



Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns

NewsNotes

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Deeptime Leadership and Wellness Course

Sister Margaret Lacson, MM, describes her experience with the Deeptime Leadership and Wellness Course offered by the Deeptime Journey Network, a Princeton, New Jersey-based nonprofit focused on building a community that “understands the universe as a primary context.”

As I was discerning and eventually was assigned to mission service at the Maryknoll Sisters Center in New York, a fellow sister strongly recommended to me a nine-month online course called “Deeptime Leadership & Wellness Program.” The program is a series of three modules and the first one – Introducing the New Cosmology – started on September 21 and ended December 16, 2022.

My first lesson was about Deeptime Perspective. A Deeptime Perspective (DTP) is one that “embraces the discovery of an evolving Universe as a stunning development that changes our understanding of the Universe and who/what we are as humans.”

This one sentence is key to the content of this first module. I know of Darwin’s Theory of Evolution and my perspective had already been informed by the Big Bang theory. But this course put them into a more complete picture for me. Thomas Berry refers to it as “the new story” – The Universe Story.

The story of the Universe begins at the first primordial spark, going through billions of years of evolution, from gas to stardust, to galaxies and planets, from rocks to living things, from one-celled organisms to the complex biosystems of the present day, and from a living planet to a thinking planet. Understanding the movement of the Universe from simplicity to complexity helps us humans to understand our place and role in the Universe.

In the course we learned principles of Deeptime Learning. We delved into four in the first module: (1) the evolving Universe is the context of all that exists; (2) Earth is the matrix of all life that is inter-related and inter-dependent; (3) each and all in the Universe has its own particularity—a subjectivity; each one evolves and participates in the total evolution of the Universe; (4) when we understand context, matrix, and subjectivity, we are led into meaningful action that allows the humans to aid the Universe in its process of further evolution.

To learn about the Universe Story we engaged with Thomas Berry’s thinking that the Earth’s evolution is moving from the Cenozoic Era to the Ecozoic Era: it is hard to comprehend how humans, in the short time they have existed on the Earth, 200,000 years of the 13.8 billion years of the Universe – have managed to destroy much of the biosystems and the living organisms within them.

Berry proposes that we are now entering into the

Ecozoic era – the fourth biological era – and that we must enter into it consciously with a fundamental shift in the relationship of humans to Earth.

Understanding our dependence on Earth’s generative systems, humans must change their perspective, “re-shape cultures and institutions to work in creative partnership with the structure and dynamics of the biosphere.” This is how we humans participate consciously in our evolution as humans and in the evolution of the Universe. For Berry and for many scientists and cosmologists, this is the way we can save the ailing planet, by moving towards right relationships with the Earth, our one and only source of life.

The key lesson for me in the first module was this: The Universe that evolved from the primordial spark brought forth a living planet, which brought forth living creatures, the latest of which is humans. We are part and parcel of this evolution, and through us, the living Earth has become a thinking planet.

The challenge to us in this present time is not only to change our lifestyles to help the environment but also to change our collective perspective – from one that allows humans to exploit the Earth’s resources in the name of civilization, progress, and greed, to one that understands human beings as part of this one Earth, this one Universe; that we are not separate and that our well-being depends on the well-being of the Earth. We can do this individually but, in the call of re-shaping cultures and institutions, it is vital that this is done widely, by groups of peoples, by institutions, by countries, and hopefully by the whole human race.

The Deeptime Leadership and Wellness Course continues with Module 2 in January. Five Maryknoll Sisters in Japan and Korea and three more at our Sisters Center in New York are participating in the program to help us deepen our Congregational perspectives on a One Earth Community mission vision which we aspire to live out as Maryknoll Sisters. The Deeptime Perspective gives us a common base and language as we explore further our place among the humans of this One Earth Community. \$

Faith in action: Read the Global Sisters Report on the modules at <https://mogc.info/Deeptime>

South Sudan: Preparing for Papal Visit

After a two-year delay due to the pandemic, Pope Francis is scheduled to visit South Sudan and the Democratic Republic of Congo from January 31 through February 5, 2023.

As the pope's visit to South Sudan approaches, the young African country continues to struggle with violent conflict and climate-driven floods and droughts, forcing the majority of the 11 million population to rely on humanitarian assistance to meet their basic needs.

"South Sudan is a country that is beset with a myriad of problems," Maryknoll Lay Missioner Gabe Hurrish wrote in his Advent 2022 newsletter. "From its inception 11 years ago, there seems to be a never-ending stream of bad news. War, corruption, violence, abuse, economic woes, droughts and floods, pestilence, disease and an overall deficient quality of human life. A person living and working here can easily fall under the spell of despair and hopelessness."

"Yet, surprisingly, I find there is a deep joy in the hearts of these lovely people," Hurrish said when describing a women's meeting of the Toposa people, an ethnic group in the southeastern part of the country where they have traditionally lived by herding cattle, sheep and goats. "The Toposa are the most spontaneous and exuberant people I have lived with, and it is contagious. They especially have the joy of music and dance, an elixir they cannot resist."

"Dancing for peace" is how the youth group at a parish located in the UN camp for internally displaced persons in the northeastern city of Malakal describes themselves. Maryknoll Fr. Mike Bassano serves as their pastor. "The idea of the dance is to express our worship of God and is a sign of our unity," Fr. Bassano said in a video produced by Solidarity with South Sudan, an international network of Catholic groups working in the country. "Our dancers are

from different ethnic groups. So as the Catholic Church means universal, incorporating everyone, these dancers express that unity as part of the Catholic Church. We grow together working for peace in South Sudan."

"I like to dance," said Vivian James, a teenager in the sprawling camp of some 35,000 people. "It brings people together and promotes peace. Our dance is for everyone. Even though we are from different tribes, we dance together."

The city of Malakal was devastated by civil war ten years ago. Nearly all of its more than 150,000 residents were displaced. Currently, about 30,000 IDPs (internally displaced persons) live in the UN-run camp near Malakal where Fr. Bassano serves. During the last few years, Fr. Bassano has been able to offer food assistance to food-insecure people living in and around the ruins of Malakal.

As South Sudan has repeatedly slid backward into political and ethnic violence during its first decade of independence, voices for peace have continued to call for the country to focus on unity. "We're trying our best to let the voice of Christ be heard, the peace of Christ be sustained. But the challenge of violence is high," said Father James Oyet Latansio, a Catholic priest who serves as general secretary of the South Sudan Council of Churches. "So we need your prayers. We need you to hold our hand as we journey through these challenges in South Sudan," he said. "Don't get tired of talking about South Sudan or holding the hand of South Sudan. Accompany us as we journey toward the light of hope."

Fr. Oyet identified Solidarity with South Sudan as a model for mission work in the country. "The Solidarity team includes brothers and sisters from many congregations who have given their time to come to South Sudan to live and work on the ground. They're not in the peaceful places. They are in the hot spots," he said.

Fr. Oyet said the members of Solidarity came "in response to the plea of the Catholic Church in South Sudan. They train teachers, nurses, and midwives, as well as people to work in agriculture. And they don't just work with Catholics. They train evangelicals and Anglicans, as well, transmitting positive values that will help the future of the country."§

Faith in action: Follow Friends in Solidarity with South Sudan on social media to learn more about the papal visit. <https://mogc.info/SolidarityFriends>



Photo of Fr. Bassano courtesy of Solidarity with South Sudan

South Africa: Reforms Uncertain

South Africa's president Cyril Ramaphosa survived two votes in December that threatened his leadership and will face a general election in 2024 that will reveal how much support he retains with the South African people.

In 2018, former anti-apartheid activist Cyril Ramaphosa replaced Jacob Zuma as president of South Africa, home of the African continent's third largest economy, after Zuma was accused of graft and removed from power by the ruling political party, the African National Congress (ANC). Already a wealthy businessman, Ramaphosa campaigned as an anti-corruption president and earned plaudits for good governance in his first two years and for his handling of the pandemic in South Africa, where a laboratory discovered one of the first variants of the coronavirus.

However, in June 2022, a former spy boss filed a complaint with the police, alleging that Ramaphosa had hidden a burglary at his farm at Phala Phala in northeastern South Africa rather than report it to the authorities. It was not just a simple burglary; the amount of \$580,000 (U.S. dollars) flabbergasted the South African people and resulted in a call for a thorough investigation.

Initially, Ramaphosa arranged for the robbers to be kidnapped and bribed into silence. After the matter became public, Ramaphosa issued a different explanation, claiming the money was payment by a Sudanese citizen for buffaloes and that farm staff decided that the safest place to store the money was under sofa cushions at the ranch house. Naturally, most South Africans have found this explanation incredulous and wonder where the money really came from.

On November 30, a three-person board of inquiry submitted a report to Parliament, concluding that Ramaphosa "may have committed" serious violations and misconduct, had failed to report the theft directly to the police, acted in a way inconsistent with his office, and exposed himself to a conflict between his official responsibilities and his private business. After debate, Parliament decided to have an impeachment vote on December 13.

Despite winning the impeachment vote and the vote for ANC leader, Ramaphosa's personal reputation is irrevocably stained and his role as president weakened. Furthermore, he has jeopardized important ANC economic and political reforms that he pursues.

First on his reform agenda is an economic reconstruction and recovery plan, in particular addressing persistent power cuts that have devastated the national economy. This includes restructuring the power utility Eskom and other infrastructure development. In

addition, unemployment is extremely high and a nagging source of anger, particularly among the youth.

Secondly, on the political front, he wants to unite the highly divided ANC party, which he leads. The Phala Phala scandal has not only wounded Ramaphosa but also grievously hurt the ANC's chances in what will be grueling national and provincial elections in 2024.

Susan Booysen of the University of Witwatersrand explains: "The ANC built its 2019 election campaign around Ramaphosa, after its polls showed he was the only leader who continued to enjoy substantial credibility among voters." But his image as an anti-corruption champion – and vote winner – is now in doubt.

After the June revelation of the theft at Phala Phala, business organizations expressed serious concerns. The influential group Business Unity South Africa stated: "This is a significant crisis for our country and poses high risks that will see further erosion of confidence."

Dirk Kotze, a professor of political science at the University of South Africa, has written an analysis of ANC's difficulties.

"Reform is a gradual, incremental program of change or restructuring. Its intention is to change the status quo by restructuring ineffective state institutions, replacing officials, and reconstructing economic policies and practices. Reform should not destabilize the situation.

"The reformer must enjoy credibility and sufficient popularity, and must have a strategic vision and unwavering commitment to the reform. He must be strong enough to overcome resistance.

"Reform depends on astute strategies. For Ramaphosa, success depends on the support of a strong core in the ANC. Therein lies the dilemma: the success of his reform project requires reform of the ANC, which is factionalized and highly corrupt, to make it attractive to voters. This will mean promoting the values of integrity, ethical conduct, anti-corruption and a service orientation. It will mean that some people, including leaders, will have to be removed. But many are resisting and fighting back."

Furthermore, his focus on foreign direct investment and public-private partnership in infrastructure development, requiring international and private sector support, is not supported by the Left within the ANC, a very important block in the party. Thus, it remains to be seen how South Africa will move forward, with a weakened president and ruling party. §

Myanmar: 'Wounded, Displaced' Church

One year after facing criticism for a friendly meeting with junta chief Senior General Min Aung Hlaing, Cardinal Charles Bo of Yangon calls on Catholics to pray for the conflict-torn nation. The following article was first published by UCA News on December 9, 2022.

Cardinal Charles Bo of Yangon says the Church in Myanmar is wounded and displaced as thousands of people are forced to flee their homes, villages are burned and churches are destroyed amid the conflict triggered by last year's military coup.

"The people of Myanmar have been suffering from the Covid pandemic and political instability for the last two years and thousands of people are homeless and seeking refuge in the camps," Bo said in his homily at the ordination of two Salesians held at the Shrine of Mary Help of Christians in Nazareth Apostolate School, Anesakahan, near Pyin-Oo-Lwin, on December 8.

"Amid the darkness and the suffering, the Church is

arson attacks on villages including his own.

The latest appeal by Cardinal Bo came just two weeks after his home village – Mon Hla in the embattled Sagaing region – was raided by the military and homes were set ablaze while at least three civilians including a seven-year-old boy were killed.

At least 110 homes that belong to Catholic and Buddhist villagers from Mon Hla who have been living in harmony for decades were destroyed in the November 24 attack by junta forces, according to Church sources.

St. Michael Church, the priest's house and the convent were not affected by the fire.

The military has also targeted other Catholic villages.

At least 800 houses were destroyed by junta troops in the historic Catholic villages of Chan Thar and Chaung Yoe in May and June.

The military regime is specifically targeting these three historic Catholic villages in the Bamar heartland of Sagaing in a bid to stamp out growing resistance by people's defense forces.

Thousands of Christians have been displaced and sought refuge in churches, relatives' homes and in the jungle under the military's reign of terror.

Cardinal Bo met with junta chief Senior General Min Aung Hlaing last December when they cut a Christmas cake together, triggering strong criticism from Catholic and other religious communities in the country.

"I do not regret it in any way. We need to engage the major stakeholders in this country," Bo said in an interview in February. "From day one of the political shift, I sought to meet both the democratic leader and the army. The invitation was always there," he said.

Bo was one of the six Christian leaders along with Buddhist, Muslim and Hindu leaders who were recently given an honorary award by the junta leader and received public criticism from within the country and abroad.

More than 1.4 million people are displaced across the country, of whom more than 1.1 million have been displaced since the 2021 military takeover, according to the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs report on December 3.



Photo of Myanmar protest of military coup, Feb. 2021 via Wikimedia, CC

wounded, the Church is displaced," he said.

The cardinal, who is also the head of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Myanmar, has called for peace, dialogue and reconciliation in the beleaguered Southeast Asian nation.

"The only thing we need in Myanmar is love, reconciliation," he said, urging Catholics to pray for the country and lend a hand to those most in need regardless of race and religion.

The cardinal, however, did not mention the military's

Peru: Calling the Respect for Life in Conflict

Several dozen Peruvians have lost their lives and hundreds have been injured in the unrest following a rapid succession of power shifts at the presidential level at the end of 2022. This article previously appeared on our website in late December and is presented here with a January update.

On December 7th, facing possible impeachment, President Pedro Castillo dissolved Congress and declared a government of exception, only to be impeached and jailed within hours. His vice president Dina Boluarte was sworn in as Peru's first female president, but her leadership was quickly shaken by widespread protest clamoring for new elections, echoing the sentiments of 83% of the population.

When her promises to move presidential elections to December 2023 failed to calm the unrest, she declared a state of emergency on December 14, banning the right to assembly and unleashing a violent response against protesters by Peruvian security forces.

In the tragic wake of this repression Maryknoll Fr. Mike Briggs, who serves in the capitol city Lima, expressed his concern: "As of this morning [December 20, 2022] 26 people have been killed in the country during the protests of the last week (some only teenagers). We are hoping that there be no further loss of life and that the government listens to the people."

The Peruvian human rights organization DHUMA, led by Maryknoll Sister Pat Ryan, also weighed in:

"We reject the state of emergency declared by the government, since this measure does not resolve the demands of the Peruvian people who took to the streets to protest, nor does it contribute to finding a solution to the political-social situation, and on the contrary encourages the continuity of social mobilization and the consequent police and military repression, exacerbating the current national crisis. We regret the deaths of young people in the context of protests in the southern Andes region, and we hold the government of Dina Boluarte, the Ministers of the Interior and

Defense, responsible for their political decisions to act by repressing the population with the use of lethal weapons, committing murders and serious injuries."

While the Christmas holiday brought a measure of calm, protests were gearing up at the beginning of January, especially in the south. Facing outrage from the protester's deaths, Boluarte promised to investigate, but has taken no responsibility.

Some in the country consider Castillo an ineffective leader who burned his democratic credentials by his recent actions. Others excuse his actions, noting that,



Photo of December 8 clash between in Peru, by Voice of America via WikiMedia, CC

from the moment he stepped into power, he was under attack by a Lima-centered political elite that has long blocked full political participation of indigenous and rural citizens such as Castillo.

In the face of unrest and uncertainty, the Social Action Commission of the Peruvian Bishop's Conference (CEAS) has stated: "Let us move closer to peace and dialogue, in assuring no more deaths, and to achieving justice and reparations for the families."§

New Book on Bolivian Democracy

A group of Bolivian academics, journalists, and former government officials, concerned about the state of democracy in Bolivia after the 2019 elections and the subsequent ouster of then-President Evo Morales, has produced a new book, *Los 40 años del 10 de octubre - Memorias de nuestra democracia (The 40 Years Since the 10th of October: Memories of Our Democracy)*.

Calling themselves the *Fogoneros* (Flamekeepers), the group hosted a panel discussion in Washington, DC on Nov. 16 that was live-streamed on Facebook, which included two of the book's authors, Cecilia Barja, of the Vatican Dicastery for the Promotion of Integral Human Development, and Patricia Costas, sociologist and former Director General of Indigenous Autonomies for the Bolivian government. Dan Moriarty of MOGC, a returned Maryknoll Lay Missioner who served in Bolivia, also spoke on the panel.

The book is the result of a joint study of the history of democracy in Bolivia undertaken by the group over the last year. October 10 in the title refers to the day in 1982 when democracy was established in Bolivia after decades of de facto governments and the historical exclusion of the majority of Bolivians.

The authors examine this history from a variety of perspectives, through well-researched academic essays, personal accounts, and interviews. They emphasize that they do not offer an exhaustive or definitive take on Bolivian democracy, nor do they all draw the same conclusions. Rather, the book models the kind of dialogue they hope others in Bolivia will continue to promote, seeking a diversity of perspectives and learning together.

The book goes beyond basic, state-centered notions equating democracy with free and fair elections and considers communal forms of democracy, often formed by the church or other civil society groups to create spaces for dialogue and integration aimed at personal, social, and ecological transformation. The authors examine the historic conditions and dynamics that have allowed for or threatened democracy. By expanding their view beyond the partisan clashes of the news cycle, the *Fogoneros* have tapped into a long tradition of the Bolivian people "appropriating the democratic ideal not as a vehicle for achieving some golden socialism... but as an end in itself, a space to experience and develop the peaceful coexistence of the Bolivian people."§

Panel recording: <https://mogc.info/40Years-Bolivia>

Reflection from El Salvador: Roses in December

Susan Gunn of the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns, wrote this reflection on the visit of the LCWR-SHARE Foundation delegation to the communities in El Salvador where the churchwomen were martyred in 1980.

On December 1st, the community of Chalatenango, inspired by the churchwomen whom they loved and lost 42 years ago, welcomed our delegation of nearly 50 people with open arms, music, dancing, poetry and food.

The starkness of the life and death of the five women of faith—Maryknoll Sr. Carla Piette, who, while transporting a newly-released prisoner back to the community, was caught in a flash flood and drowned, and the four others who were martyred for answering Archbishop Romero's call to accompany the poor, Maryknoll Sisters Ita Ford and Maura Clarke, Ursuline Sister Dorothy Kazel and Lay Missioner Jean Donovan—moves all of us, no matter our differences and no matter the passage of time, to a deeper commitment to compassion and solidarity with the poor and vulnerable.

The residents of Chalatenango spoke to us about their deep love for the churchwomen whose faith moved them

to willingly enter into this rural community's struggle to survive during the early days of civil war in El Salvador. At the heart of their faith was their focus on the holiness and dignity of each human life. By recognizing the divine in each person and giving their lives for those on the margins of this world, the churchwomen have changed each person they touched, even our delegation, 42 years later.

These women's lives and deaths call us to open our lives to the ultimate challenge of the Gospel: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself" (Matthew 22:39). When any of us faces this challenge throughout our lives, we can unite our spirit with Carla, Ita, Maura and Dorothy, and rise to the occasion to bring forth a new creation.§

Faith in action: Learn more about Roses in December Delegation and the work of the coordinating foundation, SHARE El Salvador at <https://mogc.info/SHARE>

Brazil: Restorative Justice is Active Nonviolence

Maryknoll Lay Missioner Joanne Blaney sees profound connections in her restorative-justice work – from São Paulo to the Amazon and other regions of Brazil. The full article is on the Maryknoll Lay Missioners website.

Spontaneously, at the end of the first day of our restorative justice course, Hildelice, a farmer and fisherwoman in the Amazon area of Pará, Brazil, recited a poem about the day. At other times, she broke into song. She voiced hope in the midst of everyone's concern about violence.

Hildelice was one of 30 women leaders whom I met at a restorative justice workshop I recently gave in the Amazon area. All of us had arrived in Óbidos, Pará by boat from six different riverside communities.

Another leader, Maria Elena, like most people in her community, is a fisherwoman and *ribeirinho* (a river dweller who lives on the banks of the Amazon area and travels by boat). As the coordinator of her parish community, she works with women and prepares catechists and other pastoral workers. She was taking the training course with the others in her community.

Maria Elena said, "People here have lots of suffering in their lives. We are river dwellers like our ancestors before us. It is they who help us in these difficult times. Fishing is our primary source of income. We learned how to respect the river and not fish for commercial purposes from Nov. 15 until March 15, taking from the river only what was necessary for our survival. That has all changed in the last years and caused conflicts in our communities because of the big fishing companies who overfish and do not respect the environment. They are destroying the fish and the river, causing hunger and lasting damage to the river and our communities. The government is either absent or says nothing. As people of faith, we gather folks, but this situation is causing many conflicts now among the families."

Unfortunately, in their communities there has also been a big increase in violence against women and children. Maria Elena explained, "There is so much suffering, it is hard for some people to go on."

She asked, "How can we learn how to live well together again, working as companions on the journey, as the Gospel calls us to do? I began my journey in the church and believe that I am called and sent by God, and that each of us is also called and sent. Many people here are imprisoned by their refusal to forgive others. They exclude others. Many are very angry and sad at all the violence, and they feel hopeless. As part of the church, we remember

always that there are others who have lives much worse than ours. This gives us a perspective to share the little that we have with those who have even less."

The restorative justice course, she said, was helping her and the other participants to learn ways to deal with conflicts, analyze the violence better, learn what forgiveness really is and find paths to restoring people and relationships.

"I want to be a multiplier of this course in my community and other river communities," she said. "All of us need to learn how to organize and work collectively against this violence. Some of our community have had to move inland and have planted manioc flour, bananas, corn and beans to help with the hunger. However, illegal logging there also causes problems. So, unfortunately we have many land and river conflicts that affect our communities."



Maria Elena's commitment to her community and other river-dwelling communities is remarkable. I see a strong connection to the same struggles of folks in mega-urban São Paulo, where people also identify violence as their primary concern, followed by its many manifestations of unemployment, homelessness, hunger, inequality, etc.

Regardless of where we find ourselves in Brazil (and throughout the world), we seem to encounter an inability to engage in dialogue, to work together and to truly listen – a situation that is causing increasing polarization.

The hunger of folks to learn new ways to deal with the violence and their openness to share what works is very hopeful. Little by little, we can work to change attitudes, actions and structures that cause so much violence and help folks to heal from violence. Through nonviolent attitudes and actions, all of us can contribute in some way to bringing about the "culture of encounter" that Pope Francis speaks of.

May we take courage from the Gospel passage of John 10:10, where Jesus says, "I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full." Let us work to bring life to all whom we meet. §

Faith in action: See our two-pager on nonviolence at <https://mogc.info/2page-Nonvio> and make the Vow of Nonviolence at <http://bit.ly/VowNonvio>

Rome Conference on Nonviolence

Global voices share the power of nonviolence at landmark gathering, urge Church to enshrine and activate Pope Francis' call for nonviolence. The following report was produced by the Catholic Nonviolence Initiative.

Catholic Church leaders and local change makers from nearly 30 countries gathered in Rome December 5-7, 2022, to reflect on Pope Francis' work for nonviolent change throughout his 10-year papacy; to share their own experience of nonviolent change in the face of acute violence and injustice; and to explore next steps in advancing the spirituality, way of life, strategies, and universal ethic of nonviolence in the Church and the world.

The conference, entitled "Pope Francis, Nonviolence and the Fullness of Pacem in Terris," was sponsored by Pax Christi International's Catholic Nonviolence Initiative and the Justice, Peace, and Integrity of Creation Commission of the Union of Superiors General-Union of International Superiors General (USG-UISG), in partnership with the Maryknoll Sisters, Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns, Maryknoll Lay Missioners, and other groups.

"The consistent practice of nonviolence," Pope Francis writes, "has broken barriers, bound wounds, healed nations." Since his installation in 2013, Pope Francis has called the Church and the world to "make active nonviolence our way of life." The pope has implored us to nonviolently challenge and transform systems that oppress, marginalize, and destroy, while also creating new options for justice, peace, and a sustainable world. Nonviolence is Jesus' path and a powerful means of building social peace.

A Global Gathering: Participants from 28 nations – Mexico, Kenya, Guatemala, Romania, the Philippines, Italy, Nigeria, Peru, the United Kingdom, El Salvador, Japan, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Uganda, Indonesia, Germany, Belgium, Sri Lanka, Austria, South Sudan, Brazil, Netherlands, France, Cameroon, Lebanon, Palestine, Colombia, Rwanda and the United States – shared rich experiences of nonviolence practiced at local levels in contexts of egregious violence in myriad forms.

Together, participants reflected on Pope Francis' own experience of nonviolence; his vision that so clearly points toward a global ethic of nonviolence in the context of a "world war fought piecemeal;" and the urgent need for a paradigm shift from violence to nonviolence. Woven into the conference were times of reflection and prayer that drew on the beauty of the Advent season to move through the reality of God incarnate in different ways in the world: in silence, darkness, light, humanity, and all of creation.

Speakers told first-hand about nonviolent initiatives in Ukraine and Russia, indigenous resistance to mining and struggles for human rights in Guatemala and Brazil,

ongoing nonviolent civil struggle in Sri Lanka, dialogue for change in Kenya and education for nonviolence in Lebanon, and about nonviolence in the Church's synodal process, and in Pope Francis' prophetic ministry.

Harun Njoroge and Sr. Sia Temu, MM, members of the Maryknoll Sisters Peace Team in Kenya, shared their successful experiences of leading "Conversations for Social Change" events where representatives of community groups in conflict come together to deepen their conversation and look for a mutual way forward.

A different logic: Conference participants explored Pope Francis' many messages, including in Fratelli Tutti, about the impossibility of a "just war." They heard Fr. Francisco DeRoux, SJ, by video describe the consequences in Colombia of 50 years of what some called a "just war" and the urgent need for a different logic. They discussed the application of a just peace framework that would address the root causes of violent conflict, develop crucial nonviolent skills, break cycles of violence and build sustainable peace.

The closing Mass was celebrated by Cardinal Michael Czerny, Prefect of the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development with conference participants, Bishop Marc Stenger, co-president of Pax Christi International, Cardinal Robert McElroy of San Diego CA, Archbishop John Wester of Santa Fe NM, Archbishop Antonio Ledesma of the Philippines, and Bishop John Stowe, President of Pax Christi USA. The celebration concluded with a recitation of the Vow of Nonviolence in many languages.

Moving forward: In 2016, Pax Christi International co-sponsored with the Vatican the historic Nonviolence and Just Peace conference, which concluded by issuing the Appeal to the Catholic Church to Re-Commit to the Centrality of Gospel Nonviolence. Since 2016, Pope Francis has shared with the Church many groundbreaking resources for the nonviolent journey, including the 2017 World Day of Peace message entitled Nonviolence: A Style of Politics of Peace and his encyclical Fratelli Tutti.

We are grateful for these signposts toward a nonviolent future and look forward to all the ways that the Church will strengthen its teaching and support for the practice of Gospel nonviolence in this time of crisis and opportunity, encouraged by Pope Francis' message in 2017: "I pledge the assistance of the Church in every effort to build peace through active and creative nonviolence."§

COP 27: UN Climate Talks Move Forward

The fate of our common home, this fragile planet, was placed again in the hands of those who gathered in November, for the 27th time, at the UN Convention on Climate Change, this time on African soil, in Egypt.

Some 190 countries sent delegations to the UN Climate Talks COP27 in Egypt this past November, from Afghanistan to Zimbabwe, representing Earth's eight billion people. Such a successful attendance rate for one meeting is no small feat. Perhaps it was due to the wakeup call of the Earth itself, speaking in the language of floods, heatwaves, droughts, and wildfires.

It was the newest and smallest member of this forum, the Vatican, that seemed to lay out the task ahead most clearly: "either we win together, or we lose together." This was the message of the Holy See Secretary of State, Cardinal Pietro Parolin at the start of the conference.

Those who have been the traditional losers in this battle, those for whom climate change is not tomorrow but today, achieved the most significant victory of the conference thanks to their sheer refusal to be ignored. Small island-states that are being swallowed by rising oceans joined other nations that are being drowned or scorched by climate catastrophes to demand reparations. The result was a surprise eleventh hour historic agreement to establish a Loss and Damage Fund, adding a fourth pillar to what Cardinal Parolin named as the essential elements to solving the climate crisis: mitigation, adaptation, finance, and loss and damage.

Details of this new fund are yet to be determined, but it was a step toward restorative justice, acknowledging that wealthy countries, whose wealth was created through the burning of fossil fuels, have a debt to poorer nations who have contributed little to climate change, yet suffer its effects most acutely. One example is Pakistan, a third of which was inundated this year by floods caused by climate change. Pakistan has emitted only 0.3 percent of the world's cumulative carbon emissions, compared to the U.S.'s 24.3 percent.

The creation of a Loss and Damage fund was seen as a major step forward for climate justice. Unfortunately, progress on moving the global economy away from fossil fuels stagnated. Although over 80 countries (including the US and the EU) backed a proposal by India to phase down all fossil fuels and peak global emissions by 2025, their efforts proved unsuccessful.

As world temperatures are on track to warm above 2°C by 2030, this missed decision on emission reductions puts in danger the goal to "keep alive the 1.5" of the 2015 Paris Agreement. Every fraction of a degree of global warming unleashes catastrophic weather events that cause

immeasurable suffering.

The United States arrived at the global gathering hopeful of a new leadership role, fresh from the passage of the Inflation Reduction Act, the most sweeping U.S. climate bill ever, promising to reduce U.S. greenhouse gases by 40 percent. But the parsimony of the world's largest historic emitter of greenhouse gases in offering only pennies to global adaptation and mitigation efforts deflated their standing. Although President Biden promised to contribute 11.4 billion to international climate finance in 2022, Congress dashed his hopes, approving only one tenth of that amount.

While the United States has not been forthcoming with financial commitments, one victory at COP was to open space for dialogue on new and creative sources of climate finance, such as debt swaps for climate initiatives. There was much talk about the Bridgetown Initiative which proposes an overhaul of major development banks to drive trillions of dollars toward climate solutions.

Another space opened both formally and informally was dialogue about climate and agriculture. Agriculture is both a casualty of climate change and a contributor. On the same continent as the UN conference, drought-induced hunger threatens more than 50 million people. Meanwhile, some twenty percent of deadly greenhouse gas emissions are attributed to industrial agriculture. Side events during the climate talks connected people and organizations seeking alternatives, such as agroecology, a practice which both builds resilience and mitigation to climate change.

The sparks that emerge from these side events are perhaps the real progress at the annual climate talks. The seeds of change are, after all, often birthed on the margins – a core tenet of our faith. As preparations for COP28 in the United Arab Emirates are already underway, let us hope that these seeds find fertile ground.§

Faith in action: Watch a presentation by Maryknoll Lay Missioner Peg Vamosy in El Salvador about her ministry to promote sustainable agricultural techniques. <https://mogc.info/SustainableAgriculture>



UN Biodiversity Conference

Last minute global match to halt biodiversity loss yields a goal.

As billions of eyes were fixed on the World Cup final in Qatar, the Earth itself was vying for victory in a match in Montreal, Canada. There, representatives from 196 countries signed onto a new framework to address biodiversity loss and restore natural ecosystems by 2030.

More than plant and animal species are threatened with extinction by the end of the century, barring major changes. Decades of destructive ecosystems have left many biologically critical areas approaching irreversible tipping points that could destabilize life on the planet.

The ball that finally got to the goalpost was a complex one, but it has one defining characteristic: a pledge to “halt and reverse biodiversity loss” by protecting 30 percent of Earth’s land and sea area by 2030. For commentators of this spectacular match, this was its “Paris moment.” comparing the framework’s 30×30 goal to the target under the 2015 Paris Agreement on climate change to limit global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius. Both are concrete and thus easy to understand, albeit less easy to achieve and certainly not ambitious enough.

Indeed, the gavel had barely been raised when a voice of disagreement called out. The Democratic Republic of the Congo raised an objection. Who is going to pay for all this? The representative for the Democratic Republic of Congo objected to the proposed final text for not setting up a specific biodiversity fund. The majority of the world’s biodiversity is in the Global South. The DRC itself holds about a third of the world’s pristine forests. Setting this all aside to protect biodiversity sounds noble to the Global North but means disuse of resources that could provide desperately needed income for its inhabitants.

In response to the question of who will fund this dream, another 30×30 deal was struck: a pledge to increase the flow of finance to developing nations to care for nature to at least \$30 billion by 2030, as well as another annual \$200 billion towards the conservation of biodiversity. That still falls short by between \$500 - \$900 billion per year according to experts.

And then there is the question of oversight. There is nothing legally binding about this framework. All that exists is the peer pressure of those carrying the ball up and down the field, the agreement of nations to report, review and voluntarily “ratchet up” their ambitions for tackling biodiversity loss. That makes this goal not quite the definitive victory that 8 billion people and 1 million species need. But for now, it’s what the world has.

There were other goals too, including the commitments to cut global food waste by half, reduce pollution, such as pesticides and plastics, and combat invasive species. Finally, the conference agreed to the goal of championing Indigenous peoples’ rights. This group resides on 20 percent of the planet’s lands but stewards 80 percent of its biodiversity. There was recognition that they are doing something right that should enlighten us all.

The United States is just one of two countries in the world not party to the Convention on Biological Diversity. Although President Clinton signed on, the requisite two-thirds Senate approval never materialized. President Biden’s 2021 America the Beautiful plan unveiled a similar proposal to the UN Framework, a commitment to conserve 30 percent of the nation’s land and waters by 2030. But this plan too is voluntary. Congressional efforts to create a National Biodiversity Strategy were introduced then quickly canned. §



Photo by Biodiversity UN of the opening of the Biodiversity Conference via Flickr, CC

U.S. Proposals for Ocean-based Climate Solutions

The United States has taken ambitious steps for addressing climate change impacts on oceans and marine life.

At a series of international environmental conferences throughout 2022, the United States led or joined new pledges and efforts to conserve and protect ocean waters and the life they contain.

“Ocean-based climate solutions have a key role in keeping the goal to limit temperature rise to 1.5 degrees Celsius within reach and improving global climate resilience,” the U.S. Department of State said in a statement during the largest of the international environmental conference of the year, the UN Climate Talks COP27 in Egypt in November.

Early in 2022, during the seventh Our Ocean Conference in the island-nation of Palau in the western Pacific, the United States announced the Ocean Conservation Pledge, an ambitious new effort encouraging countries to commit to conserve or protect at least 30 percent of ocean waters under their national jurisdiction by 2030.

Soon after that, during the UN Water Conference in Portugal, the United States reiterated its support for Sustainable Development Goal Number 14: a “commitment to conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources, by scaling up ocean action based on science and innovation.”

During COP 27 the United States announced the following pledges and commitments:

Advancing the Ocean Conservation Pledge: During COP27, 16 countries pledged their commitment to conserve or protect at least 30 percent of ocean waters under their jurisdictions by 2030. John Kerry, the United States special presidential envoy for climate, called for conservation of 30 percent of the ocean habitat in a Boston Globe opinion piece in October 2019, to augment a similar call made by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature in 2016.

Launching the Green Shipping Challenge: Following President Biden’s call to action at the June 2022 Major Economies Forum, the United States and Norway launched the Green Shipping Challenge at COP27, with more than 40 major announcements from countries, ports, and companies on the actions they are taking to help align the shipping sector with the Paris Agreement goal. These efforts build on U.S. leadership in zero-emission shipping, including \$3 billion in the Inflation

Reduction Act to support zero-emission port equipment, technology, and climate action plans; more than \$700 million in the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law to make U.S. ports more efficient and resilient; and U.S. efforts at the International Maritime Organization (IMO) to advance a goal of phasing out greenhouse gas emissions from the international shipping sector to zero no later than 2050.

Expanding the Blue Carbon Inventory Project: Blue carbon refers to carbon stored in coastal habitats such as seagrasses. Eighty-three percent of the global carbon cycle is circulated through the ocean. Coastal habitats cover less than two percent of the total ocean area but account for 50 percent of the total carbon sequestered in ocean sediments. However, these are some of the most threatened ecosystems in the world and are being destroyed by coastal development, pollution, mining, farming, and dredging. The United States is partnering with Costa Rica and the Smithsonian Environmental Research Center to develop data tools for countries to assess and track blue carbon and use the data to support their NDC (Nationally Determined Contribution) as part of their commitment to the Paris climate agreement.

Supporting the Ocean Risk and Resilience Action Alliance: Through the alliance, the United States is supporting three projects: a climate and ocean risk assessment for Toamasina, Madagascar; the third wave of the Ocean Resilience Innovation Challenge, which is building projects that benefit local communities and reduce climate risk; and the deployment of the Coastal Risk Index, which calculates and maps the protective benefits of mangroves and coral reefs into risk insurance models.

Joining the Global Offshore Wind Alliance: Offshore wind has significant untapped potential to combat the climate crisis. The United States is a leader in offshore wind, with national goals to deploy at least 30 GW of offshore wind by 2030 and 15 GW of floating offshore wind capacity by 2035.

Developing a National Ocean Acidification Action Plan: The United States announced the start of a process to create a plan to address the root causes of ocean acidification by COP28 in November 2023. The hope is this plan will provide a model for other countries to follow. §

UN: Multidimensional Poverty Index Report

The latest UN report on global poverty offers insights in “poverty profiles” and highlights encouraging examples of overcoming interlinked aspects of poverty.

A report from the UN Development Programme (UNDP) introduces the term “deprivation bundles” to describe recurring patterns of poverty involving the lack of basic elements such as access to education, health, housing, drinking water, sanitation, and electricity. Data show that most poor people are impacted by two to four or even more of these deprivations and that being deprived in one area often leads to deprivation in one or two other areas.

For example, in Laos, families that lack access to cooking fuel often are unable to send their children to school because the children must spend their days collecting firewood. Conversely, Nepal’s investment in sanitation reduced child mortality by improved access to clean drinking water and nutrition.

The UNDP’s Multidimensional Poverty Index report for 2022 identifies ten specific measures of deprivations placed in three dimensions of poverty. In Health: nutrition and child mortality; in Education: years of schooling and school attendance; and in Standard of Living: cooking fuel, sanitation, drinking water, electricity, housing, and assets.

This report examined 6.1 billion people in 111 developing countries and found that 1.2 billion (19.1%) experience combinations of deprivations, a population demographic much larger than those experiencing monetary poverty only, set at \$1.90 per capita daily income. The household surveys were done prior to 2020 and revealed that 470 million were deprived in both nutrition and sanitation, making them vulnerable to infectious diseases, and over half (593 million) lacked both cooking fuel and electricity.

The largest number of poor people live in Sub-Saharan Africa (579 million), followed by South Asia (385 million), but deprivation profiles vary by region. South Asia is more likely to be deprived in nutrition, cooking fuel, sanitation and housing, whereas Sub-Saharan Africa is likely to have these four plus deprivations in drinking water and electricity. The report states: “Understanding these deprivation profiles – or bundles – helps us in designing integrated policies that can tackle multiple deprivations at once.”

Dr. Teresa de Jesus of Honduras further explains, “The challenge for us as a community is to join forces. Focusing only on health will not work; family income and housing conditions also limit a child’s development and increase

the risk for undernourishment.”

Poverty had been declining in the ten-year period studied. Of 81 countries studied, 72 significantly reduced their MPI value: 68 significantly reduced deprivations in five or more indicators, and of these 46 reduced deprivations in eight or more. The report concludes that these trends are promising in that many countries have already reduced deprivations in multiple indicators. However, the fear now is that with the Covid-19 pandemic, war in Ukraine, rising food and fuel prices, climate shocks, and a looming global recession, more people may not only become poor but that the intensity of poverty may increase.

Three countries have been put forward as examples of addressing the interlinkages in multidimensional poverty.

Ethiopia saw a reduction in poverty from 83.5 percent in 2011 to 68.8 percent in 2019, a result of improvements in years of schooling, access to drinking water, electricity, better housing, cooking fuel, and sanitation.

In Laos, improvements in access to cooking fuel, housing, electricity, sanitation, and years of schooling resulted in poverty dropping from 40 percent to 23 percent.

Nepal had significant improvements in sanitation, which led to great improvements in child nutrition, child mortality, and clean drinking water, and was accompanied by a huge decline in the incidence of poverty from 39 percent to 17 percent during this period of 2011 to 2019.

The report concludes with a call to conduct frequent and up-to-date household surveys to measure poverty and launch strategic tools to eliminate abject poverty, even as new threats arise. Recent data are vital for planning, designing policies, and incentivizing and recognizing change. Regular multitopic household surveys, while not perfect, are the best instrument for estimating multidimensional poverty. Advances in data collection, as important as they are, have not exceeded the value of frequent, extensive household surveys. §

Faith in action: Read the full report and see associated charts at <https://mogc.info/UN2022-MDPI>



Resources

1. **Explainer on COP15**, the UN Conference on Biodiversity, produced by the Laudato Si' Movement. <https://mogc.info/whatisCOP15>
2. **COP15 reflection** by Josianne Gauthier, secretary general of CIDSE, an international family of Catholic social justice organisations. <https://mogc.info/COP15-Gauthier>
3. **Interview: “The Youth Voice is the Voice of Hope, of the Future, and Action”** with Representative of Youth at UN Climate Talks COP27, Francisca Ziniel from Ghana. <https://mogc.info/COP27-Ziniel>
4. **Report: “Scaling Investment in Renewable Energy Generation: Roadblocks and Drivers”** by The Columbia Center <https://mogc.info/ScalingRenewables>
5. **Report: “The Role of Investment Treaties and Investor–State Dispute Settlement in Renewable Energy Investments”** by The Columbia Center <https://mogc.info/RenewableInvestment>
6. **Video: Sustainable Agriculture**, a presentation by Maryknoll Lay Missioner Peg Vamosy <https://mogc.info/SustainableAgriculture>
7. **Video: Ecological Solidarity Updates** by the Alliance for Global Justice <https://mogc.info/EcoSolidarity2022>
8. **Two-minute video featuring Sr. Abby Avelino, MM**, international coordinator of Talitha Kum, talking about the International Day of Prayer and Awareness Against Human Trafficking, to be celebrated on **Feb. 8, 2023**. <https://bit.ly/MOGC-AHT>
9. **Josephine Bakhita Prayer**: For the victims of Human Trafficking and their patron saint. <https://mogc.info/BakhitaPrayer>
10. **Nonviolence and Social Analysis in Mission**: Download the two-page explainer on nonviolence and how it can be integrated into mission work <https://mogc.info/2page-Nonvio>
11. **Pax Christi USA Vow of Nonviolence**: To be pronounced privately, with a local peace community, as part of a parish liturgy, or any other way that suits you. Many profess the Vow each year as part of their New Year observance. Printable version available at <http://bit.ly/VowNonvio>
12. **Back from the Brink: Call to prevent nuclear war** Introduce this resolution at your church, synagogue, civic group, medical association, university, or municipality. <https://www.preventnuclearwar.org/>
13. **World Day of Peace Message** written by Pope Francis for the celebration Jan. 1, 2023. <https://mogc.info/WorldPeaceDay2023>
14. **Close Guantanamo Rally** held in front of the White House on Lafayette park **Jan. 11**, 1pm ET hosted by the National Religious Campaign Against Torture (NRCAT) <https://mogc.info/CloseGitmo2023>
15. **Prayer for the Closing of Guantanamo** offered by NRCAT for the 21st anniversary of the Guantanamo detention facility's inception <https://mogc.info/CloseGitmoPrayer>
16. **Book review: “Conversations with Cardinal Gergorio Rosa Chavez”** published by the National Catholic Reporter on the Salvadoran Cardinal's relationship with the Archbishop Romero and his work in the turbulence of the Civil War. <https://bit.ly/3GJ4Vku>
17. **Photos: Roses in December Delegation** courtesy of the SHARE Foundation El Salvador <https://mogc.info/RosesDec-Photos>
18. **Book: “Conversations with Cardinal Gergorio Rosa Chavez”** The ebook of the Spanish version is available in various formats at <https://books2read.com/u/m2d1zo>
19. **Book: Los 40 años del 10 de Octubre - Memorias de Nuestra Democracia** A book of articles by the Fogoneros collective on the forty years of democracy in Bolivia <https://mogc.info/40Years-Bolivia>
20. **Maryknoll Sisters Podcast: Educating the Youth in East Timor** with Sr. Rolande Kahindo. <https://bit.ly/MKSrPodcast>
21. **Maryknoll Missioners Webinars**: on **Jan. 25**, 2pm ET, join Maryknoll Missioners for “Experience Life-Changing Immersion Trips with Maryknoll.” In the most recent webinar, Fr. Joe Healey discusses “New Models of Church in Eastern Africa” <https://www.maryknoll.us/Resources/webinars>