

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Pastoral Letter for 9th-10th October 2021 in advance of COP26 ©

The forthcoming meeting of world leaders in Glasgow from 31st October-12th November COP26 will have unprecedented urgency and importance. Knowledge about environmental issues has increased greatly in recent years, and our experience of natural catastrophes confirm the damage being inflicted on our global home, not least by the lifestyles with which we have become accustomed. “Care for Creation” has been a constant theme in the teaching of Pope Francis, contained not least in his publication of “Laudato Si”. The stewardship of creation, so beautifully expressed in the Book of Genesis, becomes more urgent day by day.

Care for creation, for our environment, and for the dignity of every human person, is deeply rooted in the Christian Faith. Perhaps the finite resources of our planet have been taken for granted or even ignored, particularly since the age of industrialisation in the 19th century. Pope Paul VI once wrote that “Not every development is progress”. There is a price to be paid for everything – and that price is not just money. The unthinking exploitation of resources, natural habitats and the animal world continues to do damage unless there is a profound change in attitude and behaviour personally, nationally and internationally.

“Live simply so that others may simply live” is a very profound saying. In the face of such enormous issues, it is easy for the individual to feel overwhelmed and helpless. Pope John Paul II wrote movingly of the importance of “Human Ecology”. Each one of us can contribute to the healing of creation by changing our attitudes, customs, practices and lifestyle. Travel, electricity, water, food consumption, re-cycling and waste are the most immediate and tangible things which can be addressed. Much is already being done on an individual level and by communities committed to raising awareness of the issues which confront us.

Needless to say, real change must come at an international level with agreements being made by the most powerful countries in the world. Pope Francis insists that we must think and act globally. If, as it is hoped, the Holy Father attends the COP26 Conference, he will surely re-iterate this message. At the very least, governments must surely seek to make achievable and realistic policies to ensure that further global warming is limited so that sustainable living conditions may be available for all.

May I ask that we make Sunday 31 October (the Feast of All Saints) a Day of prayer for the success of the meeting in Glasgow. There will be a variety of resources for prayer or other events available nearer the time. CAFOD is involved in the distribution of materials and offers this prayer which may be used daily in preparation for the success of COP26.

Loving God,
We praise your name with all you have created.

You are present in the whole universe,
and in the smallest of creatures.

We acknowledge the responsibilities you have placed upon us
As stewards of your creation.

May the Holy Spirit inspire all political leaders at COP6 as they
Seek to embrace the changes needed to foster a more sustainable society.
Instil in them the courage and gentleness to implement fairer solutions
for the poorest and most vulnerable,
and commit their nations to the care of Our Common Home.

We ask this through Our Lord Jesus Christ your Son.

Amen

With every blessing.

+George Stack

Archbishop of Cardiff

