as well as multiple opportunities to promote positive changes.

"It feels like we are being called to a moment of transformation of consciousness," she said, suggesting that environmental advocates will be more effective if they work across racial, geographical and class boundaries.

Rather than being caught in a reactive and negative mode that fuels clashing perspectives, she said, it's important that advocates for creation care make it clear that they are affirming positive changes. "We're simply lifting up care of creation and of communities for the common good."

"As a member of a Dominican congregation of women religious," said Siemen, "I think that the potential threat to Catholic social teaching and the well-being of people and the planet ... serve as impetus to those of us who are members of faith communities to actually become the people we are meant to be."

In this transformational moment, Brown said, it's time to pause, reflect prayerfully "and think about how we want to move next. The prophetic view of people of faith is essential. Are we up for that challenge?"

[Elizabeth Eisenstadt Evans is a religion columnist for Lancaster Newspapers, Inc., as well as a freelance writer.]

<http://globalsistersreport.org/news/environment/american-sisters-tackling-climate-care-resolve-stay-course-44466>

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**January 21, 2017**

The ecology of burial: Choices reflect beliefs about life after death

By Robert Duncan, Catholic News Service  
National Catholic Reporter

[Vatican City](#) - In a craftsman's workshop on the edge of Rome's Campo Verano cemetery, two designers are working to revive what they see as a dying art: burial.

Unlike the masons who make the cemetery's gravestones and memorials, Anna Citelli and Raoul Bretzel are fashioning biodegradable burial pods.

Their prototype is an egg-shaped sarcophagus that can hold a corpse in the fetal position. A young tree, chosen ahead of time by the deceased, will be planted over the pod in place of a headstone. Citelli and Bretzel imagine a future where "sacred forests" co-exist with cemeteries.

The burial pods are part of a widespread movement focused on "green burial" practices, which use decomposable materials and avoid the use of embalming chemicals.

A growing number of Catholic cemeteries offer "green burials," but do so emphasizing how the practices and the motivations behind such a choice must coincide with Catholic faith.

"By burying the bodies of the faithful, the church confirms her faith in the resurrection of the body and intends to show the great dignity of the human body as an integral part of the human person whose body forms part of their identity," said an [instruction on burial and cremation](#) issued by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith in October.

The Catholic Church, it said, "cannot, therefore, condone attitudes or permit rites that involve erroneous ideas about death, such as considering death as the definitive annihilation of the

person, or the moment of fusion with Mother Nature or the universe, or as a stage in the cycle of regeneration, or as the definitive liberation from the 'prison' of the body."

The Italian pod makers, who named their firm Capsula Mundi (Latin for "earth pod") say the burial process should reflect the natural processes of the world with the dying and recycling of biological materials by other organisms.

"We are earth and to earth we will return," said Bretzel, echoing the words from the Book of Genesis spoken during the distribution of ashes on Ash Wednesday. Yet Capsula Mundi was inspired not by Catholicism or New Age spirituality but a critique of modern culture.

Consumerism, with the many creature comforts it affords, has led people to think of themselves as "outside of nature, of the biological cycle of life," and thus encouraged them to counteract the natural process of decay by embalming, Bretzel said.

"In ancient times, monks were buried in the cloister of their convent; they were wrapped in a sheet, but laid in the ground," he said.

Opus Dei Father Paul O'Callaghan, an expert on church teaching about end-of-life questions and a professor at Rome's Pontifical University of the Holy Cross in Rome, said burial methods often indicate underlying attitudes about the afterlife.

Christians recognize, "in all humility, that the body has to go back to where it came from, it goes back to the earth," said O'Callaghan, noting that the words "human" and "humility" both come from the Latin word "humus," meaning earth.

"The authentic Christian practice," O'Callaghan said, is burial "followed by natural decay." The eventual resurrection of the body promised in the Creed will be the "fruit of divine intervention," he said.

The priest said he understands why Catholics might be motivated to be ecologically aware when planning for their death and burial.

Burial is more ecological than cremation, O'Callaghan argued, because the ground can "just take from the body what it wants, rather than the body being burned and heating up the atmosphere" where "most of the organic material is actually lost and is turned into CO<sub>2</sub>."

But O'Callaghan also cautions Catholics to understand the philosophy undergirding some green burial initiatives.

"When you are promoting something" that deals with death and burial, "normally you have an anthropology, you have a view of what human beings are, and how they work, and where they're destined," he said. "There is a religious element, whether you like it or not."

For Citelli, "true immortality is to return to nature. That is where the sharing of and continuity of life take place. Because the transformation of the substances, of the organic material, gives life to death."

In the Catholic view, when a person dies, it is not merely that "a part of life has disappeared and can now sort of get mixed up in the ground and in the trees and in the plants," O'Callaghan said. "This particular person, who lived in this particular body, and who was loved as a person in this particular form, is being remembered."

Because the bodies of Christians have received the Eucharist during their lives, they have been carriers of God, the priest said. A corpse should be seen not only as something loved by other people, "but also from the religious point of view as something that's sacred."

Because proposals for ecological burials vary from country to country, bishops and bishops' conferences "need to look into the anthropology, the eschatology and the theology behind" these diverse initiatives, he said.

For O'Callaghan, the important questions are: "Is there a real affirmation of the human body" as a "carrier of the Holy Spirit?" Is there "a clear element of the name of the person?" Is the commemoration not just of nature, but "of the person and the life they lived?" How is the belief in the resurrection represented?

"Very often that is represented by a headstone with a cross, which represents the power and salvation won by Jesus Christ," he said. Comparable symbolism, along with the name and dates of the individual's birth and death, would have to accompany any Christian form of a green burial.

"There's a very powerful message of concreteness, of that particular person who died in this particular situation, and his name and the date. The place is there; the cross is there. There is something that speaks to people in that," he said.

<https://www.ncronline.org/blogs/eco-catholic/ecology-burial-choices-reflect-beliefs-about-life-after-death>

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**January 25, 2017**

Native Americans condemn Trump's executive action on pipeline

By Emily McFarlan Miller, Religion News Service  
National Catholic Reporter

President Trump's executive orders advancing the construction of pipelines are drawing condemnation from the Native American and religious groups that have opposed them.

The Standing Rock Sioux Tribe issued a [statement on Facebook](#) saying the president's order Jan. 24 regarding the Dakota Access pipeline, to extend from the oil fields of North Dakota to Illinois, violated both U.S. law and tribal treaties.

"Nothing will deter us from our fight for clean water," said Tribal Chairman David Archambault II.

In a similar order on construction of the Keystone XL pipeline, which would bring oil from the tar sands of Canada to Texas, Trump said it would create "a lot of jobs, 28,000 jobs, great construction jobs."

The president also ordered all pipes used in pipeline construction in the United States to be manufactured domestically, saying it would "put a lot of workers, a lot of steelworkers back to work."

"We'll see if we can't get that pipeline built," he said.

To many Native Americans and others who have [opposed construction](#) of the Dakota Access pipeline, the movement was not primarily about jobs, money or energy. It was about protecting holy sites and water.

Shantha Ready Alonso, executive director of Creation Justice Ministries, a Christian organization whose members have joined the camps at Standing Rock, said they were "shocked" by the Trump administration's lack of regard for tribal sovereignty.

"As Christians we are committed to responsible stewardship of the gifts of God's creation and to justice for our indigenous brothers and sisters," Alonso said. "We call on the administration to respect indigenous rights and the safety of drinking water for millions."

Kyle Meyaard-Schaap, national organizer and spokesperson for Young Evangelicals for Climate Action, issued a statement saying its members were "deeply disappointed" by the president's action, which they believe will damage recent climate gains.

"As evangelical Christians, we are committed to a vision of the gospel that understands that all things are under the Lordship of Jesus Christ, and that the entire creation is being reconciled back to God through Jesus. This commitment will always lead us to advocate for the well-being of all people and for the protection of God's good creation," Meyaard-Schaap said.

"We will continue to stand with those around the world who are made most vulnerable by a changing climate. We will continue to stand with Native peoples asserting their right to clean air, water, and a stable climate."

The American Humanist Association, who also had sent members to visit Standing Rock and raised funds for the camps there, issued a statement condemning the executive action:

"It's clear that the Trump administration's idea of putting 'America first' doesn't apply to First Americans indigenous to this land. As humanists, we stand in solidarity with the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe in their ongoing resistance against dehumanizing environmental and racial injustice."

As many as 8,000 people at one time have gathered in the camps in the hills along the Cannonball River in North Dakota in solidarity with the Standing Rock Sioux against the pipeline. On Jan. 20 the tribal council had passed a resolution asking people to leave the camps in the reservation's Cannonball District, noting the strain on the citizens and resources of the Sioux Nation and the work that will be required to clean up before the land thaws and floods.

And just last month, many [had expressed](#) cautious optimism after the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers denied an easement for the \$3.8 billion Dakota Access pipeline under President Barack Obama.

Trump said the construction of both pipelines still is "subject to a renegotiation of terms by us."

The president had owned stock in Energy Transfer Partners, the company building the Dakota Access pipeline, through at least mid-2016, [according to Reuters](#). His nominee for U.S. energy secretary, Rick Perry, was — until recently — a member of its board, it said.

Its chief executive, Kelcy Warren, also had donated \$100,000 to the Trump campaign.

<https://www.ncronline.org/blogs/eco-catholic/native-americans-condemn-trumps-executive-action-pipeline>

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## **January 25, 2017**

The Indigenous Environmental Network Responds to Presidential Memorandum for Approving KXL & DAPL

Native News Online

**WASHINGTON** – On Tuesday, January 24, 2017, President Trump signed five executive actions, two of which will advance construction of the controversial Keystone XL and Dakota Access pipelines. The other three memorandums will serve to expedite environmental reviews for high priority projects.

The following is a statement from Tom BK Goldtooth, the Executive Director of the Indigenous Environmental Network:

“The Indigenous Environmental Network is extremely alarmed with President Donald Trump’s announcement of the two Executive Orders setting the stage for approving the dirty energy pipeline projects of the TransCanada Keystone XL pipeline and the Dakota Access Pipeline.

“The Standing Rock Sioux Tribe and other Sioux Tribes, as sovereign Native nations, were never consulted by Trump or his Administration on this decision that further violates the treaty rights of the Lakota, Nakota, Dakota people. Trump is portraying his true self by joining forces with the darkness of the Black Snake pipelines crossing across the culturally and environmentally rich landscape of the prairie lands of America.

“These actions by President Trump are insane and extreme, and nothing short of attacks on our ancestral homelands as Indigenous peoples. The actions by the president today demonstrate that this Administration is more than willing to violate federal law that is meant to protect Indigenous rights, human rights, the environment and the overall safety of communities for the benefit of the fossil fuel industry.

“These attacks will not be ignored, our resistance is stronger now than ever before and we are prepared to push back at any reckless decision made by this Administration. If Trump does not pull back from implementing these orders, it will only result in more massive mobilization and civil disobedience on a scale never seen of a newly seated President of the United States.”

<http://nativenewsonline.net/currents/indigenous-environmental-network-responds-executive-orders-approving-kxl-dapl/>

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**January 27, 2017**

Compassion in Action: And the Spiritual Ecology of Translating Sky Dragons into Power Grids

By Kyle Lemle  
Spiritual Ecology Fellowship

In the time when the nuns sing before the birds, the sun waits patiently as if it would not come at all. Silence given voice in an ocean of sound lapping in all directions - the thick buzz of the living, the chanting street dogs, the great crash of becoming one - the sound of the Himalayas being born to our North - harmonizing with the great crash of cymbals echoing from inside the temple walls where the nuns are busy ushering in the ritual of dawn.

With the crash, half of me becomes awake, the other half still at home in California, running laps around all my creations. And another crash, though I forgot it would come, right on time, the red sun rises over the mountains, like a whale breaching from the depths, and all the green turns to gold. The nuns raise the flag, and another day is blessed.

I'm here at the Tilokpur Nunnery for a strange experiment, the meeting of 50 nuns and 11 [Spiritual Ecology Fellows](#). We are the guests of [Khoryug](#), a network of Buddhist monasteries and nunneries across the Himalayas working on environmental protection and mitigation. This is the first time Khoryug has hosted a workshop at this nunnery, and the first time a group of foreigners have collaborated with Khoryug on a workshop.

We've come together to discuss the desecration of the Himalayas and specific actions the nuns can take to better serve the environment at the personal, community and systemic levels. Despite the majesty of these mountains, the once seemingly impenetrable frontier, they are now undergoing catastrophic changes. Climate change is happening three times faster here than the rest of the world. Tigers are being poached for trade. Over 75% of Himalayan forests have been destroyed or degraded.

Forming the cultural spine of the Himalayas, the Tibetan Buddhist community has woken up to their responsibility in creating cultures of environmental stewardship in light of the big changes underway. Leading the Karma Kagyu lineage response is His Holiness the 17th Karmapa, who has [said](#), "Environmental Conservation must be the essence of our spiritual practice."

Under His Holiness' auspices, we gather. The awkwardness is palpable our first morning as we enter the temple's conference hall. The nuns and Fellows naturally sit on opposite sides of the room from each other. What common language could we possibly teach one another in? My prostrations this morning were abysmal, but I can certainly workshop a workshop, how many times have I talked about the 'lungs of the Earth?'

"This is my first time being in a workshop," many of the nuns share as they introduce themselves to the room, cowering away from the microphone.

To start the workshop the nuns offer a prayer of auspiciousness, and the plenary is offered butter tea and sweet rice. We get to work talking about the Earth, its rapid decline, its resilient nature. All of this with the help of five incredible Tibetan interpreters who gracefully translate complex science to the nuns and intricate cosmology back to us.

We talk about the forest: the source of the rest, the mother of rivers, the waste filter of air, the cooler of climate, the home of the animals - its disappearance is bound up with ours.

We talk about water: about our murky past, the water in which we are all born. The mechanized separation of water from water.

We talk about wildlife: about humanity's relative inexperience on this planet, how the 250,000 years of human history is a mere 3% of elephant history walking the Earth.

We talk about waste: about cultures of disposability, how after drinking a bottle of water it takes only two seconds to dispense what will take thousands of years to decompose. We arrive at a new definition for plastic: the exploitation of the energy of our ancestors for our immediate convenience.

We talk about the the science of the greenhouse effect, a concept which many of the nuns have never learned. In return they offer the following interpretation of climate change: the karmic dragon born from the spells of the animals who are dying at the hands of humans.

The internal heat manifesting external heat manifesting internal heat. Our Indian neighbors further South in Delhi had nowhere to run from the 50 degree C heat this year.

After all the problems of the Earth are named, we are asked to come up with solutions, together. The nuns know better than us the origins of greed, the fires of delusion, the sacredness of life - following the instructions of the Buddha they stay inside the nunnery every year for the duration of the monsoon months to avoid stepping on creatures of the rain. Their solutions come first from the principle of non-harming.

And maybe for the first time ever participating in a workshop, I try not to jump to efficient conclusions, to blaming, to inciting revolution. Here, I am asked to look at my own mind, the same mind that births the problems of our worlds. Turning inward for mere seconds and I can find how greedy my activism can be, the same energy that takes down polluting systems also makes war.

All this time we've spent trying to paint the boat blue when at the bottom of the boat there is a 200 year old leak and I am the problem I seek. Ecology is like the Golden Rule but what I do unto others I do to myself. Scientists call it climate change, Buddhists call it Karma. This is why the Khenpo of the nunnery implores us "with Karma comes responsibility."

The challenge today is to come up with a practical solution for helping Himalayan forests, so the nuns, my project partner Kailea, and I put our heads together. The nuns explain that many of the trees they planted have died. We discern that they were planted too young, their roots were not established enough to withstand drought, weeds, wind, monkeys and cows.

So we agree to improve resilience through building an on-site nursery to grow larger trees for planting later. A scientific solution to young tree loss and a spiritual solution to caring for life in our own backyard.

And after hours of forming our nursery plan, when we are on the verge of designing an operational strategy, when asked to come up with our final call to action, the nuns suggest that the nursery can happen later; writing a song will be a better use of our time together. I swallow my sense of urgency.

One of the younger nuns in our group, Lobsang Palmo, who was silent for the entire workshop finally speaks up. She reminds us that any living thing could have been our mother in a past life including the forest dwelling insects, animals and spirits. So we write a song together called "Eight Steps How to be a Best Friend to a Tree." It's about mothering all things, knowing they will care for us when we are old. And just when we think we are getting somewhere with the song, the bell rings for tea and biscuits.

The workshop comes to a close with a great feast and a Karaoke rendition of "My Heart Will Go On." The veil of shyness shown in our initial meeting is lifted, revealing trust - our most precious commodity according to our facilitator and mentor Dekila Chungyalpa. The nuns all vie for the microphone passing it from one to the other, expressing words and songs of prayer and gratitude. And in the morning as we load our vans for departure, the nuns shower us with the traditional blessing of white scarves, so many blessings we have no more limbs to wrap them in.

They brought their study of inner environmental change, we brought our study of outer environmental change and we crashed to our mutual confusion, our mutual enlightenment. For the nuns compassion is action and sometimes the greatest action is stillness. In ceremony every morning from their cushions they shower all beings with wishes of wellness, wishes of freedom. Now, we hope they have a few more tools with which to rise from their cushions and tend their garden, a few more ideas of where their plastic biscuit wrappers may go after they are offered to Buddha, and even a vision of a future in which offerings are made with no plastic at all.

As for me, I'm still left with the question of what a prayer does. Who listens and how long does it last? I even have outcome metrics for chanting, for lighting butter lamps. But like many of my colleagues, I often burn out before the lamp, my internal resources become depleted before the projects are finished. Perhaps all I can do is show up in peace to my work, without attachment to results, to changing the world. For me it will be about flipping the question, not where can I be of most service, but how can I create the conditions for service to flow naturally through me?

It would be more convenient to continue as usual in our respective worlds, it's hard to translate sky dragons into electrical power grids. But on the brink of collapse, we lean in, we learn from each other. And maybe one morning after the songs are uttered, the cymbals crash, and the flag is raised, the nuns will look out to the mountain side and see the forest they brought into being from their own nursery, I will be singing the nun's forest song with a gospel choir of anxious UN bureaucrats, and we will know ourselves enough not to hurt ourselves.

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*Kyle Lemle is a tree planter and community-based natural resource management professional with experience working for international and grassroots NGOs from Bhutan to Thailand to California. He is an inaugural recipient of the Spiritual Ecology Youth Fellowship and is currently working with leading scientists and religious leaders around the world to empower diverse moral imperatives for conservation. The Fellowship brought him to India to work with [Khoryug](#) at a Tibetan Nunnery near Dharmshala and then to Vandana Shiva's biodiversity farm and seed saving institute called "Navdanya" from where he writes to us. He can be reached at [kyle.lemle@gmail.com](mailto:kyle.lemle@gmail.com)*

<http://www.spiritualecologyfellowship.org/blog/2017/1/27/compassion-in-action-and-the-spiritual-ecology-of-translating-sky-dragons-into-power-grids-by-kyle-lemle>

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**January 27, 2017**

Tips to sustain ourselves in our stumbling toward sustainability

By Donna Schaper  
National Catholic Reporter

When exclamatory [news alerts like this one](#) appear in our inbox, most of us want out of the box:

## **BREAKING NEWS ALERT (*Boston Globe*, Jan. 18, 2017)**

Marking another milestone for a changing planet, scientists reported on Wednesday that the Earth reached its highest temperature on record in 2016 — trouncing a record set only a year earlier, which beat one set in 2014. It is the first time in the modern era of global warming data that temperatures have blown past the previous record three years in a row.

We in the realm of environmental concern often have a simultaneous sense of needing to do more while knowing we also need to do less. We have used the slogan "Less is More" for so long that we are aware of the limits on growth. We know we are stumbling toward sustainability and want to walk confidently toward it.

Fortunately, our yearning for less becoming more in our own behavior, has spawned a small industry of continuing ecological education. Here, I name a few of the organizations that are helping activists sustain ourselves along this journey toward sustainability.

- The [Windcall Institute](#) supports visionary organizing in communities of color and engages participants in open discussions on transformative practices for staying power. Topics it discusses include: "How to create space rather than time," "Building habits of resilience," "Clearing vicarious trauma" and "Mindful breath/mindful justice." Windcall's Staying Power program works at the intersection of a multitude of issues. If climate is yours, you will be helped to become more resilient — and less afraid of headlines — by working with the wind's call.
- Etsy.com's [Good Work Institute](#) encourages spiritual and sustainable entrepreneurship where participants learn not just to do less harm but also to do genuine good. The third cohort of spiritual entrepreneurs, involving both for-profit and not-for-profit businesses, has just begun in the Hudson Valley of New York State. Etsy.org is a child of Etsy.com, and its first offspring is the Good Work Institute, which creates a community about and around people in start-up businesses who learn how to manage success in socially profitable as well as personally profitable ways.
- Yale University's first [Graduate Conference in Religion & Ecology](#), hosted by a collaboration of different campus organizations, will take place April 21. The theme is "Ethos, Ethics and the Environment" and invites participants (it is free to the public) to consider this question: "How do beliefs about the environment affect the use of and engagement with the natural world?"
- [SheEO](#) is a new business model launched in 2015 that seeks to radically transform how we support, finance and celebrate female entrepreneurs who are creating a better world. Their goal is to recruit 1,000 generous women "Activators" per region to each commit to making a \$1,000 contribution, of which 90 percent is loaned out interest-free to local women-led ventures, paid back over five years, and reinvested perpetually. Their goal for 2020? One million women in 1,000 cities making loans to 10,000 female entrepreneurs — a billion dollars of capital.
- The [justice ministry education program at Auburn Theological Seminary](#), in New York, is a clinical pastoral program, not just for clergy but also for community organizers and others who want to dip their toes into advanced education for the 21st century.

Finally, plain old action-reflection can be very effective. You don't have to register or add to your carbon footprint by going somewhere. You don't have to apply for a scholarship or pay tuition. Instead, you start where you are and do what you have been doing and add a dimension of reflection to it. For every hour you work, you also reflect. For every action you do, you add an analysis of it. For every plan you make, you evaluate your achievements, intentionally, at a later date, so that you can decide whether you want to do the same thing again.

Many people say we need to think as much as we act, hour for hour, day for day. I don't know if any of us can afford more learning, even though we may all need it. I do know all of us need to reflect deeply on what we should be doing next and ongoing. Some of us will need formal programs. Others will know how to do it yourself — and create communities of reflection inside their own practices. Either way, as we stumble along, we need to learn and re-learn how to stay balanced.

I'd like to put in a good word for that word "stumble." My friend who now spends her days in a wheelchair says that her rehab is learning how to walk again. The main teaching, she says, is re-learning balance.

The environment that we want to protect requires that we stumble along to balance, as well. Less can become more, as we stumble along, either actively or reflectively toward more impact and calm. Action reflection is a method not just for more impact and not just for more calm, but each acting and reflecting together as part of the same motion.

In acting and reflecting, we experience the way less can become more.

[Donna Schaper is senior minister of Judson Memorial Church in New York City.]

<https://www.ncronline.org/blogs/eco-catholic/tips-sustain-ourselves-our-stumbling-toward-sustainability>

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**January 31, 2017**

Severe drought brings starving Kenyans to church doorsteps

By Fredrick Nzwili  
Religion News Service

MATUU, Kenya (RNS) When her pantry runs dry, Agnes Mwikali walks down a dusty road to the local Roman Catholic Church mission.

There, beyond the metal gate and the church garden where the crops are withering, she steps into the administration building and asks for a 4-pound bag of cornmeal.

In Thatha, her home, about 93 miles northeast of Nairobi, a severe drought has left many families without food, water and pasture for their livestock.

Mwikali, a 40-year-old mother, has watched in consternation, as extreme temperatures have destroyed crops, drained water sources and laid grazing fields to waste.

“We are trying everything,” she said. “There are many of us. Many families don’t have enough food.”

Mwikali has 14 mouths to feed; her children range in age from 23 years old to 3 months. She has supported herself by weeding, herding or fetching water. But that kind of work has become scarce with the advent of the drought.

“The rains are our greatest disappointment,” she said. “Every season, we plant our seeds and watch the crops germinate, only for the rains to leave before they mature.”

At the Thatha Roman Catholic Mission, part of the Machakos Diocese, the Rev. Gerard Matolo increasingly sees more people seeking help.

“You can’t tell them that there is nothing,” Matolo said. “As their shepherd, I have to find a way to ensure they get something to eat. Sometimes I share my own food.”

Matolo estimates that nearly 3,000 people in his parish urgently need food aid. About 30,000 are at risk.

A bag of cornmeal or a bottle of oil would make a difference for a family, but the priest said there is too little to give.

The last time this region received meaningful rainfall was seven years ago. So Matolo has been storing the little food he gets as part of the agricultural tithe that small farmers and others have traditionally given the mission.

But unless things change, Matolo fears, soon cows, goats, sheep and donkeys will start dying.

East Africa is in the grips of yet another severe drought, largely attributed to climate change. The United Nations’ Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change predicts the continent will be hardest hit by climate change, in part because 1 in 4 people in the region lives in extreme poverty.

The recurrent droughts have taken a heavy toll on religious leaders, as they move to aid communities threatened by starvation. The current drought has hit Kenya, Tanzania, Somalia, South Sudan and Ethiopia, disrupting livelihoods for millions of people.

According to religious leaders, the battles against the drought have been fierce and draining and governments are not doing enough.

Agriculture in Africa is underfunded, although several governments in the [African Union Maputo Declaration on Agriculture and Food Security](#) committed to spending 10 percent of their national budget on agricultural development. Only 13 countries have met that target.

In Kenya the drought stretches across the coastal, north, northeastern and southern lowlands. Even the western region, which has not traditionally experienced severe droughts, is affected. Experts warn that the situation may persist for the next six months.

“The drought is of great concern to us as Muslims,” said Sheikh Hassan Ole Naado, the deputy secretary-general of the Supreme Council of Kenya Muslims. “We are praying and we are mobilizing.”

Kenya’s government has been delivering relief food to nearly 1.6 million in arid and semi-arid areas. Officials say the number will surpass 2 million by the end of February.

Last week, President Uhuru Kenyatta ordered the resumption of school feeding programs so that children can stay in school. The schools are also required to accept food as school fees.

In the north and northeastern regions, the Kenya Red Cross has been buying livestock from farmers, slaughtering the animals and distributing the meat to the community.

Meanwhile, Matolo and other many faith leaders in East Africa continue to stress better farming methods, the use of quality seeds and increased water harvesting.

“When I see the people starving, I feel desperate. I also feel disappointed that many of the promises by government officials to deliver water have not been honored,” said Matolo.

“If these people can get water for irrigation, the area will become the country’s bread basket. They are doing it in Israel, which is a desert. Here, the soils are very fertile and the people are not lazy.”

*(Fredrick Nzwili is an RNS correspondent based in Nairobi)*

<http://religionnews.com/2017/01/31/severe-drought-brings-starving-kenyans-to-church-doorsteps/>

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## **February 2, 2017**

The Lasting Effects of Pope Francis’ Climate Change Edict

*New research finds thinking about the pontiff changes the way we frame the issue.*

By Tom Jacobs  
Pacific Standard

Last fall, [a study](#) reported that Pope Francis' much-discussed encyclical on climate change largely fell on deaf ears. Researchers from Texas Tech University found the appeal "failed to rally any broad support on climate change" among Americans, whether or not they were Catholic.

But [newly published research](#) suggests the pontiff's call for taking care of the Earth has had a more subtle impact on American public opinion. It finds brief exposure to a photograph of the pope "increased perceptions of climate change as a moral issue."

What's more, this shift in how the issue is perceived was particularly strong among Republicans—a group that has traditionally been resistant to acknowledging the fact that humans are affecting the Earth's climate in dangerous ways.

"The pope's message may transcend political boundaries and fundamentally reshape how the issue is conceptualized among the public," a research team led by [Jonathon Schuldt](#) of Cornell University writes in the journal *Climatic Change*.

The study utilized an online survey that featured 1,212 American adults. It was conducted in May of 2016—11 months after publication of the encyclical, and seven months after his visit to the United States.

Half the participants were shown a photo of Pope Francis and asked how familiar they were with his views on climate change. All were then asked three climate-change-related questions:

- "Do you consider climate change to be a moral or ethical issue?"
- "Do you feel personally responsible to contributing to the causes of climate change?"
- "Do you feel personally responsible for helping to reduce climate change?"

For each, they answered "Yes, definitely," "Yes, somewhat," or "No."

Among those who had briefly thought about the pope, 51 percent said they viewed climate change as a moral issue. For those who had not, that figure was 46 percent.

This gap was particularly large among Republicans. Thirty-nine percent of those who were exposed to the pope's image said they considered it a moral issue, compared to 30 percent among those who were not. That's a potentially important shift, as pondering about the [ethical consequences](#) of environmental destruction may [shift behavior](#) more effectively than thinking in utilitarian terms.

Similarly, the percentage of people who felt personally responsible for contributing to climate change increased from 48 to 52 if they had seen the photo of the pope. On this issue, it was Democrats who made the difference: Sixty-four percent of those who were exposed to the pontiff expressed responsibility, compared to 56 percent who were not.

Thinking about the pope did not increase the percentage of Republicans who felt personal responsibility for climate change, which stayed steady at 36 percent.

Nevertheless, the results suggest a reminder of the pope's views can change the ways members of both parties think about the issue. Given the dangers of inertia, that has to be a positive sign.

<https://psmag.com/the-lasting-effects-of-pope-francis-climate-change-edict-89e5c11159b#.80zshva3i>

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**February 3, 2017**

Review of *Living Cosmology*, by Mary Evelyn Tucker and John Grim

Ecology & Justice Series. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, April 2016. 368 pages. \$30.00. Paperback. ISBN 9781626981782. For other formats: [Link to Publisher's Website](#).

Review by Jay D. O. Potter  
Reading Religion: A Publication of the American Academy of Religion

*Living Cosmology: Christian Responses to 'Journey of the Universe'* is a diverse and hopeful reflection on the work Thomas Berry and his call towards the "Great Work" for an ecologically sustainable future. *Living Cosmology* combines many of the great ecological thinkers within a comprehensive range of Christianity. It contains selections ranging from Pope Francis and Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew to process thought, from ecofeminism to ecopoetics, as well as including important topics such as race and class. The connecting thread through this volume is that each of the authors finds both hope for the Great Work and a call to particularity for their given location within Christianity.

The ecological crisis facing the world demands the largely silent North American Christian church to put into practice its beliefs of creation care. Mary Evelyn Tucker and John Grim, in the introduction, say, "if scientific cosmology gives us an understanding of the origins and unfolding of the universe, religious and philosophical reflection on scientific cosmology can provide a sense of our place and larger purpose in the universe" (4). This text provides the ecumenical resources to reimagine the place of the cosmos in Christian theology.

Considerable work has been done in the study of ecology and human impacts on the earth, and many Christian theologians have been writing and teaching on ecotheology, but this has gone largely unnoticed by the larger North American church. What *Living Cosmology* provides for us is a place to begin the process of reimagining future theologies and practices with the resources that Berry, Brian Thomas Swimme, Tucker, and Grim have been working on for quite some time. This book stands as a call to professors, pastors, and engaged laypersons to put theologies of ecology to work within the practices of the spiritual life of the church.

Beyond the need for Christians to work across theological borders, this text also reminds us that we need to work with those concerned about the ecological crisis that are outside of the Christian tradition. Catherine Keller urges us out of our comfort zone when she says, "I am here supposed to be speaking as a representative of Christianity, let me use that voice to declare: God doesn't

care whether we believe in God—just that we do God. That we enact, that we actualize sacred community in its planetary *convivencia*" (113). Pastors, professors, and committed lay people need to, according to Keller, find ways of being a community with one another, across ideological lines, so that we have a future to look forward to enjoying together.

In the forward to the book, Swimme makes a similar point, drawing on the deep relationality of the universe. We need relationships to sustain the work set before us, and only through relationships can we provide a sustainable future for generations to come. I will leave you with his words: "A neutron, if traveling alone through the universe, will disintegrate entirely within fifteen minutes. But take that exact same neutron and bring it together with other neutrons and protons in a carbon nucleus and it will suddenly discover it has the power to endure for billions of years. Relationships open up possibilities for creativity that are absolutely unrealizable by solitary individuals" (xiv).

**About the Reviewer:** [Jay D. O. Potter](#) is a doctoral student in Religion-Process Studies at the Claremont School of Theology.

**About the Author(s)/Editor(s)/Translator(s):** **Mary Evelyn Tucker** and **John Grim** are codirectors of the Forum on Religion and Ecology at Yale. They were students of Thomas Berry and have devoted themselves to his legacy by editing his books and producing the Emmy-award-winning film, *Journey of the Universe* with Brian Swimme. They co-edited *Thomas Berry: Selected Writings on the Earth Community*.

<http://readingreligion.org/books/living-cosmology>

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**February 3, 2017**

Divinity School adds new concentrations

By Adelaide Feibel  
Yale Daily News

With the addition of new concentration programs in Latinx theology and ecology, Yale Divinity School is making an effort to bring an age-old discipline into the 21st century.

Yale Divinity School announced in December the addition of two new concentrations to its Master of Arts in Religion Concentrated Program: Latinx and Latin American Christianity and religion and ecology. The school's Concentrated Program is a two-year curriculum that allows students to pursue in-depth work in a specific discipline of theological study. These two new concentration programs, which debut next academic year, emerged from the school's efforts to increase faculty and student diversity as well as to encourage environmental consciousness throughout its campus.

"These are [master's of arts in religion] that are relevant to the intellectual desires and goals of many young people," said Dax Crocker DIV '17, one of the students who has been lobbying for a concentration in Latin American Christianity for the past two years.

Headed by professor of Latino/a Christianity Erika Helgen GRD '15 and visiting professor Benjamin Valentin — two of the seven new faculty appointments at the Divinity School this year — the Latinx and Latin American Christianity program focuses on the expanding and increasingly diverse forms of Latinx Christianity in Latin America and the United States.

According to Helgen, the establishment of this program recognizes that Christianity today is increasingly centered in the Global South and Latin America.

Helgen said this specific concentration also intends to promote diversity within the future student body. The creation of a diverse faculty and student body has been a major focus of the Divinity School, especially in the past year as a result of the five-year, \$50 million University-wide faculty diversity initiative [announced](#) in 2015. Last spring, the Divinity School made seven new appointments to their faculty, the majority of whom are from racial or ethnic groups typically [underrepresented](#) in higher theological studies. Furthermore, [36 percent](#) of the incoming students in the 2016-17 school year came from underrepresented groups, the most in the school's history.

With the Latinx and Latin American Christianity concentration, the administration hopes to attract and recruit more minority students, especially Latinx students.

“Naturally, there is a group of young Latino and Latina who are looking for graduate studies in theology that speaks to their culture, their ethnic roots,” Crocker said. “They want to find God in the color of their skin and the music that their culture celebrates. They want to find God in their language.”

Crocker, who has been involved in both pushing for the school to implement the new program and recruiting the new heads, said administration was “open-minded” and “accommodating” to students' requests. It immediately contacted scholars to ask for professional opinions about the new concentrations and started a nationwide search for scholars in Latinx studies, Crocker said.

Part of the impetus for the creation of the religion and ecology concentration also came from student interest in the topic, said Peter Wyrsh DIV '17, secretary of the student government and a co-chair of the school's Faith and Environment Working Group. The group seeks to increase awareness within the Divinity School community about new ecological initiatives the school could implement, both academically and administratively.

Wyrsh added that a great deal of the drive for the new concentration came from the work of senior lecturers in religion and ecology John Grim and Mary Tucker, who have worked in the field for decades and in recent years have collaborated with the School of Forestry and Environmental Studies.

“We have scholars here in liturgical theology who have long been concerned with the nexus of religion and ecology and equipping our students to deal with it in churches and NGOs and all the places our students go after graduation.” said Carolyn Sharp, acting associate dean of academic affairs and professor of Hebrew scriptures.

According to Sharpe, interest for the new programs has already been growing: the school's admissions office has received applications for these concentrations, and some current master of arts in religion students are trying to transfer to one of the new concentrations.

Since the deadline for applications is Feb. 8, Associate Dean of Admissions and Financial Aid Vernice Randall DIV '11 wrote in an email to the News that it is far too early to make any quantitative predictions about this application cycle.

“What we're working on and what is going to come out of these new concentrations is going to be a strengthening of what YDS is good at — really academically sound theological inquiry,” Wyrsh said

Current concentrations in the master of arts in religion program include Asian religions, black religion in the African diaspora and ethics.

<http://yaledailynews.com/blog/2017/02/03/divinity-school-adds-new-concentrations/>

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**February 7, 2017**

Religion can make us more environmentally friendly – or not

By Niki Rust  
BBC

Eight out of 10 people around the world consider themselves religious. That figure shows that, while in many countries religion is not as dominant as it once was, it still has a huge influence on us.

What does that mean for the environmental movement? Does a belief in God or the supernatural make people more or less likely to take care of animals and the environment?

It is easy to make up stories to answer this question. You might say that many religions push the idea that the world will soon come to an end, in which case surely they encourage a "let it burn" ethos: what does it matter if the rainforest gets cut down, if the Rapture is next week? But just as plausibly, you might point out that many religions are big on kindness, and some such as [Jainism](#) even forbid killing animals. This should nudge their followers towards caring for the natural world.

But these are just stories. What does the science of human behaviour tell us?

Let's start with Christianity. [Writing in the high-profile journal \*Science\* in 1967](#), historian Lynn White [proposed](#) that Christian religions undermine wildlife conservation by advocating a domination ethic over nature. Because [the Bible talks about "dominion" over nature](#), White argued that Christianity teaches its followers that "it is God's will that man exploit nature for his proper ends".

This was, to say the least, controversial. Other historians and theologians have argued that [White was misreading the Bible](#), and that the text actually implies that we have a duty of care towards nature. Perhaps more to the point, White offered no evidence about the attitudes or behaviours of actual Christians.

In 2013, researchers tackled that question by asking whether there was a relationship between a country's main religion and the number of important biodiversity areas it contained. They found that Christian countries, particularly Catholic ones, [tended to have more areas set aside for nature](#) than other countries.

However, this does not mean White was completely wrong. Other studies suggest that conservative Christians really are less environmentally friendly than other denominations.

In [a study published in 1993](#), priest and sociologist [Andrew Greeley](#) looked at how much Americans were willing to spend on conserving the environment. He found that Christian fundamentalists were less willing, and Catholics more willing, to financially support the environment. This suggests that it is not whether a person is Christian, but rather what type of Christian they are, that influences their behaviour towards nature.

It also seems that people's attitudes towards the environment can be affected by the way Christianity interacts with other religions.

In [her PhD thesis](#), undertaken whilst at the University of Kent in Canterbury, UK, [Emma Shephard-Walwyn](#) looked at how Kenyans felt about sacred sites. These are places of biological and spiritual significance, created and maintained by communities who adhered to a traditional faith.

Shephard-Walwyn found that "some of the Christian people interviewed felt the forests should be destroyed as they are associated with the traditional faith, which they believe to be evil."

One Christian interviewed said that "tradition is now witchcraft". Others described the sacred sites as places associated with demons and superstition.

This suggests that conflicts between opposing faiths could influence how people feel about protected areas. In particular, a shift away from more traditional faiths could be bad for nature.

[In a study published in 2006](#), [Leela Hazzah](#) of Lion Guardians showed that Maasai who had converted from a traditional faith to become evangelical Christians had a higher intent to kill lions than those that kept their traditional faith. "These converted Protestants did not have very positive attitudes towards national parks or wildlife either," says Hazzah.

Christianity can play a part in how, and indeed whether, we think about nature

Because the Maasai are not exposed to much television or other media, they look to their pastors for information about the world. If a pastor does not include positive stories about nature in their sermons, the churchgoers would not get any guidance on how to be environmentally friendly.

The evangelical churches also ran religious events, sometimes a week long, which pastoralists were invited to attend. That meant no one was around back at the homestead to protect the livestock from predators. Two pastoralists lost 35 cows during one such event. When Hazzah asked them why they left their livestock unattended for so long, one man replied: "There is no need to return home when I am in the house of God. He will protect my livestock from danger".

All this suggests that Christianity can play a part in how, and indeed whether, we think about nature. So how do other religions compare?

[A study published in August 2016](#) analysed Indian people's attitudes towards large carnivores. It found that Buddhists tended to have more positive attitudes towards carnivorous animals than Muslims.

Given Buddhism's reputation for avoiding all harm to animals, this may not come as a surprise. However, the findings are not quite as straightforward as they first appear.

The more often a Buddhist undertook religious activities, the more likely it was that they had a more positive attitude towards wolves and snow leopards. In other words, the link between Buddhism and pro-environment attitudes was only apparent for the more deeply religious Buddhists.

As with the study of American Christians, the key issue is not whether or not a person is religious, but rather the form their religion takes: in this case, how devoted they are to it.

These findings mean that conservationists must frame their messages differently depending on the audience, says lead author [Saloni Bhatia](#) of the Nature Conservation Foundation in Mysore, India. "We must stress environmental stewardship with Muslim communities and religious leaders, while the idea of human-wildlife interdependence would resonate more strongly with the Buddhist communities and leaders."

In other words, conservationists need to integrate their ideas into religious thinking. "Religions, and certainly the versions of Islam and Buddhism that we have studied, seem to have well-developed philosophies towards nature and wildlife," says Bhatia. "Religious practitioners and leaders therefore have a potentially important role in conserving nature."

But instead, conservationists and religious leaders have largely grown apart.

Shepherd-Walwyn believes conservationists have mostly ignored religion because of "the false belief that science and religion don't mix, and that to be a good scientist you cannot engage with religion, because they feel religious people apply less rigorous science to their work."

She also thinks there are problems with the ways conservationists and religious individuals talk about nature. The two parties are not, so to speak, singing from the same hymn sheet.

However, some groups are trying to bridge this divide.

[The Alliance for Religions and Conservation](#) (ARC) is a secular body that helps faith leaders to create environmental programs based on their faith's core beliefs and practices.

One of their most successful [projects](#) is based on an island off the coast of Tanzania. Fishermen there had been using dynamite as a quick and easy way to bring in the day's catch. But this method of fishing is very damaging, destroying coral and killing immature fish and turtles.

Local conservation organisations tried to educate the fishermen on the harms of dynamite fishing, but this fell on deaf ears. The government then banned the practice, but again the fishermen took no notice. Then ARC stepped in.

ARC members realised that all the fishermen were Muslim, and that the local sheikhs had a lot of influence in the community. So they showed the sheikhs passages in the Koran that promote pro-environmental behaviour, and told them that dynamite fishing goes against these teachings. The sheikhs spread the information to their community and, as devout Muslims, the fishermen listened.

One local fisherman, [interviewed in the \*Christian Science Monitor\* in 2007](#), said: "I've learned that the way I fished was destructive to the environment. This side of conservation isn't from the mzungu ["white man" in Swahili], it's from the Koran."

ARC was not the only organisation involved with the fishermen. Another key party was the [Islamic Foundation for Ecology and Environmental Sciences](#) (IFEES).

Its founder Fazlun Khalid started the organisation in the 1980s because of his passion for nature. After studying theology at university, Khalid concluded that Islam is intrinsically environmentalist.

But he also noticed that Muslims had lost their connection with nature, because like so many other people they had become preoccupied with wealth. So he set up IFEES to show Muslims the core teachings of the Koran that convey an environmentalist ethic.

In Indonesia, a country rich in biodiversity but under threat from development, IFEES is working with schools to restore the rainforests.

Similarly, in Tanzania they have created an Islamic eco-village for orphans, where they are establishing renewable energy plants and recycling projects. "This eco-village was built based on the practices of the prophet on how to manage natural resources," says Khalid.

Khalid believes that there is a new global religious movement building, which is keen to embrace nature. "Faith-based organisations played a key role in the recent climate change negotiations, and IFEES were cornerstones in the creation of the [Islamic Declaration on Climate Change](#)," he says.

There is some tentative evidence that this sort of approach can work.

[A 2013 study in Indonesia](#) showed that incorporating conservation messages into Islamic sermons increased both public awareness and levels of concern. "Since then, Indonesia [has] issued its first fatwas [rulings on Islamic law] prohibiting illegal wildlife trafficking and poaching," says lead author [Jeanne McKay](#) of the University of Kent.

Beyond that, [ARC argues](#) that conservationists can learn a lot from religion about how to engage people and build support. After all, religions are famously good at garnering lots of followers all devoted to a common cause.

ARC says that, first and foremost, religions are great at telling compelling stories that can inspire and inform. They also tend to celebrate what we already have, rather than focusing on what we have lost. Conservationists may want to heed their example.

When we read stories about the environment, we can be confronted with narratives of doom and gloom about how [yet another species is closer to extinction](#) or how we have [destroyed even more wilderness](#). This is all factually correct, but [research suggests](#) that stories with a positive framing are better at motivating people to act than stories with a negative framing. In other words, [feel-good stories can be very powerful](#).

"Using faith-based approaches can prove to be a positive way forward, and indeed has the potential to gain far-reaching benefits rather than staying confined to a conventionally science-based approach," says McKay.

It would be silly to downplay the environmental crisis we are facing. But in order to solve it, conservationists may need to harness the power of hope and optimism, just as the world's religions do.

<http://www.bbc.com/earth/story/20170206-religion-can-make-us-more-environmentally-friendly-or-not>

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**February 9, 2017**

Standing Rock Sioux vow to challenge pipeline in court

By Brian Roewe  
National Catholic Reporter

A double-back decision by the Army to approve a final, critical permit for the Dakota Access Pipeline, while bypassing an environmental review, has led the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe and its allies to double down in their near-yearlong opposition to the contentious project they maintain endangers tribal water and sacred lands.

"As Native peoples, we have been knocked down again, but we will get back up," Standing Rock Sioux Tribe Chairman David Archambault II said of the order in a statement. "We will rise above the greed and corruption that has plagued our peoples since first contact."

The order from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers granted a 30-year easement, or permission, for the pipeline to cross federal land under Lake Oahe, a manmade reservoir of the Missouri River in south-central North Dakota. The lake is located roughly a half mile upstream of the Standing Rock Sioux reservation.

Since April, the site has served as the center of the opposition against the pipeline for the Standing Rock Sioux and their allies from other Native Americans tribes, as well as the environmental and faith communities. Communal prayer has been [prominent throughout the standoff](#), which has been called the largest modern gathering of Native tribes, with as many as 8,000 assembled at one point.

At other times, the camp near Cannon Ball, N.D., has seen violent clashes between Standing Rock allies, who call themselves "water protectors," and local law enforcement and pipeline workers.

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The Missouri River crossing is the last major piece of the 1,172-mile pipeline to be constructed. Once completed, it would carry daily 470,000 to 570,000 barrels of oil across four states from North Dakota to Illinois. Dallas-based Energy Transfer Partners, which is building Dakota Access, has said it is the safest way to transport the oil and that it has followed all necessary review processes for the \$3.8 billion project.

Energy Transfer Partners officially received the easement the evening of Feb. 8. A spokeswoman [told The Associated Press](#) that construction would resume immediately. The company said it would be operational within months.

Sen. John Hoeven, R-N.D., welcomed the easement's issuing, saying, "We must have a process to build safe, efficient and environmentally sound projects like pipelines and power lines." But he added that the permitting process needs to be reviewed "to ensure that everyone has an opportunity to be heard and that a fair, certain, and legal process has been followed."

The current route takes the pipeline adjacent to the Standing Rock Sioux reservation, and across sacred lands they say are protected under past treaties. At one point, the pipeline was to travel near Bismarck, N.D., but was rerouted after concerns a spill could contaminate municipal water supplies.

"It is so concerning that we're not questioning what motivated that decision," said Mercy Sr. Aine O'Connor. In her view, it was driven by discrimination and a lack of consideration of Native American peoples' rights.

Virginia Fifield, a Mercy associate and Mohawk, told *NCR* she would have liked for the Army at least require an alternate route: "It would have cost [Energy Transfer Partners] more money, but it's money versus people." She said Dakota Access is a civil rights issue for Native Americans,

and worries that the pipeline's approval of the pipeline could be "the tip of the iceberg" for the Trump administration in its interactions with indigenous peoples.

The Sisters of Mercy of the Americas in a statement said the Army's order represented a "morally unacceptable decision" that "ignores the dignity and tribal sovereignty of our Native American brothers and sisters."

"This action is yet another chapter in the U.S. government's history of injustice to tribal nations and people," they said.

The Franciscan Action Network pointed back to its statement opposing President Donald Trump's executive orders on the Dakota Access and Keystone XL pipelines, stating about the former, "Building a pipeline through indigenous people's sacred land is a violation of their religious freedom just the same as if President Trump gave permission to tear down St. Patrick's Cathedral in New York to build an oil refinery on the site."

Franciscan Sr. Karla Kloft of Dubuque, Iowa, who visited the Standing Rock camp in November, said the Army order sickened her and represented "another instance where big money and big companies oppress people."

The Army's decision feels "like such a step backwards," said Kristin Juarez, a junior at Loras College in Dubuque studying theology and international studies who also made the trek to the Standing Rock camp.

"It is completely disrespectful to the people whose land it is, who have no voice in the matter. It is disheartening that we put emphasis on fossil fuels instead of seeking new sources of energy," she told *NCR*.

O'Connor, who joined an interfaith solidarity witness in November, said that it was "irresponsible and reckless" for the Army Corps to grant the easement without completing the environmental impact statement and without full consultation of the Standing Rock Sioux. She referred to Pope Francis in "*Laudato Si'*, on Care for Our Common Home," when he said,

If objective information suggests that serious and irreversible damage may result, a project should be halted or modified, even in the absence of indisputable proof. Here the burden of proof is effectively reversed, since in such cases objective and conclusive demonstrations will have to be brought forward to demonstrate that the proposed activity will not cause serious harm to the environment or to those who inhabit it.

"I think that we have failed to exercise a precautionary or a critical approach," O'Connor said.

The order said it was complying with Trump's [Jan. 24 memorandum](#) that instructed the Army to expedite approval of Dakota Access "to the extent permitted by law," and consider withdrawing a prior directive for an environmental impact statement on the project, which the order also did. The environmental impact statement was requested by the Army in December, and was to include an examination of alternate routes and the risk of oil spills.

In the statement Feb. 7, the tribe vowed to challenge the order in court and continue to push for the completion of the environmental impact statement.

"We are a sovereign nation and we will fight to protect our water and sacred places from the brazen private interests trying to push this pipeline through to benefit a few wealthy Americans with financial ties to the Trump administration," Archambault said.

He asked that instead of returning to Standing Rock that supporters instead head to "exercise your First Amendment rights and take this fight to your respective state capitols." He also asked people to join them and other tribes March 10 for the Native Nations March on Washington.

The tribe added that if the pipeline is completed, it will seek to shut operations down.

The Feb. 7 order "is not the end of the fight — it is the new beginning," Tom Goldtooth, executive director of the Indigenous Environmental Network, said in a separate statement.

He said granting of the easement goes against protocol and legal process, disregards more than 100,000 comments already submitted for the environmental review process, and "goes against the treaty rights of the entire Seven Councils Fires of the Sioux Nations."

He added that Trump has not met with the leadership of the Native Nations. Archambault said he flew to Washington Feb. 7 to meet with Trump administration officials, but canceled the meeting upon hearing as he landed the decision about the easement.

The tribal chairman called disrespectful Trump's "complete disregard for Native Nations and our treaty rights," and spoke of his "brazen conflict of interest to the pipeline" — an apparent reference to Trump holding investments in Energy Transfer Partners. A campaign spokeswoman [told \*The Washington Post\*](#) that he sold off his shares during the summer.

Responses to the easement approval began Feb. 8, with protests held outside the White House and elsewhere around the country.

Earlier in the day, Trump had said, "I haven't had one call from anybody" complaining about his memorandum. He added, "I don't even think it was controversial."

In response, the Sierra Club and other environmental groups urged people to sound off their opposition to the pipeline on Trump's personal and presidential Twitter accounts, and by calling the White House or the numerous golf courses and hotels bearing his name.

O'Connor said she and other Mercy sisters plan to join the Native Nations March and will call on their representatives in Congress to support a letter sent the evening of Feb. 7 from Democratic members of the Senate and House natural resources committees that calls on the president "to immediately reverse this decision and follow the appropriate procedures required for tribal consultation, environmental law, and due process."

"If anything," O'Connor said, "it causes us to join together in solidarity, as we have been doing over the last several weeks. ... Our sense of Gospel work and Gospel hope tells us that we have to keep showing up and to keep resisting."

Fifield, the Mercy associate, said that Standing Rock represents the beginning of a movement, one by which Native Americans "have finally found our voice."

"Indigenous people around the world have found their voice, and we will not be pushed, we will not be silenced. It's gone on long enough," she said.

A week before the judge's order, the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe said it would "vigorously pursue legal action" to ensure an environmental review occurs.

"To abandon the [environmental impact statement] would amount to a wholly unexplained and arbitrary change based on the President's personal views and, potentially, personal investments. We stand ready to fight this battle against corporate interest superseding government procedure and the health and wellbeing of millions of Americans," the tribe said in a statement.

Throughout the protests, the tribe has insisted it does not oppose infrastructure or energy projects but that it was intent on making sure that decisions on such projects are made with input from and consideration of indigenous peoples, and do not pose a threat to the land.

Trump has promised to cut back environmental regulations that he said harms businesses, and to expedite the environmental review process.

"I'm a very big person when it comes to the environment. I've received awards on the environment, but some of that stuff makes it impossible to get anything built," he said during a meeting with business leaders Jan. 23.

"We can't have that. If somebody wants to put up a factory, it's going to be expedited. You have to go through the process, but it's going to be expedited, and we're going to take care of the environment, we're going to take care of safety and all the other things we have to take care of," Trump said.

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<https://www.ncronline.org/blogs/eco-catholic/standing-rock-sioux-vow-challenge-pipeline-court>

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**February 9, 2017**

Catholics supporting #NoDAPL movement see call to protect creation

By Jeannine M. Pitas  
National Catholic Reporter

[Dubuque, Iowa](#) -- In one of Donald Trump's first acts as president, he signed executive orders expressing support for two controversial pipelines: the Keystone XL transnational pipeline and the Dakota Access Pipeline.

The latter project has seen thousands of people in the past year gather in solidarity with the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe of North Dakota in a sustained, mostly nonviolent resistance to the pipeline.

For the Standing Rock Sioux and their allies, the main concern with Dakota Access, approved for construction in March, is that its projected route goes under the Missouri River, half a mile upstream from the Standing Rock Sioux Reservation. They contend a possible oil spill would contaminate their water and threaten sacred burial sites. The pipeline's route takes it through four states: North Dakota, South Dakota, Iowa and Illinois.

The project was temporarily halted Dec. 5 by the Army Corps of Engineers in order to allow further review and to complete an environmental impact assessment. On Tuesday, [the Army changed course](#), informing Congress that it will grant permission for an easement — a special permit allowing a company to cross private or federal land — and complete the project, without finishing the environmental review.

Advocates for the 1,172-mile, \$3.8 billion pipeline, which is all but complete outside the 1-mile stretch under the river, argue it will create jobs and other economic opportunities, while also promoting energy independence for the United States. Sen. Heidi Heitkamp, D-N.D., said that Army's decision brings "certainty and clarity" to the conflict.

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Opponents contend that, in addition the risks it poses to the Standing Rock Sioux, the pipeline will encourage the use of more fossil fuels, which are a major contributor to climate change. They also cite human rights abuses, noting the nearly 700 people who have been arrested since the standoff began in April, [including 76 people earlier this month](#). While the Standing Rock Sioux have insisted on prayerful, peaceful opposition, violence has broken out numerous times between pipeline opponents, who call themselves "water protectors," and local law enforcement.

Throughout the past several months, many Catholics, including some in Dubuque, Iowa, have felt called to stand with the Standing Rock Sioux, whether by contacting elected officials about the issue, divesting funds from banks that support the pipeline, or in some cases traveling to the site itself to show solidarity with the native peoples who are fighting to protect their water.

Franciscan Sr. Karla Kloft of Dubuque felt drawn to the #NoDAPL movement in part due to her religious order's charism.

"St. Francis was so steeped in creation. The sun was his brother; the moon was his sister," she said. "Francis also had a profound conversion experience with a leper, which led him to abandon his wealthy way of life and live in solidarity with the poor and marginalized.

"I want to ask, who are the lepers in our society today?" she said. "What we as a country have done to native people is atrocious. We need to reach out to them as brothers and sisters."

When Kloft visited Standing Rock in November, she was touched by the reverence she saw that all people showed for the Earth and by the non-hierarchical way that they related to one another.

"Every action started and ended with prayer," she said. "It made me angry at the media coverage, which sought to portray the water protectors as violent. Drugs, alcohol and weapons were not allowed in camp, and everything was done with a sense of reverence. People are being treated as so-called terrorists for doing nonviolent protests, being arrested and charged for doing nothing wrong."

In Pope Francis' encyclical on the environment, "[\*Laudato Si', on Care for Our Common Home\*](#)," he asserts that many Catholics need an "ecological conversion," whereby their encounter with Jesus becomes "evident in their relationship with the world around them."

"Living our vocation to be protectors of God's handiwork is essential to a life of virtue; it is not optional or a secondary aspect of our Christian experience," Francis stated in his encyclical.

Some Catholics who visited Standing Rock believe they were engaged directly in this call to protect God's creation, and that they intend to hold to that in spite of the Army's greenlighting of Dakota Access. Kristin Juarez, a junior studying theology and international studies at Loras College in Dubuque, also found the experience to be moving and transformative.

"In Catholic social teaching, we hear of the dignity of every person," Juarez said. "We toss this term around without knowing what it means. Standing Rock was a prayerful setting where solidarity meant taking a step back from my own agenda, hearing the pain of what people were going through."

Juarez said that when one man asked her why she was at the camp, she replied, "To stand with you."

"He paused and responded, 'Thank you.' We need to make sure that we are standing with people, not standing up for them," she said.

Other activists have felt that their call to stand with Standing Rock is likewise grounded in Catholic social teaching. Dominican Sr. Peggy Ryan, who currently works with Latino/a populations in Lake County, Ill., felt compelled to leave her ministry for a weekend and make the pilgrimage.

"Stewardship, common good and solidarity are the principles of Catholic social teaching that guide me," she told *NCR*. "The main Vatican II document, *Gaudium et Spes*, says that we need to change our human action in order to take care of everyone. The universe is meant equally for all people."

According to Mark Schmidt, who directs the social justice and respect life office for the Dubuque archdiocese, Catholic social teaching offers guiding principles for people to follow according to their well-formed conscience.

"The church would not necessarily say all pipeline construction is bad," he said. "The church urges us to switch to renewable energy sources as quickly as possible, but for now, our economy is still based on fossil fuels. Stopping all construction would further burden the current aging pipeline infrastructure, leading to more leaks and endangering life and creation. It would also make the product more expensive for low-income people who do not have the money to transfer to renewable energy."

Schmidt continued: "However, if a pipeline is to be built, legitimate concerns from all stakeholders must be addressed. With the Dakota Access Pipeline in particular, many of those voicing opposition seem to have such concerns. Have indigenous people been true stakeholders in the decisions that will affect them, and have their rights been respected? Does the pipeline serve the common good and respect human dignity? There are also documented instances of contractors not following their permits, damaging the soil and destroying biodiversity."

Brenna Cussen Anglada, a co-founder of the St. Isidore Catholic Worker Farm in Cuba City, Wis., said that if we are truly to respond to Francis' call to care for creation, as outlined in *Laudato Si'*, we must listen to the voices of indigenous people. She believes the effort to oppose the pipeline project can help the church and its members correct mistakes of the colonial era — an opportunity that the U.S. government has not taken.

"The Earth that God has given us is precious. We are wasting this chance in this country to repair our relationship with indigenous communities. A great opportunity was given to reverse the damage and make things right. This decision is a slap in the face to the Earth," she said.

Despite the Army's approval of the Dakota Access Pipeline, the Standing Rock Sioux are not giving up the fight. New lawsuits are likely to come, and a Native Nations March on Washington is scheduled for March 10.

"I am in awe of the resilience and stamina the Sioux have shown," Cussen Anglada said. "I have so much respect for them standing up for what they believe in the face of the violent punishment they are facing, and I hope that many people will respond to their call for continued support."

"People from all over the world are watching this movement," Kloft said. "It is giving people the courage and energy to fight against these multibillion-dollar corporations. It is offering a little light."

Each of the people who went to Standing Rock expressed a desire to take what they have learned and translate it into their daily lives, by working to protect local watersheds, becoming more engaged in the concerns of indigenous peoples, and further educating others about Dakota Access and other environmental issues.

Juarez, the Loras College student, is doing just that with her fellow students on campus. In light of the Army order, she is determined to maintain hope. By standing with Standing Rock, she said, water protectors and their allies have drawn attention back to the need to care for the Earth.

"I hope that this will refuel people's fire of concern," she said. "We may be back to square one, but Mr. Trump does not speak for all of us. It is back to square one. We have faced this before, and we will stay strong."

<https://www.ncronline.org/blogs/eco-catholic/catholics-supporting-nodapl-movement-see-call-protect-creation>

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**February 13, 2017**

To Fight Urban Heat, Louisville Is Appealing to a Higher Power

By Laura Bliss  
The Atlantic: CityLab

In the country's fastest-warming urban heat island, places of worship are banding together to cool down.

Louisville, Kentucky, is the nation's [fastest warming "urban heat island."](#) Local temperatures in the center of this city of 600,000\* are significantly warmer than in surrounding rural areas, thanks to a [uniquely sparse—and rapidly diminishing](#)—urban tree canopy. Cars, parking lots, buildings, and heat-trapping construction materials don't help, either. The effects of UHI vary from neighborhood to neighborhood; some spots can be as much as 10 degrees warmer than others within city limits. For the most vulnerable locals, the effect can be lethal: an [analysis of the scorching summer of 2012](#) showed 53 people in the Louisville area alone died from causes likely related to human-amplified temperatures. Climate change is making things worse.

But the Derby City also has unique strengths to play on. For one, America's "[city of compassion](#)" is home to a growing diversity of religious communities, celebrated every year with the internationally recognized, week-long [Festival of Faiths](#). Now, environmental and spiritual leaders are teaming up to help some of Louisville's heat-fighting strategies take root in vulnerable neighborhoods—and to better align preaching and teaching with the city's environmental needs.

"This is about talking to folks we're not used to talking to," says Chris Chandler, the director of the Nature Conservancy's urban conservation program. The Conservancy has partnered with the city of Louisville to help it deploy science-backed cooling strategies. "It's about creating allies and working across different communities in inclusive way with new people."

The need for such outreach reflects the often-fractionious relationship between the faith community and the secular one on climate issues: [Surveys show that certain religious groups](#) in the U.S. show less concern than others about environmental issues; many reject the influence of climate

scientists and advocates like those at the Nature Conservancy. But a growing contingent of religious groups—including Evangelical Protestants, a group that represents the [majority of believers](#) in the Louisville area—are squaring their faith with science’s climate warnings. [Some call it “creation care.”](#)

A vast body of research shows keeping urban canopies healthy and robust is one of the best guards against UHI. According to [pioneering 2015 study commissioned by Louisville](#), a 40 percent increase in urban tree cover in U.S. cities was found to decrease air temperatures by up to 10 degrees. More than 20 percent of annual heat-related deaths in Louisville could be avoided through city-led actions like robust tree-planting, [according to Brian Stone](#), a UHI expert at Georgia Tech and the author of the 2015 study.

But getting local property owners on board with tree-planting, especially in the neighborhoods that need shade most, is another question, Chandler says. The areas with the smallest share of canopy cover—and the hardest-hit by UHI—often have a lot other problems to contend with: racial and economic disparities, plus years of chronic neglect by the city. Planting and tending trees takes money and time. Yet the cooling benefits of healthy trees only accrue when entire neighborhoods invest in the effort.

If his organization was going to help Louisville, it needed to tap heavy influencers within its communities, Chandler realized, to see if they were willing to be models of environmental care. After attending a Festival of Faiths a few years ago, it hit him: houses of worship are bedrocks of community life in Louisville, and many of the city’s churches, mosques, and temples are *already* connected through the festival. So the Conservancy approached the Center for Interfaith Relations (CIR), the group that organizes the festival and promotes other expressions of interfaith action, to develop a landscape “audit” designed especially for religious communities. CIR leapt at the opportunity.

“Talking about the environment wasn’t a random subject for us,” says Sarah Reed Harris, the managing director of CIR. Every mainline religion teaches the concept of planetary “stewardship” in one way or another, and green issues have been a frequent topic of conversation at the festival. The scope of threats to life on earth has clearly grown, she says. “What is new is the practice. It’s how to express stewardship in a contemporary context.”

After a series of focus groups, the CIR recruited participants from an all-boys Catholic high school, an Episcopal church, and a mosque—all located in particularly hot spots around Louisville—to pilot a four-part landscape audit this past fall. The groups are now planning to overhaul their landscaping practices. But as a first step, they took an inventory of all the trees on their properties using the Conservancy’s [Healthy Trees, Healthy Cities App](#). That app shows the environmental, economic, and health benefits of individual tree species, which helps users understand how landscaping choices can serve them or not.

Second, the auditors mapped parts of their properties that best support wildlife and pollinators with another online [tool](#). This doesn’t directly assist with cooling down landscapes, exactly, but birds and butterflies are a very effective way to draw people to nature. Next, the participants analyzed their landscape maintenance practices, looking for energy-reducing improvements.

These three steps could serve any kind of property owner, religious or secular. It's the last part of the audit sets it apart. Here, participants answered a series of questions that probed how the environment is woven into their faiths. Are there local wildflowers on altars and centerpieces? Are religious leaders holding services outdoors? Are sermons and teachings infused with observations about the local environment? "This is really about creating a change we *can't* measure," says Halida Hatic, CIR's director of community relations and development. "It's about reaching a broad base of people, and hopefully changing their own connection between faith and the outdoors."

Sikander Chowhan, chief strategic officer at Muslim Americans for Compassion and former board member at the River Road Mosque, served as the point of contact for the mosque's auditing work. Prior to the audit, Chowhan says, his mosque had never appreciated how an overgrown wooded expanse in the back of its property could tie into Islamic teachings. Now, armed with scientific knowledge on how to put that tangle of trees to better service, Chowhan is spearheading plans to clear a small nature trail and plant a wildflower garden. The very act of revamping the landscape will serve as a conversation-starter among congregants, and maybe even a topic at services. He quotes the Quran: "And do good as Allah has been good to you. And do not seek to cause corruption in the earth."

"Faith-based organizations are the places people look for direction," he says. "So hopefully we'll get folks seeing what we're doing to make things more beneficial, and becoming more aware of their own properties."

That's the hope of the Nature Conservancy. At the very least, perhaps the intentions and goals of audit will trickle down to congregants. Meanwhile, feedback from the Louisville pilot is guiding the Conservancy as it packages the four-step audit into a ready-made, online handbook that any faith-based organization can use, accessible on the Conservancy's website and that of [GreenFaith](#), an organization specializing in connecting religious groups to conservation practices.

The faith-based landscape audit is one small heat-fighting action among many others in Louisville. Following the recommendations of the 2015 study, Mayor Greg Fischer has set a goal of attaining a [45 percent tree canopy coverage citywide](#). The city is rounding out incentive programs to encourage all kinds of property owners to revamp rooftops and lawns to deflect more heat, and it's revising its land-use plan to include trees and other natural infrastructure options to cool cities.

These actions can serve as models for other places battling UHI—which is to say, nearly every city. Engaging communities through their places of worship seems a particularly promising approach. Progressive proponents of environmental causes [often forget](#) that nearly [90 percent of American adults say they believe in God with at least some level of certainty](#). With the global climate forecast growing increasingly apocalyptic, it may be the time for climate advocates to make a leap of faith.

<http://www.citylab.com/cityfixer/2017/02/louisville-is-beating-the-heat-with-spirituality/515880/>

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**February 14, 2017**

Wasting water: Waiting for true wake-up call

By Kari Pohl  
Global Sisters Report

I recently returned to live in the United States after six years in Nicaragua, where I had become accustomed to irregular water service — or rather, the regular stoppages in water service. During the dry season and much of the rainy season, our water would go out in the morning and stay out until sometime in the afternoon. We'd considered ourselves fortunate, though — other barrios in the nation's capital only had water service for a couple of hours in the middle of the night. Meanwhile, in many rural communities, wells had gone completely dry.

I watch what's happening with Earth's water, and I alternate between wanting to cry in sorrow and scream in rage. Bolivia lost its second largest lake last year when [Lago Poopó](#) completely dried up, taking with it the fish, birds and other wildlife the Uru-Murato people used to depend on for their own survival. What does a traditional fishing culture do when there are no fish, when there's not even water?

I hear about [Flint](#), Michigan, and [Valle de Siria](#), Honduras, where the water itself — the very thing that it supposed to give life — has become a poison, sickening thousands and causing damage that will reach into the next generation.

I follow reports on the disappearance of the [Aral Sea](#) in Uzbekistan — which only a few decades ago was the world's fourth largest inland body of water and is now practically gone due to the avarice of just a handful of people insistent on cultivating cotton in a part of the world whose climate was never suitable for such a thirsty crop. How can such a miniscule group cause so much destruction?

I read about [Lake Turkana](#) in Kenya — the world's largest desert lake, which is at risk of drying up due to the construction of a massive hydroelectric dam 100 miles upstream. I can't even wrap my mind around bodies of water of that size simply disappearing.

I pray with *Laudato Sí*, and find myself drawn over and over again to paragraph 14, which, in English, states, "Regrettably, many efforts to seek concrete solutions to the environmental crisis have proved ineffective, not only because of powerful opposition but also because of a more general lack of interest."

In the Spanish version, the same paragraph says, "Lamentablemente, muchos esfuerzos para buscar soluciones concretas a la crisis ambiental suelen ser frustrados no sólo por el rechazo de los poderosos, sino también por la falta de interés de los demás." (Translated: "Regrettably, many efforts to seek concrete solutions to the environmental crisis are usually frustrated, not only because of rejection by the powerful, but also because of a lack of interest among the rest.")

The Spanish version is closer to my truth (and I like to think that it's closer to what Pope Francis intended to say): efforts to seek concrete solutions to the environmental crisis haven't "proved ineffective" — they've been frustrated; and they haven't been frustrated by some vague "powerful opposition" — they've been frustrated by the powerful themselves. Efforts have been frustrated by bottling companies who buy entire aquifers right out from under municipalities; they've been frustrated by the mining/extraction and petrochemical industries, which show no motivation whatsoever in developing new techniques for accessing and processing raw materials that don't involve contaminating millions of gallons of ground water and/or dumping toxic residue into the nearest stream or river; they've been frustrated by the owners and managers of mega-farms who continue to use what limited water remains to grow cotton, sugarcane, tobacco, alfalfa, and other water-intensive crops in parts of the world whose climate is no longer (or never has been) able to support them; they've been frustrated by energy corporations who have no qualms about building massive ecosystem-destroying dams.

Unlike in either version of *Laudato Sí*, however, I don't see a "lack of interest" — in me or in anyone else. What I see and experience is a sense of powerlessness, a feeling of being overwhelmed, a fear of being swallowed alive by forces far beyond what the average person can control.

Where do we go with this? Where do I go with this?

We live in a world where money is power and where the [accumulated wealth](#) of 67 individuals is greater than the assets of 3.5 billion other people combined; where the laws are made by the powerful, for the powerful; where politicians are bought and sold; where lethal force is all-too-often an acceptable tool to use against protesters, environmentalists, human rights workers or anyone who has the audacity to question the status quo.

Where do we go with this? Where do I go with this?

I think the main challenge isn't getting people (or me, for that matter) to care — it's to convince us that what we do really does make a difference. It's hard to persuade a poor farmer to fix her leaky faucet when the mega-producer down the road is also wasting water — not by the drop, but by the millions (billions? trillions?) of gallons because it costs less money to drain an entire water table and dig a new well than it does to revamp the system and introduce more efficient irrigation techniques.

I've been inspired by the [Standing Rock Sioux Nation](#), the [Guardians of Yaoska](#) in Nicaragua, and the [Rak Chiang Khong](#) group in Thailand and continue to look to them for guidance — individuals and groups of people who are willing to risk everything to protect and defend their water sources. I pray that I may someday be "there" — that I may be willing to put myself on the front line to protect the very thing that keeps us all alive, to protect the right of all of us to at least survive, and to protect the holy gift that God has given us.

[Kari Pohl is a Sister of St. Joseph of Baden, Pennsylvania, who had been serving in Nicaragua until December 2016 in the fields of community health education and pastoral ministry.]

**February 15, 2017**

Native Americans opposing Dakota Access get a boost from Pope Francis

By Steven Mufson  
Washington Post

Two Native American tribes are fighting the Dakota Access oil pipeline in a federal court, but on Wednesday they appeared to get support from a higher authority — Pope Francis.

Pope Francis, a longtime defender of indigenous rights, said that the need to reconcile development with those rights was “especially clear when planning economic activities that may interfere with indigenous cultures and their ancestral relationship to the Earth,” according to a report by Reuters.

Although he did not mention the Dakota Access pipeline by name, the Vatican City press suggested Francis appeared to have that project in mind. “Do not allow those that destroy the Earth, which destroy the environment and the ecological balance, and which end up destroying the wisdom of peoples,” the pope said, according to Reuters.

This was not the first time the pope has indirectly commented on U.S. issues. Earlier he criticized Donald Trump’s plan to build a wall on the border with Mexico. “In the social and civil context as well, I appeal not to create walls, but to build bridges,” Francis said, according to the AP. “To not respond to evil with evil. To defeat evil with good, the offense with forgiveness. A Christian would never say ‘you will pay for that.’ Never.”

Building and burying an oil pipeline across four states is a question of earthly legal intricacies, not the views of the pope.

Yet the tribes have appealed on religious grounds, saying the pipeline interferes with the exercise of beliefs. The Standing Rock Sioux and Cheyenne River Sioux tribes had asked in a filing last week that a D.C. federal judge halt construction of the Dakota Access pipeline because it would endanger what they called sacred waters of the Missouri River.

“The waters of the Missouri are also sacred to the tribe and are central to the tribe’s practice of religion,” they said. They argued that the very presence of a pipeline below the river and Lake Oahe would “unbalance and desecrate the water.”

The U.S. District judge, James Boasberg, declined to stop construction, but he scheduled an additional hearing on the matter for Feb. 27.

“In this regard, the right to prior and informed consent (of native peoples) should always prevail,” the pope said on Wednesday, citing the 1997 U.N. Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. The pope, who spoke in Spanish, was addressing the Indigenous Peoples Forum in Rome.

The tribes on Tuesday filed a new motion asking that construction be halted, alleging that the Army Corps of Engineers had violated the Administrative Procedures Act and the National Environmental Policy Act.

[https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/energy-environment/wp/2017/02/15/native-americans-opposing-dakota-access-get-a-boost-from-pope-francis/?utm\\_term=.b748470a63c7](https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/energy-environment/wp/2017/02/15/native-americans-opposing-dakota-access-get-a-boost-from-pope-francis/?utm_term=.b748470a63c7)

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**February 16, 2017**

Mapting: New photo-sharing app to popularize Sustainable Development Goals - Earth Charter

By Dino De Francesco and Sarah Dobson  
Earth Charter Initiative

Discovering the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and Earth Charter Principles while spreading a positive message about the future of our planet through picture and video sharing — this is the idea behind [Mapting](#), a new mobile app developed by Earth Charter International in collaboration with Soka Gakkai International (SGI).

Mapting is a free tool that invites users to look for everyday actions that people take which help to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Then it’s as simple as snapping a photo or video and sharing it on a world map.

Beyond a photo and video sharing app created to map positive actions worldwide, Mapting is also a learning tool. It was designed in such a way that each step, from the home page to the photo sharing process, offers an opportunity for its users to learn more about the 17 Goals and the principles of the Earth Charter. The app combines these two complementary frameworks, the SDGs and the Earth Charter, to build connections between the targets, or where we need to go (SDGs), and the fundamental shared values that we need to get there (the Earth Charter).

Mapting was officially launched at an event called “Youth boosting the promotion and implementation of the SDGs” held at the United Nations Headquarters in New York on 10 November 2016. Mapting received enthusiastic support from participants and NGOs. The app quickly had users from Mexico, Japan, Brazil, Switzerland and the US with more people joining every day.

Mapting was created based on the belief that individuals, specifically young individuals, have power to initiate change. This app is a simple, entertaining way to discover and engage around the Global Goals and the Earth Charter with the potential to popularize and expand the movement for sustainable development.

Download Mapping now for free at [www.mapping.org](http://www.mapping.org) to join people around the world who Snap & Map everyday acts that contribute to the SDGs.

*Authors: Dino De Francesco, Digital Communications Specialist and Sarah Dobson, Youth Projects Coordinator at Earth Charter International*

<http://earthcharter.org/news-post/mapping-new-photo-sharing-app-popularize-sustainable-development-goals/>

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## **February 17, 2017**

Pope Francis to activists: Stand with migrants, do not deny climate science, there is no such thing as ‘Islamic terrorism’

By Michael J. O’Loughlin  
America: The Jesuit Review

In a letter written to a leaders of grassroots organizations and social movements meeting this week in California, Pope Francis said Christians must resist the temptation to demonize others, protect the earth and fight against “the invisible tyranny of money that only guarantees the privileges of a few.”

Writing that the world is in the midst of an “historic turning point,” Francis said the “worsening crisis” presents both danger and opportunity, using language sure to recall tensions between some Catholic leaders and the fledgling Trump administration.

“The grave danger is to disown our neighbors. When we do so, we deny their humanity and our own humanity without realizing it; we deny ourselves, and we deny the most important Commandments of Jesus,” Francis wrote in the letter, which was dated Feb. 10 and published in Spanish.

Cardinal Peter Turkson, head of the Vatican’s department for Integral Human Development, read the pope’s letter on Feb. 16 to participants at the opening of the U.S. Regional World Meeting of Popular Movements meeting in Modesto, a new event based on similar international meetings previously held in Rome and in Bolivia. The California gathering includes participants from a dozen countries.

“I know that you have committed yourselves to fight for social justice, to defend our Sister Mother Earth and to stand alongside migrants. I want to reaffirm your choice,” the pope’s letter read.

In his letter, Francis condemned what he dubbed a global “hypocritical attitude” toward suffering and he called for more action to address a range of social ills.

“Sooner or later, the moral blindness of this indifference comes to light, like when a mirage dissipates,” he wrote. “The wounds are there, they are a reality. The unemployment is real, the violence is real, the corruption is real, the identity crisis is real, the gutting of democracies is real.”

Francis condemned leaders who rely on “fear, insecurity, quarrels, and even people’s justified indignation, in order to shift the responsibility for all these ills onto a ‘non-neighbor.’”

Though he wrote in the letter that he was not speaking about any particular leaders but of “a social and political process that flourishes in many parts of the world” that “poses a grave danger for humanity,” the letter, delivered in a border state with a large Hispanic population, is sure to suggest tensions between church leaders and U.S. President Donald J. Trump.

Last year, the pope said political leaders who propose building border [walls were not Christian](#), a statement interpreted by the Trump campaign as a slight against the candidate.

More recently, Catholic bishops in the United States have [condemned several executive orders](#) signed by Mr. Trump placing restrictions on immigration and refugee resettlement, including an executive order to move forward with plans to build a border wall.

Rather than looking to political leaders as models to solve the world’s various crises, the pope said in his letter that “Jesus teaches us a different path.”

“Do not classify others in order to see who is a neighbor and who is not,” he wrote. “You can become neighbor to whomever you meet in need, and you will do so if you have compassion in your heart.”

Francis also repeated his warning against describing terrorism as Islamic, another major theme of Mr. Trump’s campaign.

“Christian terrorism does not exist, Jewish terrorism does not exist, and Muslim terrorism does not exist. They do not exist,” Francis wrote.

“There are fundamentalist and violent individuals in all peoples and religions—and with intolerant generalizations they become stronger because they feed on hate and xenophobia,” he continued.

Mr. Trump repeatedly criticized his predecessor for refusing to label acts of terror committed by Muslims “radical Islamic terrorism,” a phrase [he has used often](#) since his election.

“By confronting terror with love, we work for peace,” the pope wrote.

Finally, the pope reiterated his plea for believers to defend creation against exploitation, issuing a subtle warning against those who deny challenges facing the environment.

The “ecological crisis is real,” the pope wrote, and though conceding that science “is not the only form of knowledge,” he said, “we also know what happens when we deny science and disregard the voice of Nature.”

Mr. Trump has called climate change a hoax and vowed to [loosen federal regulations](#) designed to protect the environment in order to support business.

For his part, the pope said the time to act to protect the environment is at hand.

“Let us not fall into denial. Time is running out,” he warned. “Let us act. I ask you again—all of you, people of all backgrounds including native people, pastors, political leaders—to defend Creation.”

<http://www.americamagazine.org/politics-society/2017/02/17/pope-francis-activists-stand-migrants-do-not-deny-climate-science-there>

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## February 20, 2017

Pope says indigenous people must have final say about their land

By David Hill  
The Guardian

In the 15th century papal bulls promoted and provided legal justification for the conquest and theft of indigenous peoples’ lands and resources worldwide - the consequences of which are still being felt today. The right to conquest in one such bull, the *Romanus Pontifex*, issued in the 1450s when Nicholas V was the Pope, was granted in perpetuity.

How times have changed. Last week, over 560 years later, Francis, the first Pope from Latin America, struck a rather different note - for indigenous peoples around the world, for land rights, for better environmental stewardship. He said publicly that indigenous peoples have the right to “prior and informed consent.” In other words, nothing should happen on - or impact - their land, territories and resources unless they agree to it.

“I believe that the central issue is how to reconcile the right to development, both social and cultural, with the protection of the particular characteristics of indigenous peoples and their territories,” said Francis, according to an English version of his speech released by the [Vatican’s press office](#).

“This is especially clear when planning economic activities which may interfere with indigenous cultures and their ancestral relationship to the earth,” Francis went on. “In this regard, the right to prior and informed consent should always prevail, as foreseen in Article 32 of the [UN] Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. Only then is it possible to guarantee peaceful cooperation between governing authorities and indigenous peoples, overcoming confrontation and conflict.”

Francis was speaking to numerous indigenous representatives in Rome at the conclusion of the third Indigenous Peoples' Forum held by the UN's International Fund for Agricultural Development.

The [UN's Declaration](#) - non-legally-binding - was adopted 10 years ago. Article 32 says "states shall consult and cooperate in good faith with the indigenous peoples concerned through their own representative institutions in order to obtain their free and informed consent prior to the approval of any project affecting their lands or territories and other resources, particularly in connection with the development, utilization or exploitation of mineral, water or other resources."

Francis also told his audience "humanity is committing a grave sin in not caring for the earth", and urged them to resist new technologies which "destroy the earth, which destroy the environment and the ecological balance, and which end up destroying the wisdom of peoples." He called on governments to enable indigenous peoples to fully participate in developing "guidelines and projects", both locally and nationally.

Various mainstream media including the BBC, The Independent and the Washington Post interpreted Francis's speech as a comment, or an apparent comment, on the current [Dakota Access Pipeline](#) conflict in the US - almost as if that was the only conflict over indigenous peoples' land they were aware of. But what about everyone and everywhere else? Such interpretations were swiftly rejected by a Vatican spokesperson, who was reported as saying "there's no element in his words that would give us a clue to know if he was talking about any specific cases."

So what do some of those who were with Francis that day think of his speech? How significant was it?

Myrna Cunningham, a Miskita activist from Nicaragua and former Chairperson of the UN's Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, says the Pope was sending several main messages. These included the "need to reconcile the right to development with indigenous peoples' spiritual and cultural specificities and territories", and the importance of the UN Declaration and consent which was, she says, "in a way a response to indigenous demands."

"I expected a strong message but his position exceeded my expectations," Cunningham told the Guardian. "He is truly clear about the struggles of our people and an important voice to make our demands be heard."

Elifuraha Laltaika, from the Association for Law and Advocacy for Pastoralists in Tanzania, says it was a "timely wake-up call to governments."

"[His comments] come at time when, instead of scaling up, governments increasingly violate and look with suspicion at the minimum standards in the UN Declaration," he told the Guardian. "Without heeding Pope Francis's call, life would undoubtedly become more miserable for indigenous peoples than ever before. Greed towards extraction of hydrocarbons and minerals

will open up additional fault-lines, heightening indigenous peoples' poverty and inability to deal with impacts of climate change and a myriad of other challenges.”

For Alvaro Pop, a Maya Q'eqchi man from Guatemala, Francis's remarks demonstrate his ongoing commitment to indigenous peoples' rights.

“Indigenous peoples have been the guardians of their resources for centuries,” says Pop, another former Chairperson of the UN's Permanent Forum. “Free, prior and informed consent is one of the most important issues of the 21st century. The Pope's comments are truly significant.”

Victoria Tauli-Corpuz, a Kankanaey Igorot woman from the Philippines and now the UN's Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, says Francis's comments illustrate his “understanding of the importance” of implementing the UN Declaration.

“His view that a bigger chance of overcoming confrontation and conflict between indigenous peoples and governing authorities can be achieved if prior and informed consent is respected echoes what many indigenous peoples have always stated,” Tauli-Corpuz told the Guardian.

Les Malezer, from Australia, describes it as “gratifying” that the Pope took such a “strong stance” on the need to respect indigenous peoples' rights, and says he took the opportunity to raise with him the “Doctrine of Discovery” - the international legal concept grounded in the 15th century papal bulls.

“Each person in our audience had the opportunity to say a very few words to the Pope as he came around the room,” Malezer, from Queensland, told the Guardian. “I asked the Pope to continue to review the Doctrine of Discovery which was followed by many instances of genocide of indigenous peoples and the taking of their lands. Also I requested the Catholic Church seek to raise awareness worldwide of the situation and rights of indigenous peoples.”

In asserting indigenous peoples' right to consent, Francis was echoing - and giving sustenance to - a growing body of international law and jurisprudence binding on governments, and guidelines, principles or operating procedures adopted by some financial institutions, UN agencies and private sector groups. According to a 2013 report by UN-REDD on the international legal basis for what is known as “FPIC” - free, prior and informed consent - “More than 200 States have ratified numerous international and regional treaties and covenants that expressly provide for, or are now interpreted to recognise, a State duty and obligation to obtain FPIC where the circumstances so warrant.”

<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/andes-to-the-amazon/2017/feb/20/pope-indigenous-people-final-say-land>

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**February 23, 2017**

The Indigenous Environment Network Responds to Forced Evacuation of DAPL Resistance Camps

By Jade Begay and Nina Smith  
Common Dreams

CANNON BALL, ND - At 2 pm CT on February 22, 2017, water protectors at the Oceti Sakowin camp were evicted by the Army Corps of Engineers. Despite efforts from camp leaders requesting more time to clean up the camp, the Army Corp remained firm with its plans to vacate the camp. The Army Corp claims jurisdiction of the land that the camp is located on even though the land is within the unceded Fort Laramie Treaty land and territories.

Individuals who voluntarily left camp prior to 2 o'clock had the choice to take a bus to be transported to an evacuation center, or relocate to other campsites outside of the eviction zone. Water protectors remaining in the camp now face risk of arrest.

There are three other campsites in the area for water protectors to relocate to: Sacred Stone, Cheyenne River, and 7th Generation camps.

Various law enforcement jurisdictions were on site including Morton County Sheriff's, North Dakota State Highway Patrol and the North Dakota National Guard and National Park Service Rangers. The Bureau of Indian Affairs Law Enforcement established a traffic checkpoint and barricade on Standing Rock Sioux Tribe reservation land, on Highway 1806, to the south of the Cannonball River bridge.

**The following is a statement by Tom Goldtooth, the Executive Director of the Indigenous Environmental Network:**

"We are appalled by today's forced evacuations of indigenous people at the Camp at Standing Rock, they are a violent and unnecessary infringement on the constitutional right of water protectors to peacefully protest and exercise their freedom of speech. It hinders the camp cleanup process and creates confusion and chaos that puts the Missouri River at risk of pollution from construction and camping debris.

"Today's expulsion is a continuation of a centuries old practice, where the U.S. Government forcefully removes Indigenous people from our lands and territories. We urge supporters of the water protectors to continue to resist this travesty by organizing mass mobilizations, distributed actions, speaking out against the violations of the Treaty rights of the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe and the Seven Council Fires of the Great Sioux Nation, and continuing to source up the capacity for litigation and grassroots organizing against the Dakota Access pipeline.

"Our hearts are not defeated. The closing of the camp is not the end of a movement or fight, it is a new beginning. They cannot extinguish the fire that Standing Rock started. It burns within each of us. We will rise, we will resist, and we will thrive. We are sending loving thoughts to the water protectors along the banks of the Cannonball River, today. May everyone be as safe as can be. [#noDAPL](#)"

[Indigenous Environment Network](#)

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<http://www.commondreams.org/newswire/2017/02/23/indigenous-environment-network-responds-forced-evacuation-dapl-resistance-camps>

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**February 25, 2017**

‘Great world war for water’ may be looming, Pope Francis says

RT

Water scarcity may cause conflict and the whole globe may be on its way to a great world war over water, Pope Francis has warned, adding that the situation is very “urgent.”

*“The right to water is essential for the survival of persons and decisive for the future of humanity,”* Pope Francis said during a meeting with international experts participating in a ‘Dialogue on Water’ at the Pontifical Academy of Sciences on February 24, as [cited](#) by [americamagazine.org](http://americamagazine.org).

*“All people have a right to safe drinking water,”* he said, adding *“I ask [myself] if in this piecemeal third world war that we are living through, are we not going toward a great world war for water?”*

Pope Francis said that the figures on water published by the United Nations cannot leave the world indifferent.

*“Every day, a thousand children die of illness linked to water and contaminated water is consumed by millions of people every day... This situation must be stopped and reversed. Fortunately, this is not impossible, but it is urgent,”* the pontiff said, as [cited](#) by ANSA news agency.

A February 2017 [report](#) from the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) states that *“groundwater sources are being depleted rapidly,”* citing *“water scarcities”* as one of the major problems.

*“Mankind's future ability to feed itself is in jeopardy due to intensifying pressures on natural resources, mounting inequality, and the fallout from a changing climate,”* it said.

In 2016, UN Water [released](#) a report saying that about 663 million people *“lack ready access to improved sources of drinking water, while the number of people without reliable access to water of good enough quality to be safe for human consumption is at least 1.8 billion.”*

Since Catholic cardinals elected him as pope in March 2013, Pope Francis has become known for his liberal approach and emotional, caring statements that reach out to the poor and sexual minorities.

In 2015, Pope Francis warned that those harming the environment and the “*powerful of the earth*” will face the wrath of God if they don’t protect the environment and make sure everyone has enough to eat.

During a UN summit in 2015, he stated that helping the poor and excluded is part of saving the planet.

Without referring to any specific countries or individuals, the pontiff blasted a “*selfish and boundless thirst for power and material prosperity,*” leading to “*both to the misuse of available natural resources and to the exclusion of the weak and disadvantaged.*”

<https://www.rt.com/news/378581-pope-francis-water-war/>

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