

Religion and Ecology News Articles

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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>

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>

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/>

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>

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/>

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/>

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>

January 19, 2018

Interfaith Power & Light welcomes Susan Hendershot Guy as new president

Episcopal News Service

Interfaith Power & Light (IPL) announced that Rev. Susan Hendershot Guy will serve as its new president, ending a year-long search for the successor to founding president the Rev. Sally Bingham, who is retiring after leading the organization for 18 years.

“I am excited to continue to grow this vital organization and its critical mission to mobilize a religious response to global warming and to act as good stewards of our planet for future generations,” said Hendershot Guy, a minister ordained in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) tradition, who has led this work in Iowa for seven years. “I deeply respect the work of Rev. Bingham and hope to build on the solid foundation she created. The need for people of faith to lead the movement to protect Creation has never been greater.”

President Emeritus Bingham will remain involved on IPL’s board of directors. “It is with delight and my strong support that I leave IPL not only with a strong board of directors, but also in the capable hands of the Rev. Hendershot Guy who will carry IPL well into the 21st Century,” said Bingham.

IPL has an unparalleled track record of educating millions of “people in the pews” about the call to care for Creation and mobilizing them to action, achieving clean energy policy wins from the local to international level. Mobilizing people of faith to be advocates for climate protection is more important than ever, as the Trump administration continues its reckless attempts to roll

back urgently needed climate policies. Maintaining the EPA's Clean Power Plan, and keeping congregations all over the U.S. moving forward with emissions reductions to show that "We are Still In" the Paris Accord are important priorities for IPL. Hendershot Guy will be speaking in support of the Clean Power Plan at the upcoming hearing in San Francisco.

"Rev. Hendershot Guy will bring a valuable new perspective to our San Francisco-based team from her experience leading one of our successful Midwest affiliates," said Doug Linney, chairman of the board of directors, which conducted the nationwide search for the new president. "I am more confident than ever in our stability, strength, and the urgency of our mission. I believe we are in a great position for growth and innovation," Linney continued.

Hendershot Guy will step into her new position this month. She will lead IPL from its national headquarters in San Francisco.

<https://www.episcopalnewsservice.org/2018/01/19/interfaith-power-light-welcomes-susan-hendershot-guy-as-new-president/>

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>

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/>

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

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>

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 20th 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.

Justin Catanoso is a regular contributor to Mongabay and a professor of journalism at Wake Forest University in North Carolina, USA. Follow him on Twitter @jcatanoso

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

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/

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>

February 2, 2018

Minister urges Christians to act on climate

By Daisy Simmons

Yale Climate Connections

'Love of God and neighbor means that we have to honor creation and care for it,' she says.

Sharon Delgado is a retired United Methodist minister and activist who challenges Christians to reflect on how their faith relates to climate change.

In her new book, [*Love in a Time of Climate Change*](#), Delgado uses scripture and religious teachings to explain why Christian ideals require action on global warming.

Delgado: “It’s not simply an issue of loving the earth and taking care of the earth, it’s also an issue of standing up and speaking out for justice for people who are on the front lines of climate change.”

She says that includes poor and vulnerable people who often bear the brunt of extreme weather, droughts, and pollution, as well as children and future generations.

Delgado: “Love of God and neighbor means that we have to honor creation and care for it, and we have to establish justice.”

For Delgado, that means going beyond individual actions like recycling. She encourages Christians to become politically active and to speak out in support of climate-friendly laws and policies.

Delgado: “We’re facing a living hell on earth if we don’t turn things around – and that is going to require systemic change.”

<https://www.yaleclimateconnections.org/2018/02/minister-urges-christians-to-act-on-climate/>

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>

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>

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->

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>

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>

February 19, 2018

The Church of England's Lent challenge: give up plastic

By Tara Isabella Burton
Vox

All over the Christian world, the faithful are making sacrifices for the [penitential season of Lent](#), which began last week. Some are giving up chocolate; others are turning away from Twitter. But the Church of England has one slightly unconventional vice it wants its parishioners to give up: plastics.

The Church of England, which has about 25 million members worldwide, exhorted the faithful to participate in the [Lent Plastic Challenge](#) forgoing single-use plastic containers, such as plastic cups, and unnecessary plastic packaging, as part of a wider program of stewardship for the environment. The effort is part of the church's wider environmental program, [Shrinking the Footprint](#).

Ruth Knight, the environmental policy officer for the church, [told the BBC](#): "The Lent challenge is about raising our awareness of how much we rely on single-use plastics and challenging ourselves to see where we can reduce that use. ... It ties in closely with our calling as Christians to care for God's creation."

Lent, the approximately six-week lead-up to Easter, is a time of fasting, penance, and prayer meant to coincide with Christ's temptation in the wilderness, arrest, and crucifixion. Catholics and some Protestants today typically give up a perceived "vice" (like alcohol or sweets) for the duration of the period.

To critics, the church's actions may seem emblematic of a wider ["secularization" of Lent](#): in which an originally spiritually focused religious observance becomes more about anodyne notions of "wellness" and "doing good." It's fair, too, to critique the movement as a bid for relevancy by a fading institution: A 2016 poll found that the number of Britons attending a weekly Church of England service [fell for the first time](#) to fewer than 1 million (or less than 2 percent of the UK's population).

Those criticisms would be valid. But at the same time, the Church of England's actions reflect a wider willingness among many mainline Protestant and Catholic Christian groups to focus on combating structural or global issues — from income inequality to environmental stewardship — alongside individual misdeeds.

For instance, Pope Francis has frequently made environmental issues a linchpin of his ministry. His 2015 [encyclical, *Laudato Si*](#), argued that caring for the environment was a fundamentally

Christian obligation. To sin against the environment, in this paradigm, is to place individual convenience and instant gratification above cooperation and caring for the world God has made.

“This is our sin, exploiting the Earth,” [Francis said in 2014](#), “this is one of the greatest challenges of our time: to convert ourselves to a type of development that knows how to respect creation.”

Francis’s notion of sin as something collective and structural, not just individual, has informed much of his theology, from his environmentalism to his [fervently anti-capitalist stance](#), a dynamic also at play in the way the Church of England is talking about its own initiatives.

It’s worth noting that these initiatives, which tend to be popular with Catholics and mainline Protestants, are not necessarily shared by all Christians. American evangelicals, in particular, have [long been wary](#) of environmental causes, seeing them as a threat to what they envision as man’s God-given dominion over the earth.

But for the Church of England, environmental stewardship has become a necessary part of the Christian mission.

By focusing on the shared call to care for what they see as God’s creation, the church isn’t just asking parishioners to recycle. It’s asking them to step up to their divinely mandated role as responsible “stewards” of creation. What could be more orthodox than that?

<https://www.vox.com/identities/2018/2/21/17032564/church-of-england-lent-challenge-plastic-environmentalism-christianity>

February 21, 2018

Red Cloud’s Revolution: Oglalla Sioux Freeing Themselves From Fossil Fuel

By Saul Elbein
Common Dreams

“People don’t like being on the grid here,” Red Cloud says, “because they’ve been coexisting with the earth – the sun, the wind – for most of their history.”

- *Henry Red Cloud, like so many Oglalla Sioux young men, left the reservation to work in construction. When he returned home in 2002, he needed a job, and also wanted to make a difference. He attended a solar energy workshop and saw the future.*
- *Today, Red Cloud runs Lakota Solar and the Red Cloud Renewable Energy Center, which have become catalysts for an innovative new economic network – one that employs locals and connects tribes, while building greater energy independence among First Nations.*

- *The company is building and installing alternative energy systems, and training others to do the same, throughout remote areas of U.S. reservations, thus allowing the Sioux and others to leap past outdated fossil fuel technology altogether.*
- *Henry Red Cloud's company has another more radical purpose: it helps provide energy to remote Water Protector camps, like the one at Standing Rock protesting the Dakota Access Pipeline (DAPL). Solar power and other alternative energy sources are vital at such remote sites, as they power up cellphones, connecting resistors to the media and outside world.*

It's high summer in South Dakota, and a cruel sun beats down with an endless floodtide of photons that burns skin through t-shirts and tinted car windows. That's the way Henry Red Cloud likes it. To Red Cloud – descendant of a great Lakota insurgent chief, founder of Lakota Solar, and self-proclaimed “solar warrior” – that July sun is key to the independence of his fellow Lakota and native peoples across America; it also embodies a hot business opportunity.

It's July 5, the tail end of Red Cloud's Energy Independence Day weekend, first announced in the wake of the Trump Inauguration, and meant to spread off-grid skills throughout Indian country – possibly with radical purpose.

I walked out of the sun and indoors to find Red Cloud leading a solar workshop, holding forth to a group of eager indigenous participants about photovoltaic cells and the danger of [phantom loads](#) – the way in which many appliances continue drawing current even when switched off. “Vampire” loads are a constant suck on household energy, consuming electricity and thereby emitting carbon to no purpose – while also draining an off-grid setup with limited juice.

A set up, like, say, the remote, off-grid camps at the Standing Rock Dakota Access Pipeline (DAPL) protests in 2016.

Red Cloud offers up a hypothetical: “Let's say you have a Water Protector camp, your solar array is charging, you notice the inverter is on, but nothing is plugged in.” The stocky 60-something instructor, with long ponytail and far-seeing eyes, frowns and shakes his head, indicating trouble. “Well, that empty power strip can draw more than your actual daily use,” draining down the batteries faster than they can charge.”

A bearded man in his late 20s raises his hand. “That bad for the array?”

“Well,” Red Cloud responds, “it's not a problem if you know about it. Just plug in a couple cellphones,” and charge them up so protestors can reach out to the media from the remote site. That way, he says, at least now the array is doing some work.

Man with a plan

After the workshop, Red Cloud shows me his innovations. A solar trailer, small enough to be pulled by a compact car, is mounted with panels and an inverter. We step into a show-house built out of compressed earthen blocks – the hydraulic press that makes them runs on diesel, the only machine Red Cloud owns that depends on fossil fuel.

“And then there’s this,” he says, pointing to a plywood box with Plexiglas atop it, a 35V photovoltaic panel that sparkles in the sun. It’s a homemade solar furnace: in the brutal Dakota winter, it can generate a 190 degree Fahrenheit mass of air, along with enough energy to blow that warmth through a house, largely eliminating heating costs. He takes me to see the solar pumps that move running water through his two-story school building. Red Cloud’s training center and home is a model for something new and, not to put too harsh a word on it, revolutionary.

His compound represents an all-in-one alternative energy lab and off-grid resistance camp set in the middle of the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation. That’s a highly unlikely place for energy innovation: Pine Ridge is America’s second poorest county, a sprawling and desolate collection of about 40,000 spread across the South Dakota Badlands. Most locals are so impoverished, and so estranged from the cash economy, that some 60 percent of them can’t afford to hook up to the electric grid.

Which, to many Lakota leaders and especially Red Cloud, represents a huge opportunity – a chance for the tribe to leapfrog over the 20th Century energy economy of coal and natural gas burning power plants and regional transmission lines into a New Economy. The goal is to build an energy independent First Nation and modern lifestyle, beyond the reach of oil shortages, price hikes, and the environmental harm perpetuated by the U.S. fossil fuel-driven economy.

For more than a decade, Red Cloud has been running Lakota Solar, an off-grid skills school and solar machine factory – one of Pine Ridge’s few locally owned business, and the heart of a business network that extends to a dozen other reservations.

Over a thousand alumni have learned to build solar arrays, solar furnaces and solar-driven water pumps in his schools. To Red Cloud, these are practical skills that expand people’s economic and political options. But they’re also something mystical – a key to a new personal and communal future. The two of us settle under a shade tree, and Red Cloud declares: “Number 45,” (that being his way of referring to U.S. President Donald Trump) “is changing a whole lot in our country. So we need to start banding together, natives and non-natives, and if we’re going to build this country let’s build it efficient.”

He wipes his forehead. “We’re all waiting for something. What? I don’t know. But it’s time to get started,” he says.

An independent tradition

In the early 2000s, Henry Red Cloud came home to the Pine Ridge Reservation and realized he had a problem. He’d spent years on the road, working seasonal construction, building with structural steel, interlocking the bones of skyscrapers “high above 5th Avenue” in New York City, and elsewhere, seeing much of America. But that wasn’t the world he wanted to live in.

“I had all these hopes of going home, having a job, getting to spend quality time with my people,” he recalls.

The word “home” for Red Cloud, and his moniker too, resonate with historic cadences. He is named for his five-times great-grandfather, the war-chief Red Cloud of the Oglalla Sioux. Though not a member of one of the traditional Oglalla ruling families, the original Red Cloud led a highly successful insurgency from 1866-1868 to prevent U.S. expansion into the productive buffalo grounds that the Lakota were then seizing from the Crow Indians.

During that conflict – now remembered as the Powder River War or Red Cloud’s War – the Oglalla and their Cheyenne and Arapahoe allies, defeated a number of U.S. expeditionary forces, wiping out an 81-man cavalry unit in the worst American military defeat at the hands of Plains Indians up to the defeat of Custer’s 7th Cavalry at Little Big Horn, Montana in 1876.

The end of Red Cloud’s War resulted in the federal government signing the Treaty of 1868, ceding a vast territory to the Lakota that made up much of what is now the U.S. Midwest. Red Cloud then agreed to settle the Oglalla at Pine Ridge, and his fight ended there. When in 1876 the Hunkpapas under Sitting Bull rose against the U.S. in anger at the treaty’s violation, the elder Red Cloud stayed out, seeing no benefit in further battles against the Americans.

The Oglallas have been at Pine Ridge since, renowned among the other Lakota and Dakota peoples for the extent to which they have proudly maintained their culture. It is still common to meet elderly Oglalla who speak only their tribal language well, and English with difficulty.

Here comes the sun

According to Henry Red Cloud, what the Oglallas lack today, and badly need, is a thriving economy. When he came home in 2002, he found a reservation that relied on something roughly comparable to a colonial economy – indigenous settlements were largely dependent on franchise stores and chains that brought little money into the community, but which sucked out dollars to the benefit of faraway corporate headquarters. About the only jobs on the reservation were with the tribe – as police, in schools and government.

With the initial intention of just making some cash, Red Cloud signed up for a solar installation course. It was a revelation.

“I thought, as natives we’ve been embracing the sun for eons,” he says, offering the Sundance as an example, the most sacred rite of the Plains Indians, in which devotees dance ecstatically for four days, exposed to the elements, without sleep, food or water.

“We have always believed in living off the land,” he says. After graduating from that first solar course, he decided there was no reason that this native self-sufficiency shouldn’t be reestablished.

He took more solar courses, learned more about alternative energy and green technology. He started working as a solar installer, always expecting to run into other Native Americans who had enjoyed the same epiphany he had. “But there weren’t any,” he recalls.

“I encouraged my brothers to come [and learn from me], but people can’t just get up and [come to my workshops]. Everyone is doing something, like making handicrafts or gathering wild food, to help their families survive. They can’t leave their families for 19 days. So I thought, what if I bring this knowledge here, to Indian Country?”

By 2004, he had learned solar installation; by 2005 he was making his own solar machines; by 2006 he had founded Red Cloud Renewable Energy and was employing locals to make solar panels to sell to the other tribes. Meanwhile, his alternative energy training school began turning out graduates.

Finding an alternative to the devil’s choice

For Red Cloud, solar and renewable energy are to the New Economy what the sun is to an intact ecosystem – the basis of everything, offering perpetual sustenance. A place as “underdeveloped” and remote as Pine Ridge, he says, has always presented its First Nation inhabitants with a devil’s choice: either continue in poverty, or sacrifice your culture to the world coming in from outside – usually the malls-and-suburban model of 20th Century America.

“But out here we’re rural,” Red Cloud says, pointing to the far horizon. “We’re the West of the West. At night you have a sky full of stars. You can see thunderstorms coming from 100 miles away. We have no Interstate, no banks, no nothing. And that’s how I like it – being able to go to the hills and see as far as the naked eyeball can see. I wouldn’t want to see mainstream America flood this place.” So, Lakota Solar and the Red Cloud Renewable Energy Center have become catalysts for an innovative economic network – one that employs locals and connects tribes, while building greater independence.

Ten years on, Red Cloud employs a dozen people at around \$12 an hour, well above the U.S. minimum wage of \$7.25 per hour. The products they make, they sell to other tribes, who add their own innovations to the mix. The nearby Rosebud Sioux have “gone to the next level,” says Red Cloud, installing residential-scale wind and rooftop solar. But they also buy their solar furnaces and photovoltaic arrays from Red Cloud. Lakota Solar is now the main supplier for three other native-owned small businesses – a solar-powered paper recycling company and two solar installation firms.

The alternative energy systems Red Cloud builds, and boosts, are what’s known as “grid-tie.” For now, they tie into the conventional electricity grid, providing a household, depending on its solar setup, with anywhere from 40 to 80 percent of their power. The systems are designed to be small scale and supplemental, offering a bit more power (or a bit more saved cash) to families that otherwise might go without, or fall short.

A mid-range residential setup from Lakota Solar goes for \$3,500 and lasts about 30 years; that’s drastically below the \$25 to \$35 thousand dollar average cost for solar arrays found in the rest of residential America. His systems don’t pay the entire electric bill, Red Cloud says, “but it’s still money saved that goes back into the community. It’s enough to help build our own economy here.”

While not the be all, or end all, these inexpensive solar installations offer more than just extra electricity to High Plains reservations. For Red Cloud and other Native American leaders, these solar solutions possess a deep philosophical appeal, extending beyond economic or environmental motives, and extending into the communal, and even to the nearly spiritual.

“People don’t like being on the grid here,” Red Cloud says, “because they’ve been coexisting with the earth – the sun, the wind – for most of their history.” Clearly, the man who came back to the reservation in 2002 has found his way home, and he’s now bringing his people home too.

See photos from this article here:

<https://www.commondreams.org/views/2018/02/21/red-clouds-revolution-ogllalla-sioux-freeing-themselves-fossil-fuel>

February 21, 2018

The world will be saved by beauty

By Martha A. Kirk
Global Sisters Report

I had been thinking, "Too much poverty, too much pain, too much pollution, I don't want to look, I don't want to know. How can we go forward with all this?"

I was helping to lead a study and service trip to Peru with our [University of the Incarnate Word](#) students and faculty, as part of a [Women's Global Connection](#) team.

Peruvian Incarnate Word Sr. Katty Huanuco introduced us to the women of the Shipiba community who live in the hills of Cantagalio, Lima.

The Shipomi-Koniba communities are indigenous Amazonian people who have moved to Lima seeking work and education for their children. Not only were they poor and struggling, but a little over a year ago their small hillside homes were destroyed by fire. The Peruvian government has refused to recognize the people's rights to be there, but about 30 of these courageous women have been working together to demand their rights.

Sister Katty has been encouraging them in developing leadership skills and in creating a sewing co-op. It seems the greater their hardships, the more beauty they have been creating with the fabrics.

"The world will be saved by beauty," says the main character of [The Idiot](#) by Fyodor Dostoevsky. In his 1999 [Letter to Artists](#), Pope John Paul II took up Dostoevsky's prophetic idea, suggesting that when humanity is challenged, beauty and wonder can draw them forward.

Two years ago, when we were on a service trip in Chimbote, a Peruvian coastal city challenged by dire poverty and pollution, I began asking Peruvian artist [Richard Jon Castañeda Estrada](#) if we could serve in Chimbote by collaborating with him on art projects. People hunger for beauty as well as food. Nourishment for the spirit gives strength and creativity to pursue justice. Castañeda Estrada, one of the best artists in Chimbote, had created a mural for the city's Centro Cultural Centenario.

One of our Incarnate Word missionaries ministering in Chimbote, Selena Mitchell, made contact with Santa Rosa School in one of the most disadvantaged areas. The children's homes do not have running water and the school has no back fence, so the area where the horses and animals live is all one with the children's playground.

Elena Valenzuela, an art teacher and one of my doctoral students, focused her research on Peruvian murals and social justice. She and Castañeda Estrada led our group in the creation of a mural in the Santa Rosa kindergarten classroom. I didn't fully appreciate it until my grandniece Harper Metting delightedly explained it from her perspective as a kindergarten student: "Children can learn their letters, they can learn their numbers, they can learn their colors and their shapes — then they can fly like a bird!"

At the school, Stephanie Phillips Mitchell, a University of the Incarnate Word nutrition teacher, also tested the quality of water in the area with Juan Piña, an Incarnate Word missionary in Peru. Every week, families get water outside from what is left of the school water supply. The families often wash their clothes in the irrigation ditch across the street. The water does not meet safe standards and we hope to help the people get safe water.

They inspired me to go home and focus on water — lack of water, polluted water, and water as the source of life. As the United States has been moving away from the crucial [Paris climate agreement](#), our sisters have made a strong [statement](#) in support of it and are calling others to do so also. I wanted us to be part of the [Global Water Dances](#) movement in support of the environment, so I contacted a former student, Catherine Cisneros, and her creative [Urban-15](#) dance and music group.

We gathered at the Blue Hole for an event we called "Standing with the Paris Climate Agreement, Celebrating and Dancing with Creation," to raise issues about water. The Blue Hole is the source of the San Antonio River and is located in the [Headwaters Sanctuary](#), our congregation's Earth care ministry that preserves 53 acres of beautiful land in the middle of the urban area of San Antonio.

See the [video](#) of our danced prayer in the dry riverbed where crystal clear water used to gush forth from a spring.

In this way, we joined people around the world in [dancing](#) to raise issues about water. Finally, people were invited to sign our sisters' Statement for Sustainability and Solidarity with the Paris Climate Agreement.

In the face of the challenges that I feel overwhelming us, let us dare to create beauty. Beauty can re-create us in hope.

[Martha Ann Kirk, a Sister of Charity of the Incarnate Word, is professor of religious studies at the University of the Incarnate Word, San Antonio, and the author of [*Iraqi Women of Three Generations: Challenges, Education, and Hopes for Peace*](#), based on her exhibit of photos and interviews.]

See photos with this article here:

<http://globalsistersreport.org/column/environment/world-will-be-saved-beauty-52076>

February 21, 2018

'Administrative chaos' risks sacred site

By Wendy Caccetta
National Indigenous Times

An ancient valley in a region of Australia found to hold secrets of Aboriginal occupation dating back to the Ice Age is at risk of being destroyed by a rail line planned by billionaire Andrew Forrest's Fortescue Metals Group, according to traditional owners.

The Native Title body for the Eastern Guruma people of Western Australia's East Pilbara, the [Wintawari Aboriginal Corporation](#), has asked federal Environment and Energy Minister Josh Frydenberg to urgently act to protect the valley.

His department told *NIT* Mr Frydenberg had appointed a "reporter" or investigator to look into the matter.

The Wintawari Aboriginal Corporation claims the case has been botched by the WA Labor Government and has not ruled out asking for a legal review by the courts if proper procedures aren't followed by the government and its advisory body, the Aboriginal Cultural Material Committee.

The valley lies at the base of Spear Hill, or Ngajanha Marntaa, a traditional meeting place for Aboriginal people who travelled to the site near the Hamersley Gorge and Karijini National Park to harvest wood for ceremonies.

The valley shares the same traditional name as the hill it abuts.

Thousands of years of history

Wintawari director Tony Bevan said the valley contains at least 50 important sites, including rock shelters and ceremonial storage places that had so far been dated back 10,300 years.

Archaeological work was continuing to determine if the secrets of the valley were even older, he said.

“We’ve done some preliminary dating and the information we have is 10,300 years old in one of the rock shelters,” Mr Bevan said.

“But that date is only halfway down the pit. We’re waiting for another type of testing to come back, which will hopefully indicate it is older.”

Mr Bevan said Wintawari wanted FMG to re-route about three kilometres of a planned rail line — part of the miner’s \$1.5 billion Eliwana Mine plans — so that it did not go through the valley.

Rock shelters in other areas in the Pilbara have been found to contain rare artefacts showing continuous Aboriginal occupation dating back 40,000 years.

Two years ago archaeologists discovered grinding stones and 48 other artefacts in a rock shelter deep in the heart of mining giant Rio Tinto’s iron ore operations near Tom Price, also in the Pilbara.

The battle over Spear Hill Valley comes after the Aboriginal group says a WA government decision in November clears the way for the FMG rail line to proceed through the valley at the same time as approval was given for Wintawari to determine the importance of the site.

The WA Government, however, says the November decision relates to the Solomon mine and its infrastructure and the Eliwana Rail Project is still with the state’s Environmental Protection Agency.

‘Administrative chaos’

Wintawari chairman Glen Camille said the WA Government had “bungled”.

He said traditional owners were pragmatic about balancing economic development and Aboriginal heritage protection, but in this case they had been denied fairness.

“Eastern Guruma are beneficiaries of mining, but FMG’s current expansion to facilitate Eliwana must have consideration for our cultural heritage places,” Mr Camille said.

“The facts are clear. On the same day, that the ACMC and the Department for Planning, Lands and Heritage provided us with the required permits to allow work to determine and document the significance of the area, to help inform the minister’s decision on the FMG application, the ACMC and the department also discussed and then recommended to the minister that FMG should be granted consent to destroy these sites.

“At best, this reflects administrative chaos within the ACMC and the department.”

Mr Camille also questioned why FMG was given the go-ahead before the report on the site's significance was ready on March 1.

Mr Bevan said they had asked Mr Frydenberg to make an emergency declaration to protect the area and also appoint an investigator to look into its long-term protection.

He said the matter was becoming increasingly urgent.

"FMG are wanting to go ahead and do some geotechnical testing, so dig test pits along the railway alignment," Mr Bevan said.

"That means they will go into that Spear Hill area and dig a 2m x 1m trench."

In a statement on February 20, a spokesman for Mr Frydenberg's Department of Environment and Energy said a reporter, or investigator, had been appointed.

Further applications from Wintawari were being considered.

"The department will work with the reporter to ensure an expeditious and thorough process," it said.

"The exact timing of the process depends on the volume and complexity of information contained in the application and responses from affected parties, the nature of consultation with affected parties, the extent of requirement for scientific and archaeological investigations."

Act in need of reform, says Wyatt

WA Aboriginal Affairs Minister Ben Wyatt did not directly respond to questions from *NIT* about whether the handling of the Spear Hill Valley matter had been botched nor whether he was confident the rail line would not destroy a significant site.

Instead his office issued a statement in which he said he would like to see WA's *Aboriginal Heritage Act* reformed.

"What this issue shows is that we are currently working with an outdated *Aboriginal Heritage Act*, which all sides seem to find unsatisfying and that is why I am committed to reform," he said in the statement.

His office said the Eliwana railway was being assessed by WA's Environmental Protection Agency and Mr Wyatt would be constrained from making a decision on it "even if there was a section 18 linked to it".

The Department for Planning Land and Heritage said in a statement that FMG had made an application to the ACMC under section 18 of the *Aboriginal Heritage Act* to use land for its Solomon Mine and infrastructure.

“Having considered the information, including submissions made by stakeholders in response to the department’s procedural fairness process, the ACMC resolved to advise the minister to approve the purpose, subject to providing the WGAC reasonable access to the land to conduct excavation of Aboriginal sites approved by the Registrar.

“A permit under section 16 of the *Aboriginal Heritage Act 1972* was issued to the WGAC by the Registrar on the advice of the Aboriginal Cultural Material Committee on 22 September 2017.

“The permit was to enable the WGAC to collect Aboriginal cultural material from the surface of 10 sites for the purpose of archaeological investigation. The permit consented to test pitting for the purposes of collecting materials and for the WGAC to manage the cultural material collected.

“The permit was valid for a period of 50 days, with a report on the outcome of the permitted works to be provided by the WGAC to the Registrar by 30 November 2017. At the request of the WGAC, the department has agreed to extend the period for reporting until 1 March 2018.”

New FMG CEO backs process

Fortescue Chief Executive Officer Elizabeth Gaines said FMG had worked closely with the Eastern Guruma people and Aboriginal heritage professionals to identify important Aboriginal cultural heritage sites.

“On the basis of information gathered during this process, an agreed boundary was placed around Spear Hill and Fortescue designed its railway to stay outside of the boundary,” Ms Gaines said.

“Fortescue secured consent from the state to use the land outside of Spear Hill and we will continue to work constructively with Eastern Guruma.

“This project is important for Fortescue and the state and will provide significant employment during construction and operation, with a capital cost of US\$1-1.5 billion.

“Fortescue has always sought to work cooperatively with Aboriginal people to ensure heritage is appropriately managed.”

Ms Gaines said FMG was open and ready to contribute to any review made by the Federal Government.

The ACMC was also contacted for comment.

<https://nit.com.au/administrative-chaos-risks-sacred-site/>

February 22, 2018

Midlands Voices: Let's build consensus for action to promote climate stability

By Daniel R. DiLeo and Richard W. Miller
Omaha World Herald

DiLeo is assistant professor and director of the Justice and Peace Studies Program at Creighton University. He is also a consultant to Catholic Climate Covenant. Miller is associate professor of systematic theology and associate professor of sustainability studies at Creighton.

This week Creighton University hosted a lecture by V. Ramanathan, Ph.D, a world-renowned climate scientist who advised Pope Francis on his ecological encyclical, *Laudato Si'*. As Catholics, we affirm the Church's consistent teaching that climate change is an urgent moral issue. As Americans we ask that people of faith and goodwill demand science-based climate change policies from our elected officials, and implore our leaders to preserve the climate upon which civilization depends.

In 1859, Irish physicist John Tyndall showed that greenhouse gases like carbon dioxide in the Earth's atmosphere trap heat in a process called the "greenhouse effect." Since then, human activities — especially fossil fuel combustion — have radically increased the amount of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere.

At the same time, our planet's surface temperature has increased nearly two degrees Fahrenheit in the past 150 years. This is no coincidence. As the National Aeronautics and Space Administration reports, "97 percent or more of actively publishing climate scientists agree: Climate-warming trends over the past century are extremely likely due to human activities."

Human-forced global warming is having profound effects across the planet. For example, the Greenland and Antarctic sheets have lost miles of ice in the past decade, and glaciers around the world are melting rapidly. As a result, global sea level rose eight inches over the past century, and a growing number of distinguished researchers warn that we could already be committed to 10 to 16 feet of sea level rise.

Climate change affects people around the world — especially the poor who contribute least to the problem. Sea level rise displaces coastal communities. Drought causes food and water stresses that lead to resource conflicts, political instability and violence. Increased severe weather events produce malnutrition, malaria, diarrhea and heat stress that, according to the World Health Organization, already cause 150,000 annual deaths globally and may lead to an additional 250,000 fatalities between 2030 and 2050.

There is a growing danger that we will soon pass tipping points that lead to irreversible global warming and effects beyond human control. This is due to the long lifespan of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere (thousands of years), and because of so-called "feedback loops." For example, permafrost melt releases frozen greenhouse gases that further intensify the greenhouse effect.

Faced with these realities, the Catholic Church, beginning with Saint John Paul II in 1990, has recognized climate change as a moral issue implicating core commitments of the Christian tradition to protect human life and dignity, promote the common good, exercise special concern for the poor and vulnerable, and care for God's gift of creation. In defense of these commitments, the Church has repeatedly supported action to address climate change.

Since climate change is a global problem that voluntary actions and regional policies have failed to address, the Catholic Church has repeatedly advocated for national and international climate change policies.

Domestically, the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops supports the Clean Power Plan. Internationally, the USCCB calls for American contributions to the Green Climate Fund. Additionally, the Vatican under both Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI and Pope Francis advocates for a global climate change accord — most recently the Paris Agreement.

Many American politicians and corporate leaders — including from Nebraska — have resisted these and other policies for climate stability. Instead, they have largely chosen to ignore the overwhelming scientific consensus about human-forced climate change and support energy plans providing short-term financial benefits for some persons at the long-term expense of climate stability for all humanity — indeed, all creation.

As U.S. Catholics, we ask that people of faith and goodwill demand science-based climate change policies from our elected officials. We also implore our leaders to enact policies preserving the climate upon which human life and dignity, the common good and all creation depend.

http://www.omaha.com/opinion/plus/midlands-voices-let-s-build-consensus-for-action-to-promote/article_e64cb761-9277-51da-b037-bff039a6a7fb.html

February 23, 2018

How dangerously dirty water is threatening one of the world's ancient religions

United Nations Environment Programme

On an unseasonably warm winter afternoon in Baghdad, Sheikh Anmar Ayid hitches up his robe and crouches by the Tigris river. Rocking back and forth on his haunches, he flicks the water from side to side – all the while chanting rhythmically in Aramaic. After finishing his ablutions, a two-minute procedure, the young sheikh turns to a small mud-brick temple and begins to pray.

In past years, Ayid might then have quenched his thirst directly from the river. As a Mandaean priest, an adherent of a pre-Abrahamic faith that's native to the Fertile Crescent, he and his co-religionists believe the Tigris – and the Euphrates – are sacred and flow from heaven. Clerics are consequently only supposed to drink from and eat food washed in their waters.

That, however, is scarcely even possible these days. Dirtied and drained almost from the moment they rise, Iraq's great waterways are in bleak states by the time they reach the country's heavily urbanized centre. To drink straight from them is to invite near instant sickness. And so as the rivers plumb desperate new lows, seemingly worsening by the year, the Mandaeans are struggling to practice their several thousand-year-old rituals.

"We depend on the water for everything, for worship, for daily life, for food," Ayid said. "But because the water is going from bad to very bad, we are negatively affected."

Across the world, water pollution is leaving a devastating trail in its wake. [Eighty per cent](#) of all wastewater goes untreated, and much of it finds its way back into rivers and lakes – where it contributes to ecosystem and public health crises. Up to a third of all rivers are blighted with pathogenic waste, according to UN Environment data, and a seventh suffer from organic waste problems, mostly from agricultural fertilizer run off. In largely desert countries, like Iraq, worsening sandstorms and diminishing grass cover have caked the rivers with dust and saddled water treatment facilities with a new range of woes.

Never before, though, it seems, has poor water quality imperiled an entire religion. Already threatened by jihadists and criminal gangs, who damn them as heretics and target them for their historic role in the gold trade, the Mandaeans' numbers have fallen from 100,000 to less than 10,000 in Iraq since 2003. For those who remain, pollution's assault on one of the central tenets of their faith has added final insult to injury.

In Amarah, 350 km south of Baghdad on the Tigris, the pollution is so debilitating that not even boiling water is enough to prevent local priests from falling ill. At their heavily-guarded riverside temple in the Iraqi capital, Ayid and his colleagues have taken to leaving buckets of water to sit for a day, before skimming off the layer of fetid scum that's usually accumulated on the top. From Baghdad to the Mandaeans' traditional heartlands in the country's far south, there's so much glass and trash in the shallows that few worshippers dare set foot in the rivers without wearing sandals. "Our religion believes human nature requires hygiene, and so for us many things are built around water," Ayid said. "But where is the hygiene here?"

What makes this all the more frustrating for many Mandaeans is that the culprits are hiding in plain sight. With insufficient wastewater treatment facilities and lax environmental regulations, ever-growing volumes of industrial and domestic refuse are seeping into the rivers. In Baghdad alone, dozens of places, including the Dora oil refinery and the massive Medical City hospital complex, discharge waste directly into the Tigris, according to local conservationists. All this at the same time as upstream dam construction and reduced rainfall cut the rivers' flow has brought the lifeblood of the Mandaeans faith to the brink of disaster.

"When water levels drop, the health of that lake or river is likely to be affected, both in terms of quantity and quality," says Lis Mullin Bernhardt, a Programme Officer in UN Environment's Freshwater Unit. "And the lower the flow, the less likely that water body is to be able to deal naturally with water pollution and contamination."

Globally, there is an increasing awareness that something drastic has to be done. UN Environment operates a monitoring system, [GEMS/Water](#), which keeps tabs on river and lake water quality, and also helps states establish their own water quality surveillance networks. “For me, it’s like going to the doctor,” Bernhardt says. “You need that monitoring, those stats and numbers, to understand what’s happening and know a bit more about what you can do about it.” By encouraging the planting of water grasses and the preservation of wetlands, for example, UN Environment is pushing for green solutions to water quality problems.

But for the Mandaean, the fear is that no manner of solutions might arrive fast enough to save their rituals – and perhaps their very existence. Scattered now across Europe, North America and Australia, they question whether a community as small as theirs can endure in diaspora. That a people whose faith teaches care for the environment might die in part because of it is a tragic irony not lost on Sheikh Ayid.

“Above all, we respect the water, of course. But we respect the Earth and the animals too. It is forbidden, for example, to play with a living tree, to slaughter an animal unless it is needed, or to throw things into the river,” he said. “Our daily life depends on nature, but nature is not being kind to us.”

Learn more about UN Environment's work on [freshwater ecosystems](#).

<https://www.unenvironment.org/news-and-stories/story/how-dangerously-dirty-water-threatening-one-worlds-ancient-religions>

February 26, 2018

A climate scientist talks—respectfully—to climate-change skeptics

By Amy Frykholm
The Christian Century

*Katharine Hayhoe is a professor and director of the Climate Science Center at Texas Tech University. She has led climate impact assessments for many cities and regions. Recognizing her ability to communicate the importance of climate change to skeptical audiences, the Yale Program on Climate Change Communication called her a “national treasure.” She also appears in the video series *Global Weirding*. She and her husband, Andrew Farley, a pastor, wrote *A Climate for Change: Global Warming Facts for Faith-Based Decisions*.*

How did you begin trying to communicate to the skeptics about climate change?

It began inadvertently. I met my husband at the Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship at the University of Illinois, when we were both in graduate school. We had been married six months or so before it dawned on us that we weren’t on the same page when it came to climate change.

I come from Canada, where I took for granted that everyone agrees that climate is changing, humans are responsible for it, and we need to do something about it. He came from the American South, where many believe climate change is something liberal, atheist tree huggers have invented so that the government can rob people of their personal liberty and ruin the economy. I had never met anyone as intelligent and educated as my husband who didn't think climate change was real. And he had never met anybody who believed the same things he did who thought it was.

Back then, 17 years ago, the issue was not as politicized as it is today. And we had another advantage: we not only loved each other, but we respected each other. I knew that he was a really smart person. He knew that not only did I share his faith, I was a practical person. I wasn't somebody who wanted to ruin the economy to save the whales.

One conversation didn't resolve our differences overnight. But over the course of months, through exploring the evidence and the implications together, he came to agree that climate change is real and human-caused and that the impacts are serious enough to warrant taking action.

How was that conversation like the others you've had since with people who deny climate change?

It was my first experience of starting from a place of mutual respect and shared values. And that, I realized, is the key to success: not just then but even more so today, when climate change has become one of the most politically polarized issues in the United States.

Today, the most accurate predictor of what people think about climate science—or even what the number on the thermometer means—is where they fall on the political spectrum. In a study done in 2017 in New Hampshire, during an unusually warm winter in the state, researchers asked, “Has this winter been unusually warm?” People's perception of an event they had personally experienced differed based on their political affiliation. It doesn't get more politically polarized than that!

How did you start speaking in churches?

By the time we moved to Texas about ten years ago, I realized that many people thought what I did as a climate scientist was one step removed from astrology—so I wasn't sure what to expect. Within a couple of months of moving here, though, I was asked to speak to a women's group about climate change. I did my best and fielded a lot of questions—some I could answer, some I couldn't. The experience reminded me of the conversations I had had with my husband.

Soon, another invitation came to speak at a book club from a woman who had been in the first group. I adapted my presentation so it addressed many more of the questions people had asked in the first one—and got even more questions. Then another invitation came, to a church group. I adapted the presentation again and collected even more questions. And that's what I'm still doing today, more than ten years later.

Whenever I'm invited to speak to conservative audiences—farmers, water managers, experts in the oil and gas industry, Christian colleges and churches—I try not only to anticipate but respect the questions they will have. My goal is to communicate that, yes, those are good questions that deserve good answers, so let's talk!

What have these the conversations taught you?

One of the most important things I've learned is that most people don't really have a problem with the science or even the theology of climate change.

I know that there are lots of scientific sounding objections: "it's just a natural cycle," or "scientists don't know enough yet," or "those models are always wrong." I hear these every day. And I also hear the religious objections: "if God is in control, then nothing bad can happen," or "God gave us dominion over the earth, so we can do whatever we want," or, "the earth is going to end anyway, so why does it matter?"

But if we talk about these concerns for more than a few minutes, the conversation quickly moves past the science and even the theology. People's real objections are based on the fact that they believe the solutions to climate change conflict with their ideology and even identity. They've been told that climate change solutions will ruin the economy; that the issue is being pushed by godless liberal atheists, and Christians can't go along with them; that the concern is a tool of the Democrats to expand big government and control people's lives. And who wants any of that? I don't.

Here's the thing: those worries are not accurate. There are all kinds of solutions that energize local economies, build jobs, free people to develop their own energy sources, and—most importantly—fulfill our call to exercise responsible dominion over the planet and love others as Christ loved us. So my message is: we do not have to change who we are to care about this issue. Who we are is already the perfect person to care about this. We just need to connect the dots between the things that we already care about, how they are affected by a changing climate, and what we can do about it that is consistent with who we are.

What kind of connections do you make?

I've become increasingly convinced that nearly everyone already has the values they need to care about climate change. It's just a matter of figuring out what values those are, then making the connection.

Many of those I speak with are Christians, so we can connect on our shared faith. In Genesis 1, humans are given dominion or stewardship or responsibility over every living thing on the planet. Whichever word we prefer, it's impossible to interpret this as meaning pillage and plunder, given all we read of God's joy and pleasure in creation throughout the rest of the Old Testament. It's not just about nature, though; the Bible has a lot to say about caring for others, especially those less fortunate than us, those who are already poor and suffering. Climate change exacerbates the problems of hunger and poverty and lack of access to clean water, so for me, I care about climate change because it's a humanitarian issue.

The Bible is by no means the only point of connection. We can connect over economics, how clean energy creates many more jobs than traditional fossil fuels, many of them local, and how it empowers us to develop our own energy rather than importing it. For those concerned about American exceptionalism and “making America great again,” it’s important to recognize that China is already well ahead of the United States when it comes to the new clean energy economy of the future. We all know what their air quality looks like; but what most people don’t realize is that they are changing, fast. They already have more wind and solar energy than any country in the world, and they are a global leader in manufacturing this technology. Continuing to shore up the coal industry when there are more jobs in solar energy than coal is like investing in horse farms and buggy manufacturing as the automobile is starting to be mass produced. It just isn’t competitive.

“I hear a lot of scientific sounding objections, but they aren’t the real issue.”

For those of us concerned about our health, we can connect the dots between the air pollution from fossil fuels and some 200,000 people in the United States who die every year as a direct result of this pollution. If we’re concerned about water, as many are in Texas, we know that the warmer it gets, the more water evaporates out of soils and reservoirs, exacerbating drought. Whoever we are, whatever we believe, whatever matters to us, these days there is more likely than not a connection to climate change: how it affects us and what we can do to make sure that we are reducing its impacts and prepared for those we can’t avoid.

Where do you take the conversation from there?

To solutions. All too often, we think solutions are punitive and unpleasant; that if we agree climate is changing and humans are responsible, then the only fix is to let the government control our thermostats, or control how many minutes we are allowed to shower, or even take away our trucks. But that’s not the case at all.

There are so many practical, beneficial solutions that we can all support and even implement in our day-to-day lives. New LED lightbulbs save us money—and don’t have to be changed nearly as often. Eating lower down the food chain reduces our carbon footprint—and benefits our health as well. Insulating our houses keeps energy costs down.

In addition to personal choices, we can do more. We can add our voice to organizations that reflect our personal values, from Young Evangelicals for Climate Action and Interfaith Power and Light to the free-market Energy Enterprise Institute or even the libertarian Niskanen Center. We can make our elected representatives aware of important programs like the U.S. Mayor’s Climate Protection Center and the bipartisan Climate Solutions Caucus in the U.S. Congress.

And perhaps most important, we can talk about solutions, like the fact that Fort Hood, the biggest army base in the United States, signed a new contract for solar and wind energy because it will save taxpayers over \$150 million; or that there are at least six cities in the United States that are already using 100 percent renewable energy (including Georgetown, Texas); or that the cheapest prices for solar energy are in developing countries where people need it the most.

What specific actions do you recommend to church communities?

Church communities have so much potential: classes, sermons, book recommendations, guest speakers, even online communities like Climate Caretakers for people who want to “care for the climate through regular prayer and action that glorifies God and loves our neighbors.” It’s important to be a good steward of our finances; so a church might consider doing an energy audit to save money, which would also reduce the church’s carbon footprint and might free up funds to support for missions or invest in green energy options the church. As part of their witness, one congregation offered its roof to the community as a “solar panel garden,” because it’s often cheaper to put a lot of solar panels on one large structure like a church than dividing them up among homes. Churches are great places to help each other and build community by starting a composting program or a lightbulb initiative to replace senior citizens’ incandescent bulbs with the more efficient LED type, or by asking a local car dealership to park electric cars in the parking lot so that everybody can see what they look like or reaching out to elected officials to share their concerns.

How do you respond to eschatological concerns, like the notion that the world is going to end soon anyway?

My favorite Bible verse comes from 2 Timothy 1:7, which says that “God has not given us a spirit of fear.” This is a litmus test for us Christians. If something is inducing fear in us, it is not from God. What God has given us is a spirit of love, power, and a sound mind.

In the New Testament, the apostle Paul was writing letters to people who expected that Christ would return tomorrow or next week. He makes it very clear that although we don’t know the day and the hour, we are not to sit on our hands waiting for him to return, and we are certainly not to tremble in fear. We are to do good works, which includes loving and caring for others. And today, that includes addressing global issues like climate change that disproportionately impact the most vulnerable of us.

What are your goals for these conversations?

My goal is for people to feel empowered. So often, we feel as if climate change is this enormous global problem and nothing I can do about it will ever make a difference—so why bother? The truth is that the boulder is already rolling downhill, we just need more hands.

The Yale Program on Climate Change Communication surveyed thousands of people and categorized them into six different groups based on their relationship to action on climate change. They called the results the “Six Americas of Global Warming.” The categories are alarmed, concerned, cautious, disengaged, doubtful, and dismissive. And despite the fact that the loudest voices we usually hear from are the alarmed, on one end of the spectrum, and the dismissive, on the other, the majority of people in the United States are somewhere in the middle.

So my personal goal is to move people who are cautious, disengaged, or doubtful to concerned, recognizing that this *does* matter to me and there is something that I can do to help.

What is the most important action that you encourage people to take?

The number one thing that we can do is talk about climate change.

In addition to helping us understand where people are coming from, the Six Americas survey also asked how many times a year we hear someone else talk about climate change. It turns out that about 75 percent of people said less than one or two times a year.

Why should we expect someone to care about something that they never hear anyone talk about? Why would we expect someone to think that the problem can be fixed if we never hear anyone talk about solutions?

“Nearly everyone already has the values needed to care about climate change.”

We may be scared to talk about climate change because we worry it will pick a fight, or we will have to argue about science, or it is just doom and gloom, such a downer. But as we’ve discussed above—and as I talk about in my Global Weirding videos—there are lots of positive ways we can connect this issue with things people already care about, to talk about why it matters to us and what we can do about it.

Tell us about your PBS series on Global Weirding.

Our Global Weirding series is now in its second season. Every other week, we release a short video that tackles a frequently asked question that has something to do with climate change. The prompt for the series came from a local PBS station, which thought it would be cool for a station in West Texas to do a series on the science, politics, and religion of climate change. The videos are purposely designed to be short and sharable and to give people interesting facts and perspectives they can use in conversation with others.

Questions we’ve talked about so far include: How do we know climate change is real? What do all of these crazy hurricanes have to do with global warming? What does the Bible say about climate change? Won’t plants and animals adapt? Aren’t you climate scientists just in this for the money? Are those airplane tracks we see in the sky a secret attempt by the military to cool the planet?

I haven’t heard that one.

Yes, that’s a big conspiracy theory in the darker halls of the Internet. Never mind that the logistics of secretly producing massive amounts of chemicals, shipping them to airports, and getting them on board commercial flights without the pilot’s knowledge or anyone else finding out is stunningly prohibitive; there are still thousands of people convinced that the normal condensation trails, or contrails, we see in the sky for minutes and even hours after planes have passed are actually a chemical experiment by the military to do . . . what? The answers never make sense—but hopefully our Global Weirding videos do!

Do you have time to do any science?

I have to make time, because doing science is what I love most. I work with big climate models, looking at how well they are able to reproduce the local climate patterns that bring heat waves and drought and storms. Then I translate that into information that people can use to make plans. For example, the city of Austin is using information that we generated in developing its long-term water plan, to make sure the city is prepared for a changing climate. Washington, D.C., is using our projections to plan for the future of infrastructure and public health. When it all comes down to it, we all want the same things: enough food to eat, clean air to breathe, clean water to use, and a safe place to live. Climate change threatens that, and that's why it's so important to prepare for its impacts.

A version of this article appears in the print edition under the title "How to talk to climate skeptics."

<https://www.christiancentury.org/article/interview/climate-scientist-talks-respectfully-climate-change-skeptics>

February 27, 2018

Some Christians are cutting carbon for Lent

By Diana Madson

Yale Climate Connections

Instead of giving up luxuries, they're reducing pollution.

The weeks just before Easter are known as Lent. It's a time when many Christians fast or give up luxuries. Now, some churches and faith groups are encouraging Christians to reduce activities that contribute to global warming.

Leah Wiste is director of outreach and advocacy at an organization called [Michigan Interfaith Power and Light](#).

Wiste: "Lent is a state of preparing for rebirth ... And so we focus on transformation."

In that spirit, her group helps Christians use this time to develop more environmentally friendly habits.

Wiste: "We propose a Lenten Carbon Fast. We've created a calendar that suggests one activity each day that folks can do in order to reduce their ecological footprint."

It includes actions such as switching to energy-efficient L.E.D. light bulbs, eating food that is not trucked long distances, turning the temperature down on water heaters, and hanging clothes out to dry instead of using the dryer.

Wiste: “The hope is that this several week exercise won’t just end at Easter but that these actions actually seed a more fundamental transformation that people can then continue.”

Listen to this podcast here:

<https://www.yaleclimateconnections.org/2018/02/some-christians-are-cutting-carbon-for-lent/>

February 27, 2018

Pope's climate expert tells Nebraska audience: It's an issue in the laps of faith leaders

By Bill Kelly

NET News – Nebraska’s PBS and NPR Stations

Did you know Pope Francis has a scientist consulting him on issues related to climate change? Neither did we.

Dr. Veerabhadran "Ram" Ramanathan, an atmospheric and climate scientist, recently [spoke to students](#) at Creighton University. In an interview with Bill Kelly of NET News he talked about his post with the Vatican, why the pope made climate an ethical and spiritual issue, and why Nebraska needs to pay attention.

V. Ramanathan: I'm a distinguished professor at the [University of California, San Diego](#). I started working on this topic of climate change, at least for the last 40 years. I joined the Vatican as part of the [Pontifical Academy of Science](#). They have 80 world renowned experts invited to the academy. I was invited, invited to join the Pontifical Academy of Science in 2004 by then-Pope John Paul II.

You are elected to the Academy not because of your religious beliefs, not because of your cultural or national origin, it's purely based on scientific merit. You're just chosen for your science and I found that to be remarkable. I don't think there is any panel equal to that in any religion that I know of having a scientific body exerting its free will.

Bill Kelly, NET News: As a member of the Vatican's Pontifical Academy of Sciences, you're in the service of Pope Francis. I'm betting most people still ask what is the service that you offer the pope.

Ramanathan: The Academy meets once every two years but then individual members organize meetings on special topics, there are at least two such meetings each year. Based on that, we then brief the pope what is the most recent scientific thought on any particular topic. We had meetings on creationism, we had meetings on fundamental areas of physics, and of course, climate change. Sometimes he comes to our meetings himself.

Kelly: Did Pope Francis need convincing that there's appropriate advocacy to be done in the area of climate change?

Ramanathan: I don't know the answer to that question. I personally don't think so. But I can just tell you about one event. I planned to organize a meeting under Pope Benedict on melting glaciers. By the time we got to organize the meeting in 2014 (Pope Benedict) stepped down and [Pope Francis stepped in](#).

At the end of it, I was asked to brief the pope. Unfortunately that day he had only two minutes. So, I mentioned to him just on one thing, which is 'what's going to be the plight of the poor?' Climate change was caused by pollutants from the wealthiest billion around the world. But the poorest three billion who have not even discovered fossil fuels. They were still using primitive energy. I told him these three billion are going to suffer the worst consequences. He seems to have immediately got that (message). A year later he spoke about climate change extensively. In fact, [there was a famous statement he made](#). "If you hurt nature, nature will hurt you back."

When he released encyclical, I consider that the most influential document on us as human beings protecting nature. Scientifically it's very accurate. I challenge any climate scientist to look at [Laudato Si, his encyclical](#), and find anything there which he or she doesn't agree with. It's stuck to the rigors of the science. Perhaps that may be because of the influence of the Pontifical Academy of Science.

There's one statement says, "Cry of the earth should be heard with the cry of the poor." That's how he synthesized all of climate change into one sentence.

Kelly: So where does the science and the spirituality intersect with this issue?

Ramanathan: This being my mantra, the thing I'm pushing last five years, more so after my interaction with Pope Francis, is that in the context of climate change we have reached an important fork on the road. Which is, if you ignore the science and go one way, my own science tells me I foresee destruction. Suffering on mass scales. Now we are talking about three quarters of the planet getting impacted if you let these pollutant emissions go unchecked for the next 30 years.

So where does spirituality fit in? Because of our inaction to stop this climate change, it has become a huge moral, ethical issue. Three billion (people) who have nothing to do with this (the cause of climate change) are going to suffer the worse consequences. The change, which is already happening, is going to get worse. They're irreversible on our time scales. Once you have the sea level rise 10, 15 feet, it's not going to go back for another several thousand years. So generations of our children, grandchildren, and their children, they're going to suffer the worse impacts of our actions. It's the huge equity issue, which puts it right in the laps of faith leaders.

Kelly: You're in the center of the United States and you have a faith community here often with roots in Christianity. They also can be traditionally politically conservative. This is where some of those ardent skeptics of climate change can be found these days, too. What would your message be to one of those congregations in Nebraska?

Ramanathan: First I want to challenge on one topic you mention that the Christian community is conservative. I found in my interaction last five years the Christian community is

tremendously unified in protecting creation. They call it creation, I call it nature. That's where I find that we can come together science, policy and religion.

The fundamental challenge I face in talking with churches and with evangelical groups which I have done, is to separate the politics from the science of climate change

Kelly: If part of the tenant is science comes in opposition to biblical teaching, that's a huge hurdle for you to overcome. That their faith is in conflict with your science.

Ramanathan: I've learned from the Catholics that being good stewards of the planet is part of the teachings. I've interacted with the president of the American Evangelical Association who oversees 30,000 churches. He reassures me, being good stewards of the planet is [part of the evangelical theology](#) too. So, I have so far not seen that resistance.

Kelly: There is a certain band of Christian belief that says this is just [God's will](#) and this is the course that God's intending. Your response.

Ramanathan: That's very difficult for me to understand because when the testaments were written, the whole issue of we damaging the planet beyond recognition was not there.

If God created us and God created our ecosystem, how can one part of that system destroy the other part? If you think of both as creation, then the issue of this as God's will, it's very difficult to justify.

Kelly: Nebraska is a state built on generations of farm families and a strong agricultural economy. Weather and climate, long range climate are part of people's lives and a big chunk of this state. What is the responsibility of American agriculture in addressing this issue?

Ramanathan: The issue that concerns me is how are (rural farmers) going to be impacted by this climate change? What we are predicting, the extreme weather, is going to get a lot worse because we are creating new climate. As the American Meteorological Society said, we are expecting huge heat waves exceeding 130 degrees Fahrenheit. Then we're predicting huge droughts. Not the drought that comes one or two or three years and go away. Lasting for ten years.

We need to work with the farmers in Midwest and the Great Plains region, to advise them what to expect. How do they adjust their agriculture practices?

How can they contribute? I think the main thing is conserve water use. It's not going to plentiful. Prevent greenhouse gases escaping from your farm, for example. The manure is a major source of greenhouse gas escaping. What can they do about? Very simple. Put them in bio-digesters, so the manure becomes biogas, which they can use for power. There are a lot of low hanging fruits, win-win solutions the farmers can adapt.

Kelly: When you look at this data, are there times you are already convinced that it's too late?

Ramanathan: Not at all. If it was too late, I would never be giving this message to the public. Then I'm doing a great disservice, right? Fortunately there's still time. Climate change is going to get worse, but at least 50% worse than when we were experiencing but it's not going to be catastrophic if they start cutting down the emissions. Starting today. Not 20 years from now. Not 15 years from now. But today. We have about 15 years from now to bending, what I call bending the curve. If we all start and unite, just like America unified before second World War, we just need that repeated.

Kelly: If the United States does do a better job of its preparation but there are still global effects on food supply in these other nations, even if America sustains itself, what are the impacts from food supply shortages back on this country?

Ramanathan: Let's assume America can deal with this. That's exactly what I thought until I saw what's happening to California last five years. I thought of California as the super technology, super rich amongst the U.S. This whole drought and fire of last five years has brought us to our knees. I'm not at all clear that if the changes happen on the scale many of us would do well, but a lot of the population are going to get hurt.

Let's assume that America can cope with this. Yet the burden on this is going to be huge. Just focusing on the three billion poorest population, they earn \$1 a day, they depend on the next day's paycheck. Throw a five-year drought on them and I see how the world is unable to deal with one million Syrian refugees. There's no governing system. I'm talking about hundreds of millions. Fatalities, displacement, migration. It really worries me, concerns me.

Kelly: Last question. You're a little boy growing up in India. Other little boys thought they were going to be an astronaut or an actor or a cricket player. When you were growing up did you say, "I'm going to grow up to be an advisor to the pope?"

Ramanathan: It's funny you ask. I grew up in small towns in India, spent most of my time in villages of my grandfathers. I had only one dream, when I came to America, not to pursue science. Definitely not climate change science. Not to pursue higher studies. I wanted to own a Chevy Impala. And live the American good life.

Kelly: Have you gotten it yet?

Ramanathan: It's my fate I worked on climate change. I could never buy that Impala. If Chevy makes an electric Impala with batteries, I have solar in my rooftop, first thing I would do is buy that Impala.

Listen to this story here:

<http://netnebraska.org/article/news/1117893/popes-climate-expert-tells-nebraska-audience-its-issue-laps-faith-leaders>

February 27, 2018

New project to challenge Catholics to reduce carbon footprint, care more for environment

By Mark Bowling
Catholic Leader

A project aimed at healing, protecting and caring for our common home is to be introduced in parishes and Catholic agencies across Brisbane archdiocese.

Called Living Laudato Si', the project will draw on Pope Francis' 2015 encyclical – Laudato Si': On Care for Our Common Home – and will challenge Catholics to make practical changes to the environment around them.

“We want people to really understand the breadth and depth of what Pope Francis was saying (in Laudato Si') and to embrace the notion of ‘ecological conversion’, as Pope St John Paul II called it,” Brisbane archdiocese’s Catholic Justice and Peace Commission executive officer Peter Arndt said.

“It will include challenges to people to make practical changes – reducing their carbon footprint, reducing our waste, caring for the natural environment – and maybe supporting poorer people who are facing the challenges of environmental damage like climate change.

“We are seeing Queenslanders in the Torres Strait, as well as people in the Pacific, who are facing serious problems because of climate change.”

Mr Arndt is a member of a newly formed Living with Laudato Si' steering committee, headed by Auxiliary Bishop Ken Howell, which is considering how Catholics could get involved.

“We really expect to dive into the six chapters of Laudato Si' one at a time ... then we'll start to look how we can roll it out in parishes, schools and agencies in the second half of 2018 and beyond,” he said.

“We are not starting from zero. There's a lot of action already being taken, so in many cases we'll be building on what is already there.”

The former director of Catholic EarthCare Australia Jacqui Remond will work as a facilitator on the project.

Mr Arndt ranks environmental protection as a crucial issue for Brisbane's Justice and Peace Commission.

He spoke at a #Stop Adani anti-coal mining rally outside Queensland Parliament House on February 13, at which he advocated for alternatives to burning fossil fuels to reduce global warming.

“My speech was to address the concerns around employment and to say that one of the ways we can address the issues of concern to people in central and north Queensland is to build on the good work developing large-scale clean, renewable energy projects,” Mr Arndt said.

“Queensland is now the leading state with twenty large-scale projects in operation and more than five thousand full-time jobs – so that is quite a significant number directly employed there.”

<http://catholicleader.com.au/news/new-project-challenge-catholics-reduce-carbon-footprint-care-environment>

March 2, 2018

Religious investors welcome Midwest utilities' action on climate change

By Dennis Sadowski, Catholic News Service
National Catholic Reporter

Washington — Two religious communities have withdrawn shareholder resolutions filed with Midwest electric utilities after the companies announced they would publish climate risk assessment reports.

Officials at Michigan-based CMS Energy Corp. and WEC Energy Group of Milwaukee recently said their firms would publish an assessment looking at the long-term business impacts of limiting global warming to less than 2 degrees Celsius (3.6 degrees Fahrenheit), the standard adopted by the Paris climate accord.

The resolutions had been filed by the Sisters of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Aberdeen, South Dakota, with CMS Energy and by the School Sisters of Notre Dame, Central Pacific province (based in the central U.S.), with WEC Energy.

Corporations schedule annual meetings in the spring, giving shareholders the opportunity to file resolutions on which votes are taken in an attempt to shape company actions not just on social issues but business-related concerns as well.

The companies realized that it made sense from a business perspective to adhere to the Paris guidelines and work toward further reducing their greenhouse gas emissions, explained Frank Sherman, executive director of Seventh Generation Interfaith Coalition for Responsible Investment, of which the religious communities are members.

Sherman said it's unlikely that the resolutions from the religious orders alone persuaded the utilities to act, but that together with other investor voices, the companies realized it was important to align their business interests with the need to address climate change.

"The more enlightened companies recognize that their religious investors are the canary in the mine," Sherman told Catholic News Service. "It's happened with climate change, supply change

and human rights, and a host of social and environmental issues that eventually become front-page articles."

Presentation Sister Ruth Geraets called the companies' step "a big thing."

She said her congregation remains concerned about U.S. plans to withdraw from the Paris accord and the planned rollback of the Clean Power Plan, which called for significant reductions in power plant emissions by 2030.

"It's up to shareholders to put before corporations how important it is to work on less emissions," she told CNS.

The Notre Dame sisters were pleased to learn WEC Energy agreed with the congregation's view, said Tim Dewane, director of the province's Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation Office.

"For us, we think it is in the strategic best interest for the company. It also makes sense for the common good and care for creation," he said.

"For us, we're about educating, advocating, and acting with others to make this world a better place. We recognize if we're going to deal with climate change, it requires individual action, government action and private action," Dewane said.

The discussions the order had with company officials opened the door to meetings on other issues as well, he added.

CMS Energy announced Feb. 19 that is planned to reduced carbon emissions by 80 percent and no longer use coal to generate electricity by 2040. It said that it expected to produce more than 40 percent of its energy from renewable sources and energy storage within the same time frame.

The company in 2015 was the 21st largest emitter of carbon dioxide among U.S. power generators. Since then it has retired seven of its 12 coal-fired plants.

WEC is the 22nd largest U.S. utility and the 13th largest carbon dioxide emitter, according to the Interfaith Center on Corporate Responsibility, of which Seventh Generation is a member.

ICCR said in a news release that WEC had set an emission reduction target for 2030, but had not provided information on how to reduce its carbon footprint to align with the 2-degree scenario.

The investor groups and the congregations planned to monitor the company's actions to ensure that their commitments are met.

<https://www.ncronline.org/news/environment/religious-investors-welcome-midwest-utilities-action-climate-change>

March 5, 2018

Ottawa's conservation plan puts Indigenous people in charge of protecting land

By Gloria Galloway
The Globe and Mail

The federal government will ask Indigenous people to take on the job of protecting vast regions of Canadian wilderness after this week's budget promised "historic" investments in nature conservation.

Environmentalists, who praise Ottawa's decision to spend more than a billion dollars to meet the country's international biodiversity targets, say the Inuit, the Métis and the First Nations are eager to accept the official role of stewards of the land.

It is one, they say, that falls naturally to first peoples whose traditional territory encompasses most of the remaining undeveloped area of Canada, and who have both the traditional knowledge required to do the work and a personal stake in ensuring that the conservation projects are a success.

"They want to do it in a way that respects their culture, their history and their connection with the land, allowing them, for example, to harvest [natural resources]," Environment Minister Catherine McKenna said Wednesday in an interview with The Globe and Mail. "That's extremely important to them. And co-management is extremely important to them."

Finance Minister Bill Morneau has allocated \$1.3-billion over five years to be used to protect species at risk and to implement broad recovery plans. That will pay for the expansion of national wildlife areas and migratory bird sanctuaries, as well as the management of protected areas and national parks.

As expected, gender equality was a major theme of the 2018 federal budget. The budget includes new measures aimed at encouraging greater participation of women in the work force, along with a program to encourage more men to take paid parental leave.

The investment includes a \$500-million Nature Fund that Ottawa says will pair with matching funds from provinces, corporations and not-for-profit organizations to buy private lands, to support provincial and territorial conservation efforts, and to build the capacity of Indigenous people to conserve lands and species.

Under the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity, Canada has pledged to protect at least 17 per cent of its land and inland waters by 2020. The money in the budget should pay for what is needed to meet that commitment. But the Liberal government says it is also an investment to address reconciliation with Canada's Indigenous people.

Ms. McKenna pointed out that the federal government has already negotiated a number of conservation agreements with Indigenous people and said there are many models that the Inuit and the First Nations have adopted to play key roles in those efforts.

In 2015, the Thaidene Nene national-park reserve was proposed in a 14,000-square-kilometre swath of boreal forest and tundra on the eastern end of Great Slave Lake. It is co-managed by the Dene who are sharing their cultural heritage with visitors while protecting a vast area of the country's northern wilderness.

The 9,700-square-kilometre Torngat Mountains National Park in Labrador is being co-managed by Inuit, the staff is Inuit and the Inuit are protecting the endangered caribou herds.

And, in Gwaii Haanas National Marine Park Reserve on Canada's west coast, young Haida people who are part of an Indigenous Guardians Program are protecting the region but also introducing people to their culture and their connection with the land.

Some of the money promised by Ottawa could be used to train more Indigenous Guardians in other parts of the country, Ms. McKenna said. "Indigenous peoples are already engaged when it comes to species at risk," she said. "Indigenous peoples are living on the land and they can help."

Valerie Courtois, the director of the Indigenous Leadership Initiative, a collective of Indigenous leaders who are working to strengthen Indigenous nationhood, said the \$1.3-billion commitment is "historic" and is exactly what the members of her group hoped to see in the budget.

In the past 20 years, Ms. Courtois said, the most creative, boldest and biggest proposals in terms of conservation and land use in Canada have come from Indigenous people.

Indigenous people across Canada "want to hold the pen on what happens to our lands," Ms. Courtois said, "because we have a responsibility to those lands and we have a right, as described in [the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples] to think about determining our future as a people and the way to do that, from an Indigenous perspective, is lands."

<https://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/politics/conservation-plan-puts-indigenous-people-in-charge-of-protecting-land/article38160267/>

March 6, 2018

'For us, land is life'

United Nations Environment Programme

It's a dangerous time to be an environmental defender. In [2017](#), 197 people – nearly four every week – were murdered for defending the environment.

To bring attention to this issue, UN Environment is launching today an [Environmental Rights Initiative](#), which aims to raise awareness of the links between human rights and the

environment. The Initiative will work with governments and non-state actors alike to help them promote, protect and respect environmental rights.

Dulphing Ogan, an indigenous leader from the Mindanao region of the Philippines, represents the kind of environmental defender that the initiative hopes to support. Ogan hails from a region where indigenous access to land has long been threatened by extractive industries and government overreach. To shed light on some of the issues facing environmental defenders, we asked him to describe his experience working in the region.

Tell us about yourself and where you come from.

My name is Dulphing Ogan and I am the Secretary General of Kusog sa Katawhang Lumad or KALUMARAN in Mindanao, which translates to strength of alliance of Lumad (indigenous) peoples in Mindanao. Our people face a variety of issues, but we are proud to say we are environmental defenders. We say “no to mining” and “no to logging” in our communities, to save the last remaining forests in Mindanao.

What are some key environmental issues on Mindanao?

Large plantations are a big driver of deforestation and forced displacements of indigenous communities. The problem is that the government and the Department of Natural Resources (DENR) are considering crops such as papaya and bananas a form of reforestation, despite the fact they are monocrops and are environmentally unsustainable. The DENR and companies support this and showcase this as a way of mitigating global warming. They use this strategy to get people to give their Free Prior and Informed Consent, or FPIC, which legally means that the indigenous peoples have been informed about the project and consent to it being implemented on their land. Thus, it's not always difficult for governments and corporations to get the consent of indigenous peoples and fool them into giving their FPIC, which opens the area up to destructive industries.

Once lands are opened to big corporations there are also environmental concerns like logging, mega-dams and destructive mining. Our stand is to resist these kinds of projects [and keep them] from entering our ancestral lands. As indigenous peoples, that's our biggest contribution to protecting the environment.

What are some of the biggest challenge you face as environmental defenders?

As indigenous peoples, many issues we face are interrelated. In places where outside interests want to exploit the land, environmental defenders from indigenous communities are accused with trumped up charges, threatened, and even killed. One recent example comes from the people of the Dulangan tribe. On 3 December 2017, eight tribal members were killed by government forces for resisting logging and coffee farming on their ancestral lands in the [Lake Sebu](#) area. This is only the most recent example of private industry being favoured over local communities.

Are there any possible solutions to the issues? Can communities, businesses, and the government coexist peacefully?

In fact, Lumads (indigenous people) have a system of sustainable agriculture, which counteracts the continuous degradation of the environment. At the same time, we have reforestation initiatives in areas where planting crops such as corn is not feasible anymore. We also plant root crops and timber trees in deforested areas and watersheds. It's a combination of protection and sustaining the economic needs of the people. The government should help local initiatives as well as allocate resources to help fulfill sustainable development programmes. What happens now is they prioritize big corporations, such as mining and logging, at the expense of the people. The government should support community projects that have proven to be environmentally sound and sustainable.

I think it's better to have businesses that can develop national industries that support local needs, not resource extraction for foreign export. For example, coconut farming could be developed as a sustainable and profitable industry, an alternative that benefits companies and communities. Businesses and indigenous communities can co-exist by building together national industries that support local needs.

Are indigenous communities the most effective stewards of the environment?

We are the remaining populations that value connections between nature and the people. For us, land is life. If you cut the tree, destroy watersheds, there will be no life. We are environmental defenders.

Learn more about UN Environment's [Environmental Rights Initiative](#).

<https://www.unenvironment.org/news-and-stories/story/us-land-life>

March 7, 2018

Lifestory: Evangelical Christian Makes the Case for Climate Change

By Sebastien Malo, Thomson Reuters Foundation
Sight Magazine

Katharine Hayhoe, a climate scientist and evangelical Christian, says she gets slammed every day on social media for her contributions to establishing that climate change is human-made.

But on Monday, she was welcomed with applause at a United Nations-backed climate summit in the capital of Canada's western province of Alberta, where polls show that climate scepticism rates are among the highest in the country.

Dr Hayhoe, a professor at Texas Tech University, has emerged in recent years as a leading voice sharing the science of climate change to sceptics - many of whom are fellow evangelical churchgoers.

A 2015 survey from the Washington DC-based Pew Research Center found that just one quarter of white evangelicals in the United States believe that climate change is caused by humans.

A separate Pew poll from 2016 showed that white evangelicals voted overwhelmingly to elect United States President Donald Trump, who has pulled his country out of the Paris agreement, a global pact to curb climate change.

But Dr Hayhoe said it is that same Christianity that fuels her dedication to climate science.

"I study climate change because I think it's the greatest humanitarian crisis of our times," she said.

"It exacerbates poverty and hunger and disease and civil conflicts and refugee crises," she told the Thomson Reuters Foundation.

Traits that have made Dr Hayhoe uniquely qualified to speak authoritatively in such conservative circles are best summed up by two accolades she has received.

For her work in explaining climate change, Dr Hayhoe has made *TIME* magazine's list of most influential people, and she was named one of the 50 Women to Watch by the evangelical magazine *Christianity Today*.

Her calling came "completely serendipitously."

Six months into her marriage, her husband, a linguistics professor, told her about his disbelief in global warming.

"You have somebody you respect and you also love, and you also want to stay married. I said well, 'Let's talk about it.'"

It took two years of discussion to agree that heat-trapping greenhouse gas emissions attributable to human activity are driving today's climate change.

The marital episode and her subsequent engagement with faith groups have firmed up her views that the traditional conservative tenet of small government - not science - usually explains why some resist the issue.

"(It's) not because they really have a problem with the science," she said. "It's because they have a problem with the perceived solutions."

"Taxes, government legislation, loss of personal liberty...that's the real problem people have."

Dr Hayhoe did not field any questions from climate change sceptics during her talk at the summit in Edmonton. And her message struck particularly close to home in a province that is Canada's main oil producer.

"The world energy system is undergoing an energy revolution...from old dirty energies that we have been using for hundreds of years to clean, endless sources of energy like wind," she said, in an interview after her speech.

"Oil and gas companies, they look down the road and they understand that the world is changing."

Under the Paris agreement, nearly 200 countries agreed to curb planet-warming emissions enough to keep the rise in global temperatures to well below two degrees Celsius above pre-industrial times, ideally to 1.5 degrees.

But without unprecedented action temperatures could rise above 1.5 degrees, according to a draft report by the UN's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change seen by Reuters earlier this year.

<https://www.sightmagazine.com.au/columns/lifestory/8908-environment-evangelical-christian-makes-the-case-for-climate-change-at-un-summit>

March 8, 2018

Pope chooses 2019 Synod of Bishops on Amazon theme, appoints council

By Carol Glatz, Catholic News Service
Crux

ROME — Pope Francis has chosen the theme and appointed members of the preparatory council for the Synod of Bishops for the Amazon region, which will take place in Rome in October 2019.

The theme, the Vatican announced March 8, is “The Amazon: New paths for the Church and for an integral ecology.”

The pope also named 18 members for the pre-synod council that will collaborate with the secretary-general of the Synod of Bishops in preparing for the special assembly next year.

A synod council usually prepares an outline and list of questions, which bishops’ conferences and other interested groups in the church respond to. The responses are then compiled and analyzed before a synod working document is prepared.

The synod will seek to hear the voice of those living in the Amazon region and identify new paths of evangelization, especially for indigenous people who are “often forgotten and left without the prospect of a peaceful future, including because of the crisis of the Amazon forest,” which plays a vital role in the environmental health of the entire planet, the pope has 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,” he said when meeting indigenous people in Peru in January 2018.

Rich in biodiversity, natural resources and cultures, the Amazon rainforest is the largest in the world, covering more than 2.1 million square miles in South America. The rainforest spreads across Brazil, Ecuador, Venezuela, Suriname, Peru, Colombia, Bolivia, Guyana and French Guiana.

Among the 18 new members of the synod council are three cardinals, 13 bishops, one nun and a layman — the majority of them are from countries in the Amazon region.

Council members include: Brazilian Cardinal Claudio Hummes, president of the Pan-Amazonian Church Network (REPAM); Ghanaian Cardinal Peter Turkson, prefect of the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development; Mexican Cardinal Carlos Aguiar Retes of Mexico City; British Archbishop Paul Gallagher, Vatican foreign minister; Sister Maria Lopes Dos Santos, a member of the Carmelite Missionary Sisters of St. Therese of the Child Jesus and delegate of the Confederation of Latin American Religious; and Mauricio Lopez, executive secretary of REPAM.

<https://cruxnow.com/vatican/2018/03/08/pope-chooses-2019-synod-bishops-amazon-theme-appoints-council/>

March 9, 2018

In Peru's Madre de Dios region, church helps indigenous peoples survive

By Catholic News Service
National Catholic Reporter

Arazaire, Peru — Bishop David Martínez de Aguirre Guinea of Puerto Maldonado listened as Harakmbut leader Matilde Tije described the predicament of her people.

In this hamlet of 110 residents, there is no school or potable water, and children are seen drinking Coke from bottles. Although the Harakmbut obtained land titles in 1977, 18 mining concessions have since been granted on these lands. People say mining activities have polluted their rivers with mercury used in the extraction process, and the government body responsible for supervising forest resources constantly imposes fines and pressures community members to stop their agricultural, fishing and hunting activities.

"How can we live if we cannot fish or hunt?" asked Tije, tears streaming down her face.
"Sometimes all we have to eat is plantains."

Currently, three members of the Arazaire community are in detention for failure to pay stiff fines originally imposed because illegal loggers cut down trees. And, recently, state officials have

ordered that each of the 22 families living here must pay the government 35 soles (\$10) monthly for the rainwater they use.

"The situation you describe is the reason why Pope Francis visited Madre de Dios," Martínez told her, referring to Francis' [Jan. 19 visit to the Amazon](#).

Madre de Dios, the Kansas-sized region in the Amazon forest on the border with Brazil and Bolivia, has been described as "*la periferia de las periferias*" (the edge of the edge). Francis' decision to visit highlighted the plight of indigenous peoples and a valuable rainforest that spans nine countries; both will be discussed at a special [Synod of Bishops](#) at the Vatican in October 2019.

About 29,000 of the province's population of 348,000 are members of 22 indigenous tribes. They are descendants of people chained and enslaved on the plantations during the 19th-century rubber boom denounced by Pope Pius X in his 1912 encyclical [Lacrimabili Statu](#).

Today, gold lures prospectors to scramble on the artisanal mines here. The gold rush has brought environmental degradation; human trafficking, as indigent young girls are tricked into working as prostitutes in the illegal mining centers; and violent clashes between armed groups vying for the most lucrative seams. Madre de Dios today has the second-highest homicide rate in Peru.

Caritas, the church's charitable agency, has worked with the Arazaire community to draw up a communal plan that sets out the collectively defined needs, priorities and proposals for income-generating activities. This key document is used as a baseline in all negotiations with the state or other stakeholders.

The church also is working to promote environmental and socially responsible initiatives to mitigate the damage wrought by uncontrolled mining activities. One such example of their help is in the settlement of Fortuna, where the people have opted for the creation of a responsible mining enterprise, Fortumil. The socially responsible gold-producing company, founded by 16 partners, is using minimal mercury, and profits benefit the entire community of 40 families. No alcohol is allowed here and prostitution is banned.

The Peruvian bishops' social action commission and the U.S. bishops' Catholic Relief Services have provided advice on running a small business and have generally accompanied the process.

A further priority for the church is income-generating agroforestry initiatives that revitalize the soil. About 25 miles from the wilderness of La Pampa, an association of cocoa producers — accompanied and supported by Caritas — is selling cocoa, fruits and vegetables at international fair trade and local markets.

Such initiatives, as well as promoting environmental restoration, also support the inhabitants of the region; Martínez worries about conservation groups that fail to take into account the needs of the people.

"These people must fish and hunt to survive, and their activities are small scale and sustainable," said Martínez. "Environmental policies to protect the Amazon must include the survival of its peoples."

The bishop is hopeful that the 2019 synod will bring improvements for the indigenous peoples here. Church organizations are already preparing for the synod.

The Amazon Center of Anthropology and Practical Application, known by its acronym CAAAP, is preparing extensive consultations with the local indigenous peoples of all the Amazon regions in Peru. The 13 bishops of the Peruvian Amazon created the social organization in 1974.

"We hope that the synod will raise awareness that the Amazon region is not just a pantry to be raided for its resources, but a space to protect," said Martínez. "We are an Amazon church, with the Amazon at its heart. We have to ensure the peoples of the Amazon have a stronger participation in the church, and that their contribution shows us the face of Christ and can enrich us."

<https://www.ncronline.org/news/environment/perus-madre-de-dios-region-church-helps-indigenous-peoples-survive>

March 11, 2018

Clifton Diocese: Laudato Si' inspiring reflection and action

By Clifton, Mary Colwell, and Ellen Teague
Independent Catholic News

Catholic environmentalists Mary Colwell and Ellen Teague led a day of reflection on Saturday in Salisbury, focusing on the imperatives in the 2015 environment encyclical of Pope Francis - Laudato Si'. Around 40 people attended the event, 'Laudato Si': A Call to Action', organised by Salisbury Justice and Peace Group and Clifton Diocese Justice and Peace Commission.

Participants came from as far afield as Bristol, Bath, Rochester, and Swindon, and the day was ecumenical, with Quakers and Anglicans, including two Anglican priests and a strong representation from Salisbury Cathedral's Justice and Peace Group. "We have peregrines on the Salisbury Cathedral spire" reported one of them. An advisor to Catholic schools in Salisbury said she wanted "as a Christian to find out what my responsibilities are towards addressing justice issues and environmental problems". Others said they simply wanted to be encouraged in their work to care for God's creation. Many had already studied the themes in Laudato Si' and were active in promoting "ecological conversion". One was involved in Salisbury's Transition Town Movement and participates regularly in the international webinars of the Global Catholic Climate Movement.

Suggestions for personal change towards sustainable living included eating less meat, wasting less water and finding out more about virtual water. Using less plastic, particularly single use,

was moving up priorities and supporting green electricity and public transport. The Laudato Si' Prayer would be brought back to parishes and consideration given to celebrating First Communion and Confirmations by planting trees. The livesimply award programme and eco-church were discussed. Many are involved in planning for Earth Day on 22 April and for Creation Time 1 September - 4 October. There was interest in the 'Joy in Enough' programme of Green Christians which looks at sustainable living.

Mary Colwell, an award-winning producer of programmes on nature and the environment, lamented the disconnection between human society and the natural world. "To me, God created this extraordinary universe which blows our minds with power, energy, diversity, constant transformations" she said; "the natural world speaks to me of what a wonderful God we have".

She led a reflection on the view from the venue's extensive windows, which overlooked a busy roundabout with the green oasis at its centre and a Church by the road. The Church was constructed using flint, an ancient building material, and perhaps built on an older site of worship. Cars whizzed round the noisy roundabout, prompting reflection on busy lives and the failure to slow down and appreciate nature. Within the roundabout bulbs could be seen appearing in the grass and Indian bean trees swayed in the wind, but there was little human access to the site. However, "we instinctively put nature back in our lives" reflected Mary, who has led a campaign to protect disappearing Curlews.

With Laudato Si' Pope Francis has brought the Catholic Church to the forefront of the ecology movement, according to Ellen Teague of the Columban JPIC team. Pope Francis has added his extraordinary moral leadership to the fight against climate change, she said, quoting his words that, "the climate is a common good" and "there is an urgent need to develop policies so that, in the next few years, the emission of carbon dioxide and other highly polluting gases can be drastically reduced, for example, substituting for fossil fuels and developing sources of renewable energy". Pope Francis also says that, "living our vocation to be protectors of God's handiwork is essential to a life of virtue; it is not an optional or a secondary aspect of our Christian experience". Strategies for a solution demand an integrated approach to combating poverty, restoring dignity to the excluded, and at the same time protecting nature.

Ellen highlighted campaigns to tackle the commodification of natural resources, particularly water, and to urge the UK government to implement the Paris Agreement on Climate Change. She facilitated a group reflection on creation-centred spirituality, and quoted eco-theologian Thomas Berry's words that, "our fulfilment is not in isolated human grandeur but in our intimacy with the larger Earth community".

LINKS

Clifton Diocese Justice and Peace Commission

<https://cliftondiocese.com/departments/services-and-commisions/justice-and-peace/>
<https://cliftondiocese.com/faith/care-of-creation/>

ICN Review of Mary Colwell's Book on John Muir
www.indcatholicnews.com/news.php?viewStory=26792

<https://www.indcatholicnews.com/news/34498>

March 14, 2018

At Lekòl Jezi-Mari, little by little, the bird builds its nest

By Geri Lanham
Global Sisters Report

Notes from the Field includes reports from young people volunteering in ministries of Catholic sisters. A partnership with [Catholic Volunteer Network](#), the project began in the summer of 2015. This is our seventh round of bloggers: Viviana Garcia-Blanco is a Dominican Volunteer at the United Nations and Geri Lanham is a volunteer with the Religious of Jesus and Mary in Gros Morne, Haiti.

Giving directions to Lekòl Jezi-Mari, a primary school in the neighborhood zone of Fon Ibo, is a bit morbid. The first landmark is a mint green morgue, followed by the stump of a mango tree.

But then the landmarks change and become living and life-giving. As I walk along the dirt road, I pass living walls of cacti that mark a garden's boundaries and an attempt to protect the growing produce from the never-satisfied stomachs of the local goat population. Then I follow the final bend in the road and am greeted by the cheerful yellow-and-chocolate-brown walls of Lekòl Jezi-Mari.

There is no mistaking this place, with its large, bright buildings. It is a testament to permanence in an agrarian neighborhood of subsistence-farm families where people struggle to put food on the table each day.

As I approach, I see students looking sharp in their pressed sunshine-yellow and chocolate-brown uniforms. These 576 students are a living, breathing embodiment of Lekòl Jezi-Mari and the education they are receiving, which is a lifeline for many of their families.

The majority of these students come from low socioeconomic backgrounds. For them, the school is not just a place of book learning. It is also a place to learn life skills and to learn to interact with one another and with teachers who have compassion for them and who want them to succeed against the odds stacked against them. Some of these students will be the first in their families to graduate from sixth grade.

After an afternoon rain shower, I am always humbled to see how the older students pick up the younger students and place them on their backs to carry them across the muddy river that before the rain had been a road. No adult asks them to do this, but the older students feel a responsibility

to help the younger ones arrive at their destination. I do not have the balance to pick up anything or anyone on the muddy road, so I am in awe to see sixth-graders balancing a kindergartener in front, a second-grader in back, and their backpacks on their heads. These students may not be taller than me, but their sheer force of will makes them far stronger than me on this path.

Lekòl Jezi-Mari started under a mango tree in 1998. It was a group of children brought together by Claude Etienne and Jean Desinor, two community leaders in Fon Ibo who believe the children of the neighborhood merit a formal education.

Since that simple beginning, Lekòl Jezi-Mari has blossomed under the care of Sr. Pat Dillon of the Religious of Jesus and Mary, who has seen the school grow from a single classroom building to 16 classrooms today. The parish school is administered by the Religious of Jesus and Mary, and although it is a Catholic grade school, it welcomes students of any religion.

Sister Pat works tirelessly with Claude and Mèt Leny, the principal, to create a compassionate learning environment where the students can strive to achieve their potential. This includes engaging with the parents, many of whom are illiterate, to encourage them to support the learning of their children to the best of their ability.

When students have a scuffle on the playground that comes to blows, they do not face corporal punishment. The students face something much harder: a mandatory attitude adjustment. Mèt Leny hears both sides of the disagreement then sends the offending parties to sit under the mango tree to think about what they did. When they have calmed down and come to an understanding of how they will live together peaceably, they return to Mèt Leny and explain to him their solution to the disagreement. Lekòl Jezi-Mari students are challenged to learn and live the fact that one's right to swing one's arm ends when it hits another's face.

Lekòl Jezi-Mari students have some life-changing opportunities when they come to school. Thanks to the support of [Mercy Focus on Haiti](#), Friends of Haiti and [Fundación Juntos Mejor](#), the students enjoy a midday meal, which gives them the strength to learn. The lunch program is augmented with produce from the school garden, which is tended by the fifth-grade class.

Each week, classes spend at least one session in the solar-powered computer lab, where students use their math skills to save penguins from falling asteroids and do further research to expand their knowledge of topics in their history books. Students learn about their place in the world, and they are invited to think about how they will strive to change the reality of their neighborhood in order to begin to change the reality of their country.

There is a Haitian proverb, "*Ti pa ti pa zwazo fè nich*," which means, "Little by little, the bird builds its nest." Step by step, we change the world. The kindergarten teachers participate in a formation program called *ti pa ti pa*, since they are helping the children take their first steps into learning.

With the foundation they receive at Lekòl Jezi-Mari, these little ones will be able to grow into bright young people who will have the skills and the capacity to be life-giving agents of change

in their families and in their community if they can only find the opportunity to utilize these skills growing within them.

[Geri Lanham lives in community with the Religious of Jesus and Mary in Gros Morne, Haiti.]

<http://globalsistersreport.org/blog/gsr-today/ministry/lek%C3%B2-jezi-mari-little-little-bird-builds-its-nest-52536>

March 15, 2018

Papua New Guinea's first Cardinal says climate change is 'disaster' for his people

The Tablet

"Most of the islands are in danger," he told an audience at The Catholic University of America on Tuesday

People of the southwest Pacific Ocean nation of Papua New Guinea face severe threats from rising sea levels caused by climate change, the country's first cardinal said during a visit to Washington this week.

Cardinal John Ribat, archbishop of Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea, shared stories of his fellow Papuans who have been forced to move inland from ancestral lands along the ocean as rising seas have inundated their homes.

The same is true on hundreds of tiny islands throughout the Pacific basin, he told Catholic News Service yesterday, before a visit to Capitol Hill to plead for action to protect the environment and address climate change.

Ocean levels have risen in recent decades, overtaking low lying areas on tiny island nations and large land masses alike. Scientists attribute higher seas to melting polar ice as greenhouse gases from the burning of fossil fuels accumulate in the earth's atmosphere, causing the planet to warm.

"We are responsible to voice this...If nothing is happening to us in the way of help, our people will be faced with disaster," Cardinal Ribat said. The Catholic Church must accompany people who face any type of difficulty, he added.

Since being appointed the country's first cardinal in 2016, Cardinal Ribat has focused much of his ministry on addressing climate change. He has called the environment the most important issue for the Papuan Catholic Church to address because of the risks facing thousands of people in the country of 8 million.

"We're accompanying people through this," the cardinal said, calling climate change a family issue that connects the words of Pope Francis' apostolic exhortation on the family, "Amoris Laetitia," and his encyclical on the human relationship with the environment, "Laudato Si".

"The issue for us is the families are suffering," Cardinal Ribat said. "They are the ones that will be in more of a struggle."

Rising seas are affecting islands through the western Pacific, and Cardinal Ribat, who is president of the Federation of Catholic Episcopal Conferences of Oceania, said his fellow bishops agree that immediate action is needed to assist people who are being forced to relocate.

"Most of the islands are in danger," he told an audience at The Catholic University of America on Tuesday.

Drinking water also is at risk, he said. Some communities have seen their wells infiltrated by sea water, causing an increase in salinity, and some people have had to abandon traditional gardens, he said.

Cardinal Ribat arrived in the US to speak on the environmental impact of climate change at St Ignatius Loyola Parish in New York City on 12 March. A member of the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, he also received an award from the parish for his commitment to upholding the principles of Jesuit spirituality in his ministry.

He decided to add a stop on Capitol Hill, where, he said, he hoped that the stories of the climate challenges confronting average people will influence members of Congress to act to protect the environment.

The cardinal also expressed concern that US President Donald Trump had committed to withdrawing the country from the Paris climate accord reached in 2015.

"Pulling out of this is not realising the struggle we are going through," he explained. "I don't think they are fully aware of the costs of this. The pulling out by the president is so difficult for us to understand. We are the victims of what is happening."

Papua New Guinea is an overwhelmingly Christian nation. About 27 percent of residents are Catholic and 70 percent are Protestant. The remainder follow Baha'i, Islam or indigenous religions.

Cardinal Ribat's visit was coordinated by the Franciscan Action Network, Global Catholic Climate Movement, Catholic Climate Covenant, the US Conference of Catholic Bishops and Catholic University's School of Theology and Religious Studies.

<http://www.thetablet.co.uk/news/8738/papua-new-guinea-s-first-cardinal-says-climate-change-is-disaster-for-his-people>

March 16, 2018

In Midst of 'Immense Suffering' Caused by Climate Crisis, Caribbean Religious Leaders Call for

Debt Relief

By Jake Johnson
Common Dreams

Citing the destruction wrought by last year's [uniquely devastating Atlantic hurricane season](#) and other natural disasters, a group of Caribbean religious leaders issued a [letter](#) (pdf) on Friday calling on governments and international financial institutions to relieve the debt of island nations and allow them to devote their resources to meeting the needs of their citizens.

"Across the Caribbean, we still see immense suffering from the hurricanes that landed last year," Jubilee USA executive director Eric LeCompte said in a [statement](#) endorsing the Caribbean leaders' call. "Islands that are struggling to recover after natural disasters and meet basic needs of their people should not be making debt payments."

Signed by 22 faith leaders from several Caribbean islands, the letter notes that research "points to the fact that the growing severity of hurricanes in the Caribbean is related to man-made climate change."

"We in the Caribbean, like some other nations elsewhere in the global south, are least responsible for but most affected by climate change," the letter continues. "The few dozen small Island States across the world, for example, have neither the size nor developmental history to have been major contributors to current climate change. Yet these small Island States are the most easily devastated by rising seas and harsher storms. Our brothers and sisters who inhabit these places are in peril, through no fault of their own."

In order to be prepared for the next hurricane season and future disasters caused or made worse by the climate crisis, the faith leaders made three demands:

- Our own heads of state and government must unite and collectively demand the creation of an efficient debt relief option ahead of the next hurricane season through all available means, including the United Nations system and the Bretton Woods institutions.
- The IMF must use its rule-setting power to endorse a full debt moratorium once a hurricane or any other serious disaster brings destruction beyond a predefined level and make sure that a serious debt restructuring of all external commitments shall be possible under due consideration of our peoples' human rights.
- The Eastern Caribbean Central Bank and the Caribbean Development Bank must act as supporters of a comprehensive debt restructuring process once it is needed.

"As churches in the Caribbean we have witnessed the grief and despair of our people last September, and we are not prepared to enter the next hurricane season without at least being able to tell them that our authorities shall be able to use scarce resources for immediate relief and midterm reconstruction rather than debt service," the statement concludes.

<https://www.commondreams.org/news/2018/03/16/midst-immense-suffering-caused-climate-crisis-caribbean-religious-leaders-call-debt>

March 18, 2018

China is taking action to better protect its rivers

Feng Shuang, Editor
China Daily

The International Day of Action for Rivers has been celebrated across the world since 1997. Every year, on March 14, ordinary people raise awareness about the importance of healthy watersheds and the equitable and sustainable management of rivers. [\[Special Coverage\]](#)

China's rivers are an important part of its identity and heritage, having sustained Chinese people for more than 5,000 years. China's rivers have allowed the country to develop and prosper economically. They are important sources of food, energy and production of goods. By itself, the iconic Yangtze River contributes 73 percent of the country's hydropower while the provinces and municipalities in its basin contribute 42 percent of China's GDP.

Intensive development, however, has taken its toll on Yangtze and on all rivers in the country. The National Bureau of Statistics documented 50,000 rivers in China in the 1980s. Only 23,000 are left today. More than half of China's rivers have disappeared or become polluted. Travel to the countryside in China, and you will hear stories about the disappearance of these life-giving arteries. Look out of your window as you fly domestically, and you will see dry riverbeds where water once flowed. Protecting these powerful yet fragile life-support systems should be a strong focus to develop a "Beautiful China" by 2035.

There are encouraging developments. Measures are being taken to conserve the Yangtze River basin. In early 2016, China announced the creation of the Yangtze River Economic Belt which forbids any additional large scale development projects within one kilometer of a stretch of the Yangtze River, from Chongqing to Shanghai, as well as for the Yangtze's major tributaries. Large-scale heavy manufacturing and chemical plants already present are being forced to close or relocate.

Since the middle of last summer, over 200,000 river chiefs have been tasked and are being held accountable for the protection of China's rivers. River chiefs are government officials who have responsibilities related to water resource protection, pollution control and ecological restoration. There are billboards by many rivers with telephone numbers and QR codes so that citizens can report any water pollution or contamination.

In the past two years, provincial leaders in Southwest China's Yunnan province have taken important measures to protect the Nu River from large-scale and small-scale hydropower development. The Nu River is an ecological gem that hosts over 6,000 plant species, and supports 50 percent of China's animal species.

It is important that China continues to take leadership on river protection. Healthy rivers in China contribute toward regional stability and peacefulness among neighbors. China shares 110 of its rivers and lakes with 18 downstream countries, and 2 billion people depend on these rivers. In most cases, China controls the headwaters of these rivers.

Consequently, it is critical for China to manage these rivers in a consultative and cooperative manner and create transboundary environmental compensation mechanisms and transparent information sharing. China is building cooperation among Mekong countries by leading the Lancang-Mekong Cooperation Framework, but there is an urgent need for more collaborative leadership. Though it is challenging, these rivers provide opportunities for cooperation across boundaries.

China continues to play a large role in creating a more sustainable planet by pursuing an "ecological civilization" and more balanced growth. As China curbs climate emissions, it must be careful not to sacrifice rivers by exploiting them for their hydropower potential. Rivers are global carbon sinks and ensuring their protection means that they can remove more carbon from the atmosphere. Healthy rivers help us to be resilient in the face of climate change.

A new Ministry of Natural Resources is being set up to manage State-owned natural resource assets and the environment. This will be a breakthrough, since currently Chinese ministries have unclear and overlapping divisions of responsibilities and compete to manage the country's water resources and rivers.

Rivers are the arteries of China and are powerful representations of the Chinese nation. Keeping the rivers of China healthy and free-flowing will continue to sustain the Chinese people and downstream neighbors for generations to come. Keeping healthy rivers will also help ensure internal stability and peaceful relations with China's neighbors.

The author Stephanie Jensen-Cormier is China program director, International Rivers.

<http://www.ecns.cn/2018/03-18/296162.shtml>

March 18, 2018

Water Woes at Katas Raj

By Syed Muhammad Abubakar
Dawn

Legend has it that, after the death of his wife Sati, Lord Shiva cried so inconsolably that his tears formed a pond that came to be known as the Katas Raj pond. Around this pond, temples were built dedicated to the Hindu deities Shiva, Ram and Hanuman. It is the modern-day Lahore-Islamabad motorway that leads tourists to the arcane and sacred site. Situated in Punjab's Salt Range near Kallar Kahar (at an altitude of 2,000 feet), the Katas Raj Temple complex is

considered the second-most sacred shrine in Hinduism. The pond from the Hindu legend occupies an area of two kanals and 15 marlas, with a maximum depth of 20 feet.

The seven temples at Katas — believed to have been built around 650 and 950 AD — are connected to one another by walkways. The name of the temple complex is derived from the Sanskrit word ‘kataksha’ which means ‘tearful eyes’ and every spring and autumn, Hindu pilgrims from Pakistan and India visit the pond to bathe in it and ‘wash off their sins’.

The Katas pond drew attention last year when the Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) Mian Saqib Nisar [took notice of the drying up of the pond](#). He stated, “This temple is not just a place of cultural significance for the Hindu community, but also a part of our national heritage. We have to protect it.”

Located in the Salt range, the second-most sacred shrine for Hindus faces peril at the hands of industrial development

Water from this pond has been used to irrigate the orchards of loquats in Choa Saidan Shah, a small town and union council in Chakwal district. It also supplied water to the nearby town for drinking purposes but now its own survival is at stake, with unsustainable development threatening its very existence.

This is not the first time the water body has faced perilous conditions. In the early 2000s when cement factories began to be set up in the Salt Range, popularly known as Kahoon Valley — a rain-fed zone — the local communities started to experience a sharp decline in groundwater levels, as their bore wells started to dry out. The Katas Raj pond was no exception to this, and the pond slowly began to dry up. By May 2017, the water level of the pond was so low that it left the temple stairs, which were previously submerged, exposed.

Waseem Ahmed Raja, a resident of Chakwal has been fighting to save Katas Raj pond from drying up for years. He has suffered the wrath of those sitting in power corridors having been served non-bailable warrants and even having been barred from entering Chakwal on one instance. Raja explains that the pond began drying slowly in 2009 and, by 2012, had nearly dried up altogether. “The situation re-emerged in 2017 and since it is an internationally renowned site, the issue was highlighted [in the news],” he adds.

Raja explains that in order to ascertain the reasons behind the depletion of water in the pond, it is important to understand what led to this. He holds the cement factories, which became operational in 2007, responsible. “In October 2008, I filed an application to the Environment Protection Agency [EPA] that one of the cement plants prior to installation had said that they will bring water for their use from Malkana, a nearby village. They later deviated from their commitment.

“As I moved the application,” he says, “a site inspection was done on January 14, 2009, which confirmed that the factory deviated from their Environmental Impact Assessment [EIA], thus threatening the local flora and fauna. The District Officer Environment also confirmed that the springs of the valley are drying up but, in the end, the EPA gave an ambiguous verdict that the

deviation [from the commitment] had been proved but water scarcity could not be proved. The cement factory was then asked to plant 30,000 trees and stop causing pollution.”

In a report submitted to the Supreme Court, in answer to the CJP questioning the Punjab government for failing to safeguard the Katas Raj pond, the Punjab government admitted that an aquifer feeding the pond was depleting due to boring of tube wells by a cement factory.

The CJP advised the government that if the pond is drying due to groundwater abstraction by factories, an alternative water supply scheme should be found to spare the pond. “We have to find a solution as to how water can be provided to the pond. Even if we need to close down tube wells or halt the water consumption of the factories, we will do it,” he observed. A timeline was demanded of the factories for making alternative arrangements for water disbursement.

The National Assembly Standing Committee was told that these cement factories should be constructed on the other side of the valley, preferably in Lilla, as we knew that the pond at Katas Raj would dry up in a few years,” says former director-general of the Environment Protection Agency.

Asif Shuja Khan, former director-general of Pakistan EPA told *Eos* that when plans to build cement factories in Kahoon Valley were underway, he along with the then secretary to minister for environment strongly opposed the move for their construction, stating that a pristine environment will be devastated and all of its water springs will dry up, especially the Katas Raj pond. Despite their repeated warnings, Khan says, the EPA Punjab issued the environmental approval to the factories.

“The National Assembly Standing Committee was told that these cement factories should be constructed on the other side of the valley, preferably in Lilla, as we knew that the pond at Katas Raj would dry up in a few years,” adds Khan.

The CEO of WWF-Pakistan, Hammad Naqi Khan says that an EIA is a planning tool used worldwide to gauge whether a project should be undertaken or not. It is instrumental in identifying potential impact, alternate sites and processes that bear a sustainable environment in mind.

“Before the factories were established,” he says, “there was a plan to construct them in Lilla, a union council of Jhelum district, which was of course a viable option, and water availability was much easier, as the Jhelum river was close to it, but Chakwal was chosen due to proximity to the Lahore-Islamabad motorway.

“The present devastation of Kahoon Valley could have been prevented had the Environment Protection Department (EPD) and the project proponents incorporated WWF’s comments on EIA reports,” adds Hammad Khan.

“The Chief Justice of Pakistan has now expanded the scope of the investigation and ordered to submit a detailed report on how cement plants are affecting the entire area,” adds Raja who is also party in the case.

The Tehsil Municipal Officer (TMO) Choa Saidan Shah, confirms that the cluster of cement factories in the area has led to the depletion of water levels. “The main water source at Katas Raj adjoining the cement factories and the tehsil municipal administration of Choa Saidan Shah provides water to the inhabitants of the area. This practice was enforced on a daily basis, but now the provision of water is limited to every four days.” The report even stated that if the situation persists, this “barani [rain-fed] area will face drought in future.”

Local communities say that these factories, in addition to producing cement are also producing ‘clinker’ which was not included in the approved plan, which means that the factories are consuming more water than their approved limits.

Naseem-Ur-Rehman, director of EPD, recalls that when the Katas Raj pond dried up previously, it was revived after de-silting. However in 2017, when de-silting was no longer helpful, Rehman suggested engaging the engineering department to solve the problem.

Rehman argues, “It is not correct to say that the cement industry is solely responsible, as excessive water consumption by domestic users of Kahoon Valley is also a major reason.”

Rehman points to population bulge, climate change and unpredictable rainfall patterns as contributing factors. He further said, “The groundwater level across Punjab has gone down and there is a need for groundwater regulation.

“An alternate solution to reduce burden on groundwater resources of Kahoon Valley, and discussed previously as well, was to bring water from River Jhelum for the cement factories, which can now be considered. We have also asked the cement factories to draw only the required amount of groundwater,” Rehman adds.

URGENT MEASURES

Asif Shuja Khan thinks that prospects of saving the pond are bleak. “It is too late now,” he says, “as water depletion has exacerbated to unprecedented levels. However, the last hope of saving Katas Raj pond is to chalk out a master plan of its environmental protection, entailing a thorough EIA and its subsequent implementation. An Environment Management Plan should be devised by independent consultants and then create a fund which the cement factories should contribute to, along with introducing inverted wells in the area to improve groundwater situation.”

Though cement factories are major stakeholders in the valley, pumping out water for their use, a surge in population, changing agriculture patterns and increased plantation of fruits and vegetables, increase in domestic tube wells and rainfall variability, along with other sources, are also responsible for worsening the situation. The hydrological study which is currently underway by the provincial government can help fix responsibility on the factors behind the groundwater depletion of the sacred pond.

The issue is not just of Katas Raj pond but for the survival of the entire Kahoon valley. If the situation goes unabated, a time may come when the groundwater for the valley is depleted, triggering migration of the local population. This would be a sheer violation of the land rights of

indigenous communities, which have been duly recognised by the United Nations (UN). Moreover, it is open defiance of the international environment-related conventions, especially the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the UN's Paris Climate Agreement, that Pakistan is signatory to.

Syed Muhammad Abubakar is an environmental journalist. He tweets [@SyedMabubakar](#)

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1395457>

March 19, 2018

Iowa IPL Names New Director

Iowa Interfaith Power & Light

Iowa Interfaith Power & Light (Iowa IPL) has named Matt Russell, a sustainable agriculture leader at the Drake University Agricultural Law Center, as its new executive director.

Russell, a farmer and outspoken advocate for finding solutions to climate change, will fill the position starting in April. The Rev. Susan Hendershot Guy, the former executive director, left the organization in January to lead the national movement as president of Interfaith Power & Light.

“Matt was chosen to lead our statewide, faith based, grassroots organization because of his personal and professional commitment to care for creation,” says Brian Campbell, president of the Iowa IPL board of directors.

“Climate change is the greatest challenge of our time,” says Russell. “Iowa’s communities of faith play an unparalleled role in helping Iowans understand the moral imperative in solving this problem caused by human activity. I am excited and honored to lead Iowa Interfaith Power & Light into new opportunities, resources, and action.”

Under Russell’s leadership, Iowa IPL will develop a program to engage Iowa agriculture on climate change as well as continue its advocacy for sustainable energy policies and efforts to help Iowans reduce their carbon footprint.

Russell has spent his entire career with non-profit organizations in addition to eight years at USDA as a member of the Farm Service Agency state committee. Currently, Russell works as the Resilient Agriculture Coordinator at the Drake University Agricultural Law Center. He farms with his spouse in rural Lacona and grew up on a family farm near Anita. He received a bachelor’s degree from Loras College and studied for the Catholic Diocese of Des Moines at the University of St. Mary of the Lake, Mundelein Seminary in Illinois. He earned a master’s degree in Rural Sociology from Iowa State University.

Starting April 1, 2018, Iowa IPL's new director can be reached at director@iowaip.org and 515-689-1112.

<https://iowaip.org/2018/03/19/iowa-ip-names-new-director/>

March 21, 2018

The last male rhino of its kind dies. African religious leaders call it a spiritual loss.

By Fredrick Nzwili
Religion News Service

NAIROBI, Kenya (RNS) — Religious leaders who campaign for wildlife conservation are mourning the death of the world's last male northern white rhino, calling the subspecies' likely extinction a spiritual loss.

“We are staring at the extinction of the animal type, under our watch. I think it's a spiritual matter,” said the Rev. Charles Odira, a Roman Catholic conservationist priest from Kenya, where the rhino lived.

“I feel as if we have neglected our duty as stewards of creation and should have done more for this species.”

The 45-year-old rhino – named Sudan – was euthanized Monday (March 19) after suffering an infection and serious complications due to his advanced age. He was kept under armed guard at the Ol Pejeta Conservancy, north of Nairobi, and left behind two female white rhinos — a daughter and granddaughter.

The two offspring have health problems that mean neither can likely carry a pregnancy to term, and that they will likely die as the last of their kind.

Sheikh Ole Naado, deputy general secretary of the Supreme Council of Kenya Muslims, urged wildlife conservationists to take the lessons from the death of Sudan.

“It is a kind of warning that others are taking a similar path. It could be telling us that something bigger is happening — like the possible extinction of a community,” said Ole Naado, referring to the Maasai tribe to which he belongs and whose lands bridge Kenya and Tanzania.

Many Maasai fear encroaching government and commercial interests and the effects of global warming will compromise or obliterate their traditional way of life. But they themselves understand that they must co-exist with wildlife, said Ole Naado.

As religious leaders preach protection of the natural world, some spiritual beliefs are also part of the problem.

Many people in Asia believe that various body parts of rhinos, elephants and other endangered animals possess healing powers or bring luck. Poachers — driven partly by this demand — continue to hunt these species relentlessly.

While a few northern white rhinos roamed Africa wild in the 1960s, by 2008, they lived only in zoos around the world.

Campaigns against the use of elephants' ivory tusks for carving religious objects in Asia have met with some success, but the demand for rhino is still high. In countries such as Vietnam, a belief that rhino horn cures hangovers and cancer is widespread.

“Religious demand for wildlife products in parts of Asia has been a problem. We have talked to religious leaders in the region about how this is killing our wildlife,” said Odira.

“We believe God cannot commission the death of species that he had brought to life,” the priest added.

<https://religionnews.com/2018/03/21/the-last-male-rhino-of-its-kind-dies-african-religious-leaders-call-it-a-spiritual-loss/>

March 21, 2018

The Pacific Ocean, suffering servant

By Karan Varker
Global Sisters Report

What does the Jesus of Good Friday have to do with the Pacific Ocean?

In *Laudato Si'*, on Care for Our Common Home, Pope Francis writes, "In the Christian understanding of the world, the destiny of all creation is bound up with the mystery of Christ ... 'All things have been created through him and for him' (Col.1.16) ... the mystery of Christ is at work in a hidden manner in the natural world as a whole." Francis reminds us that our earth is a "mother who opens her arms to embrace us ... [but] we have come to see ourselves as her lords and masters, entitled to plunder her at will."

The Good Friday liturgy puts before us Jesus, the Suffering Servant: "He was despised and rejected by others, a man suffering and acquainted with infirmity; and as one from whom others hide their faces, he was despised and we held him of no account"(Isaiah 53:3).

Once I flew from New York to California. I had been away from Australia for some months. As the plane neared Los Angeles, I looked down and sighted the familiar, beautiful Pacific Ocean. I felt joy because I knew I was on my way home. I had grown up on the eastern coast of Australia, and the Pacific nurtured my love for the ocean, its life and those who live on its islands.

The islands of this ocean are home to many different peoples, speaking hundreds of languages. Some, like the Philippines, New Zealand, Indonesia and Japan are well-known.

Less known, yet equally important, are the people: Polynesian, Micronesian and Melanesian — all have lived in the Pacific for thousands of years. The Pacific has been the mother who protected and sustained them.

I spent considerable time during my ministry among the Melanesian and Polynesian peoples, whom I called "rainbow people" because of their colorful beauty. It was always a surprise and delight for me to learn about their cultures, languages and way of life.

I was particularly interested in their dancing, and their reasons for dancing; eventually I was able to tell their islands of origin by the way they danced. The Melanesian people of Papua New Guinea danced on serious occasions like funerals or at war dances — with much stomping of feet. In the Solomon Islands dancing was accompanied by flute and drums. In Polynesia, dancing was a joyous celebration of their culture and included wonderful arm and finger movements.

In living among these generous people, I learned that to survive I had to depend on them and trust them. Yet, I was often appalled at how they were treated. Many of these beautiful people can identify with Jesus, the Suffering Servant, as their needs are ignored and their countries exploited by the wealthy and powerful of the world.

While teaching in Melanesia on Bougainville, Papua New Guinea, I experienced the beginning of a vicious ten-years civil war, in which thousands of people died. In part it centered around the peoples' exploitation by foreign owners of one of the world's largest copper mines.

In the Solomon Islands, I saw foreign companies raping the sea with drift net and long line fishing; they were also logging the land, which resulted in disastrous mud slides. Local people showed me wrecked planes and tanks dumped by troops after World War II.

Because many Pacific Islands in Micronesia are low-lying coral islands, people are struggling with rising sea levels and the destruction of their homes due to global warming.

I taught in Samoa in the mid-1990s, during the latter years of the French nuclear testing. The people's main food crop, taro, became diseased with taro leaf blight, and I wondered if in some way this may have been connected to atmospheric nuclear fallout, as Samoa is only an hour's flight from French Polynesia.

Nuclear testing in French Polynesia had been done over several decades, and nuclear testing and nuclear waste are still contaminating the Pacific. Nuclear ballistic missiles are still being fired into the northwestern rim of the ocean.

In the same area, a tsunami caused one of the world's worst nuclear reactor disasters, and toxic waste from that is likely to be dumped into the sea.

Just recently, it was reported that highly contaminated radioactive nuclear waste is leaking on Runit Island, near the Marshall Islands, halfway between Australia and Hawaii. The waste had been buried by the USA in the late 1970s, under a vast 85,000 cubic meter concrete dome. This dome is now cracking and people who live on surrounding islands fear for their lives and for the widespread contamination of the Pacific Ocean and its food chain. It would likely be the largest nuclear cleanup in US history.

Closer to home, here in Australia, the Pacific Ocean offers us many great treasures. Among these is the World Heritage Great Barrier Reef. Sadly, so much of the reef is dying due to global warming, illegal poaching of fish, increasing numbers of the coral-eating crown of thorns starfish, and chemical run-off from agriculture and mining.

Mine run-off is a significant problem. There is fierce opposition to the government support of the development of the foreign-owned Adani Carmichael mine in Queensland, which would be the largest coal mine in Australia. The Sydney-based Climate Council of Australia recently warned the government that this mine would be a disaster for the Great Barrier Reef, for global warming and for people's health.

Another Australian treasure is our whales, particularly humpback whales. These amazing creatures make their mating journey annually from the Southern Ocean to the Reef. Afterwards the whales — including the mothers and calves — travel back to their home in the Southern Ocean, where they are facing major problems.

Because of global warming, Antarctic ice sheets may be melting more quickly than anticipated. Whales' major food source is the tiny krill that thrive in icy waters. As the ice melts, the migrating whales will be forced to travel much further south to their food source. The other danger is that they are still being illegally slaughtered by Japan, and perhaps for political, diplomatic reasons little is said about this.

As an Australian woman of Celtic origin, I have absorbed Christian Celtic spirituality in which the Divine presence was recognised in nature, landscapes and in the sacredness of everyday places. I have been influenced by Australian indigenous peoples' spirituality of the land, in which the earth is our mother from whom we come and to whom we return.

Reflecting on Scripture and theology has deepened and broadened my understanding of the presence of Christ, "the firstborn of all creation ... in whom all things have been created."

I have been influenced by the thinking of Teilhard de Chardin, who saw the cosmic Christ as the Omega point of all creation, and by Saint Francis, who called Water his Sister.

So I believe that a oneness exists between the sufferings of creation and those of Christ, the Suffering Servant.

I believe that the Pacific Ocean, with all its peoples and living creatures, reflects Jesus, the Suffering Servant. So I conclude with a simple poem I wrote about our connectedness with the ocean:

I've a passion for the sea, and it's renewed in me

Each time I stand and let it be a part of me.

[Karan Varker is a Sister of Charity of Australia. She has been a teacher in in Papua New Guinea, America Samoa and Australia, served as a principal in Australia and Samoa, and trained Catholic teachers in Samoa and the Solomon Islands.]

<http://www.globalsistersreport.org/column/spirituality-environment/pacific-ocean-suffering-servant-52711>

March 22, 2018

Cardinal Ribat raises concerns with rising seas, deep-sea mining

By Brian Roewe
National Catholic Reporter

Rising seas and new technology to mine beneath them are forefront concerns these days for Cardinal John Ribat of Papua New Guinea.

During a 12-day U.S. trip along the East Coast that concludes March 22, the head of the Port Moresby archdiocese on the South Pacific island nation has in numerous settings expressed his worry with the continuing impact of climate change on his and other islands, as well as the development of first-of-its-kind deep seabed mining in waters off his homeland.

Ribat, 61, has long spoken out about the impacts of climate change on the people of the Pacific islands, considered one of the ground zeros of global climate change, where rising seas have submerged portions of islands and have already led to communities relocating from their homes to nearby islands.

Last week, Ribat raised his concerns about climate change again on Capitol Hill in meetings with Sen. Edward Markey (D-Massachusetts) and officials for Sen. Jeff Markley (D-Oregon). Both sit on the Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works, and its subcommittee on fisheries, water and wildlife.

In their meeting, the cardinal pointed out on a map to Markey, who is Catholic, the locations of the islands as he described how rising seas have forced people to relocate farther inland every few years as the tides rise and come in farther themselves.

On Bougainville, one of Papua New Guinea's roughly 600 offshore islands, the diocese has offered a piece of land to help people resettle from the [Carteret Islands](#), which have shrunk under rising ocean tides. Ribat said that during a trip around Easter last year to Ahus and Andra islands he witnessed similar scenes of shorelines and agricultural lands that had washed away.

Sea level rise is driven by two primary factors: the oceans expanding as waters warm, and increased water mass due to melting ice from glaciers and ice sheets. According to [a climate science special report](#), published in November and compiled by 13 U.S. federal agencies, global mean sea levels have risen roughly 7 to 8 inches since 1900 — three inches since 1993 — with human-driven climate change making "a substantial contribution" during that period. Scientists project further rise of 1 to 4 feet by 2100 and have not ruled out a rise as high as 8 feet.

"When you're on an island, you get it, when you got to keep moving your house," said Franciscan Fr. Michael Lasky, who helped organize the cardinal's trip.

In the Capitol Hill meetings, Ribat also raised another problem accompanying rising tides: seawater seeping into the freshwater table underground and turning some crops inedible. "When they harvest them it's salty. They cannot eat them anymore because the sea is rising," he said.

Clean water impacted

The impact of rising seas on clean water came up as well during a meeting March 15 with officials at the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. He also reiterated concerns he shared with the senators' offices about new seabed mining technology set to begin next year in waters east of Papua New Guinea.

Nautilus Minerals, a Canadian-based company, in 2011 received a mining lease from the Papua New Guinea government for extracting deposits of copper and gold from the floor of the Bismarck Sea. [The project will be the world's first attempt at mineral extraction from the deep sea.](#)

The mining operation — which would occur 1,600 meters, or nearly 1 mile, under the sea about 20 miles off the western coast of New Ireland and 31 miles north of New Britain, both islands east of Papua New Guinea — is set to begin in 2019. According to Nautilus, the deposits of the deep sea Solwara 1 Field ("salt water" in the Tok Pisin language native to Papua New Guinea) contain copper and gold at grades much higher than typically found in land-based mines.

The potential mining site holds added significance for Ribat, who calls home Watom Island, off New Britain's north coast. While on the island at Christmas, fishers shared with him anxieties over how the mining may impact fishing grounds. During meetings with U.S. government officials, the cardinal described the seabed mining process as "taking the lawnmower over the reefs where people fish," according to Lasky.

Ribat told NCR he is concerned that the project does not include the necessary oversight and monitoring of any underwater mining operations, particularly since the machines would be remote-controlled from a large sea vessel, and that not enough is known at this point to what effects such mining will have on local marine life and people reliant on fishing and the sea for their livelihoods. A particular concern is the mining operation's proximity to a tuna breeding ground.

"There's no clear information about how or what the negative effect it will bring to the environment and also to the marine life that we have," he said.

In an [August 2016 statement](#), the Federation of Catholic Bishops Conferences of Oceania, of which Ribat is president, voiced their opposition to seabed mining, and instead endorsed sustainable development in coastal communities through tourism, fisheries and agriculture.

"The sea is a treasure for all and should never become a 'playground of exploitation,' " the statement said.

Ribat suggested it would be best "to delay this operation until we have people better prepared to assess and monitor this operation, so we're not destroying the environment for the sake of just testing this technology."

In an emailed response to NCR, a Nautilus Minerals spokeswoman called the Solwara 1 site "one of the best studied deep sea ocean sites on the entire planet," and said the company's work has been reviewed by external independent experts for the Papua New Guinea government and the International Seabed Authority.

"All of these reviews have confirmed that seabed mining has limited environmental impacts, and has positive net benefits," said Noreen Dillane, corporate communications manager for Nautilus Minerals.

She said that "independent expert observers" chosen in consultation with nearby provinces would be aboard the vessel to ensure compliance with the permit conditions. Its [environmental impact statement](#), completed in 2008, found there would be no impacts from mining on reefs or tuna fisheries, and that any impacts would be limited to a 27-acre area and beneath 1,300 meters (.8 miles) below sea level.

Critics of the seabed mining project contend there has been no independent environmental study and the present one contains gaps. In December, the [Guardian reported](#) that the Centre for Environmental Law and Community Rights, in Port Moresby, filed suit on behalf of several coastal residents over the operation, alleging that key documents were withheld and that residents had a constitutional right to that information. They have also questioned the relationship between Nautilus and the Papua New Guinea government, which holds a [15 percent share](#) in the Solwara 1 project.

Dillane said that Nautilus has conducted "regular awareness meetings" in the coastal communities near the project site and has reached more than 30,000 people through such programs since 2008. She added that information sessions were being held in the western coastal areas of New Ireland this week.

As for communication with Ribat, Dillane said Nautilus Minerals and the government have made numerous attempts to meet with him.

"To date the Cardinal has not accepted any of these attempts to meet in person to discuss the topic, and provide him with all the independent expert advice in person. Similarly, the Company has never been approached by the Federation of Catholic Bishops to provide information on the Project, or to discuss their concerns one on one," she said in an email.

The cardinal did not respond for follow-up comment.

Raising awareness

The cardinal said he hoped his visit to Capitol Hill and EPA headquarters would raise awareness of what's happening in the South Pacific and amplify efforts to address issues they're facing, given that other islands in the region are U.S. territories.

While also in Washington, Ribat, who was elevated to cardinal in November 2016, spoke about climate change and mining March 13 at the Catholic University of America, and later met with a group of roughly 80 religious seminarians to talk about his vocation.

Before departing for home, he was set to meet in New York with members of Franciscans International, the religious order's NGO at the United Nations, to further discuss sea rise and seabed mining. He was also scheduled to meet March 21 with Karenna Gore, the founder of the faith-based Center for Earth Ethics at Union Theological Seminary; Gore is also the daughter of former vice president and climate activist Al Gore.

It was an award from the Church of St. Ignatius Loyola, in New York City, that spurred the trip for the first cardinal of his island country. On March 11, Laetare Sunday, he presided at Mass and was honored with the parish's Loyola Medal, which recognizes people who have made significant contributions to their community.

"Our [parish] Lenten theme is healing," Elizabeth O'Sullivan told NCR. "And we believe that Cardinal Ribat's work in climate change, which is healing on a global level, is worthy of acknowledgement and worthy of honor."

Throughout his time in the U.S., Ribat has received updates from Papua New Guinea about the aftermath of an earthquake that rocked the island in late February.

In the early morning Feb. 26, a magnitude-7.5 earthquake struck the Southern Highlands province, that along with a landslide, [has killed at least 145 people](#) and displaced upwards of 35,000 others. The inland region is a remote part of the island, overlapping with the Mendi diocese led by U.S.-born Bishop Donald Lipert, which has made relief efforts and communication more difficult.

"The earthquake has been very devastating," Ribat said.

<https://www.ncronline.org/news/environment/cardinal-ribat-raises-concerns-rising-seas-deep-sea-mining>

March 22, 2018

Pastor mobilizes black churches to act on climate

By Diana Madson
Yale Climate Connections

His own church is teaching children how to care for creation.

Reverend Doctor Ambrose F. Carroll says that African American churches are not often associated with environmentalism. But he wants to change that.

So he founded [Green the Church](#), a campaign to motivate environmental action at black churches.

Carroll: “We are people of the African diaspora. We’re people who are ex-slaves, people who are migrant farmers, people who have spent eons with our hands in the ground, and even though we don’t talk the language of environmentalism, it’s really very close to who we are.”

At Green the Church trainings, workshops, and conventions, faith leaders teach pastors and other church representatives the religious importance of protecting the earth. And, they provide strategies for engaging churches in renewable energy, food security, and environmental justice.

Carroll says that action takes many different forms. For example, his church in Berkeley, California has switched to LED lighting and launched a program to teach children to care for God’s creation. He says the campaign inspires action, and shows that, in fact ...

Carroll: “The African American church is engaged.”

Listen to this podcast here:

<https://www.yaleclimateconnections.org/2018/03/pastor-mobilizes-black-churches-to-act-on-climate/>

March 23, 2018

Latin American bishops call for 'ecological conversion'

By Barbara J. Fraser, Catholic News Service
National Catholic Reporter

Lima, Peru — Less than two months after Pope Francis spoke out about environmental destruction in the Amazon basin during a visit to Peru, bishops from Latin America and the Caribbean have issued a pastoral letter calling the region's Catholics to an "integral ecological conversion."

The letter, published in early March, reflects on environmental issues in Latin America in light of "Laudato Si', on Care for Our Common Home," Francis' 2015 encyclical.

The Latin American bishops' council, CELAM, spent seven years drafting the pastoral letter, which will serve as input for the commission planning the Synod of Bishops for the Amazon, to be held at the Vatican in 2019.

The letter highlights "the serious consequences of the unbridled exploitation of natural resources and awareness that we must care for our common home," said Archbishop Pedro Barreto Jimeno of Huancayo, Peru, who oversaw much of its drafting.

The economies of many Latin American countries depend largely on exports of raw materials, especially minerals, the bishops note. Those countries experienced an economic boom over the past decade and a half because of high prices for oil, minerals and other commodities.

But while those revenues helped decrease poverty rates, the income gap in Latin America widened during those years.

Industries such as mining, oil and gas, timber production, industrial agriculture and large-scale energy projects cause "multiple impacts on the lives and health of people living near the projects, the environment and our entire region," the bishops wrote.

They called on business executives, government officials and investors to "prioritize the lives of territories and their people over any financial interest."

Governments must "fully assume their responsibility to protect the most vulnerable people and place the common good ahead of any private interest," the bishops wrote.

The pastoral letter reinforces ideas expressed by Francis during his encounter with indigenous people in Puerto Maldonado, a city in the Peruvian Amazon, during his January visit. The pope stressed the importance of safeguarding indigenous people's rights to their territories and the natural resources there.

The bishops emphasized that local communities must play an active part in decisions about development projects.

People today must safeguard the land, water and climate for future generations, the bishops wrote, because "justice demands that we give them a world fit for habitation."

On a page illustrated with a photo of Sister Dorothy Stang, a member of the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur who was murdered in Brazil in 2005 for her defense of small farmers' land rights, the bishops called for safeguards for "those who care for our common home."

The bishops wrote that those people "often are threatened, abused, repressed and imprisoned for proclaiming the good news of the kingdom and denouncing the gods of power and money."

"There are many martyrs in Latin America who have given their lives in the struggle for the defense of life," the bishops wrote. "Their blood is the seed of freedom and hope."

Caring for creation is the task of all, the bishops said, adding, "The important thing is to 'begin at home.'"

Individuals can take steps to conserve energy, recycle, consume less and waste less, they wrote, while Christian communities should "live their mission of caring for the earth and for the lives of people, particularly the poor."

<https://www.ncronline.org/news/environment/latin-american-bishops-call-ecological-conversion>

March 23, 2018

At global forums, church leaders advocate for safe water for all

By Lise Alves, Catholic News Service
National Catholic Reporter

Brasilia, Brazil — Erileid Domingues said most of her indigenous village has, at one time or another, fallen ill due to contaminated water.

Domingues said her village in the state of Mato Grosso do Sul is surrounded by large soybean and corn plantations that use agro-toxins in their crops, which eventually seep into the soil and make their way into the waterbeds, contaminating rivers and wells used by her Guarani-Kaiowa tribe.

"Our fish have become contaminated; we can't grow a vegetable garden because the water is also bad," she told Catholic News Service. "Days after small planes spray the plantations, water from our wells turns milky white and remains that way for several weeks. Many of us suffer from chronic stomach pains and allergies."

To tackle the question of global access to clean water, hundreds of experts, policymakers, nongovernmental groups and members of civil society came together for two water forums held in mid-March in Brazil's capital, Brasilia.

Access to clean water is a fundamental right must be a global priority, said Catholic leaders present at the 8th World Water Forum and the Alternative World Water Forum. Catholic

representatives spoke about the need to find ways to create a sustainable supply of fresh drinking water for all, especially the poorer populations around the world.

"We have a mission," said Msgr. Bruno-Marie Duffe, secretary of the Vatican Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development. "The church has the responsibility to protect human rights, to protect the poorer communities, and this also includes being able to make sure these populations have access to clean water."

Msgr. Duffe attended the official forum. He said that, although the Holy See recognizes the enormous contributions of local communities and civil society, it is also important to listen to policymakers and politicians and to encourage them to look closely at the water issues and invest in improving sanitation and water, even in the poorest and most remote regions of the globe.

"The reality is that we have many people that live in terrible situations. There is data from 2015 that shows that over 844 million people around the world have no drinking water, and that more than 2 billion people drink contaminated water," said the Vatican official, who has worked for many years on issues involving human rights and pastoral care.

"We have the technical capacity and technical means to treat, transport, and transform sea water into drinking water," he told CNS. "It is not a question of not having the knowledge, it is a question of political and moral will."

Auxiliary Bishop Leonardo Ulrich Steiner of Brasilia, secretary-general of the Brazilian bishops' conference, spoke at the opening session of the alternative forum.

"We are not discussing what we should be discussing, deforestation. Society is not concerned with water sources and deforestation," he said.

"Pope Francis believes that we need to compensate the debt we have with the environment by now taking care and cultivating land and water. We do not wish to explore, but to cultivate and take care of our lands and waters," said Steiner, referring to "Laudato Si'."

"This is our common home; we should take better care of it," he added.

Patricia Antunes do Reis, representative of the Catholic Climate Movement and Franciscan Action Ecology and Solidarity, said she believes society must monitor more closely the private sector.

"Almost 100 percent of productive activities need water, so it is necessary to seek a more equitable system for distribution between the consumption by the productive sectors and consumption by human beings. Currently, there is no such equity, and the sacrifices fall mainly on the average consumer, with little restriction put on big industries," she said during a session of the alternative forum.

Although at different forums, do Reis echoed the words of Duffe, saying that access to clean water "is not a question of lack of resources, but a political and economic option to benefit private interests."

Caritas Internationalis, the confederation of Catholic relief, development and service organizations, called on all sectors -- international organizations, affected communities, and the political and social sectors -- to pull together to tackle water challenges in a "holistic and multidisciplinary approach."

"Water scarcity conditions compound already difficult situations on social, political, ethnic and religious levels; this may lead to conflicts or forced migration, with disastrous consequences for the communities involved and neighboring states," said the statement issued by the agency during the alternative forum.

Caritas called on each country to accept its responsibility "to guarantee access to safe, quality water for everyone, especially the most disadvantaged."

For the Brazilian bishops' Indigenous Missionary Council, or CIMI, the demarcation of indigenous territory by the Brazilian government would also help the water issues in the interior of the country.

"The indigenous are known for taking care of their land, their rivers and their water," said Cleber Cesar Buzato, CIMI's executive secretary.

Buzato said tribes such as the Guarani-Kaiowa have been waiting years for the permanent demarcation of their land. He said they are making do in temporary villages surrounded by farms or cattle ranches and are unable to protect rivers and water sources, which once their ancestors revered and shielded.

"When our land is finally given to us we will be able to take care of it," said Domingues, adding, "We live because of nature, so we have to take care of nature."

<https://www.ncronline.org/news/environment/global-forums-church-leaders-advocate-safe-water-all>

March 24, 2018

From Ecuador's Amazon to president's palace, indigenous women demand end to drilling

Stabroek News

BOGOTA, (Thomson Reuters Foundation) – Indigenous women from Ecuador's Amazon rainforest have called on the country's president to end oil and mining projects on their ancestral lands, as the nation pushes to open up more of its rainforest to drillers.

Their meeting with Lenin Moreno at the presidential palace in the capital Quito late Thursday comes after the Andean nation launched a new bidding round this month for foreign companies to develop oil and gas reserves.

Ecuador, one of the smallest producers in the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), hopes to attract some \$800 million in investment to boost production that the government says is vital to improve its sluggish economy.

But women from Amazon indigenous groups say oil exploration damages their livelihoods, the environment and water sources on ancestral lands, and comes amid growing deforestation in unspoiled areas of the biodiverse region.

“We don’t want more oil and mining companies,” Alicia Cahuiya of the Waorani group told the president at the meeting.

“Oil has not brought development for the Waorani – it has only left us with oil spills and sickness.”

The women also told the president, who was flanked by several ministers, that the government was failing to consult properly with indigenous communities about planned oil and mining projects on their lands, a right they are entitled to under law.

“The oil and mining issue does not stop worrying me, because there is a future to take care of,” Moreno said at the meeting, which was streamed live on Facebook.

“What you are completely right about is the importance of dialogue consensus, dialogue decisions ... about any decisions of my government with respect to oil and mining concessions.”

The women presented the president with a list of demands they call the “Mandate of Amazonian Women”, which includes stopping oil, mining and logging projects, and conducting official investigations into attacks against indigenous leaders.

“I hope (the president) will take this mandate seriously,” Nina Gualinga, one of about a dozen women who took part in the meeting, told the Thomson Reuters Foundation.

Simmering tensions – including protests – between indigenous communities seeking to protect their lands and state-owned and foreign oil companies have been ongoing in Ecuador for decades.

The issue has come before the Inter-American Court of Human Rights, which in 2012 ruled in favour of Ecuador’s Sarayaku indigenous community in the Amazon.

The court said Ecuador had violated their right to prior, free and informed consultation before drillers in the late 1990s started exploration on lands where the Sarayaku people live.

“We will return to our communities and wait for a response from the government,” said Zoila Castillo, vice-president of the parliament of the Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of the Ecuadorian Amazon (CONFENIAE).

“If we do not receive a response in two weeks, we will be back,” she said.

<https://www.stabroeknews.com/2018/news/regional/03/24/from-ecuadors-amazon-to-presidents-palace-indigenous-women-demand-end-to-drilling/>

March 26, 2018

Irish missionaries aiming to plant a million trees in parched regions of Africa

Irish Examiner

Irish missionaries are spearheading a bid to plant a million trees as part of the re-greening of one of Africa's most parched regions.

The Republic has been invited by the United Nations to take a leadership role in helping deliver the Great Green Wall and combat desertification in a massive swathe of land south of the Sahara known as the Sahel.

The Laudato Tree Project, run by the Society of African Missions (SMA), hopes to create a lasting legacy from the Pope's visit to Ireland this August.

Irish President Michael D Higgins is expected to deliver a major speech on the issue of desertification and the country's response in Dublin today.

Don Mullan, a spokesman for the Society of African Missions (SMA), said: "As the emerald island, Africa's Great Green Wall gives Ireland an opportunity to establish a new beginning and demonstrate a new commitment to achieving promises made during the Paris Accord."

Africa's green wall, when completed, will span 13 countries. It will measure 8,000km long (4,970 miles) and 15km wide (nine miles).

The UN's proposal would also involve schools, parishes and community groups in planting trees in Ireland, increasing biodiversity and contributing to atmospheric improvement.

Mr Mullan added: "We will be asking the Government to consider matching every tree we plant in Ireland with 5-10 along the Great Green Wall."

The project takes its name from a 2015 papal encyclical by Pope Francis, *Laudato Si'*, on caring for the environment, and is intended to be a visible expression of the encyclical's intervention.

The Pontiff is visiting Ireland this summer as part of the World Meeting of Families in Dublin.

Mr Mullan said: "We are hoping that this will become a legacy project for the World Meeting of Families with the hope that the groups coming will bring the idea of the Laudato Tree Project back to their respective countries with the intention of increasing biodiversity at home while championing the cause of Africa's Great Green Wall.

"We are hoping this might become a world movement in support of Africa."

The executive secretary of the UN Convention to Combat Desertification, Monique Barbut, will meet the President and members of the Government this week.

Mr Mullan added: "The UN have put forward a major proposal to Ireland in terms of taking a leadership role in Europe and the international stage in helping progress, develop and accomplish the Great Green Wall."

He said: "Unlike the wall proposed along the US-Mexican border, this is a wall the whole world can believe in."

"It is about combating global warming and helping to provide food, jobs and a future for the millions of people who live in a region that is on the frontline of climate change."

Ireland has one of the lowest forest coverage levels in Europe and Mr Mullan said that needed to be increased to promote biodiversity and as a statement of intent that Ireland is serious about meeting its greenhouse targets and delivering on commitments made during the Paris Accord.

He and his colleagues are pressing for Government support as a way of redressing perceived shortcomings surrounding green energy use.

A range of views have been expressed about whether Ireland is on track to meet its 2020 renewable energy targets.

Irish government chief whip Joe McHugh is to co-ordinate a high-level ministerial meeting this week in Dublin with those behind the plan.

He said: "This is a hugely ambitious project and when you think about it, it's exactly the type of global response that's needed to tackle climate change.

"I've seen the impact on rural communities in Africa and at the heart of it, it's about protecting life and preserving livelihoods and communities in some of the hardest hit parts of the planet.

"It's time to open our hearts and minds to big ideas like this."

<https://www.irishexaminer.com/breakingnews/ireland/irish-missionaries-aiming-to-plant-a-million-trees-in-parched-regions-of-africa-834310.html>

March 28, 2018

Deep incarnation liberates all creation

By Marian Ronan
National Catholic Reporter

CREATION AND THE CROSS: THE MERCY OF GOD FOR A PLANET IN PERIL

By Elizabeth A. Johnson

256 pages; Published by Orbis Books

\$28.00

In January, *Scientific American* shared some disturbing news: Researchers had determined that between 1990 and 2015, concern about the environment and climate change had declined among U.S. Christians. Since the study didn't distinguish between denominations, and since Pope Francis' environmental encyclical, "*Laudato Si'*, on Care for Our Common Home," was published in 2015, you may find yourself hoping, as I did, that U.S. Catholics don't share this decline in concern.

Unfortunately, certain powerful theological paradigms going back well before the Reformation make such a distinction unlikely. In her splendid new book, *Creation and the Cross*, theologian St. Joseph Sr. Elizabeth Johnson takes on one of them: the notion that salvation is an exclusively human matter, having nothing to do with the rest of creation.

"What would it mean," she asks, "to rediscover the biblical sense of the natural world groaning, hoping, waiting for liberation?"

Johnson traces this dualism between redemption and creation back to the work of the 11th-century theologian Anselm of Canterbury and, in particular, to his "satisfaction theory" of salvation, as formulated in his book *Cur Deus Homo (Why God Became Human)*. Anselm's answer to the question, Johnson explains, is that Jesus had to become human and die on the cross to pay back what was due to God for human sin. This theory, we learn, has played a pivotal role in Christian theology and practice ever since.

But Anselm's satisfaction theory is an interpretation of the cross, not its only possible meaning. Like all interpretations, it is shaped by the social context from which it emerged, in this case, feudalism, where local rulers required subjects to make satisfaction — to pay — for breaking the law.

In contrast, Johnson proposes an accompaniment theology of salvation, in which Jesus' brutal death "enacts the solidarity of the gracious and merciful God" with all those who suffer,

including the poor, species that undergo extinction, and all the rest of creation. She traces this back to the creator God of the Hebrew Bible, the Holy One of Israel who promises liberation to the Israelites in Egypt and later in Babylon.

But this redemption is not some tradeoff, as the satisfaction theory implies, but a redemption poured out by a God whose compassion for us is that of a mother for her child, a redemption that causes streams to flow in dry land and wilderness to bloom.

It is this liberating God who sends Jesus, not to pay for our sins, but to bring good news to the poor, to proclaim release to the captives, to let the oppressed go free. But Jesus' proclamation of God's kingdom constituted a serious challenge to the Romans who ruled Israel during his lifetime. The cheering crowds who greeted him, especially during his entry into Jerusalem, as well as his confrontation with the moneychangers in the Temple, constituted such a threat to the unjust power of empire that the rulers crucified Jesus in order to silence him.

Yet, instead of death silencing him, the Resurrection made Jesus present to the disciples in an entirely new way, enabling them to take the liberating message of the compassionate God to the ends of the Earth and to all of creation. And through the early church's recorded memories of the crucified and risen Christ, this understanding of the cross as an expression of the compassion and mercy of God spread throughout the world.

The culmination of this accompaniment theology is something Johnson calls "deep incarnation." The creator God is, she explains, the God of all flesh, with flesh not signifying only sin, as the dualism between spirit and matter suggests, but the finitude and death suffered by all creation, including God's own son. With the Resurrection, this "flesh was called to life again in transformed glory."

Creation and the Cross concludes with a call to all of us to a conversion, in our actions as well as our beliefs, to love of the Creator/Redeemer of the whole world and the entire cosmos. Within this conversion, mistreatment of the Earth is as much a sin as mistreatment of other humans.

In order to repent, we must understand ourselves as members of the whole "community of creation," whose suffering is our suffering. The cross, then, is the icon of God's compassionate love for everyone and everything.

For all Johnson's disagreement with Anselm's satisfaction theory, she does show her appreciation for another aspect of *Cur Deus Homo*, and to such an extent that she actually imitates it: the question-and-answer format Anselm uses to make his theology accessible. Of course, no book is perfect, and in the case of *Creation and the Cross*, Johnson's interlocutor, "Clara," sounds, from time to time, suspiciously like a theology professor.

That limitation notwithstanding, the Q&A format, combined with Johnson's gift for clarity and strategic summarizing, makes this book an ideal tool for helping us all expand our understanding of redemption to include all of God's beloved creation.

In a review of this length, it is not possible to do justice to the range of biblical and theological sources Johnson draws upon to lay out her deep incarnation theology. The depth and accessibility of such material throughout the book makes *Creation and the Cross* an ideal resource for RCIA participants seeking to achieve an understanding of the faith.

But, really, given the feeble concern so many U.S. Christians feel for God's creation even in the face of increasing numbers of massive fires, extreme weather events, droughts and flooded cities, *Creation and the Cross* is a book we all need to read, and we need to read it soon.

[Marian Ronan is research professor of Catholic studies at New York Theological Seminary. Her seventh book is *Women of Vision: Sixteen Founders of the International Grail Movement*, co-authored with Mary O'Brien.]

<https://www.ncronline.org/news/environment/deep-incarnation-liberates-all-creation>

March 30, 2018

SE Asia's 'Environmental' Monks Need International Support

By Kalinga Seneviratne
Eurasia Review

A 76-year old Buddhist monk living on his own in his forest monastery in North-eastern Thailand has appealed for international help after receiving death threats from illegal loggers according to a report in Bangkok Post.

In neighbouring Cambodia, monks who are mobilizing under the banner of 'Independent Monk Network for Social Justice' have regularly put their lives in danger in fighting illegal logging operators who sometimes have the protection of government officials. They also spoke out July 2016 in an appeal via the German television network [Deutsche Welle \(DW\)](#).

The Germans were given access to film a workshop the monks conducted near Prey Lang – one of Cambodia's largest and evergreen woodlands. In the workshop the monks taught the local people how to use social media to protect themselves and the forests. Large parts of the forest has already disappeared paving the way for plantations and those that remains, illegal loggers are at work cutting tree after tree as government agencies that are supposed to protect the environment turn a blind eye.

In Thailand's Si Songhram district, illegal loggers are threatening to cut down trees in a forest that has over 1,000 old trees, which is ironically a part of a royal project to promote conservation. The monk, Luang Pu Kittiphong Kittisophon, abbot of Wat Pa Kham Sawang temple in Tambon Nakham has formally petitioned the local authorities asking them to help save the forest surrounding his temple that has over 1,000 Siamese Rosewood trees that are believed to be 2 to 3 centuries old.

The monk wants the provincial governor to step in to protect the trees, and has also called upon the local media to help him fight the logging gangs after shots were fired at night into a hut near to his own. He believes this is a warning for him to leave the forest temple so that the loggers can have their way.

Both in Thailand and Cambodia rural monks often “ordain” trees, chanting and wrapping them with the yellow robes so that devout Buddhists will not touch them. The ceremonies are large and well publicized in a hope to discourage loggers who might not want to make the bad karma of cutting down the forest around an ordained tree. But the greedy loggers and corrupt government officials – who sometimes include law enforcement officials – have no respect for such religious traditions.

In Cambodia – which has one of the world’s highest de-forestation rates – Buddhist monk Buntenh who has been a monk for 16 years, told DW that he is trying to convince the people that the world cannot exist without trees. “The people who cut down the forest think they are superior, but in reality they are stupid. Only the forest is superior,” he argues. “No one has told me that I should go out there to protect the forest, but for me it was a logical thing to do. I am doing all I can to save it. I plant new trees, I help the people who live from the forest, I am reminding the government of the promises they’ve made.”

Bhikku Buntenh’s network consists of over 5,000 monks, and they believe that saving the forests needs to be fought with the same passion and determination as the fight for independence against the French in the 1950s. But, this time they may have to fight their own government that is indifferent to the environmental concerns of the people.

In Cambodia, Buddhism has undergone a miraculous revival after it was almost destroyed by the genocidal Khmer Rouge regime in the 1970s. Today over 90 percent of the people consider themselves as Buddhists and the orange-robed monks enjoy great respect.

Thus, as activists they enjoy a certain amount of protection from government crackdowns against civil society protest groups. As Bhikku Buntenh told DW, the monks are speaking out because it is the peoples’ right to live in a healthy environment with trees and nature. It is what their religion also encourages.

Cambodian strongman, Prime Minister Hun Sen has spoken publicly in support of the monks’ concerns and he even gave the police permission to use rocket launchers and helicopters in the fight against illegal logging. The monks, however, remain sceptical.

Meanwhile in the Buddhist kingdom Thailand, following Bhikku Kittisophon’s petition to the provincial governor Somchai, he has visited the temple accompanied by local police, military and forest protection officials to discuss with the monk measures to protect him and the surrounding forests.

In 2017, the 120-rai forest has become part of a forest protection project implemented by the Royal Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn, but the monk has told the Bangkok Post that although he has complained to the local police about logging activities there, no serious attempt has been

made by the police to deal with the logging gangsters. Instead the loggers have made threats against the monk, which made him to go public regarding the issue.

The governor has asked the rural community to work with the local authorities to share information to fight the loggers and emphasized the importance of the local community taking an active role to save the environment.

In Asian Buddhism, forests have been a tangible part of Buddhist practices for centuries. The monks see the forest as one of their closest connections to the teachings of the Buddha. The Buddha spent over 6 years in the forests of India gathering wisdom, and was enlightened under the Bodhi tree. For centuries monastics have used the forests as a way to truly understanding the Buddhist path and the spiritual well being of the population.

But, in the modern world of greedy consumerism, these monks need international support in identifying the perpetrators of these environmental vandalism, who are usually foreign companies working in tow with corrupt local politicians and government officials, and perhaps mounting international campaigns to boycott their products – some of the forests are cut for palm oil plantations – and businesses. International organisations and media could also help to name and shame corrupt politicians, whom the local monks may not be able to do.

<https://www.eurasiareview.com/30032018-se-asias-environmental-monks-need-international-support/>

March 30, 2018

Faith-based group launches Asia Pacific faith-based coalition for sustainable development

World Vision International

BANGKOK - World Vision in partnership with ACT Alliance, Islamic Relief Worldwide, Soka Gakkai International, Arigatou International, and Asia Civil Society Partnership for Sustainable Development launched the Asia Pacific faith-based coalition for sustainable development during the [Fifth Asia Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development](#) on March 28, 2018, Bangkok Thailand.

The coalition was formed to amplify and engage with the voices of faith communities in Asia Pacific, focusing contributions on achieving the SDGs, represented by different faiths towards achieving sustainable development and peace.

"Faith-based organizations are unique as they are able to represent their faith communities on issues of social justice, enabling organisations and faith leaders to come together and effect change inside and outside of their communities," says Norbert Hsu, World Vision Regional Leader in Asia Pacific.

At the forum, representatives from different Faith-Based Organisations (FBOs) in the region tackled the importance of bringing FBOs in advancing development goals and how best to engage them at local, national and regional levels to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

“We have seen results of advocacy efforts at regional platforms, of joint capacity building initiatives at regional levels engaging faith leaders. Another is by developing faith-sensitive materials, collaborative regional research of how FBOs can work together, organizing some big events, faith-inspired action as well as joint position papers around critical issues like climate change,” says Masud Siddique, Head of Asia Region of Islamic Relief Worldwide.

During the panel discussion, the group emphasized that encouraging faith-based groups to tap opportunities and participate in more dialogues are valuable to share common goals. The group also challenged FBOs to prioritise the vulnerable groups and build up efforts in making communities resilient and socially cohesive to achieve sustainable development.

“Some challenges are unique to the entire region (Asia Pacific) while others are more specific to subregions, countries or communities. So as we move forward in our joint efforts, we could explore flexible approaches and arrangements based on the needs,” says, Hiro Sakurai, Director of the Office for UN Affairs, Soka Gakkai International.

John Patrick Murray, the representative from National Catholic Commission on Migration added, “At the core of our faith is social justice, social teachings, and those teachings both give us a guide and motivate us to action and they motivate faith people through faith to act in their world.”

In response to coordination and working alongside with UN and Civil Society Organizations in addressing issues, Shinji Kubo, UNHCR Representative suggested, “Dialogue is the most important tool for us. So I really believe that the FBOs should find a way to mobilize their communities to work together especially by disseminating what these SDGs are.”

Moving forward, Anselmo Lee representative from Asia Civil Society Partnership for Sustainable Development, suggested to come up with a simple policy review of why SDGs matter for people from different religions and faith. “We need to come up with a good narrative and capture stories on how different religions can work together to achieve the SDGs,” says Lee.

On March 28-30, 2018, the Fifth Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development, is engaging member States, United Nations bodies, other international organizations, major groups and other stakeholders in highlighting regional and sub-regional perspectives on the theme of the high-level political forum in 2018, “Transformation towards sustainable and resilient societies”.

The forum will support the presentation of voluntary national reviews and will assess the progress made with regard to the regional roadmap for implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in Asia and the Pacific.

The Member States, major groups, and other stakeholders and representatives of the international community will be invited to share their views and recommendations to improve implementation of the SDGs and quality of data to assess progress in Asia and the Pacific Region.

World Vision Background

World Vision is a Christian humanitarian organisation conducting relief, development and advocacy activities in its work with children, families, and their communities in nearly 100 countries to help them reach their full potential by tackling the causes of poverty and injustice.

World Vision is the convener of the Asia Pacific faith-based coalition for sustainable development this year.

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April 6, 2018

Islam's green future: Inside Europe's first eco-mosque

By Anna Pukas
Arab News

CAMBRIDGE: Green is the color of Islam and also the color that symbolizes eco-friendly, sustainable living.

A building under construction in Cambridge seeks to marry both in what will be Europe's first eco-mosque.

The project is 10 years in the making and has tested the ingenuity of architects and engineers. But it is on track to open in early 2019 not only as a place of prayer but also a space for teaching and welcoming people of all faiths.

“It is a place for the whole community, not just Muslims,” said Tim Winter, a lecturer in Islamic studies at Cambridge University.

Winter converted to Islam almost 40 years ago, taking the Arabic name Abdal Hakim Murad. He has studied in Egypt and Saudi Arabia and performed Hajj three times. His day job is lecturing in Islamic studies, but his other passion is the mosque.

A place for Cambridge Muslims to worship in is long overdue. According to the last census in 2011,

Cambridge is home to 8,000 Muslims, but that figure fails to take into account overseas students at the two universities (Cambridge and Anglia Ruskin) and 50 language colleges, or the growing number of “new Muslims.”

At last count, there were 100,000 Muslim converts in Britain.

Cambridge has five mosques, but none is purpose-built and all are too small. For years, worshippers have made do with rented halls, often spilling out into the corridors or street. So, 10 years ago, Winter established the Cambridge Mosque Trust, a registered charity dedicated to raising funds to build a mosque that was fit for purpose.

It was also his idea to make the mosque as “green” as possible. Care for the environment is important in Islam, but the eco-mosque should also keep the bills down, too.

In 2008, the trust acquired a one-acre derelict site for £4 million in Mill Road, an area of Cambridge with a significant Muslim population. The city council unanimously granted planning permission and, in 2009, an international architectural competition was held to find the right design.

A jury with representatives of the trust, the Muslim community and an architecture lecturer chose a design by London architects Marks Barfield, the firm behind the London Eye.

Winter gave Arab News an exclusive tour of the project. Even in its half-finished state, the building looks breathtakingly lovely. Curved timber supports shaped like trees hold up a latticed ceiling. The walls will be clad in honey-toned gault bricks with red bricks in relief. Entrance to the mosque from the street will be through a garden and open portico with Turkish marble tiles featuring a geometric design.

As well as a prayer hall holding 1,000 worshippers, the complex will have a restaurant, teaching spaces, a room for weddings, an exhibition area for local artists (of any faith), and two four-bedroomed apartments for a resident imam and the center’s director.

At the rear of the building will be a fully fitted mortuary for those taking their last journey, and another garden with a play area for children.

The mosque's green credentials are impressive. The timber supports are made of Scandinavian larch wood from a sustainable forest. The complex has underfloor heating and rainwater collection points on the roof. Water from the ablution areas will be recycled for use on the garden and for toilet-flushing.

The roof will be covered in sedum moss, which improves insulation and provides an environment for insects and birds to thrive. Heating and hot water will come from photovoltaic panels donated by a local businessman. A sophisticated heat pumping system will identify pockets of warmer air and constantly adjust the overall temperature.

“As technology improves over time, we should be able to reduce our energy costs even more,” said Winter.

The complex also has eight boxes for swifts. These will provide a habitat for a species that is endangered in Britain and also evoke the sight of the birds that circle the Suleiman mosque in Turkey.

“It's called ‘creation care’ —

acknowledging and respecting the order in nature created by a higher being,” said Winter.

Raising the £22 million cost of the project began with crowdfunding and has continued with private donations. Some have been sizeable — a million riyals from a Saudi princess, an even larger sum from an Emirati, and substantial sums from a Muslim group in Hong Kong — but most are small amounts from individuals.

“We carry out due diligence for anything over £10,000. We have to be sure where the money is coming from and there must be no strings attached. It would be hard to say no to requests or demands if there are strings,” said Winter.

He hopes the mosque will host parties of schoolchildren and other visitors “coming to learn about a religion that is misrepresented and misunderstood.”

The Cambridge community has been almost entirely supportive, he said. “The only opposition has been from the far right. There have been two marches organized by the English Defense League and the police operation was the biggest ever in South Cambridgeshire. The people in the march were not local, they were bussed in. The local people are all on our side and we had a spike in donations afterwards.”

The prayer hall has two spaces for women: one an area with partial screening at different heights “for those who require it” and a gallery upstairs “for those who want a grand view of what's going on.”

Cambridge has a long association with Islam, dating back to traders and scholars in the Middle Ages. After the Crusades, masons came from Syria and worked on English Gothic architecture.

More recently, Muslims began arriving in the 1950s and 1960s, mainly from Bangladesh and Pakistan. Today, there are also sizeable contingents of Turks, Kurds, Algerians and Kazakhs, as well as “new Muslims.”

“At last count, there were 100,000 converts in Britain,” said Winter.

Sunnis and Shiites will worship together at the new mosque “as they do in most places.” The imam will be chosen carefully. “There is no place for sectarianism or radicalism here.”

Winter, 57, is a founder of the Cambridge Muslim College, which trains British-born imams (and where he is known by his Arabic name Abdal Hakim Murad). A widely respected scholar, he is frequently included in the list of 500 most influential Muslims published by the Royal Islamic Strategic Studies Center. Shepherding the mosque project is clearly an act of faith, but it is also a labor of love.

“I want this to be a place that brings people together and benefits not only Muslims in Cambridge but anyone from anywhere who comes here,” he said. “This is not a place to keep Muslims apart but a place for the whole community to enter.”

As to what form the grand opening will take or who will officiate, Winter said there are no firm plans yet.

A member of the royal family, perhaps? “I really don’t know — although we do have a Duke of Cambridge, don’t we?”

<http://www.arabnews.com/node/1279731/world>

April 9, 2018

Baptism is our call to care for water

By Martha A. Kirk
National Catholic Reporter

In this Easter season, when we were blessed again with the waters of baptism, do we have eyes to see the sacredness of water? May we who have passed through the waters of baptism recognize that as our call to speak and work passionately so all in our global family may have clean water.

What if I had a day without water? No coffee, no toilet, no water to brush my teeth, no refreshing drink at the water fountain in the hall between classes, nothing to wash the dishes and the clothes

— not to mention the dirt on my windshield — no water along the way as I bike a few miles, no water to make the soup for supper, no hot shower (not even a cold one).

I could endure a day, but what if I were a mother with small children in sub-Saharan Africa, where the deserts are increasing in size? Or what if I was one of the children I saw last summer in Chimbote, Peru, in a neighborhood without a clean water supply?

My heart was cracking open, and when I came home, I invited people in our city of San Antonio to be a part of the [Global Water Dances](#) movement, and join groups on six continents who are focusing on water issues.

We danced at the dry "Blue Hole."

Though my community, the [Sisters of Charity of the Incarnate Word](#), did not have enough money in the late 1890s to purchase the land around the headwaters of the San Antonio River from Col. George Washington Brackenridge, they worked hard to raise money over a period of years. They believed that being close to nature is educationally beneficial and spiritually renewing. People need to learn of nature and learn to care for nature.

Abundant springs once bubbled up from the [Edwards Aquifer](#), providing for the growing population and delighting sisters and students. The aquifer has been depleted and now the "Blue Hole," the largest of the springs considered sacred by the native peoples, is almost always dry.

Nothing but a dry hole is now at this place, the Headwaters of the San Antonio River, where students and sisters once enjoyed abundant springs and boating, circa 1907.

This was the beginning of the San Antonio River and it has drawn people for over 11,000 years. When there are very heavy rains, some water may come up for a while, but then the hole is dry again.

[World Water Day](#), observed annually on March 22, [reminds](#) us that 2.1 billion people live without safe drinking water at home, which affects their health, education and livelihoods.

Wars have been fought over power, land and oil. Now, life's most basic need — water — is causing escalating violence.

If we want a safe world, if we want a healthy world, now is the time to rally about the United Nations [Sustainable Development Goal 6](#), and work together to ensure that everyone has access to safe water by 2030. Budgets for water have more potential to contribute to global security than budgets for weapons.

Because water easily comes out of your faucet now, don't forget that the city of Cape Town, South Africa, is due to run out of water this year. Its [reservoirs](#) are nearly dry.

Let us consider that we may be called to the spiritual discipline of learning where local water supplies come from, or following state and national legislation relating to water issues — and using our individual and corporate influence to advocate for the wise use of it.

The theme of [World Water Day](#) 2018 was "Nature for Water." Many problems like damaged ecosystems can be helped by nature-based solutions.

And working for water may call us to global solidarity.

[Last year](#) at the [U.N. Commission on the Status of Women](#), we attended a session given by Lisa Uribe, director of [Women's Global Connection](#) — one of our sister's ministries. Lisa told a story about a girl in Tanzania who was often punished for being late to school, but she couldn't get there sooner because she had to carry water for her family.

Women's Global Connection started a rainwater-harvesting project to assist and encourage local women; now, there are 700 women in 60 villages harvesting rainwater. The little girl was profoundly grateful and could get to school more easily.

In the midst of the San Antonio metropolitan area of almost 2.5 million, our sisters are the guardians of a 53-acre nature sanctuary, the [Headwaters at Incarnate Word](#). This nonprofit Earth care ministry seeks to increase biodiversity and benefit local wildlife, offers educational programs for adults and children, and provides a sanctuary where people are encouraged to reflect and reconnect with the Earth.

As we let the Earth restore us, we can be better at restoring the Earth.

As we renew our baptismal promises and reflect on the waters of our baptism, may we deepen in our commitment to ensure life-giving water for all.

[Martha Ann Kirk, a Sister of Charity of the Incarnate Word, is professor of religious studies at the University of the Incarnate Word, San Antonio, and the author of [Iraqi Women of Three Generations: Challenges, Education, and Hopes for Peace](#), based on her exhibit of photos and interviews.]

<http://globalsistersreport.org/column/spirituality-environment/baptism-our-call-care-water-53106>

April 9, 2018

Native Americans, Fossil Fuels and Climate Change

By Tracey Osborne
Scientific American

Indigenous people are rejecting oil, coal and gas extraction in favor of renewable energy to save their land, increase employment and fight global warming

A historic number of Native Americans are running for political office this year in congressional, state legislative and gubernatorial races. Although candidates are running on a variety of platforms, candidates like Deb Haaland put the environment front and center. Haaland, who is making a bid for Congress in New Mexico, is committed to addressing climate change through a transition to 100 percent renewable energy. [“The fight for Native American rights is also a fight for climate justice,”](#) she said in an interview

In the U.S. Native American reservations represent [only 2 percent of the land but hold approximately 20 percent of the country’s fossil fuel reserves](#), including coal, oil and gas. Together these fuels are worth some [\\$1.5 trillion](#), according to the Council of Energy Resource Tribes. Whereas some have called for privatizing and exploiting native lands to unleash the economic potential of fossil fuels, many indigenous leaders from both the U.S. and other countries disagree with this approach.

Patricia Gualinga, for example, the international relations director for the Sarayaku indigenous community of the Ecuadorian Amazon, has traveled around the world to fight fossil-fuel exploitation—including the United Nations’ annual climate change meetings, where I first met her. Following the 2014 People’s Climate March in New York City she wrote in a blog: [“The Sarayaku indigenous people believe that instead of bringing ‘development,’ the oil industry is destructive for indigenous society, nonindigenous society, the planet and nature.”](#)

This worldview gives considerable weight to the social, cultural, ecological and sacred value of land over the purely economic, and it was evident in the Standing Rock conflict, where thousands of indigenous peoples and allies challenged the completion of the Dakota Access Pipeline. The project was suspended by Pres. Barack Obama, but under the administration of Donald Trump it was approved and completed last year. Oil has begun to flow under Lake Oahe, the main water source for local communities and a sacred site for the Lakota and Dakota peoples.

In addition to approving the Dakota Access and Keystone XL pipelines, the Trump administration has introduced numerous policies to promote fossil-fuel development as a strategy for job creation. To be sure, stimulating energy-related employment is important, but fossil fuels are the wrong place to look: It is well documented that the renewable energy sector is not only better for the environment but also better at job creation. According to a [World Bank report](#), wind and solar produce about 13.5 jobs per \$1 million spent in the U.S. compared with the 5.2 jobs created in oil and gas and 6.2 in coal.

Furthermore, according to the [U.S. Department of Energy](#), whereas the number of U.S. jobs in coal, oil and gas have declined in recent years, the workforces for solar and wind power increased by 25 and 32 percent, respectively, in 2016 alone. The future of employment in the energy sector—including construction workers, technicians and engineers—lies in renewable energy not fossil-fuel extraction.

This fact has not been lost on those advocating for renewable energy on native land. Given the current economic challenges of the coal industry in Arizona, exemplified by the scheduled closing of the Navajo Generating Station in 2019, Jihan Gearon, executive director of the [Black](#)

[Mesa Water Coalition](#), is calling for a transition to renewable energy on the Navajo Nation to create jobs and support tribal sovereignty.

Tribal sovereignty has been consistently undermined by fossil-fuel development, as evidenced by the Trump administration's recent unleashing of two million formerly protected acres in Bears Ears National Monument for oil and gas extraction. The monument was designated by Obama at the request of several Southwestern tribes including the Navajo, Ute, Paiute, Hopi and Zuni, who claim ancestral and ongoing ties to the land. Given the growing impacts of climate change, instead of opening new areas to drilling we should respect the demands of indigenous people and keep fossil fuels in the ground.

Honoring such demands would also dovetail with arguments by leading climate scientists that the best, perhaps only, way to reduce emissions is to stop extracting fossil fuels. According to [a 2015 study](#) by Christophe McGlade and Paul Ekins at University College London, more than 80 percent of coal, half of gas and one third of oil reserves must be left untouched in order to stay beneath the 2-degree Celsius upper limit for global warming set by the Paris agreement.

Meanwhile climate inaction carries an enormous price tag. Last year alone the types of extreme weather events likely to increase in a warmer world, such as Hurricanes Harvey and Irma, have cost the U.S. an estimated [\\$150 billion to \\$200 billion](#). Avoiding these costs will greatly strengthen the economy in the long run. This is even more evidence in support of a just transition to renewable energy that represents our best bet for protecting people and the planet.

It is time world leaders honor indigenous sovereignty over their ancestral lands and promote renewable energy as an important strategy for mitigating global climate change.

Tracey Osborne is a professor at the University of Arizona with expertise on climate change and Indigenous rights, Director of the [Climate Alliance Mapping Project](#), and is a Public Voices Fellow with the OpEd Project.

<https://blogs.scientificamerican.com/voices/native-americans-fighting-fossil-fuels/>

April 9, 2018

'It's our lifeblood': the Murray-Darling and the fight for Indigenous water rights

By Anne Davies
The Guardian

When the water levels of the Darling river fall, local elders in Wilcannia, [New South Wales](#), say, the crime rate spikes, particularly juvenile crime.

It seems like an odd correlation until the elders explain just how important the river is to their everyday lives.

“It’s boring here when the river stops running,” says Michael Kennedy, chairman of the Wilcannia Local Aboriginal Land Council. “It becomes a lifeless place. We can’t find the tranquilities and therapies of the river.”

The people of Wilcannia are Barkandji people. The Darling river is known in the local language as the Barka and the Barkandji are, literally, people of the river. The Darling has sustained them for thousands of years but now they say the river is in crisis.

Badger Bates, a Barkandji elder, says when he was a child growing up at Wilcannia, the river always had water.

“It might have only been a foot but it did not run dry as it does now,” he says.

Kerry King, an elder and a director of the land council, says: “It’s much harder to get a feed from the river.

“I used to go with my mother to collect duck eggs and catch ducks. Now the closest the kids get to a duck dinner is watching My Kitchen Rules.”

Now a major campaign is under way to give meaning to the idea of Indigenous cultural flows. A [major research project](#) documenting the case for cultural flows is due to be released around April. Representatives of Indigenous nations along the Murray-Darling river system have also stepped up their lobbying of federal politicians.

The Murray-Darling basin plan recognises Aboriginal people have a right to cultural flows for spiritual, economic and environmental purposes but in practical terms the concept of cultural flows remains just that: a concept.

In the same way as Indigenous people secured native title, this campaign to secure water allocations would enable Indigenous communities along the river to take part in the management of the river system.

A 2012 study undertaken as part of the Barkandji native title claim – one of the largest in Australia – found only 0.01% of water rights are under Aboriginal control.

“Back in 2015, the government gave us native title rights but no water rights,” Bates says. Exactly what quantum of water will be sought will probably hinge on the cultural flows project and the outcome of political wrangling.

Environmental flows are not the same as cultural flows, Bates says. There will likely be overlap in the objectives of a healthy environment and Aboriginal custodianship of water but a release for environmental reasons – say to flush a wetland – might not necessarily align with Indigenous environmental aspirations for the river.

Along the Murray, the campaign for cultural flows is further advanced.

The [Nari Nari Tribal Council](#), a not-for-profit Indigenous environmental conservation organisation, holds five water entitlements and manages 11,300ha of riverine land.

It has completed projects in cultural site protection, revegetation, bank stabilisation and water efficiency to the value of \$1.2m.

In 2001, the Indigenous Land Corporation, on behalf of the NNTC, purchased three pastoral leases, Toogimbie, Lorenzo and Glen Hope station, situated 40km west of Hay. These properties include regionally important environments such as plains rangelands, seasonal floodplain wetlands and an 18km riparian zone along the Murrumbidgee river.

The group leases land to a farmer and temporarily trades its high-security water licence to generate income for its environmental and cultural preservation activities.

Will Mooney, executive officer of the Murray-Lower Darling Rivers Indigenous Nations (MLDRIN), is at the forefront of a campaign that is seeking greater ownership of water rights by Aboriginal nations across the basin, which could be used by communities for cultural, environmental or economic purposes.

“We need policies that give voice to these aspirations,” he says.

When the cultural flows project is released, it may well redefine the water equation, which currently defines it as a balance between farming and the environment.

Several groups are planning to make claims for hundreds, even thousands of gigalitres of water in the Murray-Darling system to be put under Indigenous control.

The cultural flows project will include detailed evidence of Indigenous relationships with river systems and how water is used by Indigenous people, as well as an attempt to identify what sort of policy changes are needed to make cultural flows a reality.

Bates argues that, without control or access to water in the dry inland, native title can have only limited utility.

“What good is all that land if we don’t have a say in the way the river is managed? It’s our lifeblood,” Bates says.

Mooney also sees ownership of water as a way of building capacity in their communities, in dealing with water agencies and providing employment and skills in the same way that stewardship of land has created jobs as rangers.

Central to Barkandji culture, spirituality and teachings is that the Barka is home to the Ngatji (Rainbow Serpent), who created the lands and the rivers. The Barkandji are responsible for the Ngatji’s health and wellbeing, although they find this increasingly outside of their control under contemporary water governance arrangements.

“If we don’t protect the river, the serpent will get wild with us,” Bates says.

<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2018/apr/10/its-our-lifblood-the-murray-darling-and-the-fight-for-indigenous-water-rights>

April 10, 2018

Indigenous knowledge is critical to understanding climate change

By Timothy J. Greene
Seattle Times

As we prepare to join Saturday’s March for Science, please understand that by integrating traditional knowledge with Western science, we can solve some of our biggest challenges, including those brought by our changing climate.

Good science is critical to our health, ability to live full lives and community well-being. We use science to advance medicine, enhance our use of natural resources, ensure our food supply and much more. That’s why more than a million people around the world joined the March for Science in 2017 and why we are gearing up again to march for science on April 14.

Western science is just one way of knowing. Indeed, traditional knowledge and wisdom of indigenous peoples is recognized by the United Nations for its potential to sustainably manage complex ecosystems. Yet all too often, Western science has disregarded centuries of science-based knowledge coming from Native Americans and other indigenous peoples.

Indigenous peoples have lived in our particular locations for many generations, and we define ourselves in relation to our home environment. Our deep and long-standing relationships with the environment are unique; our very existence depends on our ability to conserve and maintain our lands and waters for future generations.

Today, tribes, First Nations, indigenous peoples and Aboriginals are sounding a loud alarm about the impacts of climate change. Rising sea levels, broken natural systems, and increasing fire and flooding are apparent and documented.

For example, stocks of many fish species like Pacific hake are sensitive to ocean temperature along the California Current, and recent declines in their numbers have serious implications for the well-being of my own Makah Tribe.

While others debate the causes of climate change, we who live close to the land are experiencing major impacts from our changing climate and call for immediate and strong action to protect the resources on which we all rely. We can’t afford to disregard indigenous knowledge about climate change.

Growing up as a member of the Makah Tribe, I relied on the empirical knowledge of my ancestors to determine where to fish and how to locate other sources of food. My community relied on indigenous experiences to understand how to keep ourselves healthy.

When I was a child, my father taught me to navigate our ocean territory through currents, tides and landmarks. This knowledge, along with the life cycle of fish and time of year, allowed for the successful, sustainable harvest of species such as halibut, black cod and lingcod. In the years that followed, my peers and I transferred knowledge to other members of the family who integrated the information into current fishing and management practices.

As a youth, I'd get up in the mornings, often before sunrise, and leave the house overlooking a beach. There was no backpack, no lunch box. I was taught what our land would provide through all the seasons: roots, berries, sea urchins and mussels, to name a few. The knowledge of how, where and when to harvest is a way of life, always done in a manner that ensures the resources are sustained for the next person. These teachings and values laid the foundation for the work I completed in tribal leadership.

To our north, Tlingit and Haida elders observe young herring following older herring to spawning grounds. When industrial fishing removes the elder herring from spawning sites, the stock is destroyed, as the young fish can no longer find their way home. Failure to heed these traditional observations is leading to the demise of herring and threatening aspects of Tlingit and Haida culture that are closely tied to herring.

A recent news item featured the astonishing observation that birds in Australia intentionally spread fire by carrying burning sticks. While this is fascinating, it has long been known to the Aboriginals. Using fire as a management tool is widespread throughout indigenous cultures. Makah is no exception. For centuries our ancestors used fire to manage crops of cranberries and tea. These resources are currently threatened by our changing climate, as well as the laws and regulations that govern the use of fire.

Respecting and embracing indigenous knowledge as important science benefits all of us. In looking for solutions to the environmental dilemmas that confront us, it is critical to apply indigenous knowledge. All of us are looking for a better understanding of the Earth and her ecosystems. By integrating traditional knowledge with Western science, together we can solve some of our biggest challenges, including those brought by our changing climate.

As communities worldwide prepare to March for Science, this focus is appropriate and important. Threats to scientific knowledge must be rejected, and decision making based on fact must be embraced. Equally important, we should also embrace 10,000-plus years of field observation by indigenous peoples around the world.

This empirical knowledge has sustained people and cultures and has laid the groundwork for many modern "discoveries." Indigenous peoples are truly the experts of their area and place, with a deep understanding of the interconnectedness of nature and our role in conserving resources for future generations.

Timothy J. Greene Sr. is a former chairman of the Makah Tribal Council and a trustee for The Nature Conservancy in Washington.

<https://www.seattletimes.com/opinion/indigenous-knowledge-is-critical-to-understanding-climate-change/>

April 11, 2018

Syracuse Symposium to Conclude with Visit by Writer, Zen Teacher David R. Loy

Boulder native will consider social, ecological implications of Zen Buddhism

By Rob Enslin
Syracuse University

[Syracuse Symposium](#) concludes its yearlong look at “Belonging” with a contemplation on the Buddhist concept of nature.

On Thursday, April 19, [David R. Loy](#), a renowned professor, writer and Zen teacher in the Sanbo Zen tradition of Japanese Zen Buddhism, will give a public talk titled “[Does the Earth Belong to Us, or Do We Belong to the Earth?: Buddhism and the Ecological Challenge](#).” The lecture is from 7-9 p.m. in Watson Theater (382-392 Waverly Ave., Syracuse). He also will lead a group meditation from 6-6:45 p.m.

The following day, Loy will lead a small-group workshop called “[Healing Ecology: A Buddhist Perspective on the Eco-Crisis](#)” from 9-11 a.m. in 304 Tolley. The event will explore in detail some of the ideas from the night before. Space is limited; registration is required. To R.S.V.P. or request special accommodations, please contact Jikyo Bonnie Shoultz in Hendricks Chapel at Bshoultz@syr.edu.

Syracuse Symposium is sponsoring both events, which are free and open to the public. For more information, contact the Syracuse University Humanities Center in the College of Arts and Sciences (A&S) at 315.443.7192, or visit humcenter.syr.edu.

While in Syracuse, Loy will participate in two other events, which are free and open to the public. On Saturday, April 21, he and Onondaga Clan Mother Freida Jacques ’80 will discuss “Buddhist and Indigenous Values and Perspectives on the Ecological Challenges Facing Us” from 11 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. at the Skā•noñh—Great Law of Peace Center (6690 Onondaga Parkway, Liverpool). The session includes a light vegetarian lunch.

On Sunday, April 22, Loy will celebrate Earth Day with a special Dharma talk from 10-10:50 a.m. at the Zen Center of Syracuse (266 W. Seneca Turnpike).

Additional support for his visit comes from Hendricks Chapel, the University’s Contemplative

Collaborative, the Department of Religion in A&S, the Student Buddhist Association in the Division of Student Affairs and the Zen Center.

“David Loy works at the unexpected intersections of Buddhism and secular society,” says Vivian May, director of the Humanities Center and professor of women’s and gender studies in A&S. “He is primarily concerned about social and ecological issues, and suggests that Buddhism says a lot about our personal and collective predicaments in relation to the rest of the biosphere.”

In addition to being a regular magazine contributor, Loy is the author of 13 books. His best known ones are from Wisdom Publications and include “A New Buddhist Path: Enlightenment, Evolution and Ethics in the Modern World” (2015); “The World Is Made of Stories” (2010), which Spirituality & Practice named one of the year’s best books; and “Money, Sex, War, Karma: Notes for a Buddhist Revolution” (2008), available in eight languages.

Loy is co-founder of the Rocky Mountain Ecodharma Retreat Center, near his home in Boulder, Colorado. He also serves on the advisory boards of the Buddhist Global Relief, the Clear View Project, Zen Peacemakers International and the Ernest Becker Foundation.

For more than 45 years, his work has straddled theory and practice. “He understands the dialogue between Buddhism and modernity, particularly the social implications of Buddhist teachings. This likely is an outgrowth of his philosophical education,” says May, referring to Loy’s Ph.D. in philosophy from the National University of Singapore (NUS) and M.A. in Asian philosophy from the University of Hawaii.

In addition to studying analytic philosophy at King’s College London, Loy has trained under Yamada Koun Roshi and Robert Gyoun Aitken Roshi, seminal figures in the Western expansion of Sanbo Zen, an international Zen school in Kamakura, Japan.

A professor of Buddhist and comparative philosophy, Loy has held appointments at NUS (Malaysia), Bunkyo University (Japan), the University of Cape Town (South Africa), the Hebrew University of Jerusalem (Israel), Radboud University (The Netherlands), Xavier University in Cincinnati and Naropa University in Boulder.

His visit coincides with Earth Day on Sunday, April 22.

“Without a better understanding of the ways in which we belong to and depend on the Earth, and greater awareness of other ways of dwelling on it, it is likely that our now-global civilization will remain unable to respond adequately to this new challenge,” May says. “Rather than thinking of ‘Belonging’ in dualistic terms—who belongs and who does not belong—David Loy offers a non-dualistic approach to understanding belonging and living.”

Organized and presented by the Humanities Center, Syracuse Symposium is a public humanities series that revolves around an annual theme. Programs include lectures, workshops,

performances, exhibits, films and readings. Located in the Tolley Humanities Building, the Humanities Center serves the campus community by cultivating diverse forms of scholarship, sponsoring a broad range of programming and partnerships and addressing enduring questions and pressing social issues.

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<https://www.chinadialogue.net/article/show/single/en/10562-The-litter-collecting-lama-of-Tibet>

April 13, 2018

The litter-collecting monk of Tibet

By Feng Hao
China Dialogue

A Buddhist lama and his local volunteers search for a solution to the growing piles of rubbish on the remote Qinghai-Tibetan Plateau

It's seven o'clock in the evening Beijing time, but out on the Ganjia grasslands, in [Xiahe county](#), the sun shows no sign of setting. Outside the yurts of Sirou village several marmots rest by their burrows, plump rears upturned, showing no fear of people.

I was enjoying this scene when Sangay Gyatso, sitting by my side, suddenly asked: "Do you know any Tibetan?"

"Um... Tashi delek [hello]?" I replied.

"Yes! The 'ta' in tashi delek means ecological balance," Sangay said, explaining that maintaining a balance between humans and nature is a central part of Tibetan Buddhist teachings.

Sangay is a lama (a teacher of the Dhamma in Tibetan Buddhism), with a degree from the nearby [Labrang Monastery](#). He believes that the ideals of environmental protection match up closely with the traditional culture and Buddhist thought he has spent years studying.

"The core of our traditional culture is the foundation and motive for my work on environmental protection here," said Sangay.

And his main task when protecting the environment of his home? Collecting litter.

Junk food creates junk

The Ganjia grasslands lie in the north-east of the Qinghai-Tibetan Plateau, a vast and fertile plain on the border of Gansu and Qinghai provinces, encircled by precipitous mountains. In recent years, livestock on the pastures have started dying inexplicably – and plastic food wrappers have been found in their stomachs.

In the past the herders ate meat and butter tea, natural foods, and any waste would naturally degrade. But with the growth of modern lifestyles, processed foods have become popular and herders discard the plastic packaging on the grasslands when they are grazing their livestock, polluting the environment.

Wandaïke, a Tibetan youth from the village, said much of the litter he sees isn't left by tourists, but by the herders themselves.

In 2013 Sangay founded the Ganjia Environmental Volunteers Association, building on existing local volunteer teams that clean up in and around Waerta village about once a fortnight.

The villagers thought they were daft and their families didn't understand. "Why are you doing that, you're not getting anything in return?" they said. Local volunteer Leihexi found the criticism hard to deal with at first, but he continued with his task: "When you see the sheep cut open and their stomachs are full of plastic, then you'll understand why we do it," he explained.

Grassland rubbish, water pollution

Grasslands across the plateau have been facing the same problem. It's a similar story in Yueguzongli, a grassland at one of the [sources of the Yellow River](#).

Rigzin Dorje is a local of Qumarleb village and one of the founders of the Sprouting Grain Association, an environmental organisation. He said that organisations come from all over China to work on environmental protection, community building and conservation – but actually litter is the most pressing issue.

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Rubbish is a particular scourge during the [big annual horse-racing festival](#). Young people and children love to drink soft drinks as part of the celebrations, but when the races are over metal, plastic and glass containers are left scattered across the ground. These are eaten by livestock or slowly leech toxins into the ground, polluting nearby water sources. And up on the high grasslands, nobody collects the waste for recycling. The litter sits there forever, with huge environmental consequences. The Qinghai Tibet Plateau is the source of Asia's major rivers and so this pollution will make its way downstream into China and other parts of Asia.

Wang Yongchen is the founder of Green Earth Volunteers, a group that documents the environmental problems along the course of the Yellow River and she has been visiting the river's source for [seven years](#). She explained that the rubbish problem has improved in recent years with the growth of volunteer litter pickers. In the past, waste was simply dumped by the river side, she said.

Sacred rubbish

[Gongbu Zeren](#) is a lecturer in natural resource management at the Southwest University of Finance and Economics. He believes the Tibetan traditions of circumambulation of sacred mountains, and making sacrifices in sacred lakes, are contributing to the mounting litter problem.

Ritual offerings are placed in ceremonial bottles, sometimes made of plastic, or wrapped in a scarf and then thrown into a lake. Those bottles have become one of the main sources of pollution threatening the local ecosystem, he explained. Scarves made from synthetic fibres and plastic bottles can take over a century to break down, during which the pollutants released threaten local plants and wildlife.

Sangay and his volunteers in Ganjia are aware of the problem and focus on areas around water sources and sacred sites during their clean-ups. An increasing number of people come to worship at two sacred sites, the White Rock Cliffs and a limestone cave set within those cliffs. Volunteers have set up signposts and started collecting litter along a circumambulation route. Government waste collection and disposal systems simply don't reach as far as these remote grassland sites.

The litter problem

The locals have gradually come to understand what the volunteers are doing and the team has expanded to include 230 people across the 13 villages on the Ganjia grasslands. Thanks to Sangay's efforts, the association has won some funding to pay for the gloves, brooms, bags and transportation the volunteers need.

Transportation costs have always been a headache for Sangay. “If the government could invest a little more money and labour to build waste sorting points in villages, so waste could be handled centrally, there’d be a bigger impact,” he said.

But the local government doesn’t have the funding or the organisational capacity to set up such a system. Peng Kui, a conservation expert with the [Global Environmental Institute](#), said that centralised systems, where waste is collected at the village level and transported to the county town for treatment, make economic sense in more populous areas, but are unsustainable and impractical in vast herding areas.

It isn’t that the local government doesn’t want to help, said Peng, there’s just nothing they can do. “It’s not even happening at the city and county level, so how can there be the spare capacity and funding for townships and villages?”

Peng explained that GEI’s “Clean Water Sources Programme” is trying a new approach. In the village of Maozhuang in Yushu, Qinghai, they formed a team of volunteers to teach people in schools, monasteries and villages how to sort and reduce waste. They then allocated volunteers to clean-up areas around water sources, so waste is regularly removed before finally being transported for sorting at a community waste facility. The volunteers separate and store recyclable materials until there is enough for a trip to sell them at the county seat. Non-recyclable materials are used as fertiliser, burned or buried. This method has reduced the burying of waste by 70%.

A different approach

The serious problem of waste collection and disposal across the vast grassland area has attracted attention from commercial businesses. Taiwanese firm [Miniwiz](#) has designed the [Trashpresso](#), a mobile and solar-powered unit which provide plastics recycling in remote areas.

In 2017 [Miniwiz](#) arrived in Zadoi county, the source of the Lancang River, and turned a week’s collected waste into environmentally-friendly building materials. Founder Huang Qiangzhi told *chinadialogue* that the technology behind Trashpresso isn’t actually that advanced, but he hopes the project will show the local nomadic herders that their waste can be turned into something useful.

Sangay is also trying to come up with new ideas. He believes the whole community will need to get involved if they want to significantly reduce waste. Recently, he and some PhD students from Lanzhou University have been working on a plan to get environmental experts to train his volunteers in more formal approaches to waste handling and sorting.

The grassland ecology in Qinghai was once only supported yaks and herders, but rapid modernisation has changed all that, and old approaches will not work on new problems. But Sangay hopes that his innovative ideas and growing band of volunteers can restore the delicate ecological balance to the grasslands.

<https://www.chinadialogue.net/article/show/single/en/10562-The-litter-collecting-lama-of-Tibet>

April 14, 2018

Activist priest John Dear tours with new book on resisting climate change

By Tom Boswell

National Catholic Reporter

Just prior to the December 2015 Climate Change Conference in Paris, Pope Francis [warned a group of reporters](#) that the world is on the brink of committing "suicide." Less than a year later, Donald Trump won the U.S. presidential election and then, after he took office, [pulled out of the Paris accords](#). These days, it's hard to believe that the state of our planet could be more dire.

But John Dear, Catholic priest, longtime peace activist and, more recently, a global-warming warrior, still brims with hope, energy and optimism.

"There's more happening in active nonviolent movements around the planet right now than ever before in history," he told NCR in an interview in early April. "There's massive change happening beyond the bad news from the current administration. There's incredible organizing going on, such as the teacher's strikes, such as the [anti-gun-violence organizing](#), such as all the people working on immigration. And some people working against war, but not enough."

Dear visited Madison, Wisconsin, April 4 as part of a 50-city, three-month book tour to promote *They Will Inherit the Earth: Peace & Nonviolence in a Time of Climate Change*, the latest of his 37 books. A former Jesuit [who left the order](#) after 32 years, Dear is now a diocesan priest and a staff member of the national peace organization [Pace e Bene](#). He lives on a remote desert mesa south of Santa Fe, New Mexico, and east of Los Alamos, the birthplace of the atomic bomb.

Dear spoke at [James Reeb Unitarian Universalist](#) on the 50th anniversary of the [assassination of Martin Luther King Jr.](#) He sprinkled his talk with direct quotes and anecdotes from King's teachings on nonviolent social change.

"One of the great casualties of violence and warfare is the loss of imagination, the loss of vision," Dear said, and then quoted King as saying, the night before he died, "Hope is the final refusal to give up."

In *They Will Inherit the Earth*, most of it written while on a retreat with Buddhist leader and author Thich Nhat Hanh, Dear traces his personal spiritual journey, what he calls "a long pilgrimage of peace." The journey has included ministering to the family members of the victims of the World Trade Center attacks; visiting [Standing Rock](#) with more than 600 other clergy to stand in solidarity with the Dakota, Lakota and Sioux against the Dakota Access Pipeline; and presiding at Masses in Yosemite National Park.

"Because we have practiced violence — global, structured, institutionalized violence — and created systems of total violence, we have hurt and killed one another and destroyed the

creatures and the Earth. With the onslaught of climate chaos, we have entered the full consequences of global violence. ... We are killing the Earth, but it will not go down without a fight."

In another chapter, Dear describes the struggle of the indigenous community of the Santa Clara Pueblo in New Mexico, whose home just below the mountain of Los Alamos and the nuclear weapons national laboratories has become a lethal radioactive waste dump. The labs upon the mountain make up "the second richest county in the U.S., with one of the highest per capita rates of Ph.D.'s and millionaires anywhere on earth," Dear points out. But down below is the second poorest county in the U.S. It's an egregious example of environmental racism.

During his Madison talk, Dear stressed what Christians and everyone else can and must do to resist the Earth's doomsday scenario.

"I think the only way change happens is bottom-up, people-powered, grassroots movements of creative nonviolence in the tradition of Gandhi and King, which, by the way, goes back to Jesus, who was a movement builder and organizer," he told NCR after his speech.

"After studying nonviolence for 40 years, I've decided that nonviolence requires three simultaneous attributes. First, you have to be nonviolent to yourself. We have to stop cooperating with our own inner processes of violence, beating ourselves up, fueling our anger, our rage, hatred and resentment. Second, we have to practice meticulous, interpersonal nonviolence towards everybody in our lives, everybody in the world, and all the creatures and Mother Earth. Third, you have to be involved in the struggle for justice, disarmament and creation.

"We're usually good at one of these," said Dear, "but very few of us reach the level of Dr. King, who did all three."

In both his book and talk, Dear outlined a list of "rules for living in solidarity with Mother Earth." The first speaks of our need to grieve and to be joyous.

"We need to take quiet time and sit in the beauty of creation in the presence of the Creator and grieve," he writes in his book. "We grieve for our sisters and brothers, for the death and extinction of billions of creatures, and for Mother Earth herself. The more we take formal time to quietly grieve for suffering humanity and suffering creation, the more nonviolent and compassionate we become."

Other "rules" include practicing meditation, prayer, mindfulness and nonviolent communication, cultivating fearlessness, taking public action for climate justice, and teaching nonviolence, particularly to priests and ministers.

Dear, who is a co-founder of Campaign Nonviolence, a project of Pace e Bene, was offered an opportunity to teach nonviolence to clergy two years ago, when 80 Catholic peacemakers from more than 25 countries were invited to the Vatican for [a conference](#) to discuss abandoning the church's just war theory. While there, Ken Butigan of Campaign Nonviolence, [Marie Dennis](#) of

Pax Christi International, and Dear were asked to help draft a statement for the pope for the [2017 World Day of Peace](#).

It became the "first statement on nonviolence in the church since the Sermon on the Mount," Dear said, with obvious pride. "It's a huge breakthrough."

Now Dear is hopeful that Francis will craft an encyclical on nonviolence to match "*Laudato Si'*, on Care for Our Common Home," his [encyclical on the environment](#). "That's my personal hope and prayer and goal."

[Tom Boswell is a freelance journalist, photographer and poet living near Madison, Wisconsin.]

<https://www.ncronline.org/news/environment/activist-priest-john-dear-tours-new-book-resisting-climate-change>

April 14, 2018

Midwest Catholic Workers hold retreat and pipeline protest

By Maria Benevento
National Catholic Reporter

Duluth, Minn. — A Catholic Worker retreat culminated in an action at a pipeline storage facility April 9 in Carlton County, Minnesota, where 27 people risked arrest for trespassing when they occupied the yard with banners, signs, jars of blessed water and sacred objects in an effort to "transform" the space and oppose a pipeline project.

"We're hoping that the prayers that we leave behind and the sacred items that so many people have put in ... will have an effect," Brenna Cussen Anglada of St. Isidore Catholic Worker Farm in southwest Wisconsin told NCR the night before she risked arrest. "For a lot of us, we believe we're acting in cooperation with God's grace and, ultimately, God and love win out over evil."

The Midwest Catholic Worker Faith and Resistance Retreat, held April 6-9 in the Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Duluth, was almost entirely focused on education, relationship building and action planning related to opposing the proposed Line 3 pipeline project in Minnesota.

Enbridge, the pipeline company, commonly refers to the project as a "[replacement](#)" of outdated pipes, but the Catholic Worker group and indigenous activists said the plan constitutes an "abandonment" of old pipes and an expansion of the pipeline through an alternate path that would threaten areas sacred to local indigenous people.

The pipeline currently cuts through the [Fond du Lac](#) and [Leech Lake](#) reservations, both located in Minnesota and home to groups of the Anishinaabe people. The proposed re-routing would

skirt the reservations, but cross wild rice lakes that the Anishinaabe consider sacred and where they have the right by treaty to hunt, fish and gather.

Since the company does not have the necessary permits to start construction, a high level of confrontation with Enbridge was not possible or necessary, but "we can still invite them to transform what they have already done," said Michele Naar-Obed, a retreat organizer and member of [Hildegard House Catholic Worker](#) in Duluth.

Almost all of the approximately 60 retreatants attended the action along with a few additional protesters. Most were current or former members of the Catholic Worker movement — a decentralized network of houses of hospitality and farms whose members usually live in community, practice the works of mercy and protest violence and injustice. College students, extended community members, indigenous activists and others also attended.

Carrying signs and banners with slogans such as "Honor the Treaties," "Defend the Sacred," "Green Energy Now," "Pipe Organs not Pipelines," "Pipes Leak," "Pray for the Water" and "Sale: All Pipes Must Go," protesters did not attempt to damage the pipeline materials.

Instead, they placed jars of blessed water inside pipes and created a makeshift altar covered in sacred items they had collected over the past few months, including a carving of Jesus that belonged to Catholic Worker founder Dorothy Day, contributed by her granddaughter Martha Hennessy. (Hennessy was [recently arrested](#) for breaking into a nuclear weapons base as part of the Plowshares movement.)

Members of the group, who recorded their action in several livestreams on social media (posted on the [retreat's Facebook page](#)), also read a statement of purpose about the event, prayed, passed food and supplies back and forth through the fence, and sang songs modified to fit the occasion, such as "99 Pipes in the Pipe Yard."

Although the participants split into two groups based on whether or not they planned to risk arrest, with 27 entering the fenced-in yard where the pipes were stored while over two dozen others remained outside, law enforcement decided to let the protesters disperse naturally without making arrests. A small group remained until about 9 p.m.

Early that afternoon, Naar-Obed had told the group that "everything we envisioned happened," including placing the water and sacred items and receiving media attention from several outlets.

Some participants also emphasized that the action should be considered in the context of the whole retreat, which helped members integrate faith and action. It also provided them with knowledge and experience that they could apply to pipeline protests closer to home or use as inspiration for future actions near Duluth.

During the retreat, group members participated in a "blanket exercise," which visually represented colonization; visited the Fond-du-Lac Reservation; and listened to indigenous people talk about their spirituality, the effects the pipeline would have and efforts to oppose it.

"I think it's important to mention that it's called the Faith and Resistance retreat," said Steven Fisher from the [Su Casa Catholic Worker](#) in Chicago. "Because it's not just one or the other. ... We came here on Friday to gather together and think in terms of how [the protest] intersects with our prayer life, our spirituality, our commitment to Christ."

A common theme in discussions was how the history of racism and oppression of native people affected the mainly-white Catholic Worker group's efforts to build trust with indigenous people and collaborate with them in opposing the pipeline.

"I told some native friends that I was with the Catholic Workers," one indigenous activist said during the April 9 action, speaking into his phone as he livestreamed the event, but raising his voice so the crowd could hear. "And they said, 'Oh no, not them again!' " Over the crowd's laughter, he explained that this group might not fit his friends' negative expectations of Catholics.

Ricky DeFoe, a local linguistic, cultural and spiritual leader, spoke at the "teach-in" portion of the retreat April 7 about the damage caused by papal bulls that gave America to Europeans without regard for native people, and the hierarchical Catholic worldview that people have "dominion over all things."

But DeFoe also brought up the themes of solidarity and mutuality, saying that descriptions of genetic differences "never tell you about the spirit — all of these things are superseded by the spirit."

Sheila Lamb, an indigenous activist who spoke after DeFoe, echoed this theme and emphasized that the pipeline issue affected everyone. "I don't want to see any more of our people suffer," she said. "Or any of yours."

Meanwhile, several retreat participants said they were motivated both by solidarity with indigenous groups and by their recognition that environmental concerns affect everyone.

"The native struggle for their land rights and water rights are now the struggle for the planet and the survival of the species," said [Des Moines Catholic Worker](#) Frank Cordaro. "Here in Duluth, the Catholic Workers are connecting with the native impulse for survival — which is happening all over the globe — and we're lending our voices, our life, our tradition to their efforts."

"We're trying to figure out how we can be the best allies" for the native community, said Naar-Obed, "recognizing that what they're fighting against and what they're fighting for affects all of us, not just the native community, although they take a bigger hit because of what it means to them in their culture."

Cussen Anglada said that while she was generally opposed to increased oil flow, knowing the indigenous community opposed the pipeline was an even stronger motivation for her action.

"Meeting those people who it will impact, it has even more strengthened my resolve to speak out against it, even if it's at a personal risk," she said, "because whatever happens to me I know will be a slap on the wrist compared to what's happening to them."

<https://www.ncronline.org/news/environment/midwest-catholic-workers-hold-retreat-and-pipeline-protest>

April 17, 2018

Turn climate 'words into action' say Faith Leaders

Catholic Agency for Overseas Development (CAFOD)

Devastating flooding across South Asia in 2017 displaced 41 million people and resulting in the deaths of more than 1,000 people

Former Archbishop of Canterbury Lord Williams and more than 170 faith leaders from across the Commonwealth have issued a call to governments to turn "words into action" on climate change at a summit in London this week.

[A letter published in the Daily Telegraph in London](#) and signed by dozens of religious leaders states that "Not even the remotest corner of the Commonwealth remains unaffected" by the changing climate, with the greatest impact felt by the poorest people in the group of nations.

The signatories – including archbishops, church moderators and rabbis from all continents in the Commonwealth – call for politicians attending the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting to pursue "every effort" to keep global temperature rises below the Paris Agreement target of 1.5 degrees Celsius. The meeting will take place at Buckingham Palace, St James's Palace and Windsor Castle between Monday 16 and Friday 20 April.

Some of the religious figures to sign the letter include Cardinal Maurice Piat of Mauritius, the President of the Antilles Episcopal Conference Bishop Gabriel Malzaire, the General Secretary of the Evangelical Fellowship of India Vijayesh Lal and Senior Rabbi of The Liberal Jewish Synagogue in London Alexandra Wright.

The official website for the summit states that "urgent action" on climate change is needed "to reduce vulnerability and increase resilience" and notes that 39 of the 53 Commonwealth countries are classed as small or vulnerable states.

The faith leaders' statement is the latest in a series of calls by religious figures for action on climate change at international summits. Several heads of government cited Pope Francis's encyclical on the environment as a catalyst for the success of the UN climate talks that resulted in the Paris Agreement in 2015.

The letter says:

We, faith leaders from across the Commonwealth, representing peoples of Africa, Asia, the Pacific, Europe and the Americas, come together in friendship and co-operation to mark the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in London.

Not even the remotest corner of the Commonwealth remains unaffected or unthreatened by the impacts of climate change. Commonwealth citizens, especially the poorest, struggle to thrive amidst our changing climate.

Subsistence communities in African countries struggle to grow crops in increasingly arid earth. In the Pacific, rising sea levels threaten the existence of whole countries. In Asia, salination is driving people from their land. Arctic communities' ways of life are undermined. Ever more violent and unpredictable storms devastate the Caribbean.

At the scale of the Commonwealth we can see that the crisis of poverty and the crisis of ecology are one; each of our faith traditions reminds us of the deep interconnectedness of people and our planet. As a common problem, this crisis requires a common solution. And it is needed now.

The Charter of the Commonwealth affirms the foundations for cooperation between Commonwealth nations. But it is time to turn words into action. We call on the Heads of Government gathering in London to commit to urgent action on climate change adaptation and mitigation in line with the Paris Agreement and to pursue every effort to keep the increase in average global temperature below 1.5 degrees.

Our people call out to you. We stand beside them. Your time to act is now.

Signed by:

Africa : Frank Nubuasah, Bishop of Francistown, **Botswana**, Jan Ozga, Président, Caritas **Cameroon**, Ludovic Lado SJ, Former Vice-Dean of the Faculty of Social Sciences and Management Catholic University of Central Africa, Yaoundé, **Cameroon**, Francis Dominic Mendy, Secretary General, Caritas **Gambia**, Samuel Zan Akologo, Executive Secretary, Caritas **Ghana**, Gabriel Dolan, Director Haki Yetu, **Kenya**, Susan Nagele, Maryknoll Lay Missioner , **Kenya**, Michael Kiburi, Deputy Director, Caritas Nairobi, **Kenya**, Benson Kibiti, National Communications and Advocacy Coordinator, Caritas **Kenya**, Angela Hartigan RSM, Mercy Congregation, **Kenya**, Adam Taaso, Bishop of **Lesotho**, Relebohile Mabote, National Director, Caritas **Lesotho**, Henry Harry Saindi, Secretary General of the Episcopal Conference of **Malawi**, Victor Mnelemba, Projects Officer, Diocese of Upper Shire, **Malawi**, Timothy P K Nyasulu, Moderator, CCAP General Assembly (**Malawi, Zambia, Zimbabwe, South Africa**), George Buleya, Vice Chancellor, Catholic University of **Malawi**, Felix Chingota, Chairperson, Public Affairs Committee, **Malawi**, Charles Peter Chinula, Parish Priest and Diocesan Communication Secretary, **Malawi**, Matilda Tumalike Matabwa, **Malawi**, John A Ryan, Bishop of the Diocese of Mzuzu, **Malawi**, Patrick Jambo, Priest and Pastoral Coordinator of Nkhathé, **Malawi**, Maurice E. Piat, Cardinal Bishop of Port-Louis, **Mauritius**, Brigitte Koenig, President of Caritas Ile Maurice, **Mauritius**, Jacques Dinan OSK, Former Executive

Secretary, Caritas Africa, **Mauritius**, Vicente Msosa, Diocese of Niassa, in **Mozambique**, Alberto Vera Aréjula, Presidente Caritas **Mozambique**, Manuel Ernesto, Bishop Suffragan of Niassa, **Mozambique**, Abel Gabuza, Bishop of Kimberley, South Africa and Chairperson of the Justice and Peace Commission of SACBC (**South Africa, Swaziland and Namibia**), Mrudula Smithson, Director, **South Africa**, Kgomotso Direro, Administrator, **South Africa**, Geraldine Hedley, Finance Manager, **South Africa**, Bishop Jan De Groef, Bishop of Bethlehem, **South Africa**, Rachel Mash, Environmental Coordinator Anglican Church of Southern Africa, **South Africa**, Samuel Sifelani, **South Africa**, Noeleen Mullett, Green Parish Co-ordinator, Johannesburg Anglican Environmental Initiative, **South Africa**, Joao Noe Rodrigues, Bishop of the Diocese of Tzaneen, **South Africa**, Geoffrey Francis Davies, Bishop, Founder and Patron of the Southern African Faith Communities' Environment Institute (SAFCEI), **South Africa**, Thabo Cecil Makgoba, Archbishop and Metropolitan of the Anglican Church in Southern Africa, **South Africa**, Martin Breytenbach, Bishop of the Diocese of St Mark the Evangelist, **South Africa**, Saydz Sayed , Secretary, Interfaith Commission, **South Africa**, David Mark Franklin, Chairman of St Francis Parkview Eco group, **South Africa**, Steve Moreo, Bishop of Bishop of Johannesburg, **South Africa**, Anne Gaisford, Diocesan Administrator, **South Africa**, Michael Murphy, District Leader for St. Patrick's Missionary Society in **South Africa**, Anne Patricia Flynn, Congregational Leader Of Missionary Sisters of the Assumption, **South Africa**, Michael Bennett, Justice and Peace Chaplain, Diocese of Tzaneen, **South Africa**, Giovanna Pesenti, Salesian Sister and Pre-School Principal , **South Africa**, Lidia Castro, Principal, Primary School, **South Africa**, Annie Elizabeth Foy, Salesian Sister, **South Africa**, Joseph Dube, Head of Department, Archdiocese of Johannesburg, **South Africa**, Pearl N Tsemame, Laity Council, Diocese of Aliwal, **South Africa**, Anne Gaisford, Diocesan Administrator, Diocese of Zululand, **South Africa**, Stephany C Thiel, Religious sister, **South Africa**, Okafor Chioma Immaculate, National Coordinator, A Rocha, **Nigeria**, Jwan Zhumbes, Bishop of Bukuru Diocese, Church of **Nigeria**, Robert Abuul , Head of Programs , **Nigeria**, Jean Marie Vianney Twagirayezu, Secrétaire Général, Caritas **Rwanda**, Denis Wiehe CSSp, Bishop of Port-Victoria, **Seychelles**, Edward Tamba Charles, Archbishop of Freetown, **Sierra Leone**, Christiana Eyatunde Sutton-Koroma, National Coordinator, Foundation for Rural and Urban Transformation, **Sierra Leone**, Ellinah Wamukoya, Bishop and Chair of the Anglican Communion Environmental Network, **Swaziland**, William Nathan Mwaisumo, Program Officer, CEELS, **Tanzania**, Niyongere Pierre Celestin, Anglican Priest, **Uganda**, Bishop William Mchombo, Bishop of Eastern **Zambia**, Emmanuel Yona Chikoya, General Secretary, The Council of Churches, **Zambia**.

Americas: Gabriel Malzaire, Bishop of Roseau, **Dominica** and President of the Antilles Episcopal Conference (**Antigua and Barbuda, Bahamas, Barbados, Dominica, Grenada, Guyana, Jamaica, Saint Lucia, St Kitts and Nevis, St Vincent and The Grenadines, Trinidad and Tobago**), Frank Power SVD, Priest and Administrator, Holy Family Cathedral, **Antigua and Barbuda**, Sarita Vasquez RSM, Coordinator of the Mercy Community, **Belize**, Nigel J. Karam, Dean of Roseau Cathedral, **Dominica**, Julie Matthews, President, Sisters of Mercy, Caribbean, Central America, South America Community, **Guyana**, Susan Frazer, Sisters of Mercy of the Americas, **Jamaica**, Jordan Cantwell, Moderator of The United Church of **Canada**, Ron Cutler, Anglican Archbishop of Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island, **Canada**, Muaz Nasir, Editor – Khaleafa.com, **Canada**, Brian Dunn, Bishop of Antigonish, **Canada**, Marian Lucas-Jefferies, Coordinator, Environment Network, Diocese of Nova Scotia &

Prince Edward Island, **Canada**, Jim Hodgson, Justice Activist, **Canada**, Michelle Schofield Bull, Rector of Emmanuel Anglican Church, Spryfield, Nova Scotia, **Canada**, Matthew Sponagle, Priest and Regional Dean, **Canada**, Reid Moore, Layreader, **Canada**, Charles Edgar Bull, Rector, Anglican Parish of St. Margaret of Scotland, Halifax, Nova Scotia, **Canada**, Marg Murray, Retired Minister, Social Justice Division of London Conference, United Church of **Canada**, Jane Alexander, Bishop of Edmonton, **Canada**, Lucy Cummings, Executive Director, Faith and the Common Good, **Canada**, Jack Panozzo, Social Justice and Advocacy Program Manager, **Canada**, Margaret Newall, Unitarian Minister, **Canada**, Larry Dobson, United Church of **Canada**, Ian Dewar McPherson, Earthkeepers: Christians for Climate Justice, **Canada**, Douglas Buck, **Canada**, Jason Wood, Community Organizer, Earthkeepers: Christians for Climate Justice, **Canada**, Joe Gunn, Executive Director, Citizens for Public Justice, **Canada**, Karen Boivin, Minister and Senior Pastor, City View United Church, United Church of **Canada**, Mary Anne Byrne, Poet, **Canada**, Tim Kuepfer, English Pastor of Chinatown Peace Church, **Canada**, Arleen Brawleu, Treasurer, Sisters of Charity, **Canada**, Bernice Steele, Leadership Team, Sisters of Charity, **Canada**, Maureen Wild, Sisters of Charity, **Canada**, Sabrina Malach, Director of Community Engagement, Shores Jewish Environmental Programs, **Canada**, Helen Wallace, Sister of Charity, **Canada**, Sheila E. Moore, **Canada**, Sheilagh Martin, Teacher, **Canada**, Anne Harvey, Sisters of Charity, **Canada**, Susanne Lachapelle, Coordinator, Justice and Peace Commission, **Canada**,

Asia : Shourabh Pholia, Bishop of Barisal Diocese, Church of **Bangladesh**, Julian Leow, Archbishop of Kuala Lumpur, **Malaysia**, Joseph Hii Teck Kwong, Bishop of Sibu, Malaysia and President of the Episcopal Commission for Creation Justice for **Malaysia**, **Brunei Darussalam** and **Singapore**, Geraldine Clare Westwood, Head of the Creation Justice Commission of the Diocese of Penang, **Malaysia**, Vijayesh Lal, General Secretary of the Evangelical Fellowship of **India**, Allwyn D'Silva, Auxiliary Bishop of the Archdiocese of Bombay, **India**, Patrick Hansda, Caritas **India**, Charles Irudayam, Priest and Secretary of the Justice, Peace and Development Office, Catholic Bishops Conference of **India**, Liam O'Callaghan, Coordinator for the Ecology Commission of Hyderabad Diocese, **Pakistan**, Robert Younas, Regional President, World Apostolate of Fatima, **Pakistan**, Mahendra Gunatilleke, National Director, SEDEC/ Caritas **Sri Lanka**

Oceania : John Ribat, Cardinal Archbishop of Port Moresby, **Papua New Guinea** and President of the Federation of Catholic Bishops Conference of Oceania (**Australia**, **Fiji**, **Kiribati**, **Nauru**, **New Zealand**, **Papua New Guinea**, **Samoa**, **Solomon Islands**, **Tonga**, **Tuvalu**, **Vanuatu**), Eveline Crotty, Leader of the Sisters of Mercy (**Australia** and **Papua New Guinea**), Laiseni Fanon Charisma Liava'a, Priest, Anglican Diocese of Polynesia, **Tonga**, **Tuvalu**, Andrew Shepherd, National Co-Director, A Rocha Aotearoa **New Zealand**, Julianne Hickey, Director, Caritas Aotearoa **New Zealand**, Richard Milne, Associate Professor, University of Auckland, **New Zealand**, John Atcherley Dew, Cardinal Archbishop of Wellington, **Aotearoa New Zealand**, Patrick Dunn, Bishop of Auckland, President, **New Zealand** Catholic Bishops Conference, David McDonald, Leader of the Marist District of the Pacific (**Fiji**, **Kiribati**, **Samoa**, **Aotearoa New Zealand**), Bridget Crisp, Coordinator, Mercy Global Action, **Aotearoa New Zealand**, Mark Coleridge, Archbishop of Brisbane, Vice-President Australian Catholic Bishops Conference on behalf of the **Australian** bishops, Jeremy Greaves, Bishop, Northern Region of Southern Queensland, **Australia**, Peter Albert Moore,

Chair, Angligrreen, Anglican Church Southern Queensland, **Australia**, Duncan Reid, Adjunct Lecturer, Trinity College Theological School Melbourne, **Australia**, Veronica Lawson, Sisters of Mercy, **Australia**, Judith Glaister, Sisters of Mercy, **Australia**, Theresa Ann Foley, Sisters of Mercy, **Australia**, Carol Mitchell, Director, Justice, Ecology & Development Office, Catholic Archdiocese of Perth, **Australia**, Katie Hunt, **Australia**, Roger Jaensch, President and Chair of the Board of Directors, A Rocha **Australia**, George Browning, Past Chair, Anglican Communion Environment Network, **Australia**

Europe : Charles J Scicluna, Archbishop of **Malta**, Bishop Mario Grech, Bishop of Gozo, **Malta**, Melissa Chedid, Executive Manager, Caritas **Cyprus**, Rowan Williams, former Archbishop of Canterbury, **United Kingdom**, Leo Cushley, Archbishop of St Andrews, Scotland, **United Kingdom**, David Pickering, Moderator of the United Reformed Church National Synod of Scotland, **United Kingdom**, John Davies, Anglican Archbishop of Wales, **United Kingdom**, Loraine Mellor, President of the Methodist Church in Britain, **United Kingdom**, Alexandra Wright, Senior Rabbi, The Liberal Jewish Synagogue, London, **United Kingdom**, Jeffrey Newman, Emeritus Rabbi Finchley Reform Synagogue, **United Kingdom**, John Kafwanka, Director for Mission, Anglican Communion, **United Kingdom**, David Atkinson, Emeritus Bishop of Thetford, **United Kingdom**, Alan Yates, General Assembly Moderator, United Reformed Church in Great Britain, **United Kingdom**, Kevin Watson, General Assembly Moderator, United Reformed Church, **United Kingdom**, Philip Mounstephen, Executive Leader, Church Mission Society, **United Kingdom**, John Battle, Former MP and Minister, Chair, Diocese of Leeds Justice & Peace Commission, **United Kingdom**, Barbara Kentish, Coordinator of Westminster Justice and Peace, **United Kingdom**, Gregory Cameron, Bishop of St Asaph, **United Kingdom**, Andrew John, Bishop of Bangor, **United Kingdom**, Joanna Penberthy, Bishop of St Davids , **United Kingdom**, June Osborne, Bishop of Llandaff, **United Kingdom**, Richard Pain, Bishop of Monmouth, **United Kingdom**, Denise Boyle, Coordinator Global Justice Programme, **United Kingdom**, Monica Killeen, Sisters of Mercy, **United Kingdom**, Mary Judge RSC, **United Kingdom**, Chris Naylor, Executive Director A Rocha International, **United Kingdom**, Catherine Gibbons, **United Kingdom**, Peter Zabala, **United Kingdom**, John Keenan , Bishop of Paisley, **United Kingdom**, Michael Pryke, Youth President, Methodist Church, **United Kingdom**, Elisabeth Jill Baker, Vice-President of the Methodist Conference 2017-18, **United Kingdom**, Andy Atkins CEO, A Rocha UK and Chair, CTBI Environmental Issues Network, **United Kingdom**, Arthur Champion, Diocesan Environmental Adviser, **United Kingdom**, Geoff Foster, Environmentalist, **United Kingdom**, David James Goss, Parish Priest, **United Kingdom**, Brian McGee, Bishop of Argyll and the Isles, **United Kingdom**

<https://cafod.org.uk/News/Campaigning-news/Turn-climate-words-into-action>

April 18, 2018

Do you believe in God? Then you have a moral duty to fight climate change, writes Jim Antal

By Tom Montgomery Fate
Chicago Tribune

Jim Antal recognizes that most Americans are not engaged by the climate change issue. “Two in three Americans think global warming is happening (67%), yet most Americans (65%) rarely or never discuss it,” he writes, citing a Yale study in his new book, “Climate Church, Climate World.”

Antal thinks a central reason we have ignored global warming is because the problem is a “long emergency” and overwhelming in scope. “(N)euroscientists tell us that our brains are not suited to respond appropriately to long-term threats such as climate change,” he writes.

This is why, he suggests, we know how to respond to the immediate threats and destruction caused by a major hurricane, like Harvey: by repairing Houston’s collapsed bridges and infrastructure and other present-tense problems. But we always seem to miss the big picture — for example, the fact that “Hurricane Harvey was Houston’s third once-in-500-years flood in the last four years.”

The question Antal poses is when will climate change feel immediate enough for us to think and act decisively on behalf of future generations? He argues that we’ve developed an “environmental generational amnesia,” and that we need to think long term in both directions. Thus, he includes a useful history of climate science and of our evolving understanding of the problem. This runs from the 1850s, when John Tyndall first suggested that CO₂ created a greenhouse effect, trapping the sun’s energy and warming the climate, to Wallace Broecker’s groundbreaking research and climate projections in the 1970s, to Bill McKibben’s landmark 1989 book, “The End of Nature,” and leading up to the policies of the [Trump](#) administration.

Given that President Donald Trump withdrew from the Paris climate accord and — along with Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Scott Pruitt and U.S. Energy Secretary Rick Perry — doesn’t view climate change as a crisis, nor tie it directly to human behavior, Antal doesn’t place his hope for change in the current political leadership.

The subtitle of the book suggests where his hope does lie: “How People of Faith Must Work for Change.” A longtime Congregational pastor and activist himself, Antal identifies with the social gospel and prophetic tradition of the church — going all the way back to the abolitionist movement. Early in the book he shares his central vision.

“I believe that people of faith the world over have the capacity to determine the trajectory of our common future,” Antal writes. “Here in America, if Christianity continues to emphasize personal salvation while ignoring collective salvation, if we continue to reduce the Creator to an anthropocentric projection who privileges and protects humanity, however alienated we may be from God’s created order, then the practice of religion will continue to diminish and it will add little to the redemption of creation.”

After analyzing the history and social implications of climate change, Antal reimagines the role of church communities and their capacity to confront and resolve the problem. After each chapter throughout the book, there are discussion questions aimed at prompting readers to engage in their communities — through everything from Bible study to civil disobedience.

Clearly, Antal's purpose in writing is not simply to educate but to inspire readers' hearts, heads and hands to "repurpose" the church, and reimagine its moral calling.

The chapter titled "Discipleship: Reorienting What We Prize" outlines the basic changes in social and economic priorities Antal thinks are necessary to realize this goal. Americans, he believes, must reject and rethink "our insatiable desire for material growth, our uncompromising insistence on convenience, and our relentless addiction to mobility."

But this is of course no easy task. Such a shift in priorities is antithetical to America's thriving high-tech culture of accumulation and convenience. The challenge is formidable. And it's complicated by the fact that climate change has not been a central focus or mission of the church until recently.

In his introduction, friend and fellow activist McKibben, explains: "For religious people the environment was a second tier problem: for liberal Christians it was secondary to the 'real issues' of hunger and war; to conservative people of faith it represented a way station on the road to paganism."

Nevertheless, in spite of all the challenges, Antal's central message is one of engaged hope. Like Pope Francis and Archbishop Desmond Tutu, he sees the current climate debacle as "a Kairos moment, an opportune moment fraught with God-inspired possibility."

"(O)ur present social and economic system needs a moral intervention," Antal writes. "And so does the church. It's time to declare a new moral era."

Tom Montgomery Fate, author of the nature memoir "Cabin Fever," is a professor of English at College of DuPage.

<http://www.chicagotribune.com/lifestyles/books/ct-books-climate-jim-antal-0422-story.html>

April 19, 2018

'Laudato Si' universities' commit to forming environmental consciences

By George Rodriguez
National Catholic Reporter

Moravia, Costa Rica — Universities worldwide may be answering a call to become their communities' environmental consciences if they take an active role in an awareness effort launched by the Catholic University of Costa Rica, based on Pope Francis' environmental encyclical, *Laudato Si'*, on Care for Our Common Home."

The effort includes the launching of the *Laudato Si'* Observatory and the release of the first results contained in the *Laudato Si'* Social and Environmental Development Index. The index

was developed from key actions taken during the symposium "*El Cuidado de la Casa Común, una conversión necesaria a la ecología humana*" ("On Care for Our Common Home, a necessary conversion to human ecology"), held Nov. 29 through Dec. 1 in Costa Rica.

The observatory and the index are meant to have an impact on the development of countries as well as environmental public policy, and universities are seen as a channel for this, Catholic University rector Fernando Sánchez told NCR at the education center's headquarters in Moravia, a district on the northeastern outskirts of San José, the Costa Rican capital.

The first such meeting held in Latin America — coinciding with Catholic University's 25th anniversary — the symposium, which was organized by the university and the Fondazione Vaticana Joseph Ratzinger — Benedetto XVI, was grounded on several basic premises, according to Sánchez.

"The first is that this is a real problem, it's an urgent problem, it's a global problem we can't simply ignore," and "the other thing is that, despite the data, we should not face this from a fatalistic perspective," he said.

Sánchez referred to data gathered for the first index, covering 127 countries that hold around 97 percent of the planet's population. According to the study "more than 55 percent ... live in conditions, whether human or environmental, that are not acceptable according to the Holy Father and the *Laudato Si'* encyclical," said Sánchez, an ex-congressman of the former ruling *Partido Liberación Nacional* (National Liberation Party) and a former Costa Rican ambassador to the Vatican.

Among the top-20 countries in the index, the data places Finland in first position, with 88.77 points out of 100 for "care for our common home," followed by New Zealand (88.03) and Australia (86.78). Only two countries in the Americas made it into this group, with Canada ranking fifth (82.18) and Costa Rica placing in the 20th position (82.33).

"The Holy Father tells us: neither think that with some technical measures we'll solve the problem nor think that any human intervention is harmful — a balance must be sought," Sánchez said. This "must be done with a positive vision, one of hope, knowing that things can be changed because, if not, what are going to make the effort for?"

The effort calls for continuity, which opened the way for the creation of the *Laudato Si'* Observatory. Headquartered at the university in Costa Rica, its various aims include drawing up and publishing the index on a yearly basis. The observatory's main purpose is sharing the index with as many universities, Catholic and non-Catholic, as possible, and producing a local and international compilation of the best practices to help improve each country's index, Sánchez explained.

Sánchez underlined that since the encyclical, which he described as "within the church's social doctrine," deals with two major topics, "human development and environmental development or sustainable development." Prior to the symposium meetings were held with experts who, for years, have been measuring both situations.

"We are interested in knowing what's going on in the world that, one way or another, positively impacts the index," Sánchez said. "That is, which one, in one way or another, is improving or responding to what the pope requests in *Laudato Si'*."

Once it is published, if "we manage to have universities interested in receiving the index, the idea is for them to publicize it in their countries so they can also explain what's going on, why we did poorly or well, what we did wrong or well," Sánchez added.

Regarding the possibility of any positive action being taken, the universities "can tell us what initiatives in their countries are ... pushing the index upward and are thus responding to what the pope is asking of us," he said.

"The aim is that it acts as some kind of impact measure starting from the Holy Father's exhortations. And this is the observatory's other major goal: to cause positive impact wherever we have access," Sánchez said.

"At the end of the day, we'd want to be able to say that somehow, for some reason, knowledge of the index will generate some impact on the public policy of nations. That would be a major future goal, but if we have to have an impact ... we have to publicize it," he added.

That is where universities come in.

"The first thing that's going to happen is that those of us who adopt this have to be consistent universities," because "we can't go around preaching to everyone a conversion to human ecology if our university has not converted to human ecology," said Sánchez.

Some progress in this regard had been made already before the symposium, including the creation of *Laudato Si'* professorships and, in the case of Brazil's Pontificia Universidade Católica do Rio de Janeiro (Pontifical Catholic University of Rio de Janeiro, PUC-Rio), the creation of rooftop gardens.

Sánchez stressed that some universities have been taking *Laudato Si'*-type initiatives: "What happens is that the symposium brings us all into a logic. So, now it will be very interesting to see how much universities that accept this initiative actually change."

In his view, the encyclical's major advantage is that it deals with an awareness issue more than a religious one.

"There could hardly be a more ecumenical issue than the environmental issue because we're all in the same, common home. Doctrinal differences have no weight. Awareness and responsibility have weight," he said. "We have some fertile ground to work on."

[George Rodriguez, a freelance correspondent based in Costa Rica, has reported for Reuters and other international news agencies.]

April 20, 2018

Access to clean water is a life issue that the church must defend

By Christiana Zenner
National Catholic Reporter

Five years ago, few people thought of the Catholic church as ecologically activist or environmentally diplomatic. But Pope Francis' election to the papacy changed that, especially since the promulgation of his 2015 ecology encyclical, "*Laudato Si'*, on Care for Our Common Home." In my analysis, fresh water is the most important point of papal reflection at the intersection of environmental and social justice. Fresh water is, in no uncertain terms, a fundamental life issue.

The magisterial Catholic Church has articulated two fulcrums for environmental reflection — theological and ethical — that apply in specific ways to fresh water.

Theologically, water is the matrix of creation, a ritual substance par excellence, and a gift from God intended for the benefit of all people.

Ethically, fresh water is a substance that requires attention to justice: It is the poor and vulnerable who are first and most profoundly affected by lack of sufficient, clean, fresh water.

Francis is surely the most visible, and most recent, authoritative Catholic voice on the topic of the centrality of fresh water to environmental and social justice. Citing his and Pope Benedict XVI's papal precedent, Francis' concluding salvo at a 2017 Vatican-hosted "Dialogue on Water" exhorted:

The questions that you are discussing are not marginal, but basic and pressing. Basic, because where there is water there is life, making it possible for societies to arise and advance. Pressing, because our common home needs to be protected. Yet it must also be realized that not all water is life-giving, but only water that is safe and of good quality — as St. Francis again tells us, water that "serves with humility," "chaste" water, not polluted. All people have a right to safe drinking water. This is a basic human right and a central issue in today's world.

Both Francis and Benedict declared that the fundamental human right to water is a core aspect of Catholic social teaching, which now includes environmental aspects in a central way. The Catholic Church was among the first major international institutions to defend the idea that access to fresh water is a fundamental human right, and it has enshrined this idea in authoritative teachings, such as the 2004 Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church, *Caritas in Veritate* and *Laudato Si'*.

There is abundant skepticism in Catholic social teaching that the mechanisms of the free market, especially the tendency to treat water as a commodity, are sufficient to ensure just access to fresh water for all. Water is to be seen as a human right precisely because it undergirds all life and is central to human dignity.

The popes also point out that fresh water is essential to the fulfillment of all other rights. More broadly, sufficient access to clean, fresh water is fundamental to the achievement of all manner of public and private goods, such as education, economic activity and social equity.

It's worth noting that the Catholic Church — despite its patriarchal structure, and yet in line with social realities around the world — has noted that gender is a major factor in water and sanitation, for it is often women and girls who bear the burden of procuring water when it is scarce.

Given papal leadership and the powerful tradition of Catholic social teaching, what more might be worth exploring with regard to fresh water? I suggest five aspects that will be important for the church to consider as it deepens its analysis and moral advocacy on the subject of water.

First, individual versus structural responses to water challenges. Fresh water is a reality that is simultaneously hydrological, climatological, social and institutional. The way fresh water flows depends not only on the weather and the water sources in a region, but also on the ways that infrastructure is constructed and access given to some users rather than others, as well as incentives given to some types of water uses over others.

Twenty-first century moral reflection on fresh water requires not just attention to individual practices of conservation, but also to the political and economic frameworks within which fresh water is withdrawn from its sources, valued, exchanged and distributed. The Catholic Church, as a repository of theological insights and ethical reflection, is a needed voice in defending the preferential option for the poor and marginalized.

Second, water and migration. Scientist Travis Huxman points out, "Water is the hammer with which climate change will hit the earth." One way this is visible is with regard to environmental refugees who have left their homes in response to drought, especially in agricultural regions. Given the church's advocacy for displaced persons, it is well-poised to advocate for environmental immigrants to be granted the status of refugees, a status that confers special rights that are more conducive to well-being, especially in an era of migration prompted by water scarcity.

Third, water and sanitation. Scholars recognize that the right to water is deeply interwoven with the right to sanitation for all people, and especially significant for girls and women. How gender, water and sanitation intersect is a crucial topic, and one that the global Catholic church could rightly identify as an equity issue, since women and girls are more negatively impacted by lack of sanitation infrastructure. The church is already an outspoken critic of the fact that upward of 1,000 children die every day due to waterborne, and entirely preventable, deaths.

Fourth, rights of the environment. Human rights are focused on the human, as the name suggests. But Francis has suggested, since 2015, that there might be a "right of the environment." Is it possible that, given the intrinsic theological goodness of creation, as well as water's centrality to human flourishing, that waters could have rights in themselves, worthy of protection not only for human beings, but also for the life-giving qualities they embody?

Fifth, institutional proof of concept. The Catholic Church as a global institution has surely demonstrated the importance of conceptual leadership on the topic of fresh water and human rights. It also has the potential to demonstrate institutional commitments to best practices regarding fresh water. The Vatican's installation of showers for the homeless in Vatican City is one example of water and social justice.

Multiple orders of women religious worldwide have been at the vanguard of watershed practices and water justice efforts. The church and the world would do well to listen to these women and the truths that they proclaim in daily practice.

[Christina Zenner is an associate professor of theology, science and ethics at Fordham University, where she is affiliated faculty in environmental studies and American studies. She is the author of *Just Water: Theology, Ethics, and the Global Water Crisis*.]

<https://www.ncronline.org/news/environment/access-clean-water-life-issue-church-must-defend>

April 23, 2018

Cardinal Turkson emphasizes importance of caring for creation at St. Louis Climate Summit

By Joseph Kenny
St. Louis Review

Cardinal Peter Turkson gave a bonus talk at the St. Louis Climate Summit, which is hosted by St. Louis University as a way to advance the Pope Francis' encyclical, "Laudato Si'." In both talks, the cardinal referred to the need to respect creation.

Cardinal Turkson, the prefect of the Vatican Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development, had a key role in the formulation of the encyclical, a document that reflects upon humankind's moral obligation to address the issue of climate change. He was delayed in Canada due to a visa issue, and gave an abbreviated talk April 22 at St. Francis Xavier (College) Church on the SLU campus after two others filled in for him. He then was added as a speaker at the start of the next day's program.

Cardinal Turkson stressed that creation is the loving work of God, something that doesn't have an ownership and exists to support human life. Because creation is "a fruit of God's decided action," everything in it has a purpose, the native of Ghana said.

Creation has order and beauty so human life can thrive, he said, comparing it on a small scale to a garden. It needs to be treated respectfully, he added.

Cardinal Turkson cited seven characteristics of the encyclical, the "magnificent seven" as he called it. They are:

- **Continuity** — Pope Francis was not the first pope to talk about ecology. Following up on his predecessors, "he's bringing it all together," Cardinal Turkson said, in an "integral ecology."
- **Collegiality** — The document is a teaching done with all the Catholic bishops from around the world.
- **Conversation** — It calls for dialogue, listening to all points of views and the need for everyone to come together to solve a common problem.
- **Care** — With a couple exceptions, instead of using the word stewardship, Pope Francis refers to a more compassionate, loving and tender way of approaching our common home.
- **Conversion** — We need to change habits, behavior and lifestyles.
- **Citizenship** — Education is important to accept our responsibility toward the care of the earth.
- **Contemplation** — Prayer is a way to worship our creator and helps lead us to God.

While waiting for Cardinal Turkson to arrive, Peter Raven and Mary Evelyn Tucker filled in with talks and answered questions. Raven, a conference co-chair, is a botanist and advocate of conservation and biodiversity who headed the Missouri Botanical Garden in St. Louis for four decades. "I don't want to see civilization being destroyed," he said, adding that it is threatened unless people pay attention and adjust their activities.

Raven, a member of the Pontifical Academy of Sciences and contributor to the development of "Laudato Si'," pointed to the need to work together to "build a better, sustainable world instead of leaving a depleted" world.

Tucker, co-director of the Forum on Religion and Ecology at Yale University, called the encyclical, especially its take on the Gospel of creation, a "hymn to the universe." It awakens people to the view that "hyper individualism won't get us to a common good for our common home," Tucker said.

While calling for alternative, renewable energy sources, she said "we are losing God's creation" and "the future of life lies in our hands."

Tucker also showed optimism for "not just a sustainable future, but a flourishing future."

<http://stlouisreview.com/article/2018-04-23/cardinal-turkson>

April 23, 2018

Church teaching leads Catholic entities to divest from fossil fuels

By Dennis Sadowski
Crux

A wind turbine turns in front of a fossil fuel power plant in Charlestown, Mass., in this 2013 file photo. Catholic institutions are planning to divest part of their financial portfolios from the fossil fuel industry because of its impact on climate change. (Credit: Brian Snyder/Reuters via CNS.)

WASHINGTON, D.C. - Caritas Internationalis, the Catholic Church's worldwide network of humanitarian aid agencies, three German banks and more than 30 other Catholic institutions are planning to divest at least part of their financial portfolios from the fossil fuel industry.

The divestment announcement by the Global Catholic Climate Movement April 22, Earth Day, is part of a continuing campaign to convince Catholic entities to move investments to renewable energy enterprises.

Divestment from the fossil fuel industry is crucial to addressing climate change and upholding the commitments to reduce carbon emissions set in the 2015 Paris climate accord, Tomas Insua, GCCM executive director, told *Catholic News Service*.

"This announcement is the result of many months of hard work. Our team has been working pretty hard raising awareness. I think there is so little understanding about the fossil fuel industry being at the core of the environmental crisis," he said.

The divestment campaign also falls in line with the message of Pope Francis's 2015 encyclical on the environment, *Laudato Si', on Care for Our Common Home*, Insua explained.

"It's just unacceptable to treat the fossil fuel industry as just another industry," he added. "The call of *Laudato Si'* to move away from fossil fuels is crystal clear."

Desmond Wilson, chief financial officer at The Catherine Donnelly Foundation in Toronto, told *CNS* the divestment decision falls in line with the organization's ties to the religious community.

"We came to understand that there were moral and ethical issues in play here," Wilson said, explaining that the world's poorest people are most affected by a changing climate. "If climate change is caused by the action of humans, we have a responsibility to reflect on that and take some measures to keep that threat under control."

While its fossil fuel investments totaled just \$1 million in a \$45 million portfolio, Wilson said the foundation felt it was important to adhere to its Catholic roots.

“Eventually we came to understand cigarettes, tobacco, was a harmful product. It’s the same sort of thing with fossil fuels. We see more and more that it is a harmful product in the way it affects climate,” he explained.

Three German Catholic banks, with more than \$9.2 billion in holdings, are among the divesting institutions: Pax-Bank, Bank im Bistum Essen and Steyler Ethik Bank. Pax-Bank said it was partially divesting while the others announced they were pulling investments from coal companies.

“In view of the progressing climate change and its social consequences, we consider the exploitation of fossil fuel for their incineration as a threat to the common good,” spokesman Alfred Krott wrote in an email to *CNS*. “We want to promote renewable energy and exclude companies that mine hard coal or lignite (soft coal), peat, oil and natural gas.”

In a statement, Cardinal Luis Antonio Tagle of Manila, Philippines and president of Caritas Internationalis, said poor people around the world suffer “greatly from the climate crisis and fossil fuels are among the main drivers of this injustice. That is why Caritas Internationalis has decided not to invest in fossil fuels anymore.”

The cardinal encouraged members of the humanitarian aid network and other church organizations “to do the same.”

Archbishop Jean-Claude Hollerich of Luxembourg, president of the Commission of the Bishops’ Conferences of the European Community, or COMECE, said bishops were joining other Catholic institutions in “making financial decisions that are in line with our moral values.”

“Divestment is an important way for the Church to show leadership in the context of a changing climate,” he said in a statement. “Praise be to all those who service ‘the least of these’ by protecting the environment.”

Other divesting institutions include the Jesuit European Social Center in Belgium; Tertiary Sisters of St. Francis and Ursulines of the Chatman Union in Canada; China Biodiversity Conservation and Green Development Foundation; Caritas France; Sisters of St. Joseph of Chambery and Sisters of Mercy, Northern Province in Ireland; Archdiocese of Salerno, Italy; Catholic Youth Network for Environmental Sustainability in Kenya; International Association of World Peace Advocates in Nigeria; Jesuit-run Environmental Science for Social Change in Philippines; Justice and Peace National Commission of the Portuguese bishops’ conference; Scottish Catholic International Aid Fund; and Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Stockton, California.

<https://cruxnow.com/church-in-the-usa/2018/04/23/church-teaching-leads-catholic-entities-to-divest-from-fossil-fuels/>

April 23, 2018

Pope Francis brings a new lens to poverty, peace and the planet

By Robert W. McElroy

America: The Jesuit Review

Five years ago, Jorge Bergoglio became [Francis](#), choosing at the moment of his election in March 2013 a name that no pope had taken before. His choice of the name served as a signpost for the direction in which he would lead the global church. In his embrace of the poor, his pursuit of nonviolence and his care for all of God's creation, Pope Francis has brought the legacy of the great saint of Assisi to the very heart of the church's proclamation to the modern world.

It is especially fruitful, then, in assessing the [first five years](#) of the Francis pontificate, to examine how the pope's contributions to [Catholic social teaching](#) have reflected the three Franciscan priorities of poverty, peace and the planet. In what way has the leadership of the first pope from the New World enriched or altered the body of Catholic social teaching? What is it about his papacy or perspective that has generated such substantial opposition to Pope Francis, particularly within the United States? How should we characterize the mission that the pope has taken on behalf of economic justice, building peace and caring for our common home?

[A New Lens](#)

The starting point to answering these questions lies in recognizing that the relationship between the social teachings of Pope Francis and his predecessors is not, fundamentally, one of continuity or discontinuity. Rather, the relationship that Pope Francis' teachings on poverty, peace and the environment have with the tradition he inherited is one of fundamental continuity but refracted through a strikingly new lens.

This new lens reflects in a fundamental way the experience of the church in [Latin America](#). Critics of Pope Francis point to this as a limitation, a bias that prevents the pope from seeing the central issues of [economic justice](#), [war and peace](#) and the [environment](#) in the context of the universal church. But St. John Paul II certainly enriched key aspects of Catholic social teaching from a perspective profoundly rooted in the experience of the Eastern European church under communism. Contemporary critics of Pope Francis voice no objection to that regional and historical perspective.

Furthermore, the church in Latin America constitutes more than [40 percent of the Catholics](#) in the world. When combined with the Catholic populations of sub-Saharan Africa and Asia, which face similar economic and environmental challenges, the church of the global south constitutes more than two-thirds of the universal church. The Argentine pope's perspective on Catholic social teaching is, then, one shared by the majority of Catholics.

There are four major elements that shape how Pope Francis understands the Catholic tradition on the issues of poverty, peace and the planet.

See-judge-act. The first and most important element is the recognition that Catholic social teaching must be comprehensively inductive. Specifically, Pope Francis employs the see-judge-act methodology, which roots Catholic teaching and action in the world as it is, rather than the world as one imagines or wishes it to be. This is the central methodology used by the church in Latin America to discern how the church is being called to respond in areas ranging from evangelization to spiritual formation to social justice.

The see-judge-act method begins theological reflection by seeing the world as it truly is, then pondering the implications in light of our faith and the Gospel and, finally, promoting action in concert with those implications. As [the pivotal final document](#) of the Latin American and Caribbean bishops' meeting at [Aparecida](#), Brazil, in 2007 stated, "This method enables us to combine successfully a faithful perspective for viewing reality; incorporating criteria from faith and reason for discerning and appraising it critically; and accordingly acting as missionary disciples of Jesus Christ."

Throwaway culture. Next, Pope Francis approaches the tradition of Catholic social thought through the theme of exclusion. Marginalization, viewed as a denial of the right to participate meaningfully in political, economic, social and cultural life, has long been a major focus of Catholic social teaching. The concept of exclusion that Pope Francis deploys is broader than marginalization; it is reflective of the interwoven deprivations that do not merely banish entire populations to the margins of society but exclude them entirely. In Pope Francis' memorable terminology, such people are victims of a "[throwaway culture](#)," discarded from any meaningful participation in society.

The colonial history of Latin America and the neocolonialism that endures on many levels today has attuned this pope to the manner in which grave inequalities of wealth and power inevitably result in the patterns of exclusion that pulverize the human spirit.

In light of this history, the Latin American church is suspicious of globalization. The bishops' [Aparecida document](#) explicitly states: "In globalization, market forces easily absolutize efficacy and productivity as values regulating all human relations.... In its current form, globalization is incapable of interpreting and reacting in response to objective values that transcend the market and that constitute what is most important in human life: truth, justice, love and most especially, the dignity and rights of all, even those not included in the market."

Our common home. The third element of the pope's new lens on Catholic social thought is the recognition that integral human development includes the protection of the earth, our common home. Latin America is the home of Amazonia, a region so rich in its biodiversity that it is literally vital for the preservation of life on earth. Francis has seen firsthand the destruction of the Amazon; there is an environmental catastrophe underway that can suffocate the earth even while it destroys ancient cultures and impoverishes vast populations.

Latin America is a prime example of how economic systems that internalize profits while externalizing costs and risks must be reformed or replaced. It is also a prime example of how deep engagement with the environment informed by the scientific consensus of the world can begin to reclaim the health of our common home. The see-judge-act method reveals an ongoing

abuse of the creation that God has entrusted to us, and none of the alternative realities painted by the extractive industries of our nation can obscure that simple fact.

Pacifist roots. The final element of the new lens that Pope Francis brings to Catholic teaching on poverty, peace and the planet is the reintegration of nonviolence into the heart of Catholic teaching on war and peace. In the early church, pacifism was the dominant theme of Christian theology. For most of the church's history, however, nonviolence has been seen as a heroic though unrealistic choice, an eccentric part of our patrimony that was displaced by St. Augustine's powerful logic of war as last resort.

In his "World Day of Peace Message" in 2017, Pope Francis reclaimed the tradition of pacifism as a major theological current in the life of the church. He reiterated the contention of the early Christian community that Christ's call to love of neighbor and enemy alike is, in an unrelenting way, incompatible with recourse to war. Francis teaches that the time in which Jesus lived was one of great violence, and yet he preached nonresistance. Can the church do anything less than seek to construct a powerful and realistic politics of nonviolence rooted both in reality and in the words of the Lord himself?

A Threefold Mission

[The first five years of Francis' pontificate](#) suggest that the pope, through this new lens, has undertaken a different mission within each of the three major priorities of the Franciscan legacy.

Poverty. On the question of poverty, Pope Francis has undertaken a mission of application and renewal. Specifically, the pope has sought to enact Catholic moral teaching in the light of the forces of globalization that are transforming our economies, cultures and societies. In a very real way, Pope Francis approaches globalization with the same perspective that characterized Pope Leo XIII's critique of industrialization in "[Rerum Novarum](#)" in 1891. Francis is under no illusion that globalization can be reversed. Rather, it is his conviction that the tremendous upheaval in economic, familial and cultural life caused by globalization requires the creation of major new structures of social justice designed to mitigate the consequences and claims of globalization that have devastated so many sectors of the human family.

The great theme of the preferential option for the poor, which has resonated in Catholic teaching since the time of Paul VI, lies at the heart of this renewal. The methodology of see-judge-act, so consonant with the Second Vatican Council's [exhortation](#) to look carefully at the "signs of the times," provides the pathway for meaningful reform. And the questions of participation and marginalization, so central to the social thought of St. John Paul II and [Pope Benedict XVI](#), have been amplified by the prism of exclusion that ultimately is determinative in Pope Francis' judgments about the morality of globalization. Even refracted through the distinctive lens that Pope Francis brings to Catholic social teaching on the issue of poverty, his project is fundamentally one of continuing the long trajectory of the church's commitment to the defense of the poor, using the rich doctrinal resources that have been forged over the past 125 years.

Peace. If the relationship between the initiatives of Pope Francis and the tradition he inherited can be seen as one of continuity and renewal in the area of economic justice and poverty, Pope

Francis' mission in the area of peace is best seen as one of recovery. On one level, Francis has continued the trajectory of the modern popes in tightening the moral requirements under just war theory for recourse to war and the formulation of nuclear policy. The pope's bold decision last November to proclaim the very possession of nuclear weapons morally unacceptable is a sign of that continuing trajectory.

But on a more fundamental level, the initiatives of Pope Francis in the area of nonviolence and peace-building constitute a major shift in orientation in Catholic social teaching designed to truly empower the church's ancient pacifist traditions. This shift is rooted in the see-judge-act methodology that looks to the demonstrated successes of nonviolence in civil conflicts around the globe in which violence had been tried and failed. By pointing to the viability and moral superiority of nonviolence, this recovery of the pacifist tradition provides a necessary complement to a just war tradition that must become ever more restrictive if it hopes to preserve a claim as an authentic Christian ethic.

Planet. Pope Francis' teachings on the environment constitute a mission of neither renewal nor recovery but rather of wholesale transformation. For most of the church's history, Catholic social teaching on the environment has reflected a theme of mastery and domination. St. John Paul II and Pope Benedict both sounded a piercing alarm about the well-being of the planet in their writings about the pillaging of the earth. But it has fallen to Pope Francis, in "[Laudato Si'](#)," to construct a breathtaking theology of creation for an age in which the earth itself is imperiled.

Francis is a pope uniquely equipped to carry out this transformation. The first son of Latin America to be pope, he instinctively appreciates the richness of biodiversity as the lifeblood of the planet and has witnessed the degradation of the earth and destruction of peoples brought by rampant exploitation.

"[Laudato Si'](#)" is a prayer; it is a warning; it is an affirmation of the power and beneficence of God; it is an analysis of the contending forces and bad decisions that have brought our planet to a point of deepest peril. Most of all, it is the re-creation of Catholic teaching about the nature of the human person in relation to the earth that is our common home.

The renewal, recovery and transformation that Pope Francis has launched in Catholic teachings on poverty, peace and the planet are firmly rooted in the doctrinal tradition of the church. Yet they bring the enriching perspective of the Southern church—the majority of Catholics in the world today—to bear on the themes of exclusion, pacifism, the preservation of our common home and the massive threats that globalization poses for humanity. St. Francis of Assisi must be very pleased.

<https://www.americamagazine.org/faith/2018/04/23/pope-francis-brings-new-lens-poverty-peace-and-planet>

April 23, 2018

Divestment from fossil fuels is a witness to our faith

By John O'Shaughnessy and Erin Lothes
National Catholic Reporter

This week, an international coalition of Catholic institutions announced its divestment from fossil fuels. These include Caritas Internationalis (a Vatican-affiliated institution), Catholic banks with combined balance sheets of approximately €7.5 billion and Catholic bishops, among others.

All of us who share life on Earth should applaud this decision. After all, it will protect us from the respiratory diseases, extreme weather, and hunger we see with climate change, which is driven largely by use of fossil fuels. Less fossil fuel use means a better chance of building a healthy, safe world for our children and the most vulnerable of our sisters and brothers. Because we ourselves are Catholics who have struggled with decisions about how to manage our reliance on oil, coal and natural gas, we especially applaud the courage and conviction of these Catholic institutions.

The truth is that Catholics are, at long last, among those leading the charge to make the tough but fundamentally moral decisions about fossil fuel use and climate change. As the CEO of the Franciscan Sisters of Mary and an energy ethics theologian, we have witnessed firsthand the moral reckoning of divestment.

In 2014, the Franciscan Sisters of Mary, a congregation of women religious, removed all public companies that extract, hold and sell fossil fuel reserves from their investment portfolios. For these followers of St. Francis of Assisi, change couldn't wait. They view compassionate care of creation as the focus of their mission. In weighing the comfort of sticking with status quo investments with the greater good of a fossil fuel-free world, they made the tough but courageous decision to divest.

With help from professional advisors, the sisters shifted assets from fossil fuels to enterprises that grow the energy systems we need and preserve the lands and waters we were given. This prayerful, sustainable investment strategy has not only provided the sisters greater joy and satisfaction, it has also produced better financial returns and created social and environmental benefits they can measure.

The sisters help lead a growing movement that seeks justice in investments. With their firsthand experience and success, the Franciscan Sisters of Mary helped form the Catholic Impact Investing Collaborative, whose participants today collectively manage over \$50 billion in assets. From women and men religious to health systems and humanitarian organizations, the movement toward better stewardship of our resources is thriving.

We are at a turning point in history. For much of the twentieth century, fossil fuels were the backbone of technologies that created prosperity and security. Without a doubt, we're grateful to the miners, oilmen and engineers who have worked so hard to provide the energy we've relied on.

Now, however, we know that an economy built on dirty energy will not serve us in the long term. And institutional investors have the long-term interest of their congregations, unions and retirement systems at heart. We believe that the tide of investment is turning.

In seeking a transition from investments of the past to investments of the future, a strategy of “investor engagement,” or creating dialogue about change from the position of shareholders, has arisen. We applaud the spirit of dialogue. Unfortunately, in this case, it has not kept pace with the scaled-up transition to renewable energy that science tells us we urgently need.

For those who see dialogue as essential to their moral witness, we suggest a “both-and” strategy. A portfolio that maintains the minimum shares needed to support shareholder engagement and reinvests any divested shares in clean energy keeps the lines of dialogue open, while also making a clear commitment to the future our children will inherit.

We believe that given the depths and urgency of this crisis, we no longer have the luxury of only talking about change. We must now actively pursue it by funding clean energy.

As our brothers and sisters around the world face increasing hunger, sickness and conflict related to climate change, Catholic investors are finding continued reliance on fossil fuels will lead to harm for the human family, the young and most vulnerable above all. For many of us, divestment is a way of expressing the faith values that we hold most dear.

[John O’Shaughnessy is the CEO and CFO of the Franciscan Sisters of Mary and the founder of the Catholic Impact Investing Collaborative. Dr. Erin Lothes is an associate professor and theologian at the College of Saint Elizabeth in Morristown, NJ.]

<https://www.ncronline.org/news/environment/divestment-fossil-fuels-witness-our-faith>

April 26, 2018

Native Knowledge: What Ecologists Are Learning from Indigenous People

By Jim Robbins

Yale Environment 360

From Alaska to Australia, scientists are turning to the knowledge of traditional people for a deeper understanding of the natural world. What they are learning is helping them discover more about everything from melting Arctic ice, to protecting fish stocks, to controlling wildfires.

While he was interviewing Inuit elders in Alaska to find out more about their knowledge of beluga whales and how the mammals might respond to the changing Arctic, researcher Henry Huntington lost track of the conversation as the hunters suddenly switched from the subject of belugas to beavers.

It turned out though, that the hunters were still really talking about whales. There had been an increase in beaver populations, they explained, which had reduced spawning habitat for salmon and other fish, which meant less prey for the belugas and so fewer whales.

“It was a more holistic view of the ecosystem,” said Huntington. And an important tip for whale researchers. “It would be pretty rare for someone studying belugas to be thinking about freshwater ecology.”

Around the globe, researchers are turning to what is known as [Traditional Ecological Knowledge](#) (TEK) to fill out an understanding of the natural world. TEK is deep knowledge of a place that has been painstakingly discovered by those who have adapted to it over thousands of years. “People have relied on this detailed knowledge for their survival,” Huntington and a colleague wrote in [an article on the subject](#). “They have literally staked their lives on its accuracy and repeatability.”

This realm has long been studied by disciplines under headings such as ethno-biology, ethno-ornithology, and biocultural diversity. But it has gotten more attention from mainstream scientists lately because of efforts to better understand the world in the face of climate change and the accelerating loss of biodiversity.

Anthropologist Wade Davis, now at the University of British Columbia, refers to the constellation of the world’s cultures as the “[ethnosphere](#),” or “the sum total of all thoughts and dreams, myths, ideas, inspirations, intuitions, brought into being by human imagination since the dawn of consciousness. It’s a symbol of all that we are, and all that we can be, as an astonishingly inquisitive species.”

One estimate says that while native peoples only comprise some 4 or 5 percent of the world’s population, they use almost a quarter of the world’s land surface and manage [11 percent of its forests](#). “In doing so, they maintain 80 percent of the planet’s biodiversity in, or adjacent to, 85 percent of the world’s protected areas,” writes Gleb Raygorodetsky, a researcher with the POLIS Project on Ecological Governance at the University of Victoria and the author of [The Archipelago of Hope: Wisdom and Resilience from the Edge of Climate Change](#).

Tapping into this wisdom is playing an outsized role in sparsely settled places such as the Arctic, where change is happening rapidly – warming is occurring twice as fast as other parts of the world. Tero Mustonen, a Finnish researcher and chief of his village of Selkie, is pioneering the blending of TEK and mainstream science as the director of a project called the [Snowchange Cooperative](#). “Remote sensing can detect changes,” he says. “But what happens as a result, what does it mean?” That’s where traditional knowledge can come into play as native people who make a living on the landscape as hunters and fishers note the dramatic changes taking place in remote locales – everything from thawing permafrost to change in reindeer migration and other types of biodiversity redistribution.

The Skolt Sami people of Finland, for example, [participated in a study](#) that was published in the journal *Science* last year, which adopted indicators of environmental changes based on TEK. The Sami have seen and documented a decline in salmon in the Näätämö River, for instance. Now,

based on their knowledge, they are adapting – reducing the number of seine nets they use to catch fish, restoring spawning sites, and also taking more pike, which prey on young salmon, as part of their catch. The project is part of a co-management process between the Sami and the government of Finland.

The project has also gathered information from the Sami about insects, which are temperature dependent and provide an important indicator of a changing Arctic. The Sami have witnessed dramatic changes in the range of insects that are making their way north. The scarbaeid beetle, for example, was documented by Sami people as the invader arrived in the forests of Finland and Norway, far north of its customary range. It has also become part of the Sami oral history.

It's not only in the Arctic. Around the world there are efforts to make use of traditional wisdom to gain a better and deeper understanding of the planet – and there is sometimes a lot at stake.

Record brush fires burned across Australia in 2009, killing 173 people and injuring more than 400. The day the number of fires peaked – February 7 – is known as Black Saturday. It led to a great deal of soul searching in Australia, especially as climate warming has exacerbated fire seasons there.

Bill Gammage is an academic historian and fellow at the Humanities Research Center of the Australian National University, and his book, *The Biggest Estate on Earth: How the Aborigines Made Australia*, looks at the complex and adept way that aborigines, prior to colonization in 1789, managed the landscape with “fire and no fire” – something called “fire stick farming.”

They used “cool” fires to control everything from biodiversity to water supply to the abundance of wildlife and edible plants. Gammage noted five stages of the indigenous use of fire – first was to control wildfire fuel; second, to maintain diversity; third, to balance species; fourth, to ensure abundance; and five, to locate resources conveniently and predictably. The current regime, he says, is still struggling with number one.

“Controlled fire averted uncontrolled fire,” Gammage says, “and fire or no-fire distributed plants with the precision of a flame edge. In turn, this attracted or deterred grazing animals and located them in habitats each preferred, making them abundant, convenient, and predictable. All was where fire or no-fire put it. Australia was not natural in 1788, but made.”

While the skill of aborigines with fire had been noted before the giant brushfires – early settlers remarked on the “park-like” nature of the landscape – and studied before, it's taken on new urgency. That's why Australian land managers have adopted many of the ideas and partnered with native people as co-managers. The fire practices of the aborigines are also being taught and used in other countries.

Scientists have looked to Australian natives for other insights into the natural world. A team of researchers collaborated with natives based on their observations of kites and falcons that fly with flaming branches from a forest fire to start other fires. It's well known that birds will hunt mice and lizards as they flee the flames of a wildfire. But stories among indigenous people in

northern Australia held that some birds actually started fires by dropping a burning branch in unburned places. Based on this TEK, researchers watched and documented this behavior.

“It’s a feeding frenzy, because out of these grasslands comes small birds, lizards, insects, everything fleeing in front of the fire,” said Bob Gosford, an indigenous rights lawyer and ornithologist, who worked on the [research](#), in an interview with the Australian Broadcasting Corporation in 2016.

Another [recent study](#) down under found that an ancient practice of using fire to clear land to improve hunting also creates a more diverse mosaic of re-growth that increases the number of the primate prey species: monitor lizards and kangaroos.

“Westerners have done little but isolate ourselves from nature,” said Mark Bonta, an assistant professor at Penn State Altoona who was on a co-author on the paper on fire and raptors. “Yet those who make a point of connecting with our earth in some form have enormous knowledge because they interact with a species. When you get into conservation, [that knowledge] is even more important.” Aboriginal people “don’t see themselves as superior to or separated from animals. They are walking storehouses of knowledge,” he said.

The Maya people of Mesoamerica have much to teach us about farming, experts say. Researchers have found that they preserve an astonishing amount of biodiversity in their forest gardens, in harmony with the surrounding forest. “The active gardens found around Maya forest villagers’ houses shows that it’s the most diverse domestic system in the world,” integrated into the forest ecosystem, writes Anabel Ford, who is head of the MesoAmerican Research Center at the University of California at Santa Barbara. “These forest gardeners are heroes, yet their skill and sophistication have too long been set aside and devalued.”

Valuing these life ways is an important part of the process. For the Skolt Sami, [writes Mustonen](#), “seeing their language and culture valued led to an increase in self-esteem and power over their resources.”

It may not just be facts about the natural world that are important in these exchanges, but different ways of being and perceiving. In fact, there are researchers looking into the relationship between some indigenous people and the very different ways they see the world.

Felice Wyndham is an ecological anthropologist and ethnobiologist who has noted that people she has worked with can intimately sense the world beyond their body. “It’s a form of enhanced mindfulness,” she says. “It’s quite common, you see it in most hunter-gatherer groups. It’s an extremely developed skill base of cognitive agility, of being able to put yourself into a viewpoint and perspective of many creatures or objects – rocks, water, clouds.

“We, as humans, have a remarkable sensitivity, imagination, and ability to be cognitively agile,” Wyndham says. “If we are open to it and train ourselves to learn how to drop all of the distractions to our sensory capacity, we’re able to do so much more biologically than we use in contemporary industrial society.”

Among the most important messages from traditional people is their equanimity and optimism. There “is no sense of doom and gloom,” says Raygorodetsky. “Despite dire circumstances, they maintain hope for the future.”

<https://e360.yale.edu/features/native-knowledge-what-ecologists-are-learning-from-indigenous-people>

April 27, 2018

Forum on ecological civilization mulls China's role in way forward

Xinhua Net

CLAREMONT, the United States -- The 12th International Forum on Ecological Civilization, an initiative to create and promote new modes of development in China and the West, kicked off in Claremont, Southern California, Friday.

Themed "Ecological Civilization and Symbiotic Development", the two-day conference is hosted by the Institute for Postmodern Development of China, a non-profit organization.

Over 160 scholars from China, the United States and other countries are exchanging views on the latest developments in ecological civilization.

John B. Cobb Jr., a 93-year-old member of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, called to improve the quality of community life in a way that would leave everyone better off while reducing the pressure on the natural environment, suggesting that China could lead the way.

"We need to describe the need in a different way, such as freeing everyone from degrading poverty while reducing the overall pressures on our natural environment," he said. "This would require changes in our lifestyle that are not now seriously discussed in any nation. Perhaps China can lead the way."

David Korten, co-founder and president of the Living Economies Forum, a non-profit that promotes positive living principles and a new economy grounded in them, said we have arrived at a defining moment in the human experience.

"Either we find our common path to an ecological civilization that meets the essential material needs of Earth's human population in a balanced relationship with (Earth's) natural systems, or we risk being the first Earth species knowingly to choose self-extinction," he said.

Korten, the author of influential books including "When Corporations Rule the World," and "The Great Turning: From Empire to Earth Community", said this poses a distinctive challenge to China, which must now choose between leading the world on one of two paths.

The mayor of Claremont, Opanyi Nasiali, welcomed scholars from around the world, saying, "I hope this conference stresses the importance of collaboration and strengthens the respect we must have for each other in this global village."

http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2018-04/28/c_137144045.htm

April 28, 2018

7 arrested as faith leaders protest Trans Mountain pipeline expansion in Burnaby

By Chad Pawson
CBC News

Leaders from a broad spectrum of religious faiths stood with Indigenous people at a Kinder Morgan work site in Burnaby, B.C., on Saturday to protest the expansion of the Trans Mountain pipeline.

Muslims, Buddhists, Jews, Unitarians, two choirs, members of 10 Christian denominations, and interfaith groups all participated by singing and chanting but also fixing prayers, rosaries and flags to the gates of Kinder Morgan's site at [Shellmont Street and Underhill Avenue](#).

Amal Rana placed a quote from the Prophet Mohammad on the gates.

"Environmental justice is a huge part of the Islamic faith, actually all our faiths," she said. "We are here to stand with Indigenous people and also for the earth ... that is part of our spirituality."

[Seven people were arrested by Burnaby RCMP officers](#) for breaching a court-ordered injunction that prevents people from obstructing or impeding access to Kinder Morgan facilities in Burnaby.

The groups said they were against the expansion because of concerns it could cause environmental damage, and that there was [not enough meaningful consultation done with Indigenous stakeholders](#).

Bat-Ami Hensen, a member of Metro Vancouver's Jewish Community said it was important to stand with people from other faiths in opposition to the project.

"We have common values," she said of all the groups gathered on Saturday.

Others like independent Christian Reverend Dr. Vivian Marie says the event was also to show a commitment to reconciliation with Indigenous people.

"Our faith demands that as well as care of the earth," she also said.

Laurel Dykstra, a priest with the Anglican Church of Canada, says religious leaders are putting prayers into action by being willing to be arrested.

"People of faith are standing in solidarity with Indigenous people to say this pipeline will not be built," she said.

Meanwhile, parts of a protest camp set up in Burnaby appeared to have been vandalized with spray paint saying, "protesters not welcome," and "go home."

Burnaby RCMP have not yet confirmed if it received complaints about the spray paint or if they are investigating.

The Trans Mountain project received federal approval in November of 2016. The National Energy Board (NEB) concluded that the project is in Canada's public interest and it could [proceed with 157 conditions](#).

Since then, legal challenges and political wrangling have stalled the expansion, which would increase the amount of oil or products being transported from Edmonton to Burnaby from 300,000 barrels per day to 890,000 barrels per day.

On Friday, the B.C. government asked the B.C. Court of Appeal if it has [the jurisdiction to bring in stricter rules for companies to ferry more heavy oil](#) — like diluted bitumen — through the province.

This week Environment and Climate Change Minister Catherine McKenna wrote an open letter to B.C.'s environment minister proposing [the creation of a joint scientific panel to study oil spills and response measures](#).

Trans Mountain says it has prepared extensive plans to help emergency responders react faster, and more effectively, in limiting potential impacts of a spill.

<http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/faith-leaders-trans-mountain-protest-burnaby-1.4640502>

April 30, 2018

Mormon environmentalist conveys ecological message through fiction

By Jana Riess

Religion News Service

The phrase “Mormon environmentalist” is not one you hear every day, given that Mormons in the United States are often politically conservative. But Utah resident George Handley is exactly that – committed to both the Mormon faith and to rescuing the environment.

As a professor of interdisciplinary humanities at Mormonism's flagship school, Brigham Young University in Provo, Utah, Handley has long penned nonfiction that has addressed the impact that human beings are having on the planet. But now he's channeling his creative energies in a new direction, through fiction. [His debut novel *American Fork*](#) has just been released from indie press [Roundfire Books](#).

Set in 2001, *American Fork* tells the story of a reclusive botanist, Zacharias Harker, who enlists the help of a young artist, Alba, in chronicling the damage climate change is wreaking in Utah's Wasatch Mountains.

"Alba is someone, as an artist, who is just discovering her love of the natural environment," says Handley. "And Mr. Harker has a deep connection to the natural world that's not a function of an academic or political interest, but something deeper. He's wrestling with deep existential questions that emerge from the suffering he's had in his own life, which unfolds as the novel moves forward."

Alba's interest in the environment is strongly influenced by her Mormon faith, which is also true of the author, who says his approach is "strongly influenced by literature and art and spirituality. I certainly am interested in the politics surrounding environmentalism, but I tend to think of those issues as less of an activist and more of a humanist and a believing Mormon."

Not all Mormons would agree. In the Next Mormons Survey, a nationally representative sample of Latter-day Saints conducted in 2016, only 41% of Mormons agreed with a statement that "the earth's climate is getting warmer because of human activity."

The results were even lower among Mormons in Utah, the setting of Handley's novel: just over a third of Utah Latter-day Saints say the climate is changing because of human activity.

Handley says he's not surprised by this resistance to scientists' findings about climate change and the environment, though it saddens him. "I live it and experience it all the time," he says, noting that in two decades of teaching at BYU, he has worked to bring people with different ideas into dialogue with each other.

"I spend a lot of time trying to help people identify the common ground they already have. Obviously, I'm interested in helping people understand the science and be informed with the best information, but you can't go into discussions seeing climate change as some kind of culture war. It's such a non-starter."

At BYU, he has co-taught a course with biology professor (and novelist and friend) [Steven Peck](#), focusing on religion and the environment. Because of the success of that course, Peck offered a related spinoff elective in the biology department, and Handley wound up designing an environmental humanities program.

Now through fiction, he is able to weave environmental themes into the lives of his characters. "There is increasing interest in the ways in which fiction can help us think about the environmental crisis in productive ways that are harder to come by in other forms of writing," he

says. He cites the nature writing of [Barbara Kingsolver](#) and [Amitav Ghosh](#) as formative in the burgeoning field of environmental fiction.

“The compelling case to be made for narrative is that it allows you to step into a world that can shape your moral imagination in vital ways. If the fiction writer is doing his or her job well, the novel can retrofit your imagination.”

Handley will promote the novel with readings and book signings in Utah, including an appearance at [the King’s English Bookstore in Salt Lake City on the evening of Tuesday, May 29](#).

So far, he says, the early response has been quite positive, though he would not be surprised to have some pushback from a few conservative Latter-day Saints. Handley says he wishes religious people would “put down the sword of political ideology” where climate change is concerned and “just think about and celebrate the principles and values of stewardship, which are so beautifully articulated in Mormon doctrine. And really get serious about living up to the responsibilities that are spelled out in our scriptures.”

Mormonism, he says, is actually a treasure trove of concern for the environment, which is something he hopes more Latter-day Saints will take seriously. “We either neglect a lot of those teachings or we actually dismiss them. In the name of a political set of loyalties we think that environmental concerns are things we should be dismissive or distrustful of.”

<https://religionnews.com/2018/04/30/mormon-environmentalist-conveys-ecological-message-through-fiction/>

May 2, 2018

Religious leaders mobilize to protect indigenous people and forests

By Willie Shubert
Mongabay

- *Religious leaders joined forces with indigenous peoples from Brazil, Colombia, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Indonesia, Meso-America and Peru at the Nobel Peace Center in Oslo in 2017 to launch the Interfaith Rainforest Initiative (IRI).*
- *The IRI plans to mobilize high profile religious leaders to intervene in policy forums and advocate for forests and indigenous people with support from UN Environment.*
- *It has been estimated that one third of climate change mitigation is from tropical rainforests and securing land rights for indigenous peoples is an effective and low-cost method of reducing carbon emissions.*

What if the moral and spiritual influence of the world’s religious communities and their leaders were directed towards protecting rainforests and their indigenous guardians? Is this an

appropriate role for religious and faith-based communities to take on? The coalition of religious and indigenous leaders behind the Interfaith Rainforest Initiative believe it is.

Buddhist, Christian, Hindu, Jewish, Muslim, and Taoist religious leaders joined forces with indigenous peoples from Brazil, Colombia, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Indonesia, Meso-America and Peru at the Nobel Peace Center in Oslo in 2017 to launch the Interfaith Rainforest Initiative (IRI) and are committed to mobilizing billions of people of faith to stand up for rainforests and their protectors. The IRI global steering committee reconvened at the UN Headquarters in New York on April 19, 2018 to give a briefing on this initiative and to receive consultation.

“We are here tonight at this stage to listen,” said Reverend Fletcher Harper a writer, preacher and executive director of Green Faith as he addressed the diverse group of indigenous leaders and other attendees in New York. “There is a great deal of historical inertia from which we must overcome and much blindness from which we must repent and for which we will need your help,” said Rev. Harper. “We are here to listen. We are in your debt. We hope to be worthy of your partnership.”

Faith leaders as eminent as Pope Francis and faith communities have made [contributions to environmental efforts](#) in the past. The creation of [The Paris Agreement](#) was aided by people of faith who organized, engaged in civil disobedience, and mobilized millions to sign petitions. Harper says faith communities and organizations including The Parliament of the World’s Religions, Forum on Religion and Ecology at Yale University, The World Council of Churches, Religions for Peace, the Real Network and Green Faith are committed to bringing that same level of commitment to protecting forests and indigenous peoples.

This protection cannot come soon enough. In 2016, nearly 4 people were murdered per week defending land from industries like mining, logging, and agribusiness — [40% of these deaths](#) were indigenous people. For most indigenous people, land serves as the center of their spirituality, livelihood, and survival. And in the case of tropical forests much more is at stake—the health of the entire planet.

It has been estimated that [one third of climate change mitigation](#) is from tropical rainforests and securing land rights for indigenous peoples is an effective and low-cost method of reducing carbon emissions. According to the World Resource Institute, securing these rights in Brazil, Colombia, and Bolivia, for example, would be the equivalent of removing between 9 and 12 million cars from the road for one year. In areas of the Amazon where indigenous people have land rights, deforestation is [2 to 3 times lower](#). However, [less than 10%](#) of indigenous people hold formal land rights to the forests they protect and inhabit, making it difficult to take any legal actions against those who would illegally or unethically exploit resources.

Worldwide, IRI plans to mobilize high profile religious leaders to intervene in policy forums and advocate for forests and indigenous people with implementation support by UN Environment. IRI will also launch early programs in five high risk, high priority countries: Brazil, Colombia, Peru, the Democratic Republic of Congo, and Indonesia. These programs will support the

development of faith-based networks with diverse advisory councils which include local indigenous people.

“Protecting tropical forests is not only a matter of the protection of nature but also about the protection of the cultures, languages, livelihoods and human diversity that thrive within these ecosystems,” said Reverend Harper. “The protection of forests is only done well when it is integrally connected to the protection of indigenous peoples and we wish to reaffirm our recognition of this as fundamental to what this initiative is about.”

IRI steering committee member and Ambassador of Norway Mae Ellen Steiner acknowledged that governmental partners have a long way to go and have lots of inconsistencies, but, at least in the case of Norway, they are trying. Norway has invested heavily in IRI and has devoted almost US\$3 billion over the past decade to support developing countries to reduce deforestation and forest degradation, and has committed to continuing substantial investments.

During the question and comment portion of the New York briefing, indigenous leaders in the room echoed a shared ethos surrounding the sanctity of the forests, their centrality to their lives and expressed enthusiasm about working with IRI and its mission. However, concerns were raised about dealing with unsupportive governments, local industries and businesses.

Leaders and representative of NGOs and advocacy groups (such as the Water Culture Institute and Rainforest Alliance) were eager to learn how they, as secular organizations, could help. The steering committee members were clear that atheists, humanists, and any person of ethical convictions had a place in dialogue and coalition building. The IRI members were also reminded and encouraged to include the voices of youth and women in the process.

“I have heard from many indigenous people that our religions need to re-indigenize,” said Dr. Kusumita Pedersen, IRI steering committee member and Professor Emerita of Religious Studies at St. Francis College, New York, who has been part of the global interfaith movement for over thirty years.

“What does this mean?” Dr. Pederson asked. “Within the philosophies, worldviews, and ethics – the deepest values and visions of the world’s religions – there are those elements that correspond to the indigenous spiritual traditions. The Pope’s encyclical *Laudato Si* states that all living beings have dignity, not merely human beings. Father Thomas Berry famously said the universe is not a collection of objects but a communion of subjects. All beings have a spirit, personhood and are worthy of respect. So, our traditions need to draw out from within themselves these elements, hold them up, and make them as strong as possible to help us to be effective in the work we are doing, in solidarity. This is the task before us in order to move hearts and minds. It is not always easy, but we must never give up.”

A recording of the IRI Briefing and Consultation in its entirety is [available here](#).

View more features in Mongabay’s ongoing series on conservation and religion [here](#).

<https://news.mongabay.com/2018/05/religious-leaders-mobilize-to-protect-indigenous-people-and-forests/>