

Double rainbow over Glasgow on eve of COP26



Central Glasgow was ablaze with colour and vibrant with drumming as more than 500 climate pilgrims made their way through Saturday shoppers on 30 October to highlight the walking pilgrimages to COP26 converging on Glasgow from around the UK and Europe.

'Climate Justice Now' appeared on many banners carried by the pilgrims and supporters, but among the newer initiatives was a group of Harry Potter characters leading a huge black serpent carried by 22 people and with 'Capitalism' written on the side. A 'Coat of Hopes' comprising several hundred patches of rainbows, flowers and other images and messages of hope attracted considerable media attention. Each patch was prepared lovingly by local communities

throughout the UK.

Helen Elwes from Bristol, brought a large painting depicting Our Lady as a protector of creation, 'Mother of Mercy'.

The Young Christian Climate Network (YCCN) Relay to COP has covered a 1,200-mile route from Cornwall since June. The Camino to COP, which left London in early September has covered 450 miles and both reported "hundreds of conversations" and "profound engagement with faith communities". Both have stayed in churches and with other faith communities, spoken at services and run educational events. "I never thought I would get all the way" said one Camino walker, "and I wouldn't have, without the amazing navigators, stewards, support drivers and fellow walkers, and our lovely host communities."

The 'Climate Pilgrims', who have walked across the UK in advance of the summit's opening were joined by pilgrims from Sweden, Denmark, Germany, the Netherlands and Poland walking under the banner 'Pilgrim's Walk for Future'. All aimed to lobby the COP26 climate summit for a fair deal for the Global South, but also "providing time for deep thinking and reflection upon the lives we lead, particularly our throwaway culture." The walks touched hearts and minds along the routes and a much wider community through reports on Twitter and Facebook. There were supporters alongside them on Saturday from such groups as

CAFOD, Christian Aid, Tearfund and Operation Noah. One group of three religious sisters were Columban, Carmelite and the Sisters of St Andrew.

High-powered faith delegations will be in the summit itself, but they are aware they have the full backing of grassroot faith communities, demonstrating the depth of commitment for climate justice.

On Saturday morning, Melanie Nazareth of the Camino to COP, who was one of the 12 people walking the whole route, reflected that the last day of walking was in the rain and the group took delight in seeing so many rainbows: "rainbows that are so close we can almost touch them where they touch the ground, and one where the colours appeared twice as if a double dollop of hope was needed". She added that, "the thought is in my head that maybe we are walking as work to make manifest a covenant with God."

On Saturday evening the closing service of the YCCN Relay to COP was held at St George's Tron, Church of Scotland, in a building decorated with fairy lights and the boat which the young walkers have brought with them every step of the way. Its sails are made from materials of countries badly affected by climate change. More than 28,000 small origami prayer boats were collected along the way and were on display. We had tea and cake on the way into the church, before settling into a truly joyful service of popular hymn music from the St George's Tron Band and reflections on the Relay. Its co-lead, Josh Evans, was clapped as he revealed the full extent of the YCCN achievement: 2,500 walkers - mostly young Christians - took part and were supported by 130 churches across eight denominations. Not only supported but overwhelmed with hospitality. Everybody laughed as he reported that, "on one day a group of walkers received three breakfasts."

The young walkers were thanked for being prophetic and inspirational by Martin Johnstone, the COP26 ambassador for Glasgow Churches Together. In the final prayer, co-lead Rachel Mander spoke of "the Lord who sets us out on crazy journeys" and of bringing before the

Lord, "all the people for whom this COP26 conference really matters."

And this evening many churches across the UK rang their church bells between 6 and 6.30pm to show support for climate action, particularly for the vulnerable communities in the global south who are already suffering terribly from the impacts of a warming world.

Let's hope the world leaders gathering on Monday are listening!

COP26 Blog 2: 'We can deliver - we must deliver' Ellen Teague Oct 31st, 2021



Bishop John Arnold at COP26 faith vigil Well, we're off. The landmark COP26 Climate conference has started. Those of us fortunate enough to be accredited to enter the 'Blue Zone' did our daily Covid test, negotiated security checks and filled our water bottles no throwaway plastic cups here. No paperwork either - with maps of the complex, schedules etc. all being online in numerous e-mails. Evidence of the campaigners outside could be seen through the window of the media centre, with a huge sign reading, 'NO NEW WORLDS' across the other side of the River Clyde.

In his opening address, COP president and Conservative MP Alok Sharma thanked the international delegations for their efforts to get into the UK. But it's been an effort for locals too. Trying to reach the conference centre this morning in teaming rain, with long walks to get around high barriers, left me reflecting on those texts telling me to 'have fun'. Ha ha - this is a commitment to report on faith calls for climate justice, and in the context of global concern to rebuild a stable climate. But... it is a privilege to actually be here.

But let's get back to the rain. How ironic that torrential rain disrupted journeys to Glasgow these past few days. Train journeys passed miles of waterlogged fields at the Scottish border, with water close by on both sides of the carriages. It focused the mind regarding the impacts of more severe weather on all of us.

It was interesting to hear Alok Sharma say: "Act now to keep 1.5 alive." I've seen that slogan on umpteen banners at climate marches by faith groups over the years, such as 'The Wave' in 2009. He spoke of being motivated by recently witnessing such disasters as climate-induced famine in Africa. Of course, Catholic hierarchies and communities have been reporting on these negative climate change impacts for many years - such as the Bishops' Conference of the Philippines - along with the Church's Caritas, Justice and Peace and missionary networks. The Church has a close ear to local communities and a commitment to "hear the cry of the Earth and the Cry of the Poor", as *Laudato Si* put it, which have both been worsened by our warming planet.

Māori climate activist India Logan-Riley also spoke at the opening of the summit where she is representing indigenous communities. She gave a stinging input about colonialism undervaluing and replacing indigenous practices. She reported that oil exploration has long been challenged by indigenous groups. "We try to keep fossil fuels in the ground and stop its expansion" she said, adding that, "for this COP, learn our histories, and listen to our stories." This afternoon, back in Central Glasgow, Catholics joined other faiths in an outdoor COP26 vigil organised by Interfaith Glasgow and Interfaith Scotland. Bishop William Nolan of Scotland Justice and Peace and Bishop John Arnold, environment lead for the Catholic bishops of England and Wales, were there to support.

"It's wonderful to see the different faiths come together on this cause" said Bishop Nolan; "who would have thought 10 or 20 years ago that we would have seen this?" He flagged up the Glasgow Declaration in September where faith leaders came together and said: "Across our doctrinal and political differences, we know that we must change our ways to ensure a quality of life which all can share, and we need to provide hope for people of all ages,

everywhere, including future generations. To offer hope in the world we need to have confidence that those in power understand the vital role they have to play at the Glasgow COP26." Amen to that.

On this All Saints Day, I recall those hundreds of environmental martyrs globally who have sacrificed their lives to supporting local communities challenging mining and logging multinationals and all practices which destroy God's creation. And I wondered about the modern-day saints in our midst. At the faith vigil were 'Camino to COP' walkers who are now praying at an Earth Vigil for the duration of the climate summit. They are based around the Glasgow Quaker Meeting House but praying at locations largely outdoors for hours on end. They are prophetic witnesses to the urgent changes we need to see COP26 put in place. More than 120 of the world's leaders are here tomorrow. I'll conclude with a notice from Alok Sharma today: "I believe we can deliver - we must deliver."

COP 25 Blog 3

Climate activist from Kenya



Sitting in a high-powered press pack - journalists from Vietnam on one side and Fiji on the other, Daily Express opposite and world's media all around, such as Reuters, The Washington Post, and The Guardian - I felt a buzz to see this massive media focus on the Climate Crisis. It's about time!

I set up my laptop at one of the hundreds of workstations provided while munching

the free bar of chocolate we were given on the way in. The packet said, 'Store below +1.5 degrees celsius to avoid a meltdown' and realised this would be only the first mention of 1.5 degrees I'd be hearing today. We knew that 120 world leaders were gathering because we could hear their helicopters overhead and today was the first of two days of their inputs. Were we going to get more "Blah, Blah, Blah", as Greta Thunberg feared a few weeks back? The conference's goal is to make real progress in the move towards net-zero carbon emissions by 2050 and keep global warming below 1.5 degrees Celsius. This is widely seen as the key level needed to avoid the most destructive consequences of global climate change. In fact, I was impressed that the first round of speakers seemed more serious than I have ever heard them. "Humanity has long since run down the clock on climate change" said Prime Minister Boris Johnson. He hoped for a green transition and for making available at least

\$100 billion dollars a year to help the global south. He noted that "half the population of the world is under 30 and they will judge us; if we fail they will not forgive us." He felt the leaders also had a duty to the unborn, saying "we cannot let them down", a reference to future generations. He concluded that "we have the opportunity and the duty at COP26 to begin to irrefutably turn the tide and begin the fight back against climate change."

There were strong words too from UN Secretary-General António Guterres. He warned that we are still "treating nature as a toilet" and "still careering towards climate catastrophe, with a rise above two degrees." He suggested that, "young people know it and vulnerable island states live it." He warned that, "the sirens have sounded" and urged that countries must revisit their climate policies often. "This COP must be a focus for solidarity and richer countries offer more overseas development aid" he added.

President Biden said: "Let this be the moment we answer history's call, here in Glasgow."

Prince Charles and David Attenborough underlined the need for nature-based solutions and for using this opportunity to create a more equal world.

Particularly memorable was a 'Message from the Earth' video. One image that will stay with me is of husky dogs pulling a sled through water. This powerful film of extreme weather destroying the planet's stability reminded that we need to be more attentive to Earth's natural systems and value them.

This was picked up by Indigenous activist Txai Suruí from Brazil who also felt that "Earth is speaking to us" and our targets for action "are not 2030 or 2050, but now." She told delegates that in her Amazonian home, "animals are disappearing, the rivers are dying and our plants don't flower."



COP26 Blog 4: Churches maintain pressure for Climate Justice

Ellen Teague Nov 2nd, 2021

Westminster candlelit prayer walk for start of COP26 on Monday night

Does the Catholic Church recognise the climate crisis as more than just one issue among many justice Issues? Does it recognise that the UN 26th Conference on Climate Change (COP26) in Glasgow is a critical summit for global climate action and limiting global warming to 1.5 degrees this century from pre-industrial levels?

I would say, "Yes". Just as at the landmark Paris Climate talks of 2015, the Catholic Church has been an influential voice on

behalf of our wounded Earth and poor communities.

COP26 is such a vital moment that the Vatican has sent a delegation headed by Secretary of State Cardinal Pietro Parolin. The Holy See seeks to amplify the voice of the most affected and promote their inclusion in the climate justice negotiations. The financial compensation for 'loss and damage' experienced by so many poor people will be a key ask, particularly for the Global South, and one that the Vatican will be monitoring. Substantial funds are needed to help the countless communities harmed by the climate crisis and for those who have lost land due to rising sea levels and salination of agricultural land.

"The young, who in recent years have strongly urged us to act, will only inherit the planet we choose to leave to them, based on the concrete choices we make today," said Pope Francis in his message to COP26, read out today in the main conference hall by Cardinal Parolin. It was overshadowed in the media by PM Boris Johnson's simultaneous live press conference, but it is part of the conference record.

Pope Francis called for richer countries, "to take a leading role in the areas of climate finance, decarbonisation in the economic system and in people's lives, the promotion of a circular economy, providing support to more vulnerable countries working to adapt to the impact of climate change and to respond to the loss and damage it has caused." He called for the cancellation of foreign debt, to release finance for the climate emergency. "At the same time, we have come to realise that it also involves a crisis of children's rights," he added, "and that, in the near future, environmental migrants will be more numerous than refugees from war and conflicts." He urged nations, "to prepare a future in which our human family will be in a position to care for itself and for the natural environment."

Meanwhile, the grassroots groups were also campaigning today. Catholics on six continents united ahead of COP26 to push the 'Healthy Planet, Healthy People' petition. I signed it some months ago myself, and Columban missionaries were amongst those promoting it. The petition was handed over to COP26 this evening during an Interfaith event at St George's Tron Church in Glasgow. The church was packed with representatives of the Laudato Si Movement, Lutheran World Federation, Islamic Relief and others. More than 150 people joined online from as far afield as New York, Quito, Rome, Brasilia, Nairobi, and the Holy Cross Church in Vancouver.

Lorna Gold of the Laudato Si Movement was one of those handing over signatures of more than 115,000 individuals and 432 partners. The petition has been an initiative of the Movement to promote the implementation of the Pope's encyclical 'Laudato Si'. A key call is to recognise human-induced climate change and biodiversity as part of one and the same crisis and to implement nature-based solutions. An accompanying letter said, "it is our responsibility as Catholics to lift up the voices of the most vulnerable and advocate on their behalf."

And other initiatives include young Catholics from Kenya, Ghana, Rwanda and Zimbabwe engaging with COP26 here as part of Faiths4COP26. Tomorrow, Jesuit Missions, the international development office for the Jesuits in Britain, will set out on a pilgrimage for

climate justice, which will see 28 pilgrims walking 52 miles from Edinburgh to Glasgow during the summit. The pilgrims include four Jesuits and their journey will culminate with joining the Global Day of Action for Climate Justice march through Glasgow city centre on Saturday.

And let's remember thousands of initiatives at a local level, ranging from a candle-lit procession for COP26 in London yesterday by Westminster Justice and Peace, to a COP26 poster displayed outside St Benedict's Church in Garforth, to prayers for the summit's success being said in parishes globally.

Blog 5 Green wash Ellen Teague Nov 2nd, 2021, 2021 COP 26 Blog 5 Ellen Teague Nov 2nd, 2021 Independent Catholic COP26 OP 26 Blog 5 Greenwash: Ellen Teague Nov 2nd,



2021 Independent Catholic News
Protests around disrupted Central Glasgow today. Frustration is palpable, with a gap being perceived between rhetoric from leading politicians and the urgent transition to a more sustainable society demanded by climate campaigners. The term "greenwashing" was heard over and over again. This is an environmentalists' term for an organisation's false portrayal of itself as environmentally

friendly. Some activists contend that corporations and many governments participating in the

climate summit are guilty of just that, by paying lip service to combating climate change while continuing with business as usual.

In the days leading up to COP26 young climate activists slept overnight in London's Science Museum lamenting the establishment's sponsorship deals with fossil fuel companies. Around 30 members of the UK Student Climate Network camped in the museum's lobby after holding a candlelit vigil for "the victims of the museum's fossil fuel sponsors: Shell, BP, Equinor and Adani". The young people wanted "to reclaim this space from its destructive sponsors."

Despite the fact that greenhouse gas emissions need to drop sharply within the next few years, the world's governments continue to support the fossil-fuel industry with \$11 million per minute, according to a new analysis from the International Monetary Fund. Yet, pressure is building up for this to change, not least from the growing divestment policy of faith groups.

Today at the summit the key theme was finance. Banks and asset managers representing 40 per cent of the world's financial assets, involving 450 firms across 45 countries, pledged to meet the goals set out in the Paris climate agreement. Yet, responding to chancellor Rishi Sunak's "finance day" speech, Christian Aid's Jennifer Larbie said: "this announcement does little to shift the dial now on the trillions still flowing into fossil fuel projects every day, with the deadliest of impacts borne by developing countries."

Yeb Sano, a well-known environmental activist from the Philippines, said in a tweet today, to "beware of those supporting carbon markets, especially offsets, as a solution to the climate crisis." He felt, "they don't grasp the true transformation required to fulfil the Paris goals." Carbon credits could, for example, be generated by planting trees or buying up existing forests, as a way to "offset" a dirty power project on the other side of the world or further oil development, such as Total in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

There was another contentious area revealed yesterday as leaders of more than 100 countries vowed to end deforestation by 2030. Frontline communities want action well before that! But will world leaders stick to the promise made? Regarding Brazil, it is expected that President Jair Bolsonaro 's motivation comes more from his desire to claw back public support than to save the rainforest. Deforestation of the Brazilian Amazon has soared since he took office in 2019. The Bolsonaro administration slashed funding to Brazil's environmental agency, accused environmental NGOs of starting fires, and sacked the head of Brazil's National Institute for Space Research when it released an unflattering report on deforestation. Not much sign then that the president has had an "ecological conversion". An important meeting today was a side event , 'Making Peace with Nature: Heeding the Call of Indigenous Peoples', co-organised by the Anglican Communion, Religions for Peace International, the World Council of Churches and others. The Churches have long called for the world to listen to indigenous peoples who have been raising their voices outside the conference centre today. They want serious green action, not greenwash.

This morning I was invited to meet Green Christian members at Govan and Lyndhurst parish church near the exhibition centre, where they are holding daily talks and prayers during the summit. It was a small group but an impressive one. There was Euan McPhee who has cycled from Cornwall to Glasgow, stopping in each Anglican diocese he passed through to pick up their climate declarations for handing to the COP organisers. These dioceses included Truro, Exeter, Wells, Bristol, Lichfield and Liverpool.

Also present was Sr Mary Jo McElroy, who is on the international Justice and Peace team of the Religious of the Sacred Heart of Mary. She lives in Noddfa, a retreat house in Penmaenmawr, North Wales, but before that spent 20 years in North East Brazil. She spoke of her background working there and witnessing the impacts of worsening desertification, the murder of justice and environment activists, and the inspiration of the Church's Basic Christian Communities. Outside the conference venue is a sign providing a powerful reminder of the 1000 plus environmental defenders killed since the Paris agreement. No wonder passions are raised!

I admire peaceful protest to add to the momentum for action, but also feel we must give this summit a chance to deliver. We know it must deliver. The United Nations COP process is the best hope for progress on the global scale.

COP26 Blog 6: 'War causes Climate Change and Climate Change causes War'

Ellen Teague Nov 4th, 2021



Peace gathering at Buchanan Steps Energy was the theme for today at COP26. And the day started with the announcement that 20 governments have promised to stop financing oil, coal and gas projects beyond their borders, with 40 countries pledging to phase out coal power, the world's most polluting fossil fuel. But a smaller meeting, outside of the main conference caught my eye.

I've been here in Glasgow covering the UN Climate Summit for five days now and not heard anything at the gathering of nations about military expenditure and military greenhouse gas emissions. Militaries and the industries that support them are among the world's largest polluters but are often exempt from having to report and reduce their emissions which are causing global warming.

However, an alliance of peace groups - including the Movement for the Abolition of War (MAW), Pax Christi and Christian CND - held a public meeting this afternoon at the Buchanan Steps in Central Glasgow pushing for military pollution to feature in climate agreements. The message of the meeting to COP26 was: 'War causes Climate Change and Climate Change causes War.'

They would like to see less focus on militarising responses to climate impacts, such as corralling climate refugees, and more on tackling the causes of climate change linked to militaries. Speaker Dr Stuart Parkinson of Scientists for Global Responsibility asked: Does the UK government really prioritise tackling the climate crisis? If so, why does it spend over seven times more on its military than on its Net-Zero Strategy?

The meeting highlighted that modern militaries are completely dependent on fossil fuels with no sign of realistic or practical Net-Zero plans. A fundamental question is: how should 'defence' look in a post-carbon, climate changed world? As the richer nations, themselves responsible for the historic burden of greenhouse gas emissions, struggle to raise \$100bn annual climate finance for poorer nations, it is worth noting that just one year of global military spending (\$2 trillion) would deliver 20 years of international climate finance. Militaries are major greenhouse gas emitters and typically the largest energy consumers among any government agency. Because militaries have been excluded from compulsory reporting obligations since Kyoto, data on global military emissions is very limited. In spite of the scale of their emissions, the military's contribution to climate change impacts is not part of official COP26 discussions in November 2021. The meeting in Glasgow heard that a letter and petition has been sent to COP26 calling for military greenhouse gas emissions to be on the agenda for COP27 next year. Pax Christi England and Wales, Anglican Pacifist Fellowship, MAW, Peace Pledge Union and Scientists for Global Responsibility were amongst more than 100 groups which had signed.

The flier of today's event carried a photo of Catholic peace campaigner Bruce Kent outside parliament more than a decade ago with a banner reading 'Climate Change causes War and War causes Climate Change.' His prophetic stance has increasingly been picked up by the mainstream Churches and civil society.

When the Columban Missionaries launched their Climate Policy statement last week, they said: "Increasingly communities are in conflict as a result of Climate Change which is a growing threat to global security..... Faced with the climate crisis, and global military expenditure rising to almost US \$2 trillion in 2020, there is a critical need for the military to be included in commitments by states to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions."

Since this summit is identifying key polluters, it is disappointing not to hear any mention so far of the world's militaries and climate change.



**COP26 Blog
7: Climate
campaigning
needs 'Faith,
Hope and
Love'**

Ellen Teague
Nov 5th, 2021

Eco Stations at
St Aloysius
Today,

Jo Siedlecka of
Independent
Catholic News
and I headed
off to '24
Hours for the
Climate', a
global vigil for
Catholics and
people of faith
to pray and
advocate for

the success of COP26, which is roughly halfway through. It was hosted at St Aloysius Jesuit Parish in Glasgow, but most people participated through a livestream on the internet. Among the organisers were the Missionary Society of St Columban, Justice and Peace Scotland, CAFOD, SCIAF, Pax Christi International, Jesuit Missions, Don Bosco Green Alliance and Religious of the Assumption. Around 50 young people were involved at the parish,

organised by the Columbans and CAFOD. This was very appropriate since today was Youth Day at the summit.

Video material was presented at the vigil from partners internationally and in the UK. Participants were invited to write messages that would be delivered to COP26 negotiators, calling on them: "to agree to stop all fossil fuel extraction by 2040, protect and restore ecosystems, and financially support developing countries as they adapt to climate change." Every hour, a prayer experience themed around God's creation and ecological spirituality and the story of a community impacted by climate change was broadcast. In the first few hours participants experienced prayer with Assumption Sisters, a Laudato Si' Liturgical Dance from the Philippines, a 'River Guardians' presentation from a CAFOD partner in Colombia, a Prayer for Creation and Myanmar by Catholic Student Action in Myitkyina Diocese, and a climate reflection from Columban missionaries in Chile and Peru. Of course, teachings from Pope Francis featured.

In the afternoon Glasgow Churches Together presented 'Wisdom from the Global South' and the Glasgow Catholic Worker highlighted their regular witness against nuclear weapons at nearby Faslane Nuclear Base. 'Growing Our Future' was presented by Jesuit Missions. Evening prayer was led by CAFOD and Columban International Youth Encounter. During the night, participants experienced 'Praying for a climate of peace' with Pax Christi of England and Wales and 'Voices from the margins' from EcoJesuits in the Philippines. A Typhoon Hainan survivor spoke about 'Fossil fuel companies killed my family' and Columban eco-theologian Fr Sean McDonagh gave an interview, 'Climate Change and the Churches'.

Jo and I spent the afternoon at the parish and participated in an Eco-Stations of the Cross which was filmed and then broadcast during the night. Of course, it wasn't nighttime everywhere and it was exciting to see a Columban team in El Paso, on the US/Mexico border, tweeting a photo of them sitting in front of a screen watching the vigil. Columbans in Australia participated too. The 'Stations', led by James Trewby, the Columban Education Worker, and Danny Sweeney of Justice and Peace Scotland, were intensely moving. Danny sang at regular intervals the haunting refrain, 'If the field are parched - have mercy' by Chris Juby. (see Link below) For Station 13, where the body of Jesus is taken down from the Cross, we prayed: 'O God who makes all things new, help us hold on to our faith, hope and love when we feel overwhelmed and discouraged by the daunting challenge of the ecological crisis.'

It was interesting that similar thoughts were echoed this afternoon by 24-year-old Ugandan climate champion Vanessa Nakate. Speaking at a huge youth march and rally through Glasgow she said: "We need to continue holding leaders accountable for their actions. We cannot keep quiet about climate injustice. Three things should stay with us as we continue to organise and mobilise - Faith, Hope and Love."

Tomorrow will see even bigger marches throughout the world. Columbans in the Pacific archipelago of Fiji reported that: "we have Catholic University Students from many

campuses marching tomorrow in support of COP26, organised by our Mission Office, and the Archbishop will be giving a keynote address."

There is episcopal involvement here too. The vigil will conclude tomorrow morning with a Mass celebrated by Bishop William Nolan of Galloway, President of Scotland Justice and Peace, with the homily delivered by Bishop John Arnold of Salford, Lead Bishop for the Environment in England and Wales. We will then be blessed and sent forth for the Glasgow march. Hundreds of thousands are expected in Glasgow and London.

LINKS

'If the field are parched - Have mercy' by Chris Juby - www.youtube.com/watch?v=-LsqrROrAcM

Livestream 24 Hours for the Climate - www.24hoursfortheclimate.org/livestream

Sancta Familia Catholic media company were filming in the church tonight. See: www.sancta.tv/

COP26 Blog 8: Joining the Jesuits for Climate Justice

Ellen Teague Nov 7th, 2021



Bishops of England & Wales, Scotland and Ireland - with climate campaigners at the end of Mass I joined the Jesuits today. Specifically, I spent most of the day with the Jesuits at their parish Church in Glasgow and then joined Jesuit Missions

for the huge Glasgow Climate March for the Global Day of Climate Action.

It all started with a Mass at 9am at St Aloysius to conclude the 24-Hour Climate Vigil for COP26. It was celebrated by Bishop William Nolan of Galloway, the environmental lead in Scotland, with the homily given by Bishop John Arnold of Salford, the lead in England and Wales. Irish Bishop Martin Hayes of Kilmore and the Irish coordinating bishop for 'Laudato Si', was also there and five Jesuits, including Leonard Chiti, the provincial of Southern Africa. Many of the young people who participated in and led the vigil were in the

congregation wearing tee-shirts of CAFOD, Trocaire and Pax Christi. Dr Lorna Gold, president of the Laudato Si' Movement Board of Directors, sat near the front.

Bishop Arnold said he was optimistic about what COP26 could achieve and was impressed that young people and faith campaigners, "all have a sense of urgency of caring for Mother Earth - our common home." He told the congregation never to underestimate, "that by your personal example you can make a difference."

With a short break, the Mass was followed by another service to welcome the Jesuit group that had walked from Edinburgh over three days to highlight the climate summit. Nearly 30 of them were cheered as they walked down the road on a very stormy day and entered the church. The welcome was given by Paul Chitnis, Director of Jesuit Missions, who thanked the pilgrims, "for their efforts and their energy regarding COP26". The provincial of the Jesuits in Britain, Fr Damian Howard SJ, gave a reflection on the first chapter of Genesis where, "the context of creation is the beginning of everything". He felt he "was not one of life's demonstrators" but would be joining the group at the Climate March because, as he saw on one banner, "things are so bad even the introverts are here."

We were all invited to refreshments in the parish hall before groups began setting out towards Kelvingrove Park to join the 'Faith Bloc' of the Climate March. It was a happy choice to join a group that included Fr Damian Howard and other Jesuits, Paul Chitnis, people from Stonyhurst College, Bishop John Arnold and young Jesuit collaborators. We were given 'Jesuit Missions' high visibility vests, which made it easier to stay together, and spirits were raised by singing hymns and handing around biscuits. We sang 'Here I am Lord' as we entered the park and walked to the gathering area where other groups included Columban Missionaries, CAFOD, Glasgow Interfaith, and the Laudato Si Movement with a large inflatable globe. The line 'I the Lord of wind and rain' had a particular poignancy amidst beating wind and rain, but when - after nearly two hours - the weather improved with sunshine and a glorious rainbow appeared in the sky, everybody clapped. We were optimistic, feeling we were making an important contribution towards demonstrating that faiths demand action to stabilise Earth's climate.

All along the route into Central Glasgow I was running into collaborators in campaigning for climate justice: Lancaster Faith and Justice, Wrexham Justice and Peace, Sr Bridgetta Rooney of the Sisters of St Joseph of Peace, and Revd John Bell at the head of a group from the Iona Community singing their distinctive, 'We are marching in the light of God.' Also seeing those I didn't know but knew about their plight, particularly indigenous people from North and South America in distinctive headdresses.

The banners expressed the demands of the walkers: 'No more Blah, Act Now', 'No more gas in Mozambique', 'Count military emissions', 'System Change not Climate Change', 'Decent jobs on a living planet', 'There is no climate justice without debt justice'. The words of Pope Francis appeared everywhere - 'Hear the cry of the Earth and the cry of the poor'.

COP26 Blog 9: 'We are all environmentalists now' Ellen Teague Nov 8th, 2021



Fr Joshtröm Kureethadam and Ellen Teague

"We are all environmentalists now" - the Bishop Chair of Scotland Justice and Peace said at Sunday Mass today, "but we must put our beliefs into practice." Bishop William Nolan of Galloway was giving the homily at St Aloysius Jesuit church in Glasgow which hosted a COP26 delegates' Mass halfway through the conference.

Bishop Hugh Gilbert OSB, of Aberdeen, Chair of the Scottish Bishops Conference, was the main celebrant, alongside six out of the eight Scottish Catholic bishops and more than 20 priests.

Other concelebrants included the Papal Nuncio, Archbishop Claudio Gugerotti, Fr Damian Howard SJ, Provincial of Jesuits in Britain; Fr Roger Dawson SJ, Superior of the Jesuits in Scotland; Fr Gerard Mitchell SJ, Parish Priest of St Aloysius and Fr Joshtröm (Josh) Isaac Kureethadam, Coordinator of 'Ecology and Creation' at the Vatican Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development, and a member of the Vatican delegation to COP26.

The Mass was ticketed so I was lucky to get in! Meeting Fr Josh was one highlight. Bishop Nolan's homily was another and he received spontaneous applause from the congregation at the end. He warned against just "painting ourselves greener than green" and suggested that "we must combine our words and actions and respond to "the cry of the Earth and the cry of the poor." There were at least three references to these famous words of Pope Francis in his 2015 Encyclical Laudato Si. Bishop Nolan warned against thinking that technology will

solve the problem of climate change and he suggested that we must fundamentally review our lifestyles. "Are we citizens or consumers?" he asked; "Surely our purpose is more than consuming." Drawing heavily on the Church's Social Teaching he reminded that, "Earth's resources are finite and not just to be used by the powerful and rich."

Scattered through the congregation were a lot of tired people after yesterday's uplifting but long climate march, which some have jokingly called "soggy solidarity." The Sisters of St Joseph of Peace and Faithful Companions of Jesus were joined by Camino to COP walkers, and campaigners with Earth Vigil, Columban missionaries, CAFOD and Operation Noah. Bidding prayers for Christian champions of the environment and for a just sharing of Earth's resources gave a spiritual context for the concerns being aired at COP26.

There was beautiful music from the Motherwell Diocese choristers led by Mrs Elaine Trower, organist Mr John Pitcathley, and even a brass band. They played John Rutter's 'For the Beauty of the Earth' and a powerful version of 'All creatures of our God and King' among other pieces. At the end, Bishop Gilbert thanked all those "putting energy into COP26" and urged them to "continue in the name of Christ."

A notable feature of the past week has been the energy and breadth of engagement by faith groups. Liturgies, multi-faith gatherings and vigils abound. A notable declaration by a coalition of faith leaders last week was the largest-ever divestment from fossil fuels by faith groups, including the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Scotland. But preparations are being put in place for future work as well. Guidance was released last week for the Catholic Church in England and Wales on accounting methods for net zero carbon. This 'Guidance on Catholic Diocesan Carbon Accounting' presented a step-by-step guide specifically for a Catholic diocese, produced by the 'Guardians of Creation' project.

Later this afternoon a special COP26 service featuring Christian churches and organisations from around the world was held at 12th century Glasgow Cathedral. The event, which was organised by Glasgow Churches Together, was attended by guests from countries including Australia, Fiji, and Zimbabwe in a show of ecumenical solidarity for global climate justice. Many of those who took part were from nations which are already bearing the brunt of climate change. Faith leaders contributing to the service represented the All Africa Conference of Churches, Pacific Conference of Churches, Anglican Communion, Catholic Church, Orthodox Church, World Communion of Reformed Churches, World Council of Churches, Eco-Congregation Scotland and the Scottish Church Leaders' Forum.

Representatives from the Young Christian Climate Network (YCCN) and the Camino to COP were also in the congregation.

Many people walked from St Aloysius to Glasgow Cathedral, about a mile away, and it proved to be a great opportunity for informal chats. I found myself with two bishops - Scottish and Irish - Fr Josh, Danny Sweeney of Scotland Justice and Peace and Jo Siedlecka of ICN. Fr Josh is preparing for the Vatican launch of the Laudato Si Platform next weekend, a ready-made programme for Catholic parishes, schools and groups to build a sustainable

future in a variety of ways. It was great to see the Church working at the summit itself and outside with many positive initiatives and prayer.

This was a rest day for the COP Summit after several days of pledges at the end of the week to put climate at the heart of national curriculums, support sustainable ocean projects and take urgent action and investment to protect nature and shift to more sustainable ways of farming. It was good to have a day of taking stock before a very busy second week. Alistair Dutton, Chief Executive of SCIAF, the Scottish Catholic International Aid Fund, said today: "There are just a few days left to make the Glasgow talks really count for those facing the consequences of the devastating climate crisis. So much time and energy has gone into hosting COP26, now it's time for negotiators to deliver the robust action the world needs." Already a four-day 'People's Summit' has been launched for 7-10 November with sessions online covering such issues as 'Extractivism Industries, Climate Colonialism and Community Alternatives' and 'No Climate Justice without Social Justice'. And tomorrow afternoon, an Operation Noah event will see leading faith thinkers and campaigners discussing fossil fuel divestment and climate justice. If you find such discussions fascinating - which I do - it's a feast of dialogue and advocacy before COP26 comes up with its report at the end of the week and the long-term work to tackle climate change will really get going.

COP26 Blog 10: Polar bears in lifejackets

Ellen Teague Nov 8th, 2021 (Updated Nov 9th, 2021)



#Tuvalu's finance minister Seve Paeniu with artist Vincent JF Huang at the Tuvalu Pavilion in COP26

Today Filipinos are marking eight years since Typhoon Haiyan devastated the Philippines. "We are still living in the same vulnerability, in the same trauma," said a Filipino delegate at the COP26 climate summit in Glasgow this morning.

Typhoon Haiyan was one of the most powerful tropical cyclones ever recorded. With wind speeds of up to 195 mph, buildings in the Visayas were flattened and 6,340 Filipinos were killed. It heralded a new era of this kind of disaster.

The Philippines is an island nation of the Western Pacific where the more severe weather of a warming world will have, and indeed is having, profound impacts.

Philippine Bishop Crispin Varquez of Borongan said today, on the typhoon's anniversary, that since so many calamities are related to climate change, he asked the public "to hear the cry of our planet for common action to save our common home". He urged Filipinos to heed Pope Francis' call for "ecological conversion".

Another nation in trouble is the Pacific island archipelago of Tuvalu, which has one of the most visually dramatic pavilions in the main conference centre of COP26, known as the Blue Zone. It is displaying an art installation of polar bears wearing life jackets standing on melting ice and a penguin strung up beside them. They are the work of Taiwanese artist Vincent JF Huang who was in the pavilion, alongside Tuvalu's finance minister Seve Paeniu, when I visited.

It is easy to presume that country delegates to COP26 are politicians divorced from the frontlines of the climate crisis. But Seve Paeniu was very far from this stereotype. He told all who would listen that "we are living climate change" and feared the fate of his low-lying atoll home and the population of 11,000 people. "Islands are disappearing and we are literally sinking," he said, standing before the exhibit. Huang showed some of his other work. One showed Michelangelo's Pieta beside his Pieta showing a polar bear cradling a dead penguin. Powerful stuff, demonstrating the link between melting icecaps and sea level rise.

Pacific islanders at risk of rising sea levels are struggling to be heard at the climate summit in Glasgow as the COVID-19 pandemic hampers long distance travel. Only three Pacific leaders - of Palau, Fiji and Tuvalu - have travelled to make speeches pressing for deep cuts in greenhouse gases by major emitters led by China and the US. Usually, almost all the leaders of 14 Pacific island states come to the annual talks.

The Glasgow summit is trying to keep alive the toughest goal of the 2015 Paris climate agreement, to limit global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels. Global surface temperatures are already up 1.2 degrees. Pacific islanders want \$750 billion a year in climate finance in the second half of the decade, far above unmet pledges by developed nations to provide \$100 billion annually by 2020.

Yet, unfortunately, the fossil fuel industry has a powerful presence at COP26, mostly behind the scenes. In fact, Global Witness reports that if the fossil fuel industry were a country, it

would have by far the largest number of delegates - over 500 lobbyists. This is a real problem for a landmark conference that must listen most attentively to the voices of victims demanding urgent climate action.

It is to the credit of the Christian Churches and other faiths that they are lifting the voices of the smaller nations and communities and supporting their call for a just transition and divestment from fossil fuels. This afternoon Operation Noah held an online event from COP26, 'Fossil fuel divestment, climate justice and a just transition for all'. Lorna Gold of the Laudato Si Movement said, "the impact of faith institutions that have divested has been very, very significant...they roughly represent 35 per cent of all institutions that have divested...and Catholic institutions make up a disproportionate number".

The Pacific island nations had powerful support today from former US President Barack Obama. The 60-year-old, who grew up in the US island state of Hawaii, spoke at COP26 to leaders and delegates from Pacific island nations. He described himself as an "island kid" and said the islands are now "threatened more than ever" by global warming. He described island states as the "canary in the coalmine" for climate change, which will suffer the most catastrophic effects of global warming before other countries. Obama ended his speech this morning with a Hawaiian proverb, urging people to unite to move forward. "It's a reminder that if you all want to paddle a canoe you'd better all be rowing in the same direction" he said, "and at the same time, every oar has to move in unison."

COP26 Blog 11: Climate solutions 'need to be based around women'

Ellen Teague Nov 9th, 2021



Sr Mary Jo McElroy RSHM, Claudelice Silva dos Santos, and Maria Elena Arana

What an honour to meet CAFOD partner Claudelice Silva dos Santos, walking alongside Maria Elena Arana of CAFOD at Saturday's Climate March in Glasgow. I was introduced to this smiling woman, waving to the young people hanging out of windows along the route, and had no idea then of the sacrifices she has made to protect the Earth and the poor. A land defender from Pará, in the Brazilian Amazon, Claudelice has experienced intimidation and violence first-hand. Her brother and sister-in-law were murdered 10 years ago for their resistance to illegal logging. She describes going through days when, "I couldn't even get out of bed for fear of being shot because of the death threats I was getting." And yet she can say, "I overcame all this because we believe change is possible."

Sadly, so many environmental champions only become widely known because they have been murdered. Sr Dorothy Stang and Berta Cáceres are two women who spring to mind. Both their lives and deaths were a witness to what Pope Francis calls "the cry of the Earth and the cry of the poor." Their martyrdom embodies the intimate connection between creation justice and social justice for the poor that is at the heart of Francis' encyclical *Laudato Si'*.

The day's theme today for COP26 was Gender. Well, half the day! The UN reported that women and girls, particularly those facing intersecting inequalities, are disproportionately impacted by climate change, but they are also critical leaders at all levels of climate action, from local communities to global forums. Prominent young women activists, such as Greta Thunberg and Vanessa Nakate, have made headlines this week, but advocacy is just one area where women have been active.

On the 'Greenfaith' webinar from Glasgow today some interesting statistics were highlighted. Women produce more than 50% of the world's food but have few rights over the land they tend. They have vast indigenous knowledge of local plant species and links with weather patterns, helping them provide a wide variety of nutritious food for their families, but this knowledge is often overlooked by those outside their communities. Women and the girl child are traditionally responsible for water portage and securing fuelwood, which are both impaired by climate change.

Nearly 200 participants doubted whether COP26 could address the climate crisis successfully because "solutions need to be based around women", according to a speaker from Indonesia. She felt COP26 is ""too white, too male, too elite" and that "plans have locked out faith communities." Women joining in felt it is simply common sense to protect and nurture the fruitful resources we still have, such as forests, and to put resources into clean renewable energy.

I also attended a COP26 Coalition People's Summit event titled, 'Feminist Pathways towards a Just and Equitable Transition'. Participants entered the online gathering from Zimbabwe, Brazil, Colombia, Indonesia, Thailand, Nepal, Estonia, Netherlands, France, Italy, and the US. And they had one thing in common. They were nearly all women. I wondered why so many men have an allergy to the word 'Feminist'. There was a call for equality to be built into transition plans and for huge military budgets to be diverted to paying for a sustainable

future. Wanun Permpibul, Director of Climate Watch Thailand, called for "power to move from the hands of the corporates to the hands of those on the ground, especially women." In case you were wondering about the second half of today's COP26 programme. It was 'Science and Innovation,' which was billed as "demonstrating that science and innovation can deliver climate solutions." So today the UK Government announced it will give £210m backing for mini nuclear reactors "to hit net zero more quickly". Climate change was given as the big excuse to back the nuclear industry, even though it has yet to overcome its inherent problems of cost, construction delay, nuclear waste, decommissioning, security, let alone the small but still highly material risk of catastrophic accidents. I am amongst the women feeling dismay at this move. I wonder how many women were consulted! By the way, do catch up with last Sunday's 'Songs of Praise' on Creation and meet some of the young pilgrims with the Young Christians Relay to COP. Theologian Hannah Malcolm and organiser Rachel Mander were interviewed. "God has been with us every step of the way" said Rachel.

COP26 Blog 12: Crunch Time and getting crunched

Ellen Teague Nov 10th, 2021



Protest at COP26. Which future would you fund?

The image of an indigenous woman wiping the tears of a 'red rebel' at a street protest in Glasgow yesterday touched many. And no less than Mary Robinson of The Elders was tearful this morning as she told Sky News that "we are not aligned to 1.5 C at the moment

“although” to be on track for this is doable.” She felt political commitment, “needs a crisis mindset that cares about the future of humanity and our beautiful world.”

A frustrated Robinson blamed the leaders of Brazil, Australia and Saudi Arabia in particular of not being in crisis mode and accused the last as consistently taking the language of gender and human rights out of international climate agreements.

Saudi Arabia is part of the huge fossil fuel lobby at COP26, and she wanted this challenged. She hoped peoples on the frontline of climate change and transition would be listened to more seriously. Also, she hoped Greta Thunberg would be proved wrong in her view that the conference would simply be 'Blah Blah Blah'.

It was crunch time today as the first draft of the COP26 declaration was made public and the summit moved into its final days. The dichotomy between the powerful and the vulnerable was evident. It was Transport Day at COP26, and leading car manufacturers were given a platform to air their promises. Volvo called electric vehicles "a core part of future planning" and Uber wanted to "clean up urban transport". Meanwhile, the London Mining Network was tweeting from a protest outside the conference entrance. Indigenous and mining activists gathered in the cold under the banner, 'SAY NO to dirty mining our way to clean energy'. Speakers from Indonesia, Guyana and Philippines, as well as representatives of the Neskolith and Nuxalk First Nations called for the energy transition to be centred on "human rights, community consent, transformative solutions."

We should be aware of the complexity around the issue of what eco-theologian Thomas Berry called the 'great work' of transitioning. My family is very proud of our electric car, but I now know that a huge increase in mining of lithium - used in electric cars - is controversial. Mapuche Indians in Chile report that extensive lithium mining is already destroying areas used by nesting flamingoes and community agriculture and they want to regain control of their land and food production. They are trying to resist being crunched in the world's system and reject such terms as 'green extractivism' and 'climate smart mining' which are now commonly used by mining corporations. There are no benchmarks to measure these concepts. The mining protesters don't want to become 'sacrifice communities' in the name of addressing climate change and providing car manufacturers with the raw materials to make their transition vehicles.

Indigenous representatives also delivered a letter to the US Consulate in Glasgow, host of the US delegation, demanding the US 'build back fossil free'. They left the letter in the door and an oil rig on the front steps!

On transport, there are three sectors: ground transportation, maritime transport and aviation." Of these, planes are especially problematic. Not only do they produce greenhouse gases, including water-vapour, but they release them high in the atmosphere, where their climate impact is magnified. More needs to be done to reduce the need for travel and to improve local public transport. Under the Paris agreement of the 2015 COP21 summit, countries didn't have to include international aviation or maritime emissions in their national

contributions. There was no direct mention of cars either, leaving those emissions to countries to address in their individual action plans.

There are no easy answers. Today, a coalition of 346 organisations from 78 countries issued a joint statement warning that "the hydropower industry is gearing up for a massive greenwashing effort to present its destructive product - which has been shown time and again to destroy ecosystems and communities - as the pathway out of our predicaments." While highlighting the harms of dams - from exacerbating methane emissions and jeopardizing freshwater species to violating the human rights of impacted communities - the statement emphasised that, "free-flowing rivers and natural lakes have immense value for the welfare of the ecosystems they sustain, humankind, and survival on the planet."

And it isn't only in the global south where you find disempowered communities facing economic and military might. Glasgow has seen several 'Toxic Tours' showing that within a few miles of the COP26 conference are the offices of Teekay Shipping - an oil and gas shipping company - and two banks that fund fossil fuels - PG Morgan Chase and Barclays Bank. Close by is the Strathclyde Pension Fund, Scotland's richest pension fund, which is estimated to have £800 million-worth of investments in fossil fuel companies. Further afield, the Grangemouth oil refinery complex on the Firth of Forth is the largest climate polluter in Scotland. Its gas flares and cooling towers are visible across the Scottish Lowlands. The Mossmorran Petrochemical facilities - operated by Shell and ExxonMobil - output significant greenhouse gas and cause ill health to the local community. Faslane, the home of Britain's expensive and dangerous nuclear weapons, is only 26 miles from Glasgow. The city itself has also seen a demonstration outside BAE Systems because, in the words of one protester, "our governments have allowed spending on arms to outstrip spending on climate solutions."

The mismatch between political pledges and what is happening in the natural world at this crucial period drew Prime Minister Boris Johnson back to COP26 today and travelling by train this time! While he was back at the summit The Climate Coalition, the UK's largest grouping of campaigners on climate change, called for finalising a deal that keeps 1.5°C alive, protects nature and delivers finance to support those on the frontline. "We need to power on through the blockages" Johnson said. But he stopped short of spelling them out as Mary Robinson did this morning?



Coat of Hope to illustrate Blog 13

COP26 Blog 13: 'The Church must sing a song of hope at this time'

Ellen Teague Nov 11th, 2021

When COP26 President Alok Sharma, First Minister of Scotland Nicola Sturgeon and UN Secretary General António Guterres stood for the two-minute silence at 11am on Armistice Day this morning, TV viewers had two minutes to contemplate the beautiful Earth Globe hanging above them.

I thought not only of the young soldiers who have died in war, but the millions of civilian lives and the environment destroyed by war. Did you know that eight million horses, donkeys and mules died in World War I? And I thought of climate change challenges that have no military solution. How can the military tackle problems facing people in the highlands of Papua New Guinea experiencing hotter temperatures and changing rainfall patterns who are increasingly prone to diseases spread by mosquitoes?

War, inequality, and climate change were issues picked up by a piece of drama today outside the front gates of the conference. Christian Climate Action displayed a large banner reading, 'Stop Climate Chaos Deaths' and below it was a line-up of seven 'dead' bodies covered with white sheets and labelled 'War', 'Famine', 'Pollution', 'Skin Cancer', 'Drought', 'Suicide', 'Floods'. The drama was to highlight that the climate crisis and associated issues are already having a profound impact on communities and ecosystems around the world.

The same group also took part in the Camino to COP and organised - particularly artist Barbara Keal - the wonderful 'Coat of Hopes' being worn the whole 500 miles from London to Glasgow. The patchwork garment was walked through Saturday's 'Global Day of Action'

and conference delegates have been invited to put on the coat to feel the weight of responsibility of the hopes, fears and prayers of ordinary people across the UK and the world for the environment and vulnerable communities.

Sewn into the coat are more than 300 patches produced by local groups such as Columban lay missionaries in Birmingham and the Milton Keynes Mission partnership. In them you find grief for the loss of species, remembrances of landscapes irreversibly changed, prayers that hearts can expand to welcome those displaced by climate breakdown, and dreams of carefree joy in nature. The patch gallery on the Coat of Hopes website shows bees on flowers, birds feeding their young, and phrases like 'Protect our home', 'Waste is a design fault' and 'Save our children's future'.

The connection between issues and the importance of faiths demonstrating hope were highlighted last night during a webinar chaired by Bishop John Arnold, lead bishop on the environment for England and Wales. We heard theologian Dr Carmody Grey say that, "the Church must sing a song of hope at this time." She felt stories of Christians who have lived lives of radical hope, for example in the Amazon, should be remembered. These would inspire the Church to embark on a new moral journey, learning about ecological sin and ecological conversion. She felt that taking care of the future means action on justice, the environment and peace. She also called for creation to feature more centrally in Catholic liturgies and for better strategic and coordinated Church action which would challenge poor political leadership on ecological and social issues.

Asked to comment on where COP26 is at in its final few days, Dr Lorna Gold of the Laudato Si Movement felt, "we have been here before with promises that are not implemented" but she felt that faith activity outside the - "the People's Summit - has filled me with hope." One example she gave was the alignment of faith values to growing divestment from fossil fuels by faith groups.

Pope Francis wrote to the Catholics of Scotland several days ago, saying, "time is running out and this occasion must not be wasted." He underlined the responsibility to future generations. And young Ugandan climate activist Vanessa Nakate told summit delegates this afternoon that "humanity will not be saved by promises, but by action" and "God help us all if you fail." Prayers and vigils continue in Glasgow tonight and further afield as COP26 enters its final day tomorrow.

This youtube is very inspiring and worth watching

Vanessa Nakate speech at COP26 - www.youtube.com/watch?v=cuuOts3jL3I on 11 November 2021

Coat of Hopes - www.coatofhopes.uk/ is very interesting and I do not know how they can fulfil a challenge they make

COP26 Blog 14: How many COPs to arrest Climate Chaos?

Ellen Teague

Nov 12th, 2021



Bishop John Arnold with campaigners

'How many COPs to arrest Climate Chaos?' This clever banner was hung outside the COP26 summit in Glasgow today. In fact, creative banners and dramas over the past two weeks have done an amazing job of summing up key issues amidst the 'summit-speak'.

'No Faith in Fossil Fuels' appeared on Sky News this afternoon and, in an interview, Melanie Nazareth of Christian Climate Action and standing with the banner identified two problems with political leaders. "They don't have the courage to do what needs to be done" she said and "politicians tend to focus on short-termism". A Catholic barrister, she has not only walked from London to Glasgow with Camino to COP but has been part of the Earth Vigil running over the two weeks of the summit. She was speaking amidst widespread disappointment with the latest draft of the summit's concluding statement. Another draft is being prepared at the time of writing.

The frustration outside the summit was inside too. Seve Paeniu, the finance minister of Tuvalu, whom I met last week, called for much stronger pledges on decarbonisation and finance, particularly mechanisms for delivering finance.

Speaking in a final stock-take session of nations' delegates he spoke movingly that, "this is a matter of life and survival for many of us and we must not fail." A delegate from the Marshall Islands then said, "I can't accept failure for failure is accepting there isn't a future for my country." After the plenary hundreds of campaigners did a walkout chanting, "Keep 1.5 alive".

Some of us have been here before. I was at the Paris COP21 climate summit of 2015, the year of *Laudato Si*, and we were just delighted then that there was an Agreement reached, despite its shortfalls. But the move in the right direction did not take away from the failings of the process. Countries in the global south did not have the big, well-resourced negotiating teams of the rich countries and the sheer clout to steer the COP21 Agreement. And lobbyists for the corporate world - including the fossil fuel non-state actors - had access to the meeting rooms where decisions were made, with resources way beyond what non-governmental organisations (NGOs) could muster to influence negotiations. This is what I would call structural sin and little has changed. No wonder much of the text was purely aspirational text, and not legally binding or enforceable.

The great fear now at the conclusion of Cop26 is that the transformation to a low-carbon world will take too long, that an addiction to oil and fossil fuels will not stop, certainly not fast enough, and that we will undermine that web of life that sustains us all.

Yet, significant steps forward are being taken. A US and China joint statement on Enhancing Climate Action in the 2020s is geopolitically significant. And the Beyond Oil and Gas Initiative was launched by Costa Rica and Denmark, with countries and subnational jurisdictions committing to end all new oil and gas projects.

The chorus of NGOs, faith groups, youth groups, indigenous peoples and charities is continuing to step forward as the voice of the people, particularly the poor and vulnerable. There was a rush of online activity this afternoon as the *Laudato Si* Movement galvanised more than 60 Catholic organisations, missionary groups and prominent Catholics within a few hours to issue a statement on the CO26 draft agreement with a view to strengthening it. It can be found on its website. "We must reach an agreement in Glasgow that sets a clear and ambitious timeline for a just transition away from harmful fossil fuels," said the statement, and "as Catholics, we have other priorities for the final agreement as well, ensuring human rights and environmental safeguards, recognising the rights of Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities and keeping the commitment of 1.5 degrees."

The Vatican Delegation underlined today that time is of the essence and expressed the hope that the final decisions of this Conference "may be inspired by a genuine sense of responsibility towards present and future generations, as well as the care of

our common home, and that these decisions may truly respond to the cry of the Earth and the cry of the poor."

Despite disappointment - unless there is more ambitious draft overnight - engagement with the COP process will continue. The United Nations is the closest thing the world has to a global governance platform and one where the smaller nations have a voice. We must persevere with it. Only working collaboratively will eventually secure climate justice. Planning for a more sustainable future in a new era will continue.

Paul Chitnis, Director of Jesuit Missions, stressed that it is "vital that people of faith remain hopeful; there are plenty of grounds for being pessimistic, but I think as people of faith we must always cling to the hope that things can and will be better." That hope, he felt, has come from the demonstrations outside the summit and from the pilgrimages praying for the success of the conference.