

## Religion and Ecology News Articles

2018

**January 3, 2018**

Pope to hear from indigenous about ministry, land rights in Chile, Peru

By Barbara J. Fraser  
National Catholic Reporter

TEMUCO, Chile — Sergio Catalaf's son was just 3 days old when police arrested the Mapuche Indian leader, accusing him of terrorism. He and 10 other Mapuche leaders spent 14 months in preventive detention before being acquitted in October of setting fire to a farmhouse in which an elderly couple died.

Sitting in his simple wooden house, cradling the child on his lap as a light rain fell outside, Catalaf said he and others have been targeted unjustly because they are defending their people's right to their ancestral territory.

He would like Pope Francis to speak out about that when the pontiff visits Temuco Jan. 17.

Pope Francis' weeklong trip to Chile and Peru in January will take him to two regions that are among those countries' poorest, where environmental issues and demands for indigenous land rights have led to sometimes-violent conflict.

In the Araucania region of southern Chile, Mapuche communities have been stripped of their land repeatedly — first by Spanish colonists, then by settlers who moved to the region to farm, and more recently by timber plantations.

The pope will celebrate Mass here and share lunch with a small group of "simple people, ordinary people from the region," according to Bishop Hector Vargas Bastidas of Temuco.

Vargas said he expects the pope to bring a message "of hope, that hearts may be opened to peace, justice and dialogue."

Pope Francis is slated to meet with Amazonian indigenous people in Peru's southeastern Madre de Dios region Jan. 19. His visit comes at a time when Wampis and Achuar people in Peru's northern Amazon region, as well as groups in other parts of the country, are seeking greater autonomy and territorial rights.

Those rights are at the heart of conflicts in southern Chile, where protests have been marked by violence in recent years. Besides the burning of the home in the case in which Catalaf was acquitted, protesters have burned evangelical and Catholic churches, although indigenous leaders also have received support from the church.

The construction of hydroelectric dams on the Biobio River displaced indigenous communities and remains contentious, and recent decades have seen the expansion of pine and eucalyptus plantations across vast areas of southern Chile.

The plantations have depleted local water supplies and occupied areas claimed by Mapuche communities. Although they provide some local jobs, a study in 2016 found that plantations have done little to reduce poverty in the Araucania region, which remains one of the poorest in Chile.

Plantations have displaced indigenous people, who traditionally farmed, fished or raised livestock. They also have left little of the native forest that is the center of Mapuche spirituality, said Isolde Reuque Paillalef, a Mapuche woman and coordinator of indigenous ministry for the Diocese of Temuco.

The Chilean government has been purchasing or allocating state land to be turned over to Mapuche communities that have documents proving rights predating the arrival of settlers. But some communities have received land that is too far from their communities to be of practical use, or that lacks water and electricity, she said. In other cases, the cost of moving to the new land and building houses is prohibitive.

Nevertheless, Mapuche communities maintain their identity and their traditional religion, particularly the "nguillatun," a communal ritual that strengthens and renews bonds among the community members, Reuque said.

"This is a people of faith, which, despite everything, has not lost its values, its love for the earth and its own identity," she said.

Some bishops and priests are reluctant to support the movement to strengthen indigenous identity and traditional rituals, Reuque said, but others have embraced it.

Just outside the city of Temuco, Fr. Juan Antonio Gonzalez lives in a simple, wooden house in an area the diocese has designated as a Mapuche parish. Like his neighbors, he tends a flock of chickens in a pen beside his home.

He has no plans to build a church building for people whose traditional place of worship has been the forest. Instead he visits the communities scattered throughout his parish, including more than a dozen that have Christian communities founded more than four decades ago, when Maryknoll missionaries from the United States worked here.

"That network of Christian communities is what most strengthens the Mapuche culture," Gonzalez said. "Our work is to accompany the Mapuche people, supporting the good initiatives that spring from them" and strengthening their cultural identity.

"The Mapuche people's demands are just," he said, adding that although the Chilean government and the Mapuche people must resolve them, the Catholic Church can help by encouraging dialogue.

Pope Francis will hear similar concerns about territorial rights, environmental damage and the need for indigenous ministry when he travels to Puerto Maldonado, in the southeastern Peruvian Amazon, Jan. 19.

Home to some of the world's most biodiverse parks, that area has been devastated by a gold rush that has left large expanses of barren land pockmarked with pit mines. The wildcat mining has led to forced labor, trafficking of women and girls for prostitution, and one of the highest murder rates in the country.

Indigenous people from vicariates throughout the Amazon will travel to Puerto Maldonado for a meeting with the pope. Most will be leaders of Christian communities in their parishes or villages. Some will be from areas where communities have suffered oil spills or invasion by wildcat gold miners, while others have seen their forests razed and replaced with oil palm plantations.

Amazonian indigenous communities are among the poorest in the country, and often lack basic services such as safe water, sanitation and electricity.

The lack of basic services, along with poor schools and scarce job opportunities, drives many indigenous people to cities. They often live in the most impoverished urban neighborhoods.

Many conceal their indigenous roots to avoid discrimination, Rosa Pacaya, who leads a Christian community in La Inmaculada parish in the northeastern city of Iquitos, told CNS.

Pacaya lives in Masusa, a riverside neighborhood of houses built on stilts, which floods each year during the rainy season. The houses lack running water and sewage systems, and trash collects in the streets and under the buildings when the water recedes.

Most men in Masusa work informally, loading and unloading riverboats in the nearby port, while women care for their children and do odd jobs. Pacaya cooks and cleans in other people's houses or scavenges scraps of wood behind a sawmill to sell for firewood.

The stress of daily life takes a toll on families and leaves people little energy for mobilizing to demand better living conditions, she said.

A priest visits the chapel in her neighborhood once a month to celebrate Mass. On the other Sundays, she leads the Liturgy of the Word and catechism classes. By working with children, she hopes to draw the rest of the family into the Catholic community.

Ministry among indigenous people in both rural and urban areas requires a church with an indigenous face, said Divine Word Fr. Fernando Diaz Fernandez, who works in the parish in Quepe, a town about eight miles from Temuco.

"It would be a church that is tribal, rather than monarchic," he said. "A family church that is not patriarchal. It would be a church that learns to read the word of God in creation, to care for (creation) and respect it. A church that witnesses to the truth, seeking out our neighbors and those who suffer, and serving them."

<https://www.ncronline.org/news/environment/pope-hear-indigenous-about-ministry-land-rights-chile-peru>

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**January 5, 2018**

Pope to teachers: Help kids live with care for all of creation

By Carol Glatz, Catholic News Service  
National Catholic Reporter

**Vatican City** — A lifestyle that is environmentally ethical cannot be "schizophrenic" — for example, by showing more care for animals and forests, than for the plight of people, Pope Francis said.

A green lifestyle must be consistent and complete, driven by a love for God the creator and all of his creation, the pope said in a speech Jan. 5 to the Italian Association of Catholic Teachers, which held its national congress in Rome in early January.

The elementary school teachers must help children from a young age understand and practice an environmentally ethical lifestyle that must not be "schizophrenic," that is, a kind of disconnected concern for, as an example, "taking care of animals in extinction, but ignoring problems facing the elderly. No. Or defending the Amazon rainforest, but neglecting the rights of workers to have a fair wage," he said.

This approach demands teaching the importance of personal responsibility, not bombarding the children with slogans or catchy commands that someone else will have to carry out, he said. Teach children to have an enthusiastic appetite for "experiencing an environmental ethics that stem from the choices and behaviors in daily life," he said.

The pope also encouraged teachers and schools to rebuild a new alliance with families that mutually supports and strengthens each other.

The educational alliance or "pact" that once existed among the state, schools and parents unfortunately "is broken" and must be repaired, he said.

Since constructive collaboration no longer comes "naturally," plan and design a way for it to happen, even with the help of experts in education, said the pope, who used to teach at a Jesuit high school in Buenos Aires.

"But even before that, foster a new 'conspiracy' — and I am fully aware of this wording — between teachers and parents," becoming jointly responsible accomplices to promote the well-being of children, he said.

Teachers and parents cannot see each other as opposing forces and or point fingers at each other, he said, but rather, they must put themselves "in the other's shoes, understanding the real difficulties both sides face today in education, and thus creating greater solidarity, a supportive collusion."

Pope Francis also urged the Catholic teachers to continue to be inspired by their Christian values, whether they teach in public or private Catholic schools, and to encourage their students to be open to others in a "culture of encounter."

The challenge is to work together to teach kids to be open to and interested in what is around them, he said.

They need to be "capable of caring and tenderness — I am thinking of bullying here — free from widespread fallacies" that claim the only way to be worth anything is "to be competitive, aggressive and tough toward others, especially toward those who are different, foreign or seen as being an obstacle in some way to one's personal success," he said.

"Unfortunately, this is the 'air' our children often breathe," he said. The remedy is to give them a "change of air" that is healthier and more humane, he said, which is why it is important teachers build a new alliance with parents.

Help kids see others as brothers and sisters to be respected and as worthwhile in getting to know "with their past, their virtues and defects, assets and limits," he said.

<https://www.ncronline.org/news/environment/francis-chronicles/pope-teachers-help-kids-live-care-all-creation>

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**January 8, 2018**

Organizers want 'Black Nazarene' festival in Philippines to go green

By Inés San Martín  
Crux

Three years ago, Pope Francis shattered the all-time record for turnout for a papal Mass by drawing an estimated six million people in Manila, the capital of the Philippines. The previous record had also been set in the heavily Catholic Asian nation, when St. Pope John Paul II is

believed to have celebrated a concluding Mass at World Youth Day for somewhere between four and five million.

Yet neither of those events are even close to being the Philippines' biggest religious gathering. That pride of place belongs to the annual Black Nazarene procession, and the Asian Catholic news agency UCAN reports that this year, the week-long celebration is expected to draw close to 20 million people to Manila.

The apex will come on Tuesday, when a feast known as the *Translacion*, celebrating the passage of a sacred image from one location to another, is marked.

Every year on Jan. 9, millions gather in Manila for a procession of the *Poong itim na Nazareno*, a life-sized statue of a suffering Jesus fallen under the weight of the Cross. It's held along a three-mile route from Rizal Park, where Francis delivered his "[Thrilla in Manila](#)" in 2015, to the Minor Basilica of the Black Nazarene, in the district of Quiapo, where the image is kept throughout the year.

This time around, organizers are echoing the environmental-friendly message Francis delivered in the Philippines and throughout his pontificate, urging people to keep the celebration "trash-less." The appeal has been made by several environmental groups and Father Douglas Badong, vicar of the Minor Basilica of the Black Nazarene in Quiapo district.

"Let us consider our environment in our expression of faith," the priest said.

According to UCAN, Monsignor Hernando Coronel, rector of the basilica, also called on Catholics "to translate the devotion into actions that would serve the community."

"Let us become ecological stewards like how we protect the image of the Black Nazarene during the procession," he said.

Last year, over 300 tons of garbage were collected throughout the week along the route of the procession, some 70 tons after the 20-hour pilgrimage from the park to the church. These statistics led to last week's call from several pro-environment groups, urging Black Nazarene devotees to renounce littering and maintain a "zero-waste" policy during the procession.

The suggestions - made by the EcoWaste Coalition, Buklod Tao, and the Green Brigade Committee of the Quiapo Church - include asking for pilgrims to refrain from smoking or vaping as an "act of penance," to return used beverages and food containers to givers or vendors for proper disposal, and to store their food in reusable cloth bags instead of plastic ones.

In recent years, among the most littered items were food packaging, plastic cups, food leftovers, bamboo skewers, PET bottles, plastic bags, newspapers and cigarette filters.

Speaking from experience, the group also asked for people not to relieve themselves in PET bottles, nor in the walls of Rizal Park or the streets, saying that it's "unsightly and unsanitary."

The environmental groups asked the devotees to “express their faith in a manner that is respectful of the environment.”

“The Catholic devotion to the Black Nazarene is truly breathtaking and splendid. Sadly the annual *Traslacion* is sullied by the unrestrained littering at the *Pahalik* and vigil site in Luneta and along the processional route,” said Daniel Alejandre, of the EcoWaste Coalition in a statement.

The EcoWaste Coalition, self-defined as a public interest network of community, church, school, environmental and health groups pursuing sustainable solutions to waste, climate change and chemical issues, issued its own statement, fearing a repeat “of the heaps of garbage” left by the faithful on Dec. 31- another big day for the Black Nazarene devotees, since it marks the beginning of the novena in his honor.

“As a show of reverence to the Black Nazarene, we request the faithful to manifest their solemn devotion in a way that will not overwhelm Rizal Park and the processional route with litter,” he said.

“Cleaning up the mess left behind by the devotees can be a grueling task for government workers and for volunteers from various parishes, schools and groups,” he added.

According to the EcoWaste Coalition, the protection and preservation of the city’s environment and God’s creation should also be “at the core” of the devotion to the Black Nazarene.

During off-the-cuff remarks at the University of St. Thomas in Manila three years ago, Francis urged youth to protect the environment, “not only because this country, more than many others, is likely to be seriously affected by climate change.”

The pope had a set of prepared remarks, which he decided to set aside - as he often did during this trip - opting instead to speak in Spanish through an interpreter. This decision was partially motivated by the fact that the Argentine pontiff was visibly moved by the questions posed to him, particularly that of a 12-year old girl named Glyzelle Palomar, who asked the pope, “Why do children suffer?”

However, Francis requested for his original speech to be published. In it, he focused even more on the environment, something that was expected: Preparations for the papal visit were partially set in motion after a 2013 super-typhoon in the central Philippines left 6,000 dead and 4.1 million homeless.

“You are called to care for creation not only as responsible citizens, but also as followers of Christ!” the pope wrote in the speech, available on the Vatican’s website. “Respect for the environment means more than simply using cleaner products or recycling what we use. These are important aspects, but not enough.”

He went on to say that by destroying forests, ravaging the soil and polluting the seas, humanity betrays the noble calling of being “stewards of God’s creation.”

Francis insisted on this during his homily in the Mass in Rizal Park that drew a crowd estimated at six million people.

“[God] created the world as a beautiful garden and asked us to care for it,” he said. “But through sin, man has disfigured that natural beauty; through sin, man has also destroyed the unity and beauty of our human family, creating social structures which perpetuate poverty, ignorance and corruption.”

The actual feast of the Black Nazarene is marked on Good Friday. However, this week’s procession is even more popular. It reenacts a seemingly minor historical event from 1787, known as the solemn *Translacion*, meaning transfer, of the image from its original home, where Rizal Park is now located, to its present home at the basilica in Quiapo.

Most Filipino Catholics consider the Nazarene statue to be miraculous, able to heal terminal cancers and other sicknesses, to grant petitions, and to help those in need.

<https://cruxnow.com/global-church/2018/01/08/organizers-want-black-nazarene-festival-philippines-go-green/>

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## January 11, 2018

How Much Does Climate Change Cost? Try \$1.5 Trillion (and Counting)

By Mark Trahan  
YES! Magazine

The Trump administration, and its allies in Congress, are fighting a losing war. They continue to press forward for the development of oil, gas, and coal when the rest of the world understands the implication of that folly. Global warming is the most pressing issue for our time. Period.

The thing is governments really have two choices when it comes to managing the impact on its people from global warming: spend money on trying to reduce the problem or spend money on cleaning up the catastrophes.

The Trump administration is on the hook for the catastrophe. [A report released Monday by The National Centers for Environmental Information](#) pegged the total cost this year at \$1.5 trillion, including estimates for Hurricanes Harvey, Irma, and Maria. (And that doesn’t even begin to count the human toll, lost lives, lost jobs, lost opportunity.)

I witnessed firsthand the impact of Hurricane Maria on the island of Dominica last month. We keep hearing stories about the power grid being down (similar to Puerto Rico) and you think, Why? It’s been months. Why aren’t the lights on? Then you see nearly every electrical pole on the island sideways. The entire grid needs to be rebuilt (or better, rethought) and that’s decades of infrastructure. So the figure of \$1.5 trillion is far short of what will be needed. Nearly every



electrical line, every other house, the damage was so widespread it's impossible to overstate. And that's just one island. Multiple the effect across the region. The planet.

Even the United States.

The Centers for Environmental Information says there were 16 weather and climate disasters with losses exceeding \$1 billion each across the country last year. These events included one drought, two flooding events, one severe freeze, eight severe storms, three cyclones, and one extraordinary wildfire. These "events," as the center defines them, resulted in 362 deaths.

Turns out 2017 was a record-breaking year. "In total, the U.S. was impacted by 16 separate billion-dollar disaster events tying 2011 for the record number of billion-dollar disasters for an entire calendar year," the report said. "In fact, 2017 arguably has more events than 2011 given that our analysis traditionally counts all U.S. billion-dollar wildfires, as regional-scale, seasonal events, not as multiple isolated events. More notable than the high frequency of these events is the cumulative cost, which exceeds \$300 billion in 2017—a new U.S. annual record."

A similar report was published by the Government Accountability Office, including a recommendation that Executive Office of the President "identify significant climate risks and craft appropriate federal responses."

But instead of trying to reduce the impact—and the costs of weather-related catastrophe—the Trump administration continues on course for new development of oil and gas. The Interior Department announced new rules that, if enacted, will open up nearly all of the United States coastal waters to more oil and gas development beginning next year.

"By proposing to open up nearly the entire OCS for potential oil and gas exploration, the United States can advance the goal of moving from aspiring for energy independence to attaining energy dominance," [said Vincent DeVito, counselor for Energy Policy at Interior, in the news release](#). "This decision could bring unprecedented access to America's extensive offshore oil and gas resources and allow us to better compete with other oil-rich nations."

Or as Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke put it: "The important thing is we strike the right balance to protect our coasts and people while still powering America and achieving American Energy Dominance."

Dominance is such a funny word. How can any nation be dominant in the face of hurricanes that are ever more powerful and destructive? How does energy dominance work when tens of thousands of Americans will have to move because their homes are no longer there because of fire or storms? What happens if that number grows into the hundreds of thousands? Millions? How can we afford to spend trillions of dollars rebuilding what we have now?

A group of elders on the Bering Sea immediately condemned the Interior Department's offshore drilling plan. "We told them that in person last October and again in writing, that there were 76 tribes in these regions opposed to this," said the statement from the elders. "The draft plan implies that Bering Sea communities were 'generally supportive of some' oil and gas activity.

This is not accurate and there is no evidence of this from Bering Sea communities. For decades, our people have opposed oil and gas activity and we continue to oppose it today. The northern Bering Sea is a very fragile ecosystem. The marine mammals that we rely on use it as their highway and they follow specific migration routes. That is how we know when and where to find them. The noise and vibration associated with drilling will interfere with their sonar and disrupt their migrations. Then we the coastal people will lose our primary food source.”

There is a connection between developing oil and gas and paying the high costs to clean up after a storm. One side of the ledger goes to a few; the oil and gas “industry.” The folks who bought and paid for this administration.

The other side of the ledger is the rest of us. The taxpayers who will foot the bill for this continued folly.

And on the Bering Sea? The folks who live there are one storm away from a tragedy. As the elders put it: “Our people and our way of life are being exposed to danger and we do not understand why.”

<http://www.yesmagazine.org/planet/how-much-does-climate-change-cost-try-1.5-billion-and-counting-20180111>

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**January 12, 2018**

'This is a sin.' Public appeals to Pruitt's religion

By Niina Heikkinen

E&E News

To keep the Clean Power Plan alive, some people are appealing to Scott Pruitt's faith in God.

The EPA administrator, who is a Southern Baptist, has fought against the Obama administration's signature climate rule since his days as Oklahoma's attorney general. Now the agency he leads is in the first phases of undoing the rule, by seeking comment on the proposal from the public. A number of commenters made it clear that EPA's decision to reconsider the rule did not mesh with their own religious views. They challenged Pruitt to reconsider his opposition to the Clean Power Plan in light of his moral obligation to protect the planet.

One woman told Pruitt to review the Bible's teachings on the environment.

"[I]f you are among those Americans that have turned your back on science because it challenges your beliefs, I urge you to consult your religious texts," wrote Jessica Ferrato.

Ferrato noted that citations in the Bible about care for the environment could be found from "Genesis to Revelations" and were supported by a range of Christian denominations, as well as non-Christian teachings.

"[W]hether you are guided by science or religion, by mathematics or by the lure of cold hard cash, our morality, our life experiences, and our success as a species and as a society is fundamentally connected to the care with which we manage the bounties of our natural world," Ferrato said.

Greg Rockwell, meanwhile, expressed his disappointment with the administrator more succinctly.

"This is a sin. Please repent, and follow God," he wrote.

While appealing to the administrator's personal beliefs may seem like an unusual tack to prevent regulatory rollbacks, Pruitt is known to have strong ties to his faith. In Oklahoma, he was an active member of his church in Broken Arrow, where he served as a deacon and taught Sunday school. Since coming to Washington, he has attended Bible studies with other Cabinet members ([Climatewire](#), July 14, 2017).

Pruitt often sprinkles his public speeches with religious references, using words like "prayerfully" and occasionally alluding to Scripture. Last November, he attended the dedication of Washington, D.C.'s Museum of the Bible.

Commenters attempted to tap into that connection to Christianity to reach the administrator, who has gone forward with the repeal over the objections of environmental groups and public health experts.

Many comments filed with EPA began with the same phrase: "As a person of faith, I am very concerned about the impact of global warming on God's Creation."

Commenters pointed out that the Bible called for mankind to be "good stewards" of the Earth. That, they said, included protecting against the harmful impacts of climate change.

The Rev. Dr. Gail Cafferata, an Episcopal priest, said repealing the Clean Power Plan was undermining "vital health protections."

"God has blessed us with this planet with its precious air, water, flora and fauna, and made us stewards of this wondrous creation. From this ethical perspective, any risky exploitation of the earth for human purposes like greed or power or national supremacy is immoral because it offends the Creator of heaven and earth," she wrote.

This isn't the first time opponents of Pruitt's plans have attempted to reach him by appealing to his faith. In October, a group of religious leaders made a trip to EPA headquarters calling for the agency to take action on climate change and reconsider its deregulatory agenda. The

administrator did not attend that meeting, but the group was able to meet with agency staff ([Climatewire](#), Oct. 25, 2017).

To date, there are more than 185,000 comments posted on the *Federal Register*, and EPA had set a comment deadline of 11:59 p.m. Tuesday. Yesterday afternoon, EPA extended that to April 26 to allow comments after additional public "listening sessions" on eliminating the rule.

EPA's first listening session of the year will be on Feb. 21 in Kansas City, Mo., followed by another on Feb. 28 in San Francisco. The final listening session will be on March 27 in Gillette, Wyo., according to EPA. The agency held its first listening session in November in Charleston, W.Va.

"In response to significant interest surrounding the proposed repeal of the Clean Power Plan and the success of the West Virginia hearing, we will now hold listening sessions across the country to ensure all stakeholders have an opportunity to provide input," Pruitt said in a statement.

An EPA court filing on Wednesday also asked the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit to continue to keep the case challenging the Clean Power Plan on hold until the agency completed its rulemaking process.

So far, most of the posted comments on the CPP's repeal have voiced opposition to the proposal.

Some commenters lauded Pruitt's actions, too.

One man, David M. Albert, said he thought some provisions of the Clean Power Plan were illegal and the rule should be repealed. He targeted the endangerment finding, a scientific determination that underpins EPA's greenhouse gas rules.

"The CPP is proposed due to the Endangerment Finding which itself was enacted without required study. Since the enactment of the Endangerment Finding all of the supporting arguments for it have been shown to be invalid by peer reviewed science," he wrote.

<https://www.eenews.net/stories/1060070817/>

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## January 16, 2018

Christianity Is Not Getting Greener

By Niina Heikkinen, ClimateWire  
Scientific American

U.S. Christians' concerns about the environment and climate change haven't shifted much in the past two decades, despite a push by some religious leaders to increase attention on the issue, a new study finds.

In fact, Christians' views may be reversing course since the 1990s, according to David Konisky, an associate professor at Indiana University's School of Public and Environmental Affairs and the study's author.

"Not only has there not been an amplification of concern among Christians about the environment, there's seemingly been a decline, at least over the time period I've been studying," he said.

Konisky's work is part of a decadeslong debate both in academia and among religious leaders about the degree that Christianity is a positive or negative influence on people's attitudes on climate change. His study comes as some researchers have suggested there has been a "greening of Christianity" in recent years, as high-profile religious leaders like Pope Francis have made climate change a higher priority within the faith. Konisky wanted to find out whether this "organizational-level" emphasis on caring for the planet was having an impact on the attitudes of individual Christians.

Konisky said he wasn't necessarily surprised by the findings.

"It seemed perfectly possible that Christians may be less concerned about the environment than, say, non-religious individuals, but there may have been a growth over time in the level of concern," Konisky said.

To figure out whether there had been a change in attitudes over time, Konisky needed data that consistently tracked attitudes about the environment over a number of years, along with religious affiliation. He found just such a resource in Gallup polling data, which included specific questions on concerns about the environment, pollution and climate change. He analyzed survey responses from 1990, 1991, 1999 and 2005 to 2015.

He found American Christians' concern about the environment had remained the same or declined, and that the degree of concern did not shift based on how often the individuals said they attended church.

His [findings](#) were published recently in the journal *Environmental Politics*. The paper comes as environmental groups are seeking to rally support for environmental regulations at U.S. EPA and other federal agencies that the Trump administration is in the process of unwinding.

The role of religion on shaping beliefs about politically charged issues like climate change has gotten attention under the Trump administration, particularly as President Trump has packed his Cabinet with evangelical Christians.

Konisky noted previous research had shown that political affiliation and ideology were the most important influencers on Americans' attitudes on the environment.

"But once you sort of move past that and think about other characteristics, what you consistently see popping up in empirical research is that religion matters," he said.

Konisky cautioned that there were several limitations to the study. The surveys did not ask detailed questions about which denominations respondents were affiliated with. The research also doesn't provide an answer for why concern may be decreasing.

"What's the explanation for the decline? I can't really say with any certainty because the data don't allow that kind of analysis. There is a lot of future work to be done to figure out what explains these correlations," Konisky said.

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<https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/christianity-is-not-getting-greener1/>

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**January 17, 2018**

Amid attacks on churches, Francis tells Chilean indigenous to shun violence

By Joshua J. McElwee

National Catholic Reporter

**TEMUCO, Chile** — Pope Francis told Chile's indigenous people Jan. 17 to shun bloodshed in their decades-long struggle with the country's government over control of their native lands, warning that violence "eventually turns even the most just cause into a lie."

Speaking in the capital of Chile's verdant southern Araucanía region — where protest against the government's sale of former indigenous territory to logging companies has included shootings, kidnappings, and bombings — the pope said: "You cannot assert yourself by destroying others."

"Violence begets violence, destruction increases fragmentation and separation," Francis said in a homily during a Mass with 150,000 Mapuche, Rapanui, Aymara, Quechua, Atacameño, and other indigenous people gathered at Maqueue airfield.

Violence, the pope said, is "like the lava of a volcano that wipes out and burns everything in its path, leaving in its wake only barrenness and desolation." He encouraged the native peoples to instead "seek the path of active nonviolence."

Francis' exhortation against political violence came on the second of his three-day visit to Chile. A tense atmosphere not before seen on the pope's 21 other voyages abroad has marked the trip.

At least six churches across Araucanía have been firebombed in the past 48 hours, apparently by militant indigenous groups who think the pope's visit lends legitimacy to the Chilean government's control of their native lands. Three helicopters owned by the logging

company Forestal Arauco were also attacked overnight Jan. 16, their cockpits left bombed-out and unusable.

Francis is also facing vocal criticism over his 2015 appointment of Bishop Juan Barros Madrid of Osorno, Chile, who is accused of covering-up for notorious abuser Fr. Fernando Karadima in the 1980s and '90s.

Several protesters stood outside the airfield in Temuco Jan. 17 to criticize the pope over Barros. Referencing the pope's defense of Barros in 2015, when he said the allegations against the bishop were being orchestrated by "lefties," the protestors held a sign that read: "Not lefties, nor fools, Osorno suffers. Bishop Barros covered up."

Francis arrived in Temuco after an hour-long, 400-mile flight south from Santiago, the Chilean capital, where he is staying each night in the country.

The Mass in Temuco began with a short ritual performed by a small group of indigenous people, who approached the wood-accented altar platform at the airfield wearing colorful headdresses and holding tree-branches. As several of the indigenous banged on drums, the rest of the group moved the branches while singing softly.

Francis started his homily by referencing how the airfield hosting the Mass had been used at the beginning of Augusto Pinochet's 1973-90 military dictatorship as a detention and torture center of political dissidents.

The pope said the site had been the location of "grave violations of human rights" and said he wanted to offer the Mass for all those who had died and those who experienced "so much suffering, so much pain."

Francis also focused his reflection on the need for different cultures within a society to seek unity together while distinguishing between unity and uniformity.

The pope said that unity should not come about as "the result of forced integration" but must be woven together like a hand-stitched garment. "Unity can never be a stifling uniformity imposed by the powerful, or a segregation that does not value the goodness of others," he said.

Logging is Chile's second-largest industry, after copper mining, and is responsible for 10 percent of the country's exports. Nearly 20 percent of land in Araucanía is now used for forest plantations, which activists say has adversely affected the local ecosystem.

There are about 600,000 Mapuche in Chile, which has a total population of some 17.9 million. The indigenous people have lived in the region since long before the Spanish arrived in the area in the 16th century.

The Chilean government and the Mapuche have been at odds for nearly three decades over what lands in the region should be controlled by the indigenous group, and the disagreement has as

times turned violent, often with the setting of destructive fires that cost logging companies tens of millions in damages.

After the Mass Jan. 17, Francis is to have a private lunch with 11 representatives of the Araucanía region, including eight Mapuche, a victim of rural violence, a Haitian immigrant, and a Swiss-German settler,\* at an educational center run by the Congregation of the Holy Cross. The pope will then return to Santiago, where he is to hold a meeting with young people and visit the Pontifical Catholic University of Chile in the evening.

The pope's visit to Chile will continue Jan. 18 with a trip to Iquique, a port city about 1,000 miles north of Santiago, where he will celebrate an open-air Mass before heading on later in the day to Lima, Peru.

The pope will be in Peru through Jan. 21, returning to Rome Jan. 22.

<https://www.ncronline.org/news/world/amid-attacks-churches-francis-tells-chilean-indigenous-shun-violence>

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## January 19, 2018

From the Amazon, Francis decries policies that 'strangle' indigenous

By Joshua J. McElwee  
National Catholic Reporter

**Puerto Maldonado, Peru** — Pope Francis stood among the indigenous peoples of the Amazon Rainforest Jan. 19 to criticize the ramp-up of the global extraction industry in the world's most biodiverse region and decry local policies that he said "strangle" its some 350 native tribes.

The pope met with about 4,000 indigenous in this small city near Peru's southeastern border with Bolivia, known as the gateway to the Amazon, and expressed support for proposals that would place large portions of the forest under native control.

"We have to break with the historical paradigm that views Amazonia as an inexhaustible source of supplies for other countries without concern for its inhabitants," Francis said in an address marked by criticisms of both exploitative global industries and national Peruvian policies.

"Great business interests want to lay hands on [the Amazon's] petroleum, gas, lumber, [and] gold," he said. "The native Amazonian peoples have probably never been so threatened on their own lands as they are at present."

The pope then lambasted local policies that he said operate "under the guise of preserving the forest, [but] hoard great expanses of woodland and negotiate with them, leading to situations of oppression for the native peoples."



"These problems strangle her peoples and provoke the migration of the young due to the lack of local alternatives," he said, speaking as Peruvian President Pedro Kuczynski sat in the audience.

Francis, who has made environmental protection a key focus of his papacy, came to the Amazon on his first full day in Peru, which he is visiting through Jan. 22 on the second leg of a weeklong journey abroad that started in neighboring Chile.

His speech to the indigenous, some of whom took part in the event bare-chested and sporting feathered headdresses, comes as the expansion of permitted construction of dams and roads has tied with illegal mining activities to turn large portions of the lush, verdant rainforest into contamination zones.

Puerto Maldonado's apostolic vicariate estimates that nearly 17 percent of the Amazon has been destroyed. In press materials, the vicariate said that a "spectacular increase" in the granting of mining permits in particular has shown an "arrogant disregard" for environmental conservation efforts and the protection of native peoples.

Francis also heard testimony from three members of different Amazon tribes. Héctor Sueyo and Yésica Patiachi of the Harakbut people spoke passionately about the pressure their peoples are under.

"We ask that you defend us!" Patiachi told Francis, to wide applause from the crowd.

Sueyo said they had a warning for the world: "The indigenous peoples of the Amazon want to tell all of humanity that we are worried because due to the consequences of climate change the land is spoiling, the animals are shrinking, the trees are disappearing, the fish are dying, [and] the fresh water is running out."

Earlier this week, leaders of three of the largest indigenous communities asked Francis to support their request for Peru to grant some 50 million acres in collective land rights to the indigenous.

The pope appeared to back that effort in his speech Jan. 19, noting "promising initiatives ... which advocate that the native peoples and communities themselves be the guardians of the woodlands" and would "benefit your families, improve your living conditions and promote health and education in your communities."

As he has at many times in his nearly five-year papacy, Francis also pointed out the effect carbon emissions have on both the local and global scale, saying that release of hydrocarbons after oil extraction and coal mining in the Amazon "gravely threaten the lives of your families and contaminate your natural environment."

"Your lives cry out against a style of life that is oblivious to its own real cost," the pope told the indigenous. "You are a living memory of the mission that God has entrusted to us all: the protection of our common home."

For his part, the pope promised that the Catholic Church "will never stop pleading for the outcast and those who suffer."

Francis focused on the environment in his 2015 encyclical "*Laudato Si'*, On Care for Our Common Home," in which he accepted the wide scientific consensus on climate change and called on global governments to act.

Several world leaders have said the encyclical played a role in the success of the 2015 Paris agreement, which has been signed by 195 countries and obligates them to reduce carbon emissions and practice more sustainable development.

Sixty percent of Peru is located in the Amazon Rainforest, which also encompasses parts of Brazil, Colombia, Venezuela, Ecuador, and Bolivia. About 34 million people live in the Amazon, including some individuals and tribes in voluntary isolation.

The Puerto Maldonado vicariate said that more than 250 dam projects and 20 road construction projects have been approved in recent years, and more than 8,000 mining permits have been granted, with another 6,800 under review.

Francis was greeted at the event Jan. 19 by two dances from young indigenous peoples, whose arms and legs swayed to a slow incantation.

The pope began his address by naming 22 of the different Amazonian tribes he wanted to greet and then saying he had come to see the "deep wounds that Amazonia and its peoples bear." He asked the native tribes especially to protect those who have chosen voluntary isolation, calling them "the most vulnerable of the vulnerable."

"They went into seclusion in the most inaccessible reaches of the forest in order to live in freedom," he said. "Their presence reminds us that we cannot use goods meant for all as consumerist greed dictates. Limits have to be set that can help preserve us from all plans for a massive destruction of the habitat that makes us who we are."

Francis landed in Peru from Chile Jan. 18 to an enthusiastic welcome on the streets of the capital of Lima.

Tens of thousands of people lined miles of Lima's streets to try and catch a glimpse of the pope as he made his way from the airport to the apostolic nunciature, where he is spending his nights.

After arriving at the nunciature, Francis took to his pope-mobile a second time to try and greet more of the people on the streets, who were pushing against barricades and gathered rows deep, holding signs and offering small gifts or religious objects.

The reception in Peru made a sharp contrast to Chile, where the pope encountered protests each day in the country over his 2015 appointment of Bishop Juan Barros Madrid, who is accused of covering up sexual abuse by a fellow priest in the 1980s and '90s.

Francis will return to Lima in the afternoon of Jan. 19 for a meeting with Kuczynski and will give a speech to him and the country's other political leaders. The pope travels Jan. 20 to Trujillo, in northwest Peru, for an outdoor Mass and a meeting with priests and religious.

<https://www.ncronline.org/news/environment/amazon-francis-decries-policies-strangle-indigenous>

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**January 19, 2018**

Pope set to visit site of deforestation, indigenous struggle in Peru

By John Cannon  
Mongabay

- *Pope Francis plans to visit Puerto Maldonado in the Peruvian region of Madre de Dios Friday morning on his trip to South America.*
- *He will speak with indigenous communities in a coliseum.*
- *Madre de Dios had the second-highest rate of deforestation in the Peruvian Amazon in 2017, with 208 square kilometers (80 square miles) of forest cover loss as a result of farming, logging and mining.*

Pope Francis will visit one of the Peruvian Amazon's most threatened regions today, where the leader of the Catholic Church is expected to address escalating deforestation and uncertainty about indigenous peoples' rights.

"The Holy Father has a special concern for the Amazon and therefore put as the first point of his journey an encounter with indigenous groups to dialogue, to give a sign of hope," Salvador Piñeiro, president of the Peruvian Episcopal Conference, said in [an article published by Mongabay LatAm](#). "These topics concern the Pope and he feels them very closely."

After a visit to Chile earlier this week, the pope is scheduled to fly Friday morning from Lima to Puerto Maldonado, the capital of the Madre de Dios region. It's a place where logging, agriculture and mining — much of it illegal — have led to the loss of thousands of hectares of rainforest in recent decades. In some cases, these activities have touched off conflicts with local communities.

Buoyed by Pope Francis's commitment to tackling environmental issues as codified in [Laudato Si'](#), the encyclical he published in 2015 subtitled "On Care for Our Common Home," campaigners are eager to welcome him to their corner of southeastern Peru. After meeting with local authorities, he will speak to indigenous people in a coliseum.

"It is very symbolic that the pope is going to Madre de Dios, the capital of the country's biodiversity, home to many indigenous peoples in voluntary isolation, and yet [one that] has seen

a growing trend of environmental problems, corruption and poisoning of the ecosystem,” said Pedro Solano, who heads the Peruvian Society for Environmental Law, known as SPDA.

The region of Madre de Dios is in the midst of a “deforestation crisis,” [according to the scientists at the NGO MAAP](#), short for Mapping of the Andean Amazon. Based on their calculations using early-warning alerts from the University of Maryland and Peru’s environment ministry, they’ve tracked an “increasing trend of annual forest loss since 2001, peaking in 2017.”

The 208 square kilometers (80 square miles) of forest loss in 2017 is twice what the region saw in 2008. That means that Madre de Dios has been saddled with the second-highest rate of deforestation in Peru’s slice of the Amazon. To get a better idea of what’s causing this hemorrhage, the MAAP team drilled down into the data covering specific areas.

Gold miners are felling trees in areas around the upper stretches of the Malinowski River, which abuts [the wildlife-rich Tambopata National Reserve](#), as well as the town of La Pampa. Elsewhere, near Santa Rita, Guacamayo and Iberia, small-scale farmers appear to have cut several thousand hectares of forest to plant cacao, corn and papaya.

The satellite imagery has shown the “rapid proliferation of logging roads” around Tahuamanu, according to MAAP. And in 2017, spots of deforestation began to show up in two ecotourism concessions teeming with wildlife near Las Piedras, which locals say are the result of cacao farming and cattle ranching.

“This hotspot is located within a forestry concession, but its impact is troubling due to the extension and density of the new road network,” MAAP reported. The team found evidence of 130 kilometers (81 miles) of new logging roads into forested areas in 2017.

Issues such as logging and mining affect indigenous ways of life, leaders say. The razing of the forest they depend on and the pollution of their waters from mining are among the issues that a coalition led by the group Fenamad, the Native Federation for the Madre de Dios River and its Tributaries, hopes to bring to the forefront with the pope’s visit.

“For us, indigenous peoples, the pope’s arrival is important because it is a leader who is highlighting environmental issues and human rights,” Julio Cusurichi, president of Fenamad, said in [another article](#) by Mongabay LatAm.

Also in the group’s proposal are the legal security of their claims to the land and a desire to have a say on large projects such as oil and gas infrastructure, dams for hydropower, and roads that cut through the forests. They also want to see the continued protection of peoples living in voluntary isolation and a recognition of the conservation contributions that indigenous communities make.

Many local and national leaders also see this as an opportunity to elevate the status of indigenous rights and rampant forest destruction on the national agenda.

“Unfortunately, lawmakers have failed to see this reality and are letting an opportunity pass for the organization of the country against this phenomenon and to demonstrate to Peruvians and the pope concrete actions that address this our common house as he calls the world,” said Iris Olivera, program coordinator at the organization Law, Environment and Natural Resources. “We just hope that the pope can raise an agenda, a commitment that we can then follow up on.”

Others envision a mandate arising out of Pope Francis’s choice of where to visit in Peru.

“If the pope comes to Peru and his first trip is to Madre de Dios, he commits us as a country to be able to take effective measures for protecting the environment and combating illegal activities occurring in the region,” said Alicia Abanto, the deputy ombudsman of the Environment, Public Services and Indigenous Peoples.

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## January 19, 2018

Pope in Amazon urges seamless defense of life, earth and cultures

By Inés San Martín  
Crux

PUERTO MALDONADO, Peru - In the middle of Peru’s Amazon jungle, Pope Francis on Friday delivered what could be considered a “seamless garment” speech - stressing ecology and issuing a strong appeal for protection of the Amazon region, which he said is not an “inexhaustible source of resources,” while also insisting that human life has equal, if not greater, value.

Francis said he wanted to affirm “a whole-hearted option for the defense of life, the defense of the earth and the defense of cultures.”

The term “seamless garment,” associated with the late Cardinal Joseph Bernardin of Chicago, refers to an approach to the sanctity of life stressing opposition to abortion and attempts to

redefine the family in tandem with other social justice issues, such as defense of the poor and the environment.

“The defense of the earth has no other purpose than the defense of life,” Francis said during his first speech in Peru after arriving Thursday night.

“We know of the suffering caused for some of you by emissions of hydrocarbons, which gravely threaten the lives of your families and contaminate your natural environment,” he said.

Yet, the pope warned, there is also an equally worrying “distortion” of certain policies, which aim to conserve nature without considering the men and women who live in the area. There are movements, the pope told a stadium with some 4,000 people from the Amazonian region, trying to preserve the forest that also “hoard great expanses of woodland and negotiate with them, leading to situations of oppression for the native peoples.”

Saving the trees and wildlife, in other words, is not good enough, if the people who live in the region are not equally protected.

On the day of the annual March for Life in Washington, D.C., Francis also delivered a strong pro-life message.

Speaking about the family and how it’s contributed to keeping cultures alive, he said that today there are “ideological forms of colonialism, disguised as progress, that slowly but surely dissipate cultural identities and establish a uniform, single... and weak way of thinking.”

“Ideological colonization” is a papal shorthand for attempts by Western governments and NGOs to compel impoverished nations to accept measures such as contraception, abortion and gay marriage as a condition of development assistance.

Referring out loud to what was originally a footnote in his prepared text, Francis also spoke of the need to “raise our voices” against pressure in favor of the sterilization of women, which, he said, at times happens without their knowledge.

That’s a highly sensitive issue in Peru, since former President Alberto Fujimori launched a family planning program in 1996 that involved the sterilization of thousands of women. Justified at the time by a desire to reduce poverty, the program stirred controversy when many women, mostly members of the country’s Amazonian indigenous groups, reported that they had been sterilized without their consent.

In general, the pope presented a comprehensive case for the defense of life, both natural and human, in the Amazon.

“Praise to you, Lord, for your marvelous handiwork in your Amazonian peoples and for all the biodiversity that these lands embrace!” Francis said Friday.

The pope was paraphrasing a prayer by St. Francis of Assisi, “Canticle to brother sun and sister moon,” which gave the title to the pope’s first-ever encyclical on the environment, *Laudato Si’*.

The Argentine pontiff has long called for greater protection of the environment, insisting that climate change is at least partially man-made.

“This song of praise is cut short when we learn about, and see, the deep wounds that the Amazon and its peoples bear,” Francis said.

Prior to the pope’s remarks, he heard from indigenous persons urging a defense of the peoples and cultures of the Amazon.

María Luzmila Bermeo told Francis that forests have been attacked, fish killed, trees cut down, animals hunted, and rivers polluted by mining, gold and oil extraction.

“Now we do not have many natural resources,” she said, adding that it seems “we don’t care. We don’t respect nature. Rather, we pollute all nature.”

Pollution, she said, has heavily impacted the Amazon, which today suffers the effects of climate change.

“What can we do? The authorities can help conserve the forests, to keep our environment clean and breathe pure air, like when I was little,” she said.

Arguably, the pope said, the Amazon’s peoples have never been so threatened in their own land, which is under pressure on many fronts, including what he called a “neo-extractivism, and the pressure being exerted by great business interests that want to lay hands on its petroleum, gas, lumber, gold and forms of agro-industrial monocultivation.”

In recent years, the Peruvian Amazon has been plagued by illegal mining that damages the delicate ecosystem. Yet this practice, the pope said, also leads to another “devastating assault on life”: human trafficking, slave labor and sexual abuse.

“Violence against adolescents and against women cries out to heaven,” the pope said.

“Where is your brother or sister who is enslaved? Let us not look the other way. There is greater complicity than we think. This issue involves everyone!” he continued, quoting his own document, *Evangelii Gaudium*.

Francis also referred to the “most vulnerable of the vulnerable,” meaning what are called “Indigenous Peoples in Voluntary Isolation,” who went into seclusion in inaccessible reaches of the forest to “live in freedom.”

“Their presence reminds us that we cannot use goods meant for all as consumerist greed dictates,” he said. “Limits have to be set that can help preserve us from all plans for a massive destruction of the habitat that makes us who we are.”

Puerto Maldonado is a steamy rainforest city often used as the gateway to deeper, more remote parts of the Amazon jungle and a jumping-off point for eco-tourists who want to explore the natural riches of Tambopata national park.

There are over 50 ethnic groups living in the Peruvian Amazon, and representatives from several of them traveled to participate in the gathering with Francis. Also present were bishops from eight of the nine countries that make up the Pan-Amazonian region. Last year, the pontiff called for a 2019 synod of bishops to focus specifically in this region, and some on the ground perceived this meeting as a prelude of the one to come.

One of the organizers of the event told *Crux* on Thursday that many had to “travel by boat, then go into the mud, then on another boat” to get to Puerto Maldonado, in the Madre de Dios region.

Respecting and recognizing the native peoples, acknowledging their cultures, languages, traditions, rights and spirituality is key, and can only be done with the indigenous being the “principal dialogue partners, especially when large projects affecting your land are proposed.”

The Amazonian people, the pope said, are not an obstacle, but a cry against a style of life that ignores its own real cost. Instead, indigenous peoples are a “living memory” of the mission God has entrusted to humanity: “the protection of our common home.”

On another topic, the pope said that education, which helps create a culture of encounter, must be a priority of the state, yet respectful of their ancestral wisdom and bilingual.

Francis closed his remarks praising the missionaries who devoted their entire lives to the people of the Amazon and the protection of the region.

“Do not yield to those attempts to uproot the Catholic faith from your peoples,” Francis said. “The Church is not alien to your problems and your lives, she does not want to be aloof from your way of life and organization. We need the native peoples to shape the culture of the local churches in Amazonia.”

Pope Francis has a busy day ahead. After meeting with the indigenous peoples, he was scheduled to encounter the local population at an education center, and then head to the Hogar Principito, home to some 35 orphan children.

He will then have lunch with representatives of the Amazonian peoples, and then head back to Lima, where he’ll address the local civil authorities and have a private meeting with President Pedro Pablo Kuczynski.

<https://cruxnow.com/pope-in-chile-and-peru/2018/01/19/pope-amazon-urges-seamless-defense-life-earth-cultures/>

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**January 19, 2018**

Pope brings environmental crusade to Peru's Amazon, citing 'defense of the earth'

By Lucien Chauvin

Washington Post

Pope Francis landed in the Amazon on Friday, bringing his environmental crusade to a rough-and-tumble corner of Peru's jungle that is besieged by deforestation and illegal mining.

The visit to Peru, the second leg of a trip that ends Sunday and also took him to neighboring Chile, gave the Argentina-born pontiff a chance to highlight the links between the environment and indigenous people. He met with Mapuche people in Chile early this week and gathered here Friday with thousands of indigenous people decked out in traditional dress.

Arriving just after 10 a.m. in the jungle heat, the pope was greeted with chants of "Francis, Francis, you are now Amazonian."

He arrived at his first official event aboard his popemobile and circumvented a phalanx of men wearing loincloths. Addressing a crowd of indigenous people from Peru and neighboring countries, he stressed the environmental ills facing the Amazon, including agribusiness, logging, mining, and oil and gas drilling. He also cited "certain policies aimed at the 'conservation' of nature" that he said did not take into account people who inhabit the rain forest.

"We have to break with the historical paradigm that views the Amazon as an inexhaustible source of supplies for other countries, without concern for its inhabitants," he said during a 20-minute speech. "Defense of the Earth has no other purpose than the defense of life."

He said that the Amazon is not only about biological riches but is a "cultural reserve" under threat by new forms of colonialism. "Limits have to be set that can help preserve us from all plans for a massive destruction of the habitat that makes us who we are," he said.

The visit and the meeting with indigenous people are meant to build on his groundbreaking treatise on the environment — the 2015 *Laudato Si* encyclical, passages of which were read in five languages by indigenous leaders — and to plan for a synod of Amazon Basin bishops that has been called for October 2019.

The pope's message and the encyclical, basically guidance to clergy and the faithful on key environmental issues, were applauded by the crowd. But inhabitants also expressed fear that not enough is being done as environmental destruction in this massive sea of green continues to gain speed.

"The Amazon is our home, but it is also the lungs of the world. We have to work much harder to stop deforestation," said the Rev. Juan Elias, a priest in Bolivia's jungle state of Pando, across the Peruvian border.

Elias echoed the pope's concern, saying that forests are being clear-cut to make way for large-scale agribusiness, including sugar cane. He said the new fear is the expansion of soy, which already covers huge tracts in Bolivia's eastern plains. "There are plans for soy. Can you imagine what that will do? It would be devastating," he said.

The pope did not make specific references to some of the controversial issues being pushed by indigenous peoples, such as territorial demarcation, property titles and consent, specifically the right to veto extractive or infrastructure projects, including roads and dams for energy projects that they say degrade the environment.

"The church has to get our governments to see that their policies are destroying the environment and us with it," said Angelom Arara of Brazil's Arara do Pará people. "We want more support from the church, and we want our governments to follow what the church says."

Wearing an ample feather headdress and covered with red and black body paint, Arara was part of a delegation representing 32 indigenous peoples from Brazil who traveled to Peru to present their case to the pope. "We can no longer just talk. There needs to be real action, because we are being killed while we wait," he said.

Brazil's Indigenous Missionary Council reported that more than 100 indigenous people were killed in the country in 2016. Brazilian authorities continue to investigate the killing in September of 10 members of an indigenous group that lives in voluntary isolation near the border with Peru.

The pope dedicated part of his address to people living in isolation, who he said were the "most vulnerable of the vulnerable" and should not be considered a "kind of museum of a bygone way of life."

The largest concentration of people living in voluntary isolation are found along the long, inaccessible border between Peru and Brazil.

The World Wildlife Fund's director for climate and energy, Manuel Pulgar-Vidal, who previously served nearly five years as Peru's environment minister, said he hoped the testimonies from indigenous people would help ground the encyclical in everyday issues.

"There need to be priests who are capable not only of talking about the environment but anchoring it in real issues. This has not been done, which is why the message [of the encyclical] has not had the impact it should have," he said.

Pulgar-Vidal said Puerto Maldonado and the surrounding southeastern Amazon rain forest, home to some of the most biologically diverse spots in the world, offer tragic examples that could be used to drive home the pope's vision.

Peru lost nearly 407,000 acres of tropical forest in 2016, 5.2 percent more than the previous year, according to the state's protected areas service. It lost nearly 4.9 million acres between 2001 and 2016 — more than the combined area of Connecticut and Rhode Island — from deforestation

caused by farming, illegal mining and road construction. The state of Madre de Dios — Mother of God in English — of which Puerto Maldonado is the capital, lost 42,125 acres in 2016, and initial estimates put the number at roughly the same for last year.

The big problem in Madre de Dios is illegal gold mining, which not only eliminates forests but contaminates the air, soil and water with toxic chemicals, including mercury used to extract river gold. Some of the large camps where gold is extracted are just down the road from where the pope landed here.

They are sprawling and barren wastelands where few plants can return after miners move on. And mining is big business. Madre de Dios does not have any large-scale formal gold mines, but the state produced 12 million grams of gold in the first 11 months of last year, according to the Energy and Mines Ministry. That represents just shy of 9 percent of the country's gold production. Peru is the world's sixth-largest gold producer. The government last year destroyed 284 illegal mining camps, the bulk of them in Madre de Dios, and launched dozens of criminal investigations, including for human trafficking.

Although he did not go after illegal mining directly, the pope did not avoid it.

“There exists another devastating assault on life linked to this environmental contamination favored by illegal mining,” Pope Francis said. “I am speaking of human trafficking: slave labor and sexual abuse.”

David Barbosa, an Ashaninka indigenous leader from Peru, said he hoped the pope would leave his country with an understanding of what is happening in the Amazon.

“I think what we are hearing is good, but the church needs to do more. It has to take a stand,” he said.

“The issues in Madre de Dios are the issues the pope addresses in the encyclical,” said Pulgar-Vidal of the World Wildlife Fund. “The focus on the Amazon is the opportunity to get the traction that is needed.”

[https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/the\\_americas/pope-brings-environmental-crusade-to-peru-amazon-though-indigenous-skeptical/2018/01/19/4de03f6a-fcb0-11e7-a46b-a3614530bd87\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/the_americas/pope-brings-environmental-crusade-to-peru-amazon-though-indigenous-skeptical/2018/01/19/4de03f6a-fcb0-11e7-a46b-a3614530bd87_story.html)

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**January 19, 2018**

Latest chapter in Adorers pipeline case unfolds with appeals argument

By Jamie Manson  
Global Sisters Report

The fight by the Adorers of the Blood of Christ against a natural gas pipeline went to an appeals court Friday, Jan. 19, as their attorneys argued that the case should be heard by a lower court that had dismissed it.

The sisters were appealing the U.S. District Court's [decision](#), in August 2017, to dismiss their claim that the building of a pipeline through their land violated their religious freedom. They argue that the Eastern District of Pennsylvania inappropriately dismissed their religious freedom challenge for a lack of jurisdiction.

The hearing was the latest chapter in a two-year battle against the building of a natural gas pipeline through Lancaster County. The courtroom for the 3rd Circuit Court of Appeals was standing-room-only, with more than a dozen Adorers and their fellow activists filling most of the available spaces.

"The Adorers have a deep and longstanding commitment to safeguard the sanctity of the Earth," the congregation said in a press statement a few days before the hearing. "As such, the forced installation of a fossil fuel project on their own land represents a gross violation of their deeply held religious convictions."

The sisters are basing their case on the Religious Freedom Restoration Act (RFRA), the same [statute](#) that the Little Sisters of the Poor have cited in their case against the contraceptive mandate in the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act.

In 2005, the sisters adopted a "Land Ethic," proclaiming that, as a matter of religious belief, they will not use their land in any manner that does harm to the Earth. The Adorers have used Pope Francis' environmental encyclical, "[Laudato Si', on Care for Our Common Home](#)," to further bolster their argument.

In its legal briefs, Transco, the construction company that is building the pipeline, questioned the sincerity of the sisters' defense, calling their convictions a "subjective religious experience."

At the hearing, the three-judge panel pressed the Adorers' lead counsel, Dwight Yoder, as to why the sisters did not raise a formal complaint with the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) or Transco before construction began.

Yoder pointed out that the notifications that the sisters received from the federal commission did not offer an opportunity to object on the grounds of a violation of religious freedom.

Lawyers for the commission and Transco told the judges that they would have taken the Adorers' claims seriously if the sisters had raised them months ago when other Lancaster landowners were filing their objections through FERC's formal administrative process.

At the conclusion of the hearing, the judges requested a written argument from the Adorers' lawyers. If the court rules in their favor, the sisters will be allowed to present their case in the district court. A decision by the appellate judges is expected within a few months.

In an interview with reporters after the hearing, Yoder explained that a religious freedom claim requires a judicial process, as opposed to the administrative process that the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission offered to landowners before Transco broke ground.

"We think the District Court has jurisdiction and would be the proper forum to hear their RFRA claim," Yoder said.

Yoder said that, according to the Religious Freedom Restoration Act, the sisters could not file a claim until there was a substantial burden on their religious beliefs.

"That didn't happen until Transco condemned their property and took it against their will in July 2017," Yoder said. The congregation that month [filed](#) a complaint against the federal commission.

"When you look at RFRA, it has no requirement that you go to the agency before your religious beliefs are violated," Yoder said. "It says you have a right to a cause of action after your religious beliefs have been substantially burdened."

Yoder said that Transco's construction permit did not give enough cause for the sisters to take action. "There was no ability for them to assert those claims until the pipeline actually went through."

The Atlantic Sunrise pipeline would be a \$3 billion, 183-mile extension of the Transco pipeline system that currently runs 10,200 miles from Texas to New York.

In early July, the sisters built an open-air chapel on their land as a protest against the construction. A short video presented to reporters at a press conference after the hearing showed that the periphery of the chapel was damaged by the construction.

In their press statement, the Adorers claim that Transco altered its construction schedule to install the pipeline on their land first, "in a bald attempt to insulate themselves against a future legal victory for the Sisters."

If they ultimately win their case, the Adorers may demand that Transco remove the pipeline, since the construction company proceeded at their own risk.

"If you proceed knowing that there's a legal challenge pending and you lose, you have to remove it," Yoder said.

<http://globalsistersreport.org/news/environment/latest-chapter-adorers-pipeline-case-unfolds-appeals-argument-51476>

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**January 22, 2018**

Pope's message to Amazonia inspires hope, but will it bring action?

By Justin Catanoso  
Mongabay

- *On 19 January, Pope Francis spoke to a crowd of thousands, including many indigenous people, in Puerto Maldonado, Peru, the capital of Madre de Dios state in the Amazon, a region that has seen significant deforestation (62,500 hectares between 2012 and 2016), and significant violence due to illegal mining.*
- *Latin American analysts, while excited about the pope's visit, and appreciative of his spotlighting of illegal mining in Madre de Dios and other environmental problems across Amazonia, expressed doubt that the papal visit will have much impact in the long run.*
- *The pope singled out large corporations in his address: "[G]reat business interests... want to lay hands on [the Amazon's] petroleum, gas, lumber, gold and other forms of agro-industrial monocultivation," he said. "We have to break with the historical paradigm that views Amazonia as an inexhaustible source of supplies for other countries without concern for its inhabitants."*
- *The pope invited a top-down and bottom-up response by Catholics to the Amazon crisis, calling on indigenous people "to shape the culture of local churches in Amazonia," and announcing next year's first-ever Synod for Amazonia – a gathering of global bishops who will put papal doctrine such as Laudato Si, his landmark 2015 papal encyclical, into action.*

There is nothing quite so effective as an [historic visit](#) by a charismatic pope for bringing grave moral issues into the bright light of spiritual hope.

Pope Francis did just that on 19 January when he arrived in Puerto Maldonado, Peru, the capital of [Madre de Dios state](#) in the Amazon which is rich in biodiversity, but also in gold; nearly 62,500 hectares (154,440 acres) of forest were lost there to illegal gold mining between 2012 and 2016, [an area bigger than ten Manhattan islands](#).

Nature isn't the only victim of Illegal gold mining. The deforestation, violence and land conflicts, and toxic mercury pollution it brings to local rivers, are also seriously impacting indigenous communities who for centuries have laid claim to their ancestral rainforests and waterways.

"The native Amazonian peoples have probably never been so threatened on their own lands as they are at present," Pope Francis said in a stirring address to a huge crowd that filled a sports arena and included many indigenous people dressed in their finest decorative robes and feathered-headdresses.

The pope didn't only blame illegal small-scale miners for the Peruvian deforestation crisis. "Amazonia is being disputed on all fronts," the pope said. "There is the pressure being exerted by great business interests that want to lay hands on its petroleum, gas, lumber, gold and other forms of agro-industrial monocultivation... We have to break with the historical paradigm that views Amazonia as an inexhaustible source of supplies for other countries without concern for its inhabitants."

Judging by the ear-shattering waves of applause the pope received, everyone within earshot of Francis agreed with his assessment of the crisis and with his call to action.

“We Peruvians are obliged to take care of our cultural and natural heritage,” agreed Mariela Cánepa, policy director for the World Wildlife Fund-Peru, who hailed the pope for being forthright about the issue. “Now that this is out there in the open, we need to come together and work toward that goal [of curbing amazon deforestation]. Short term, we must make sure that this stays as a priority in the public agenda, besides plain or rhetorical statements. We need to commit to a more inclusive and sustainable vision for the Amazon and the country. Long term, everyone – authorities, civil society and citizens – need to be accountable.”

### **Now what?**

The public moment of the pope’s visit has now passed. After speaking out passionately in Peru – pumping new life into the *Laudato Si*, his landmark 2015 papal encyclical that blasted capitalism and blamed humanity for climate change, while demanding global stewardship of “our common home” – the pope has returned to Rome.

Across the Amazon, it’s back to life as before the visit: [back to chain saws](#). To [mercury poisoning](#). To [human](#) and [wildlife trafficking](#). To a relentless assault on a U.S-size region rich in natural resources, but on which the planet’s wellbeing depends for carbon sequestration, weather regulation, regional and global climate stability, and an array of plant, animal, bird and insect life found nowhere else.

The question analysts are asking is will hope take root in the wake of Francis’ visit?

Puerto Maldonado is the largest city in the state of Madre de Dios; its economy depends largely on illegal gold mining. Will the governor of Madre de Dios, Luis Otsuka, former head of the statewide miners’ association, become an environmentalist? Will the government in Lima take much needed steps to protect the indigenous tribes whom Pope Francis so exalted?

“The defense of the earth has no other purpose than the defense of life,” the pope asserted. “We know of the suffering caused for some of you by emissions of hydrocarbons, which gravely threaten the lives of your families and contaminate your natural environment.”

A consensus of those interviewed by Mongabay, as well as those quoted in other media, is pessimistic. Most offer little hope that government or [business leaders](#) will change much as a result. Many, for example, [have long dismissed Laudato Si](#) as naïve or beyond the pope’s expertise. Surprisingly, [many of the working poor](#) are opposed to the Pope’s environmental message, fearing that it will deprive them of jobs and an economically secure future.

Pedro Solano, executive director of the Lima-based Peruvian Society of Environmental Law, saw the pope Friday and spotted Governor Otsuka in the crowd.

He told Mongabay he did not expect Otsuka to suddenly press for a reduction in illegal gold mining. But he added, “It is good to remind people that he was in the audience and that his role is

to act accordingly to the [environmental and indigenous] emergency... and in the public interest of the most valuable rights that are in jeopardy: human and environmental rights.”

### **Calling on church leaders**

If the pope’s words are to lead to practical action, it may fall to the Catholic Church of South America to make it so, many agreed. But that, too, is complicated. The church is still staggering through its sexual abuse scandals, [especially in Chile](#). While Francis, an Argentinian, remains popular, his South American cardinals and bishops are less so.

“I’m Catholic, I believe in God, but I’ve learned not to trust priests,” Edwin Vasquez, leader of an Amazon indigenous organization, told [The New York Times](#).

Enrique Ortiz, a project manager with the Andes Amazon Fund and a Peruvian conservationist, is more optimistic. The pope’s specific call for the church to be more engaged in environmental protection and indigenous rights “is the real game changer,” he says.

“The pope is making sure that at the level of small, medium and large-scale churches, *Laudato Si* is coming. It’s real. It’s a big deal,” Ortiz told Mongabay. “Two years ago, we wondered if it would have any impact. But Francis is now telling the church, ‘This is a priority.’ It’s going to take a while, [but it’s coming](#). Change always comes slowly to the Catholic Church.”

Frances Seymour, a senior fellow with World Resources Institute, agreed: “Papal attention can inspire, encourage and empower local religious leaders and faith communities to redouble their efforts to stave off forest destruction and violations of human rights.”

Manuel Pulgar-Vidal is the World Wildlife Fund’s director of climate and energy. As Peru’s [former minister of the environment](#), he helped produce the working draft of the 2015 Paris Agreement at the 20<sup>th</sup> United Nations Climate Summit in Lima in 2014. He has long waited for *Laudato Si* to bring about change.

“There need to be priests who are capable of not only talking about the environment, but anchoring it in real issues,” he told [The Washington Post](#). “This has not been done, which is why the message [of the encyclical] has not had the impact it should have.”

In Puerto Maldonado, Pope Francis made clear that he remains committed to expanding the mission of the Church to include earth stewardship. But he understands well that this change can’t only come from above. On his South America trip, he called on indigenous people “to shape the culture of local churches in Amazonia.”

Then he punched up his commitment: in Peru, the pontiff announced that he will convene the first-ever Synod for Amazonia next year – a gathering of global bishops who will aim to put papal doctrine such as *Laudato Si* into action on the ground – including in the rainforests across Amazonia.



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<https://news.mongabay.com/2018/01/popes-message-to-amazonia-inspires-hope-but-will-it-bring-action/>

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**January 24, 2018**

Do We Care Enough About Mother Earth?

By Ryan Torok  
Jewish Journal

As the executive director of the Shalom Institute, a Jewish day camp and conference center in Malibu, Rabbi Bill Kaplan has been both a preacher and practitioner of environmentalism.

In 2016, his organization received \$75,000 from the Homeland Security Grant Program, funds it used to install two solar power banks. What's more, the institute's dining hall is made of recycled plastic, its urinals are water-free and the campus uses LED lighting.

"We're making choices — and those choices are green choices," Kaplan said. "We always do improvements with a mind on sustainability."

That very contemporary concern has deep Jewish roots, as reflected in the holiday of Tu B'Shevat, the birthday of the trees, which falls on Jan. 31.

While in ancient times the date served to keep track of fruit trees' age, it has evolved into an opportunity for Jewish environmentalists to reaffirm their dedication to sustainability, respecting the earth and conserving natural resources. That commitment, however, isn't as widespread in the Jewish community as many think it should be.

Devorah Brous, founding executive director of Netiya, a Los Angeles-based food justice organization, is focused on improving the choices individuals and the community make around food. Brous was hired by Netiya in 2011, aiming to help Los Angeles synagogues to transform their underused land into food-producing gardens.

Her efforts have yielded mixed results, said Brous, who discovered that many of L.A.'s Jewish leaders are less concerned about sustainable agriculture and healthy eating than she is. As a result, the organization is putting a greater emphasis on working with the city. Los Angeles City Councilman David Ryu recently helped Netiya secure a parcel of land that it plans to convert into an urban farm. Brous also expressed excitement about local legislation that would provide tax incentives for landowners to dedicate their property to food production.

She sees a major opportunity for the organized Jewish community to embrace congregational gardens. Farming is an effective way of immersing young adult Jews in Judaism, she said, citing

several communities — including Berkeley and Boulder, Colo., among a vibrant national movement of 17 Jewish farms — where farming has connected young adult Jews to Judaism and to other Jews.

Brous said the work she is doing addresses many Jewish leaders' goals of engaging young Jews and combatting intermarriage.

“These Jewish farmers around the country are showing that the answer is to get them close to the land, get them outside, teach them skills, teach them how to grow food, teach them how to make their own matzah instead of buying it,” she said. “Because the people who are doing these programs are falling in love, getting married and having Jewish babies.”

While successfully catalyzing food production with 31 faith-based congregations throughout L.A. County, she did say that at least two Los Angeles synagogues expressed interest in turning unused land into gardens but eventually decided against doing so.

“I think this is not enough of a priority for many synagogues,” she said. “My wish is that regenerative stewardship becomes a top priority. This is faith in action.”

The Jewish Federation of Greater Los Angeles has provided Netiya financial assistance for a gardening-education program for young children. Last fall, Federation gave Brous a \$40,000 grant to run the Seedlings Sprout! and Torah of Gardening programs out of her home in the San Fernando Valley.

Jewish day schools — including the Alice and Nahum Lainer School, de Toledo High School and Milken Community Schools — and congregation IKAR are working with Netiya, and last spring, Netiya installed an irrigation system and a number of fruit trees on Shalhevet High School's roof. The school's students and faculty also tend a rooftop flower and vegetable garden, and the school's environmental club promotes recycling.

Brous, whose sister is IKAR Rabbi Sharon Brous, also helps out at IKAR with the synagogue's Green Action team, which IKAR's website describes as a group of “advocates, activists, and gardeners” with a goal to “create a more sustainable way of life.”

“We're teaching the youngest of the young at IKAR's Early Childhood Center program,” Devorah Brous said.

Despite efforts like Netiya's, much of the Jewish community is just beginning to understand the potential behind Jewish environmentalism, said Rabbi Arthur Waskow, director of the Philadelphia-based Shalom Center, which integrates political action with spiritual wisdom. Waskow has been a Jewish environmental leader for decades. Taking care of the planet is an imperative of Biblical Judaism, he said.

“It seems to me the value of Torah and environmentalism are very closely intertwined, especially if you look at ... the Biblical tradition, which really was the spiritual expression of shepherds and farmers who were very close to the land,” Waskow said.

He said many congregations are focused on social justice issues but do not consider the environment in that category. “We now talk about ‘eco-social justice,’ ” he said, “we won’t use ‘social justice’ by itself.”

Of the major denominations, the Renewal movement has made the most progress integrating environmentalism into daily practice, he said. The Orthodox movement, he said, has the furthest to go.

“The Orthodox community, most of it, is still focused on traditional Orthodox concerns — keeping Shabbat, keeping kosher — and has only begun to address the ways in which Torah might point us toward action about the earth,” he said.

Pico Shul Rabbi Yonah Bookstein, an Orthodox rabbi, acknowledged that the Orthodox community lags behind, but he also said the Reform community does not appreciate how fundamental Jewish environmentalism is.

“Way before there was ever an environmental movement, [German Orthodox] Rav [Samson Raphael] Hirsch wrote, in the 1850s, how anybody who could think the Earth was ours to use and abuse was like an idol worshiper — and in Judaism you can’t get much worse than being an idol worshiper,” Bookstein said.

Bookstein has been passionate about the environment for decades. As an undergraduate at the University of Oregon in 1988, he brought Waskow to the campus on Earth Day to speak to Jewish students about Judaism and environmentalism.

Rabbi Yosef Kanefsky of B’nai David-Judea, a progressive Orthodox congregation in Los Angeles, said his congregation is not focusing on the environment.

“Unfortunately, [we] have nothing environmentally friendly to report,” Kanefsky said in an email.

On Tu B’Shevat, synagogues across Los Angeles will be holding Tu B’Shevat seders and other events. But Brous said Tu B’Shevat should be about more than events. The holiday reminds people how appreciating nature can improve their lives. She said there is a mystical element to the holiday.

“In our culture, you’re sort of expected to be always on, always be productive. But if you were a tree, not all trees are evergreen; some lose their leaves and go dormant in the winters,” she said, pointing out that, in the Torah, people are compared to trees. “Tu B’Shevat is this unbelievable, mystical reminder that even when they are powered down, they are still very much alive.”

[https://jewishjournal.com/cover\\_story/230019/tu-bshevat-question-care-enough-mother-earth/](https://jewishjournal.com/cover_story/230019/tu-bshevat-question-care-enough-mother-earth/)

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**January 30, 2018**

Loyola's free e-textbook brings environmental ethics to classes worldwide

By Brian Roewe  
National Catholic Reporter

In October 2017, students at a Jesuit secondary school in Spain's Aragon region were studying hurricanes. At the same time, their peers in Puerto Rico were living through the aftermath of one.

Separated by an ocean and widely different circumstances, the students at Colegio del Salvador in Zaragoza, Spain, wrote letters of support to the students of Colegio San Ignacio de Loyola in San Juan, Puerto Rico, who remained in the midst of recovery from the devastating destruction brought by Hurricane Maria a month earlier.

What connected the two schools wasn't simply empathy but an environmental textbook, that each class had used, with the Caribbean's hurricane fallout presenting a case study come to life.

"It's not just a textbook that's going from us to users, but we're able to get this lateral connection going, which is exciting," said Michael Schuck, an associate theology professor at Loyola University Chicago and co-editor of the book who helped put the schools in touch.

In January 2016, the Jesuit university launched *Healing Earth* as a free, online textbook available to anyone with an internet connection. Co-edited by Schuck and Nancy Tuchman, a biology professor and dean of Loyola's Institute of Environmental Sustainability, the e-textbook is geared toward upper-level secondary school students, beginning college students and adult learners.

Beyond its pricing and paperless publishing, what differentiates *Healing Earth* from other environmental science texts is its integration of ethics, theology and spirituality into the curriculum — subject matters not often associated with science classes — in an effort to deepen the learning experience from simply understanding what is happening and why with respect to the environment, to what it means and what can be done about it.

The approach parallels the integral ecology that Pope Francis highlighted in his 2015 encyclical "*Laudato Si'*, on Care for Our Common Home," which coincidentally published roughly seven months before *Healing Earth*.

"When the encyclical came out, we were convinced that the pope had read *Healing Earth*," Schuck said.

The team behind *Healing Earth* briefly met Francis in September at the Vatican, where they were among the inaugural recipients of the Expanded Faith Awards, presented by the University Francisco de Vitoria, in Madrid, and the Joseph Ratzinger-Benedict XVI Vatican Foundation.

"It was just very affirming for our project," Tuchman said.

The idea of a "living textbook" blending science, ethics and spirituality originated six years ago in the mind of Jesuit Fr. Michael Garanzini, formerly Loyola president (2001-2015) and director of the Jesuit Higher Education Secretariat in Rome. The concept came, in part, from a 2011 special report on ecology from the Society of Jesus, titled *Healing A Broken World*. Among the report's recommendations: developing teaching resources and curricula in environmental studies as well as increased collaboration on environmental concerns — an increasing focus for the Jesuits, in particular the impact of ecological degradation on the poor — among its vast network of schools worldwide.

*Healing Earth*, which has been used in classrooms in at least 17 countries, 20 secondary schools and more than 30 universities, attempts to do just that.

The e-textbook runs six chapters — introduction, biodiversity, natural resources, energy, water, global climate change — with each written by an interdisciplinary team of scholars and teachers. While faculty from Loyola University Chicago represented roughly a third of the contributors, about an equal number of writers hailed from outside the U.S., including Brazil, India, Indonesia, Spain and Zambia.

"We tried to make it a global perspective so it's not just about the United States and what's happening here," Tuchman said.

Each chapter starts with the science to provide a basis of understanding of the issue before expanding into the ethics, spirituality, and finally, a discussion of actions under way as well as ideas for students to get involved themselves.

At Cristo Rey Atlanta Jesuit High School, environmental sciences teacher Stanmore Hinds has watched his junior students latch onto the ethical and spiritual dimensions.

"They really get into it, and sometimes I have to try to pry them away from discussions along that," he told NCR.

Hinds, who teaches three classes on AP environmental science and has used *Healing Earth* as a supplemental text the past two school years, attributes their interest in part to teenagers' attunement to what's right and wrong. But he also sees some students, many from economically disadvantaged families, relating personally to case studies about landfills or power plants built near lower-income housing areas.

"They get a chance to see those kinds of things and they start to pick up. They say, 'Wait a minute, that's like where I live,' " Hinds said.

Incorporating into classroom discussions the spiritual and ethical discussions beyond the science helps students become more critical and analytical thinkers about their world, he added, recognizing the interrelatedness not only of the subjects they study but what happens in the communities all around them.

Connections to *Laudato Si'* have also piqued Hinds' students, as they're surprised by what the pope has said about environmental stewardship, and curious why more people haven't heeded his directives. In reply, their teacher told them, "OK, that's what you're going to do."

At Loyola Academy, another co-ed Jesuit high school in Chicago, references to the pope's encyclical and Jesuit documents in *Healing Earth* has led environmental science teacher Jennifer Snyder to make regular use of its climate change chapter.

"The way the climate change one is written is so different than in the traditional textbook because they talk about *Laudato Si'*," she said. Having Catholic social teaching included in a textbook, she added, makes it easier for science teachers to find ways to weave the Ignatian pedagogy and the school's mission into their lesson plans.

While both Snyder and Hinds have found *Healing Earth* enhancing classroom discussion, they said they can't use it as their primary textbook largely because it doesn't cover all of the material associated with the college-credit AP test for environmental science administered by The College Board.

The book's editing team continues to make updates, including a forthcoming chapter on food, a synthesis chapter tying together all the issues addressed from a macro level, and more global case studies. They also plan to polish up the Spanish translation — a priority with a sizable number of the text's users located in Spanish-speaking countries — and eventually add a French version, with an eye toward reaching schools in some African countries.

Other goals include a deeper collaboration with the Cristo Rey network of schools and with the Jesuit Refugee Services, the latter to bring *Healing Earth* into its schools set up in refugee camps. The small staff is also seeking additional donors, so far predominantly funded by Loyola University Chicago.

Ultimately, Tuchman said they strive to reach 100 known users of *Healing Earth*. As it stands, the free and online components, while making the book widely accessible, doesn't allow for a true count of how many teachers are using it in classrooms.

"We might already have those 100 and we have no way of knowing," Tuchman said.

From the workshops they've given on *Healing Earth* around the globe, she and Schuck have seen the textbook take root in classrooms, and see potential for it to become a larger platform for Catholic schools to address environmental issues across the planet.

"I hope *Healing Earth* can grow, and people can become aware that it's a place to come to talk about the challenges we're facing," Schuck said.

<https://www.ncronline.org/news/environment/loyolas-free-e-textbook-brings-environmental-ethics-classes-worldwide>

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**February 7, 2018**

As Cape Town's Water Crisis Nears 'Day Zero,' Faith Groups Spring into Action

By Brian Pellot, Religion News Service  
Word & Way

CAPE TOWN, South Africa (RNS) — The trickling sound echoed through Zonnebloem Estate's chapel as the Anglican bishop of Table Bay, the Rt. Rev. Garth Q. Counsell, slowly poured one pitcher of water into another.

This sound of running water, once considered soothing, now triggers anxiety in drought-stricken Cape Town, where residents are hoarding bottled water and showering over buckets in anticipation of "Day Zero."

[Currently estimated for mid-May](#), Day Zero would mark the unprecedented moment when engineers close most of the city's faucets. Nearly 4 million residents would be left to fetch daily water rations of just 25 liters (6.6 gallons) from fewer than 200 central collection points until rains resume or alternative sources come online.

Government officials have provided scant details for Day Zero logistics. Rather than communicate a clear plan of action, some are invoking fear [with comparisons to World War II and 9/11](#).

Major political parties and faith groups in South Africa have long recognized the toll climate change is taking on citizens and the environment. As tensions rise and politicians point blame in every direction, faith groups are working across spiritual divides to offer their flocks hope and a way forward.

Counsell's deliberate water display and opening sermon kicked off the Anglican Diocese of Cape Town's Water (In)Justice Conference on Saturday (Feb. 3). More than 120 lay and clergy members joined the event, aimed at infusing the upcoming Lenten season with messages and prayers around water's sacredness, scarcity, sanitation, biodiversity and sustainability.

"We have stopped major crises in the history of our country, and even this one will come to pass," Anglican Archbishop of Cape Town Thabo Makgoba told the room, later referencing the HIV/AIDS epidemic and apartheid. Makgoba takes issue with the apocalyptic connotations of the name "Day Zero" and suggested parishioners consider "Day One" — his preferred term for the same scenario — as an opportunity for action.

"From a biblical perspective, the concept of void and nihilism does not sit well, because we take the creation story seriously," he explained. "Zero has the connotation that this is the end. It doesn't give us hope. But we are responsible. We can do something. We can avert it."

The Rev. Rachel Mash, environmental coordinator for the Anglican Church of Southern Africa and [Green Anglicans](#), organized the conference, which featured practical water-saving tools and

ideas. Goody bags included dense [green plastic blocks](#) participants were advised to drop in their toilet tanks at home to save water.

“Our job as the church is to reduce water ourselves, inspire others to reduce water, share ideas on how to do that, get the message out into the community, and avert Day Zero,” Mash said.

The Anglican Diocese is performing environmental audits on individual parishes and fixing leaks. If or when the countdown to Day Zero drops below 30 days, Mash said the denomination plans to install crisis committee representatives at each parish to help coordinate water home delivery for vulnerable people of all faiths and none.

“If we do need to be queueing for water, it would be helpful if faith leaders are there to help marshal and to make sure the elderly, vulnerable, pregnant mums, etc., aren’t standing in the hot sun for hours,” she said.

Mash invited fellow Anglican and “water prophet” Kevin Winter of the Future Water Institute at the University of Cape Town to address the conference.

“We’ve always imagined climate change as being a slow-moving bus, but we need to recognize that there are speed bumps along the way, and we’re going through one right now,” he said.

Winter’s ultimate message: “Keep calm and save water while we have it.”

The Rev. Ronald Dias attended the conference from St. Dominic Church Parish in the township of Hanover Park, where he says water quality is already a problem.

“We have a borehole (water well) at the church, but the police stopped us from using that,” he said. “The water is running very low, and the pressure is very low. What will happen to our soup kitchen on Wednesday mornings? That requires water.”

New water restrictions came into effect Feb. 1, regulating the use of borehole water wells and limiting Cape Town residents to [just 50 liters \(13.2 gallons\) of water per day](#). By comparison, the U.S. Geological Survey estimates that Americans use [80 to 100 gallons of water each per day](#).

These numbers, and the growing panic in Cape Town’s wealthy and middle-class neighborhoods, belie a grim reality, Mash is quick to point out.

“Because Cape Town is such an unjust society, the leafy suburbs have always had enough water for swimming pools and totally ignored the fact that on the other side of the city people don’t have enough water to even throw into their toilet, and they’re sharing one toilet between 20 families,” she said.

On Sunday, the Muslim Judicial Council South Africa joined Habibia Soofie Masjid and Masjidul-Quds to lead more than 1,000 Muslims in an early morning prayer for rain.



Men at the front, women at the back, gathered on green patches of grass at the Rylands sports complex, where signs warned that the nonpotable grey water keeping the field alive is “not suitable for human consumption.”

Presiding sheikhs offered an emotional refrain that highlighted sin and redemption.

“Each and every person must ask, ‘Where did I go wrong?’ We have done so much wrong. The consequences have brought us to where we are today,” said Sheikh Moegamad Moerat of Zeenatul Islam mosque. “Once we live in halal, Allah will send us beneficial rain.”

“The root cause is the way we live, the sins we commit,” added Sheikh Riad Fataar, second deputy president of the judicial council. “You have a hand in it, and you can correct it.”

Several imams encouraged worshippers to pay zakat, obligatory alms, citing a hadith attributed to the Prophet Muhammad that Allah withholds rain for those who withhold their charity.

Pressed about the water crisis’ practical implications for Muslims — supply restrictions on ablution water used for ritual washing before prayer, and questions about whether alcohol-based hand sanitizer, now replacing soap and water in many public restrooms, is halal — Masjidul-Quds President Hafiz Mahmood Khatib said sometimes necessity makes the impermissible permissible.

“The importance of washing ourselves and obtaining a state of purity is important, but more important is finding spiritual purity. Islam enjoins us that when water is scarce you can make your ablution with pure sand,” he said.

For now, many mosques throughout Cape Town have installed aerators on taps or are providing worshippers with spray bottles or single cups of water to perform ablutions.

Cape Town’s predominantly Orthodox Jewish community has also held several gatherings and half-day fasts to pray for rain. Chief Rabbi Warren Goldstein’s office circulated a rain prayer to synagogues and now plans to launch a nationwide daily psalm.

“We are praying not only for G-d to bring the rain, but also for G-d to give wisdom and insight to all levels of government – national, provincial and city – to guide them in the right direction to find solutions for the water crisis,” Goldstein told RNS by email.

Beyond individual faith groups’ efforts, several ecumenical and interfaith initiatives have emerged to address the water crisis and “soak the city in prayer.” In May, Cape Town Mayor Patricia De Lille [hosted interfaith leaders](#) at the foot of Table Mountain to pray for rain.

On Monday, interfaith leaders gathered at St. George’s Cathedral to offer leadership in advancing water justice and averting Day Zero.

“When the interfaith voice opposed apartheid as a movement, it worked,” Archbishop Makgoba said. “This is a struggle and a crisis. We need to be good stewards. It’s a beautiful opportunity for South Africans to come together. And therein lies our hope.”

<https://www.wordandway.org/news/world/item/4069-as-cape-town-s-water-crisis-nears-day-zero-faith-groups-spring-into-action>

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**February 10, 2018**

Biodiversity Congress to be held in Dehradun

Deccan Chronicle

*Ms Vandana Shiva said the focal theme of the Congress aimed to showcase Indian philosophy of living in harmony with all living beings.*

Thiruvananthapuram: The Centre for Innovation in Science and Social Action (CISSA), Thiruvananthapuram will organise an International Biodiversity Congress at the Forest Research Institute, in Dehradun from October 4 to 6. Navdanya, Dehradun, Indian Council of Forestry Research and Education (ICFRE, Dehradun), Forest Research Institute (FRI), Wildlife Institute of India (WII, Dehradun), Uttarakhand Biodiversity Board and Uttarakhand Council for Science and Technology, will be the co-organisers of the Congress with the focal theme “Biodiversity for Ecological Civilisation: Vasudh-aiva Kutumbakam”.

Ms Vandana Shiva, managing trustee, Navdanya, told reporters here on Friday that the focal theme was aimed at showcasing the Indian philosophy living in harmony with every living being in the planet. “The Congress will be an appeal towards undertaking a transformation from industrial civilisation to biodiversity civilisation, a human civilisation strongly rooted in biodiversity consciousness.

Global authorities and thinkers who promote this philosophy of biodiversity civilisation will take part in the programme,” Ms Shiva said. Academicians, researchers, students, citizen scientists, farmers are among those who will participate., Farmer Representatives, Social Activists, and Community Representatives will be among the participants.

Congress will include a wide array of programmes including International Seminar, Exhibition, Women Biodiversity Congress (WBC), Youth Biodiversity Congress (YBC), Civil Society Meet, Workshops, National Photography Exhibition, and Documentary Film Festival More than 1000 participants from all over the world will participate in the event. Academicians, researchers, students, citizen scientists, Farmers, Farmer Representatives, Social Activists, and Community Representatives will be among the participants.

<https://www.deccanchronicle.com/nation/current-affairs/100218/biodiversity-congress-to-be-held-in-dehradun.html>

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**February 13, 2018**

Lord Williams: Environmental Crisis Toxic Expression of Humanity's Failures

By Catherine Pepinster  
The Tablet

*Lord Williams of Oystermouth gave an address on Pope Francis' green encyclical, Laudato Si' at St Mary's University*

The environmental crisis is a toxic expression of humanity's failures which Pope Francis has challenged us to tackle, according to the former Archbishop of Canterbury, Lord (Rowan) Williams.

And according to the former archbishop, one of the gravest problems of this crisis is the way in which society is failing children, hampering their ability to grow in learning and understand beauty.

Lord Williams of Oystermouth was speaking on Monday night at St Mary's University, Twickenham, where he gave an address on Pope Francis' green encyclical, Laudato Si'.

He praised the encyclical for highlighting that the Christian understanding of "who is my neighbour?" should embrace the whole of creation and that humanity's treatment of the environment is self-destructive.

"For the Christian, the doctrine of creation is a declaration that all that is comes from God", said Lord Williams. "But as Pope Francis says, it is not enough to avoid environmental disaster, to love our neighbour and ourselves...we have to ask how do we live in such a way to receive from God".

Lord Williams, now the Master of Magdalene College, Cambridge, reserved his staunchest criticism for contemporary approaches to education.

"Children need to know what beauty is and we need to think how this can be nurtured and developed in education. We have increasingly lost sight of education as a humanising task," he said.

After the lecture during questions he was even more forthright about education, expressing dismay over the Government's higher education white paper. It recommends that universities should be placed on a more commercial footing, and uncouples the link between teaching and research.

“We are in danger of trivialising higher education,” he said. “The higher education white paper was narrow- minded and a disgrace. Universities should be conversational communities”.

Lord Williams also used to his lecture to draw out a strong link between the theology of Benedict XVI and Pope Francis, highlighting the importance both attach to reason, in the sense of the importance of conversation and of learning together – something he urged was vital for universities to nurture.

After the lecture, St Mary’s chair of governors, Bishop Richard Moth, presented Lord Williams with the Benedict Medal, awarded by the university for outstanding contributions to faith and education.

<http://www.thetablet.co.uk/news/8554/lord-williams-environmental-crisis-toxic-expression-of-humanity-s-failures->

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## **February 14, 2018**

Indonesian youths plant trees to protect environment

By Katharina R. Lestari  
UCA News

*Interfaith group seek to prevent landslides, retain water at natural sources*

The Suburban Interfaith Youth Community of Kupang plant 500 saplings of mahogany in Naitoto, where a spring is located, on Feb. 3. (Photo supplied by Maks Tameno)

More than 50 people calling themselves the Suburban Interfaith Youth Community of Kupang in Indonesia's predominantly Christian [East Nusa Tenggara province](#) have planted 2,000 saplings so far this year to help protect the environment.

The young people representing Buddhism, Catholicism, Hinduism, Islam and Protestantism as well as young policemen and military personnel planted 1,000 mahogany and rain tree saplings Feb. 10-11 near a newly constructed bridge in the provincial capital [Kupang](#).

Community members as well as the local forestry department provided the saplings.

"Construction of the bridge left the land around it empty. We want to prevent any possible landslides," Maks Tameno, the community's coordinator, told ucanews.com on Feb. 14.

Earlier, on Feb. 3, the community planted 500 mahogany saplings in nearby town of Naitoto, where a natural spring is located. "The spring serves as water source of local people. We want to prevent it from drying up," he said.

In late January, the community planted 500 mahogany and rain tree saplings along a river in Belo on the outskirts of Kupang. "At least 120 families live close to the riverbanks. Heavy rains can cause landslides there," Tameno said.

In the near future, he said the community will cultivate unused land in the province and drill a well in Belo.

<https://www.ucanews.com/news/indonesian-youths-plant-trees-to-protect-environment/81522>

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## **February 19, 2018**

Before Tet festival, sisters train Vietnamese to avoid unsafe food

By Joachim Pham  
National Catholic Reporter

During the Tet or Lunar New Year, Vietnam's biggest festival, food contamination is a serious threat.

Vietnamese people say *ăn Tết*, literally "eat the Lunar New Year." During the festivities, which were at a peak Feb. 16-18 but traditionally last a full month, food is a central focus and revelers consume large amounts of a bewildering variety of food.

Amid the frenzy of activity, substandard food products and contaminated or rotten meat can be secretly slipped into restaurants, open markets and even malls.

The [Daughters of Mary Immaculate](#) have chosen the time leading up to the holiday to educate people, especially those who are ill or with limited resources, to avoid the risks of food poisoning.

"We are deeply concerned about poor people's health during the Tet. They easily suffer food poisoning because they can only afford to buy cheap food of poor quality," said Sr. Anna Nguyen Thi Hien, a doctor who runs a clinic in Hue City.

In 2017, the General Statistics Office recorded 3,374 food poisoning cases nationally, 22 of them fatal.

On Feb. 3, police in Ho Chi Minh City reportedly seized more than 10 metric tons of rotten pig meat that was collected from places outside the city. Police also caught workers at three small factories processing hundreds of kilograms of pig ears and viscera that had already started to rot or had no documents regarding its origin.

The traders said the intention was to process the meat in chemicals and then supply it to restaurants in the city.

During a Feb. 8 press conference, authorities from the coastal province of Ba Ria-Vung Tau said they fined six factories for using pesticides in processing dried fish to preserve it from insects.

Police from Thua Thien-Hue Province, in the North Central coast region, said last month they found 20 incidents of food safety violations and product imitations.

Responding to these risks, the Daughters of Mary Immaculate sisters organized a Feb. 5 training course in food safety for 50 people with HIV/AIDS, volunteers and sisters at their [Kim Long Charity Clinic](#) in Hue City.

Hien, head of the clinic, said the course "aims to raise a growing awareness of food safety among participants and provide them with practical knowledge about nutrition and food safety so that they could maintain their good health and [that of] others."

During the course, Dr. Tran Thi Kim Pho, deputy of the Food Safety and Hygiene Department in Thua Thien-Hue Province, taught participants how to use information on food origins, producers and processors to identify whether food is unclean.

Participants learned how food could be adulterated with chemical agents, viruses, poisons, pesticides and chemicals from the soil.

They were also shown ways to preserve fresh food, and to process meat, fish, fruits and vegetables with proper hygiene. They learned how to prepare nutritious food for the sick, people with malnutrition, obese patients and pregnant women.

They were taught how consuming unclean food products can lead to cancer, other diseases and poisoning.

Pho warned that many people who sell food on the street process food without proper hygiene and store food near garbage cans. Some local factories are known to use chemical agents to process packaged food products.

She said that, in one December 2016 case, 128 people were hospitalized after eating bread from a street vendor, and 23 others were sent to hospitals for poisoning in a case in 2017. Both incidents happened in Hue City.

The doctor urged participants to seek medical treatment for intestinal parasites every six months, and to wash their hands before meals and food preparation.

A participant living with HIV said, "I learned much helpful information from the course. I hope I can buy and prepare good food products to serve my family during the Tet."

She said she and 22 others suffered poisoning after buying sticky rice cakes on a street in Hue last April. "I had severe diarrhea and other symptoms, and received treatment at the hospital for one week," she said.

Joseph Nguyen Van Hoang, a volunteer who visits and serves patients at their homes, said the course would help him show HIV/AIDS patients how to prepare nutritious food for themselves.

"If patients who are in poor health get food poisoning, it takes much time for them to recover," Hoang said.

Hien said she plans to hold another course for 100 people with HIV/AIDS from the neighboring province of Quang Tri after the Tet festival.

The nuns also held Tet celebrations for 400 people with HIV/AIDS at the clinic. The attendees watched cultural performances, played traditional games, enjoyed a great feast, and received blankets, cooking oil, milk, sugar, rice and sweets.

[Joachim Pham is a correspondent for Global Sisters Report based in Vietnam.]

<http://globalsistersreport.org/news/ministry/tet-festival-sisters-train-vietnamese-avoid-unsafe-food-52021>

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