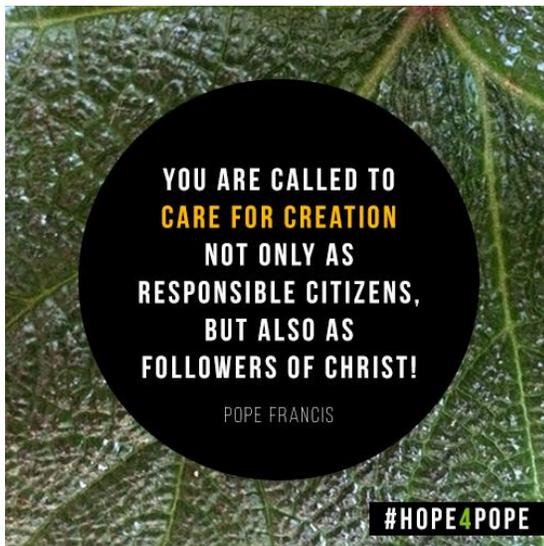


Awaiting Pope Francis's Encyclical on the Environment

Far beyond the Jesuit world, even beyond the Catholic world, people concerned with the future of life on Earth and the care for God's Creation are anxiously anticipating the release of Pope Francis's papal encyclical focused on ecology and human development. We don't know exactly when the encyclical will be released, but think it likely to become public in late June. The timing of its release is weighed with purpose- seeking to influence three major UN climate-related gatherings/processes in 2015: a July International Conference on Financing for Development; the expected ratification of the Sustainable Development Goals at the September U.N General Assembly; and the December Climate Change Conference in Paris.



From past statements from Pope Francis and Vatican leaders, we have some indications of the broad concerns the encyclical will raise (see Cardinal Peter K. A. Turkson's [remarks at Trócaire Lenten Lecture, March 5, 2015](#)). The encyclical will explore the relationship between care for Creation, integral human development and concern for the poor. Our relationship with the Creator, with our neighbor (especially the poor) and with the environment has become fundamentally un-kept. These specific concerns mirror language from the document produced by Jesuits gathering for General Congregation 35, namely that we "establish right relationships with God, with one another, and with creation" (GC 35 D. 3, n. 12).

Pope Francis will undoubtedly point to the inequality of climate change, which will disproportionately affect the poor even while it is being driven by highly developed countries like the US, members of the European Union, and Russia. All people will feel the impacts of climate change, but people living in poverty are much more likely to suffer from poorly built housing and rudimentary infrastructures unable to resist or respond to natural disasters. Pope Francis sees this as a moral issue for people of faith. Our call to care for the poorest and most vulnerable people among us must be linked to forming solutions to confront climate change.

Finally, Pope Francis has charged all Christians with the fundamental duty of protecting Creation. Looking back to the earliest chapters of Genesis, we read that Creation is God's work, born out of love for us. If humanity does not safeguard Creation, make it flourish, then we are not concerned with God's incredible gift. In order to promote the lifestyle changes necessary to be protectors of Creation, we need a radical and fundamental change in our attitudes to Creation, to the poor and to the priorities of the global economy. This requires in us a conversion of the heart, an ecological conversion.

There is much that we can and should do as individuals, faith communities, institutions and as a nation to prepare for, receive and respond to the forthcoming encyclical. As individuals and communities, we are called to a new global solidarity, one in which everyone has a part to play and every action, no matter how small, can make a difference. As individuals, groups and communities, from local to global ways, we must prayerfully discern how we can respond at this critical moment. Below are some suggestions and resources to help you and your community continue along this ecological justice journey.

RESOURCES AND SUGGESTIONS FOR ACTION

- For Jesuit and other intentional faith communities, look at the list of [Concrete Suggestions](#) of ways to live more sustainably developed by a 2010 global Jesuit taskforce formed after GC 35 and presented in the conclusion [Healing a Broken World](#)
- Follow conversations and reflections on the forthcoming encyclical and opportunities for action on climate change on the [Ignatian Solidarity Network's Papal Encyclical on Ecology](#) page
- Prayerful conversations in faith communities can help us feel more connected to other people of faith on the issue of climate change. Here are some prayer and reflection resources:
 - The Dominican Sisters have a wonderful blog with semi-regular prayer posts to prepare for the UN Climate Treaty negotiations in Paris this December- <http://paris2015andcounting.org>
 - The Intercommunity Peace and Justice Center out of Seattle has developed [a four-session facilitation guide](#) to move us towards conversion on climate change
 - The Jesuit Forum of the English Canada Province developed [Living with Limits, Living Well!](#), a 9 session guide that integrates economic activity and consumption with climate change
- Connect with other Catholics taking action on climate change through the [Catholic Climate Covenant](#)
- Sign the [Catholic Climate Petition](#), calling on world leaders to drastically cut carbon emissions
- Talk with your elected officials (in person, letters, phone calls) about supporting the Obama Administration's pledge to cut U.S. climate pollution by 26-28% from 2005 levels (statements of support from faith organizations available [here](#))
- Collaborate with other faith traditions responding to climate change through [Our Voices](#)