



Columban Center for Advocacy and Outreach

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Columban Missionaries Welcome Pope Francis' Encyclical on the Environment

WASHINGTON, DC — Praised be! Columban missionaries welcome and celebrate Pope Francis' newly released encyclical on the environment, *Laudato Si'*. This encyclical marks a historic moment in the Church as the first encyclical addressing the human relationship with all of God's creation. *Laudato Si'* deepens the contributions of previous papal documents that addressed the relationship between humans and the natural world.

Pope Francis asks, "What kind of world do we want to leave to those who come after us, to children who are now growing up?" The answer is "It is up to us." We accept that "[m]any things have to change course, but it is we human beings above all who need to change." We see the great cultural, spiritual and educational challenge before us and we are inspired by his invitation "to enter into dialogue with all people about our common home" and "to integrate questions of justice in debates on the environment, so as to hear *both the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor.*"

Like the Second Vatican Council, which "opened a window to the modern world," Pope Francis has opened a window to the "splendid universal communion" with which humans and all creation are joined. He calls us to an "ecological conversion" to turn away from an over-consuming economy and a throwaway culture, and to turn toward deeper reverence for every living creature and the future of God's creation.

Columban Superior General, Fr. Kevin O'Neill, said: "We thank Pope Francis for his visionary and pastoral leadership which invites us as faithful disciples of Jesus to an ongoing ecological conversion. Our lived experience speaks to us as we see the impacts of the exploited Earth and exploited peoples. We believe, as stated in our 2012 General Assembly, 'that we are called to solidarity with marginalized people and the exploited Earth [which] are ways we participate in God's mission'."

Columban Fr. Sean McDonagh, eco-theologian and advisor to the Vatican for *Laudato Si'*, said: "*Laudato Si'* is an important step in the Church's understanding of our human relationship with both the Creator and all of creation. We must continually learn from science, evolve our theology, and humbly situate ourselves in the wider creation story that began with the initial flaring forth 13.7 billion years ago to the world in which we live now and into the future. We must be open to encounter creation and learn from it."

Scott Wright, Director of the Columban Center for Advocacy and Outreach, said: "In *Laudato Si'*, Pope Francis has placed care for creation at the heart of the Church's relation to the world. As representatives of Columban missionaries in the U.S. region, we lift up the sense of urgency that Pope Francis extends to all governments, but especially our own, to move away from our dependency on fossil fuels and to respond with justice and mercy to the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor. We respond to his message with a commitment to greater justice for the poor, who are most impacted by environmental degradation, and with a sense of hope for future generations who will inherit the consequences of what we have done to the earth."

The Columban Center for Advocacy and Outreach is the advocacy office for the Missionary Society of St. Columban. The Center services as the line of communication between Columban missionaries serving in 15 countries around the world and policy makers in Washington, D.C. Our mission is to work towards a more just, peaceful, and environmentally sustainable world by engaging in the political process guided by our Catholic faith and the Gospel.

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