



Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns

NewsNotes

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Putting the Needs of the Poor First at COP 27

The annual UN Climate Change Convention which in years past yielded the Paris Climate Accords and Kyoto Protocol will be held in Egypt. We hope for a human-centered approach that takes into account the marginalized.

The annual United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, known as COP 27 will be held this November in Sheikh, Egypt, bringing global leaders and members of civil society together on the world stage to deliver action to combat the climate emergency

This year's keynote speaker – the Earth – has already spoken. Loudly. Through its megaphone of floods and droughts, ice melts and wildfires, hurricanes and cyclones, it has lifted its voice fiercely, clamoring to be heard.

Certainly, some have listened: mostly those who have no choice. Among them are the millions in Pakistan still under flood waters and Pacific island nations that are disappearing in the rising seas.

The question is, will these cries of the earth and cries of the poor be heard – as implored by Pope Francis in his encyclical *Laudato Si'* (see <https://theletterfilm.org/watch/>) by those who have actually set this fire ablaze?

A handful of developed nations bear special responsibility in this situation. The United States and a few European countries account for more than 40 percent of historic greenhouse gas emissions that are the primary cause of climate change. The extraction, burning and slashing of carbon that created great wealth for these nations also wrapped our entire planet in a blanket of greenhouse gases.

Meanwhile, those nations suffering the most devastating consequences of these massive carbon emissions are those who have contributed the least to the problem. The 100 least emitting countries generate 3 per cent of total emissions.

This UN Convention marks the 27th time that world leaders are attempting to get it right. Previous attempts have brought victories and missteps. The 21st COP produced the Paris Agreement, an international treaty signed by 196 countries that would limit global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius and create a climate neutral world by 2050. But global greenhouse gas emissions continue to rise and the goal is in jeopardy.

We have six hopes for climate action at COP 27:

1. “Real” zero not “net” zero solutions: A “real zero” agreement means moving away from fossil fuels, the root cause of the climate crisis. So-called “net zero” strategies have been used by the world's great polluters to continue their status quo operations while using land-based “off-setting” carbon credits. It is one of many false solutions that responds to the cry of the

greedy and will not solve the climate crisis.

2. Address the issue of loss and damage: Climate change is not just the future, it is the present for many of the world's most vulnerable citizens who have lost their homes, their livelihoods, and their cultures. Wealthy nations have fiercely resisted providing specific finance for these losses. COP 27 should create a Finance Facility of Loss and Damage guided by the polluter pays principle that is needs and rights-centered, public- and grant-based and gender-responsive.
3. Reduce the debt burden of vulnerable nations to allow climate action: Developing countries are suffering from the triple crisis of debt, climate change and nature loss. Past efforts at COP have fallen far short of needs. One approach is to reduce the debt burdens of vulnerable nations to free resources to implement climate solutions to directly benefit their peoples.
4. Respect human rights: Preparations for COP27 in Egypt are taking place against the backdrop of an ongoing and deep-rooted human rights crisis there. Egyptian authorities must take meaningful steps by lifting restrictions of civic space to ensure that civil society organizations, activists, and communities can meaningfully participate without fear of reprisals.
5. Agroecology as an effective climate adaptation strategy: A quarter of the globe's greenhouse gas emissions come from forestry and industrial agriculture. Agroecology, a system of food production that nourishes rather than destroys nature, offers a solution. It should be promoted and funded as an adaptation strategy to climate change and a pathway to greater food security.
6. The United States should take a bold leadership role: The recent passage of the Inflation Reduction Act will allow the United States to cut its greenhouse gases by 40% and return to COP in a new position. §

Faith in action: Read and share our two-pager on our hopes for climate action at COP 27.

<https://bit.ly/MOGC-COP27>

Catholics Urge Pres. Biden to be Climate Leader

More than 4,000 U.S. Catholic and nine national Catholic organizations signed the following [letter](#) to Pres. Joe Biden asking for bold leadership at the upcoming UN Climate Talks (COP27). The Catholic Climate Covenant delivered the letter on Oct. 27, 2022.

As fellow Catholics guided by the call to care for our vulnerable neighbors and our common home, we ask that your Administration exercise leadership at the upcoming UNFCCC Conference of Parties (COP27) with moral courage and exceptional ambition. Unprecedented weather events linked to global warming are happening across our nation and world with greater frequency and severity. People are experiencing profound suffering especially in nations least able to address the impacts. Yet global GHG emissions continue to rise and Paris Agreement's aspiration to limit global warming below 1.5°C is in jeopardy. Further, international financial commitments to help nations most vulnerable to climate change appear to be waning.

Our nation has a profound opportunity to revivify the goals of the Paris Agreement. Through the passage of the Inflation Reduction Act, the U.S. returns as an authentic leader of efforts to dramatically reduce global greenhouse gas emissions and provide meaningful assistance to the nations and peoples most impacted by climate change. As people of faith, we ask that you leverage this leadership at COP27 in Egypt, by:

First, urging, helping, and collaborating with other nations to meet or exceed nationally determined contributions to greenhouse gas reductions, so that together the world can keep global warming to no more than 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels.

Second, prioritizing the interests of climate vulnerable nations and peoples by:

- Ensuring that our nation pay its fair share to the Green Climate Fund and encouraging other nations to collectively meet the global commitment of \$100 billion to support low income countries with climate mitigation and adaptation;
- Promoting constructive dialogues and ambitious commitments related to Loss and Damage, which recognizes that historically high-carbon emitting countries owe a debt to climate vulnerable nations;
- Supporting efforts to reduce the debt burdens of vulnerable nations that free up resources to implement climate solutions that directly benefit their peoples.

Third, supporting human rights by:

- Pressing for freedom of access and expression by Egyptian as well as international civil society before, during, and after COP27; and
- Meeting the nation's obligations under the Paris Agreement to respect, promote and consider the human rights of all peoples, especially but not limited to the rights of indigenous peoples, local communities, migrants, and children.

As Catholics called to uphold the life and dignity of every human person and to care for our common home, we ask and pray that you and all members of the U.S. Delegation lead with ambition and moral courage at COP27. Doing so can inspire all peoples to act with tangible hope and renewed purpose to protect our common home for vulnerable peoples, ourselves, and future generations. We stand ready to work with you during these pivotal times, for the common good of all.§



Faith in action: Use the “Guide to COP27,” the UN Climate Conference in Egypt Nov. 6-18, produced by the Justice Coalition of Religious <https://bit.ly/JCoR-COP27>

Share our two-page explainer on COP27 “Putting the Needs of the Poor First at UN Climate Conference” <https://bit.ly/MOGC-COP27>

Pray for Climate Action using the Season of Creation Prayer <https://bit.ly/MOGCCreationPrayer>

New Film about *Laudato Si'*

Fr. John Sivalon, MM, Professor of Religion at University of Scranton, describes the new YouTube Original documentary “The Letter” as a message to each of us for collective, transformative action on climate change.

Sandwiched between an early introduction to Bilal “Billy” Seck, a Senegalese youth, and a last video message by Billy before he lost his life crossing to Europe in an overloaded boat, a new film entitled “The Letter” chronicles the journey of five individuals (Arouna Kande, Chief Dada, Ridhima Pandey, and Drs. Greg Asner and Robin Martin) who were invited to participate with Pope Francis in a dialogue at the Vatican and Assisi. The five were chosen for their work promoting integral ecology and to represent groups most vulnerable to climate change.

One represents Indigenous people, one youth, one the poor, and two scientists represent the voice of nature and wildlife. As their stories unfold, the film’s images accentuate the beauty and diversity of nature both on land and in the sea. It also highlights the scarring of that beauty and the destruction of nature’s biodiversity that is threatening our future and is the current source of climate change migrants.

As *Laudato Si'* itself did, this film challenges us to look beyond our comfortable and well-manicured campus to the pain and devastation that is being inflicted on the Earth and the most vulnerable. It provokes us to examine how our lives are connected to that suffering, pain, and degradation. And it challenges us to move beyond empathy and concern to action.

Chief Dada of the Maro people living in the Amazon region of Brazil, calmly describes his struggle to protect the Amazon rainforest. He describes it as his people’s home, a beautiful home. But in 2002, logging companies began to occupy the land and manage it for their profit.

In the face of losing their home, the Maro people began to organize, resist, and defend their land. “Last year, 212 people lost their lives standing up for their land” as reported in the film. This segment is particularly striking, knowing that the retirement plans of faculty and staff of the University of Scranton, including my own, are managed by TIAA-CREF. See <https://bit.ly/FarmLandGrabReport> for an explanation of the company’s role in agribusiness in Brazil.

The voice of the poor is emotionally expressed in the film by Arouna, a self-described climate refugee. He talks about the dual effects of climate change on the people of Senegal. The Sahel is encroaching from the east and the rise of ocean levels is eating away the shoreline of the west.

Because of climate change many Senegalese have lost their homes and farms. The film indicates that experts

predict that by 2050, as many as 1.2 billion people could be displaced by climate change. Arouna explains that this is why young people are risking their lives to emigrate to Europe. Arouna’s gift to the pope was a metal sculpture of an overloaded boat. A stark reminder to us that the migrants trying to get to our land are human beings with profound stories of struggle and courage.

From Haridwar, India, Ridhima Pandey epitomizes the pope’s optimism that it is the new strength and energy of young people that can bring change. The film witnesses her networking with youths across the world to mobilize despite government and corporate leaders’ failure to act.

A friend in Australia describes to her in a video call the very moments when she and her family flee their home as a bush fire rages towards them. As the family gathers their chickens and dogs, the film indicates that 3 billion animals were killed or harmed in Australian bushfires from 2019 to 2020. Ridhima recalls her own experience of flooding in India and how that experience led her to join others to advocate for change, knowing it is her generation that will be the most impacted if nothing is done.

The husband-and-wife team of scientists from Hawaii describe their research into the troubled state of coral reefs. Robin calls coral reefs “the rainforest of the sea.” She says, “They provide habitat, they provide food, and they provide shoreline protection.” While several factors may be threatening the coral reefs, both Robin and Greg emphasize the role of marine heat waves. Most frightening is that a new heatwave has begun, and if there is just another 2-degree Celsius rise in global temperature, we could lose 99% of the Earth’s coral reef. In this dire state, Robin says that science alone cannot solve this problem. People, all people, need to come together to solve it.

The film’s emphasis is that this letter (*Laudato Si'*) was written to all people. It stresses that care of the Earth and care of one another is central to all religions. It references, through various scenes and images, Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism, Indigenous, and Judeo-Christian traditions.

The production of this film is a clear indication of the Vatican’s commitment to our common home and its commitment to reach out to as broad an audience as possible. It is meant, as Pope Francis says, to move us out of our patterns of comfort to imagine something different for our common home and to act on it. §

Faith in action: Watch *The Letter* at <https://bit.ly/MOCGLetter>

Haiti Update from a Maryknoll Lay Missioner

Maryknoll lay missioner Jill Foster writes from Haiti about the deteriorating living conditions as the Caribbean country struggles with growing gang violence and organized crime.

The meme “The country is so blocked that not even [Hurricane] Fiona could get through” greeted me as I looked at my cell phone. It gave my housemate and me a much-needed laugh. Much like the hurricanes that brew in the Atlantic, there is something brewing in Haiti. It has been brewing for a long time. As gangs continue to block roads, hold trucks for ransom, kidnap, kill, and terrorize, the people are reaching a breaking point. Even in a cool-headed town like Gros Morne, the effects are noticeable.



Photo courtesy of [Jill Foster/MKLM](#)

Due to insecurity, school opening were delayed from September 5th to October 3rd in hopes that the country would cool down a bit. The opposite happened, with the last two weeks being significantly tenser than before. Nowadays, many parents are saying that they don't believe schools will open until the new year. How could they function? Gas prices climbed to nearly \$45 a gallon in Gros Morne and higher in other cities. Roadblocks popped up across the country in protest. With those two realities combined, even vehicles that have gas can't get anywhere.

The local market is dwindling in food supply. As more goes, what remains is sold at higher and higher prices. Even staple foods like rice are becoming more difficult to find, let alone afford. On the first days of protests in Gros Morne, I heard tell of people throwing rocks at the vendors in the market to get them to leave. They threw

rocks and glass bottles at cars trying to slide past barricades made of rocks, wooden stands, cars, boutiques, and burning tires. Fortunately, though I have crossed several barricades, I have yet to experience the violence some of my friends encountered.

As the days pass, I worry more and more. I still smile and check in with the people I see in the street, making sure it is still safe for me to traverse the roadblocks. All of them wave me through with a smile, but the tension is a little more apparent. There is a quiet desperation from the older generations and anger from the younger. My heart feels as if it is hollowing out my chest as hunger becomes even more pronounced than it once was. Everyone is suffering. Trucks that pump water into tanks for people's homes are struggling to function. Many businesses that sell filtered drinking water are closed.

In other towns, protestors looted charity depots and religious congregations. At least one bank was broken into and one gas station destroyed. As a result, several times I arrived at work to find the gates closed and locked as the Monfortan priests' precautions against pillaging. Gros Morne has yet to experience this as those who wish to make more trouble are few.

Yet life goes on. Those who have work and responsibilities do what they can. Cars pay the prices for the gas to run. Nurses still give medicine at the hospital, and vendors still sell what they can in the market. Farmers tend to their gardens. Cooks still make food on the street, and teachers still prepare their lesson plans.

Around this time last year gas prices also rose, though the effects are greater this time. Last time, the crisis eventually blew over. This time feels different. It's a home-grown protest rather than a political one. People are fed up, especially the youth. We do not know how it will resolve itself. It could get worse or it could get better. All that remains within our power is to continue with what we can and see what will happen.

Please send us your prayers for an internal Haitian resolution, or failing that, a peaceful one.§

Faith in action: Ask Pres. Biden to halt deportations and pursue a humanitarian response to the situation facing Haitian asylum seekers at the border. Respond compassionately to the situation of Haitian asylum seekers at the border. <https://bit.ly/HaitianAsylum>

Haiti: Alternatives to Sending Troops

Experts on social justice in Haiti offer six alternatives to international military intervention as the struggling Caribbean nation sinks deeper into economic and political crisis.

“There is a debate raging about military intervention in Haiti,” three leading experts on civil social in Haiti acknowledge in an article published in *Just Security* on Oct. 19, just days after a UN special session on Haiti. The emergency session came as response to the de facto head of state Ariel Henry’s request for special forces to help deal with armed groups that have taken over large sections of the capital city of Port-au-Prince.

Acknowledging “the historic reality of how badly past interventions have failed Haiti,” Haitian political activist Vélina Élysée Charlier, attorney Alexandra Filippova from the Institute for Justice & Democracy in Haiti and Tom Ricker, program director at the Quixote Center, offer six alternatives to sending troops.

“First, the United States can step back from its unquestioning support for the de facto government of Ariel Henry. As long as the U.S. State Department backs Henry, they are making a mockery of any claim to neutrality. A Haitian-led solution is the only way that stability returns. And, the only way this can happen is if the United States stops sitting on the scale, even as it claims it supports Haitian self-determination.

“Second, an agreement on governance has to be implemented. While insecurity could be a major obstacle, the agreement on governance has to come first, and insecurity can then be addressed through the mechanisms established. If that wasn’t the case, the millions poured into the Haitian National Police over the past years of increasingly undemocratic governance would be succeeding at stemming the violence. The international community can help with the democratic transition, but under the direction of a Haitian-led transitional authority, not in place of one. So far, the international community has effectively marginalized serious local efforts to establish a legitimate democratic government with its support for Henry. That makes it part of the problem.

“Third, use appropriate legal instruments like the U.S. Magnitsky Act, to impose sanctions on high-profile individuals involved in corruption and human rights abuses, especially including government officials and members of the oligarchy who support and facilitate gang violence in Haiti. These cannot be symbolic gestures that change nothing. The leader of Varreux-blocking G9, a former police officer who orchestrated civilian

massacres with apparent government collusion, has been sanctioned for almost two years with no impact. Yet, that is who the UN is highlighting as a target for its new proposed sanctions.

“Fourth, support accountability for the assassination of President Jovenel Moïse. It is worth recalling that many of those implicated in the assassination claimed to work for or have the support of various U.S. government agencies, and Henry, whom the U.S. government effectively installed as head of state, has not substantially responded to evidence he may have been involved, and is reported to have obstructed the investigation. The U.S. government must be far more transparent about the investigation and support efforts to identify, arrest, and judge the intellectual and material authors of this crime. Congress mandated that the U.S. Department of State report on the assassination investigation, yet that report is now four months late and the Biden administration continues to prop up Henry without responding to the serious allegations against him.

“Fifth, the United States must do more to rein in illegal gun sales to Haiti. Gun sales to Haiti from the United States are supposed to be highly restricted and monitored already, but the system is clearly broken. The United States must evaluate, fix, and enforce this system alongside officials from Haiti and the Dominican Republic.

“Sixth, the United States must stop all deportations and expulsions of Haitian migrants, most of whom would qualify as refugees or have the right to access asylum proceedings, were it not for Title 42 enforcement. Similarly, the United States should end the forced repatriations of Haitians interdicted at sea. Given the aforementioned security and public health crisis, forced resettlement back to Haiti is a violation of international obligations of non-refoulement, and clearly immoral.”

Whether any of these recommendations will be put into action remains to be seen. The authors say they are not new ideas, they have been discussed by the international community for months, but with no commitments. “The United States and other international actors seem more concerned with maintaining the current de facto regime – which they installed and prop up – in power than in allowing Haitians to lead the way out of the current crisis,” they said. “This must end.”§



Repression Anew in El Salvador

Returned Maryknoll lay missionary Gigi Gruenke writes about the devastating stories she heard about life under the state of exception in El Salvador during her visit there this past August.

On March 27, 2022, President Nayib Bukele of El Salvador issued a mandate called the state of exception. The goals of this mandate are to eliminate all gang related violence from the streets of El Salvador and to put a stop to organized crime. It was estimated that there were some 70,000 gang members in the country, and the daily number of gang-related deaths were ever rising.

Since then, public violence and deaths have been greatly reduced, and more than 50,000 citizens have been imprisoned. But no one really knows how many of these prisoners are in fact gang members.

Arrests have been arbitrary: with no evidence presented and at times the names of detained persons unknown to the arresting police or soldiers. There is no data on how many gang members have been captured, have become temporarily inactive, or have simply fled the country. There is also no verifiable data on how many prisoners have died in the squalid prisons.

Because so many prisoners are crammed into the existing prisons, a new prison is in rapid construction outside Zacatecoluca, a city with 25,000 residents. The prison will hold 40,000 individuals.

In August, I visited the rural Bajo Lempa region where I worked as a mental health provider in the early 2000s. What is most characteristic of the individuals captured in the Bajo Lempa region and its surroundings? They are poor and live in marginalized areas.

People in Bajo Lempa are terrified: who will be picked up next? They told me devastating stories of life under the state of exception. Here are a few.

Vladimir is a husband, father, beloved grandson, and a young man I first met when he was in grade school. He was pulled away from his home and loved ones in April. The shock and pain of his detention precipitated the death soon thereafter of the grandmother who raised him.

The family, and others, told me they thought a state of repression would never return to El Salvador.

Alex and his brother were picked up, separated, and placed in different prisons. An amazing thing happened to Alex: he was hospitalized for possible leg amputations due to untreated diabetes in prison. Then he developed COVID, the combination resulting in his release. His enduring hospital memory is the kindness of the nurses and aides. He also spoke of the extreme cruelty he experienced in prison.

One friend, an older woman and wartime massacre

survivor, spoke very quietly to me, unable to raise her voice even though she was safely at home. Her terrifying wartime memories overtook her ability to speak freely in this new moment of fear.

Several local people had watched in terror when their loved ones were taken from their homes. Others were taken off the dirt roads while riding their bicycles or picked up at their places of work.

Police came to a teacher's house in the dead of night and captured her in front of her screaming 3-year-old. Some days later the child's father was taken. This child, terrified and grieving, has regressed in many ways, including bed wetting.

Recently, soldiers pushed their way into an early childhood education center past the director – warrants are not required. While they searched the building, they told the terrified staff and preschoolers to speak up if they knew of any gang members.

This final account is one of my saddest. I first met Esmeralda when she was a teen. Her mother and relatives were engaged in a shared process of healing from a brutal massacre in 1981. Esmeralda was an active participant in a play presented annually as the survivors and members of the human rights community gathered for anniversary commemorations. Esmeralda farms for a living while raising two daughters, the youngest not yet one year old.

On April 19, Holy Thursday, Esmeralda was picked up by the police. No one knows why. Her family and human rights groups have tried to intervene but to no avail. Her 4-month-old baby girl is now over 10 months old and no longer cries for her mother, but surely her mother still weeps.

The UN Human Rights Commission knows what is going on in El Salvador, as does the Inter-American Court of Human Rights. They are asking President Bukele to be accountable in the face of these gross human rights violations and to take action to rectify the mass of undocumented imprisonments.

Does the U.S. public know about what is happening in El Salvador? What can you do to publicize the cruel and unjust state of exception?

Faith in Action: Ask Congress to suspend U.S. support for El Salvador military and police until human rights concerns are addressed <https://bit.ly/MOGC-ElSalvador>

Faith Community Responds to Russian Nuclear Threats

Groups urge leaders to seek diplomatic solution to war, reject nuclear weapons, and support nonviolent resistance.

The faith community continues to respond to the war in Ukraine, and particularly to threats by Russian President Vladimir Putin to use nuclear weapons. Faith leaders have condemned the Russian invasion of Ukraine, attacks on civilians, and President Putin's nuclear threats. They have warned world leaders not to escalate the conflict, urging them to pursue diplomacy and negotiate peace. The heightened risk of nuclear war has also led religious leaders to call with renewed urgency for nuclear disarmament.

The Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns joined 26 other faith groups in signing a letter to President Biden urging him to “explore every avenue of dialogue, diplomacy, and negotiation to ease tensions with Russia, end the bloodshed in Ukraine, and eliminate the nuclear threat to all humankind.” The Hindu, Buddhist, Catholic and Protestant Christian, and other faith groups wrote:

We share a moral responsibility to de-escalate tensions, return to negotiations, and realize a world without nuclear weapons. Nuclear weapons are incompatible with our fundamental respect for human dignity. They threaten our planet, communities and families... As United Nations Secretary General Antonio Guterres stated, “their elimination would be the greatest gift we could bestow on future generations.”

MOGC also led 29 national Catholic organizations in an appeal to President Biden, that his Catholic faith might guide him to pursue diplomacy, peace, and disarmament. (<https://bit.ly/RCBidenNoNukes>)

Pope Francis has continued to repeat with prophetic insistence that no war is just. While people have the right and obligation to defend themselves, the pope warns that doing so with arms may simply led to more war, which is immoral. In a new book, “I Ask You in the Name of God. Ten Prayers for a Future of Hope,” published in Italian in October, Francis writes, “War must end or (the) world risks nuclear catastrophe,” reiterating that recent events “compel me to add, unambiguously, that there is no occasion in which a war can be considered just.” As reported by Vatican News, Francis concludes the book by asserting that “the choice to follow the path of nonviolence and continued existence lies with us.”

Ukrainians seeking to follow the path of nonviolence met with international groups in Kyiv in August. Eli McCarthy with Pax Christi International's Catholic Nonviolence Initiative joined European partners on the

delegation. They heard first-hand stories of nonviolent resistance, from farmers refusing to sell grain to Russian soldiers to firefighters refusing to participate in occupation government, to engaging Russian civilians on the realities of the war. They asked that global citizens not abandon them, but 1) share their examples of nonviolent resistance, 2) advocate for the governments of Ukraine and other countries to support them by developing their own nonviolent strategies of noncooperation, and 3) aid them with funds, training, and digital security.

A report published in October analyzing “Ukrainian Nonviolent Civil Resistance in the Face of War,” concludes that it has hindered Russian military and political goals, undermined Kremlin power, served to protect civilians, increased community resilience, strengthened local governance and social cohesion, and led to greater accountability. Scholars have mapped 235 examples of nonviolent action in Ukraine since March. The report offers a set of ten recommendations for supporting further nonviolent civil resistance. Nonviolent Peaceforce has deployed a rapid response team to support action on the ground.

Meanwhile, as Russians protested the war and thousands fled military recruitment, the acting general secretary of the World Council of Churches, Fr. Joan Saúca, met with one of the WCC's most important members and the war's most prominent defenders, Patriarch Kirill, head of the Russian Orthodox Church, on October 17 in Moscow. “The reason for coming here is to see what we can do together to build bridges of peace and reconciliation and stop the bloodshed and the danger of nuclear conflagration,” Fr. Sauca said. “I think it would very helpful now to make the same statement, saying clearly to the world what you told us, here, today: stop the bloodshed, stop the killing, stop the destruction of infrastructure, look for peace and reconciliation.” Patriarch Kirill blamed the war on political powers, not churches, and spoke defensively of the soldier who “has to defend himself and his life or to give his life for the lives of the others.” Yet, the two Christian leaders were able to agree that “War cannot be holy.” “As peacemakers,” said Kirill, “we have to make all efforts to bring peace through dialogue and avoid any conflict or violence.”§

Faith in Action: Read the report on Ukrainian Nonviolent Civil Resistance at <https://bit.ly/UkraineNV>, and write to President Biden at <https://bit.ly/UkraineAction>

Second Round of Elections in Brazil Splits Church

High tensions in the runup to the runoff elections held on October 30th spilled over into the Church and pulpit in Brazil as Jair Bolsonaro courted the Catholic vote.

“We deplore, at this moment of the electoral campaign, the intensification of the exploitation of faith and religion to garner votes in the second round,” wrote the National Conference of Brazilian Bishops (CNBB) in an open letter about the then-approaching second round of elections for president and some governors held October 30th. Former President Lula da Silva narrowly defeated Bolsonaro by a 1.8% margin. The presidential campaign was especially tense with both sides accusing the other of being an existential threat. While there have always been political divisions with the Brazilian Church’s hierarchy, this election has intensified those divisions and spread among the faithful more than ever before.

The arguments in favor of each candidate should sound familiar to readers in the U.S. “As candidate Lula publicly defends questions that are condemned by Catholic morals like decriminalizing abortion, gender ideology, and socialism... it is natural that a faithful Catholic prays for the reelection of President Bolsonaro,” said Pedro Affonseca, leader of the Dom Bosco Center. In an open letter a group of Brazilian bishops made their preference clear without names: “... there is no room for neutrality when it comes to deciding about two projects for Brazil, one democratic and the other authoritarian; one committed to the defense of life, starting with the impoverished, the other committed to the ‘economy that kills’ (Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium – The Joy of the Gospel*, 53); one that takes care of education, health, work, food, culture, the other that despises public policies because it despises the poor.”

According to recent surveys, while evangelical voters, who represent 31 percent of the population, favored Bolsonaro 60 percent versus 32 percent for Lula, Catholics representing 50 percent of the population favored Lula 56 to 38 percent. For this reason, the president focused especially on winning the Catholic vote for the second round, but perhaps not in the best way.

On October 8, he appeared at an annual celebration of Our Lady of Nazareth, considered to be the largest Catholic celebration in the world, uninvited. The celebration is a river pilgrimage with thousands of boats participating. Bolsonaro rode in a Navy boat with two local politicians from his party. The Archdiocese quickly released a note lamenting his distracting presence and making it clear that they had not invited the president or

any other politician to the normally apolitical event.

On October 12 he went to the celebration of Our Lady of the Apparition, the country’s patron saint, in the national basilica in Sao Paulo. The celebration entails multiple Masses and events throughout the day. This visit was planned by the Dom Bosco Center and announced to the public ahead of time. This changed the character of what is usually a quiet, reflective event. Many Bolsonaro supporters went not for the religious celebration but to see the president, wearing shirts of the national soccer team, a symbol of support for Bolsonaro. Others came dressed in red to show their support for Lula. Arguments ensued and reporters were harassed by some Bolsonaro supporters. While a Mass was taking place in the basilica, Bolsonaro rode on top of a car surrounded by fans as if it were a campaign stop. The president participated in another Mass that day but thrice refused to take Communion when offered.

More concerning has been the increase in aggression toward priests who support Lula. Throughout the country there are reports of parishioners harassing priests during and after Masses. Homilies preaching to support the poor and to avoid violence are interpreted by some Bolsonaro supporters to be an attack on the president. Father Zezinho, famous for singing religious songs on several CDs, closed his website until after the election because of “offenses against the Pope, against bishops, against me, with slurs and bad language”. In Ceara, two priests suffered so much from harassment and threats that they were placed in the state program of protection for human rights defenders.

Some are concerned that these divisions may have a lasting, detrimental effect on the Church. “The Catholic Church... is a hierarchy. It is not equipped to deal with direct contestation between the faithful or between the clerics caused by political motives,” said anthropologist Regina Novaes. Yet others like Cardinal Leonardo Steiner believe the conflicts will not have lasting effects on the Church. “The Catholic Church is a millennial institution. We have been through much more complicated issues than this. I believe that after the elections, the situation will normalize.”§

Faith in action: Read the letter released by the Brazilian Bishops at <https://bit.ly/MOGC-BrazilBishops>

Food Crisis Demands Food Justice

Caritas Internationalis released the following statement on World Food, Oct. 16, urging the global community to address “food injustice” stemming from a disregard for those most overlooked in society.

The only way to fight the current severe food crisis is to address the “food injustice” that stems from a lack of concern for the poorest and the most vulnerable and care for our common home. On World Food Day 2022, which occurs on 16 October, Caritas Internationalis calls national governments, international institutions, and the global community to support local and small-scale agriculture as a long-term and sustainable solution against food insecurity.

World food production is affected by three major factors: climate emergency, the impact of COVID-19, and conflicts. “This World Food day 2022 is marked by the war in Ukraine, which has contributed to the upheaval in global food and energy markets, with soaring food and fuel prices will further put millions at risk of hunger across the world,” says Aloysius John, secretary general of Caritas Internationalis.

Alongside hunger hotspots like Afghanistan, Syria, and Yemen, the Sahel and the Horn of Africa regions are among the most affected, with 21 million of people in Ethiopia, Kenya, and Somalia suffering high levels of acute food insecurity and malnutrition. This is also the result of the dependence on imported foods and chemical input industrial agriculture and of the limited involvement of farmers in the food supply chain.

“It is a paradox that, in our opulent globalized world, four out of ten people cannot afford healthy food. The current severe food crisis cannot be solely addressed by industrial agriculture. We need to move away from a focus on efficiency and profit maximization in the food system and instead focus on sustaining local food systems, which through diversified seeds, have the capacity to improve food and nutrition security” says John.

All over the world, Caritas organizations implement programs to build community resilience, adopt locally driven innovation based on indigenous knowledge and support small-scale farmers. In India and Niger for example, local communities working with Caritas are maximizing the use of locally available resources, such as agricultural fertilizers and botanical pesticides, in order to improve soil nutrients and contribute to climate change mitigation. Such programs include farming techniques and systems based on agroecology, which integrates the needs of agricultural production with the principle of environmental preservation.

Caritas Internationalis calls the international

community and decision makers, to ensure greater efforts to support new forms of small-scale agriculture, create social food cooperatives, and enable small-scale farmers to cultivate their land. This means a change in agricultural development projects, with a focus on watershed management and access to sustainable agricultural materials.



States and the global community should also avoid focusing on achieving short-term food security and instead focus on long-term home-grown innovations that build sustainable local food systems rooted in local realities, inclusive and resilient to shocks around the world.

“If we do not take measures now, an increasing percentage of the world’s population is destined to suffer from hunger. Food injustice needs to be immediately addressed at the highest level. Food production must be devoid of political and vested interest and seen as a common good for humanity,” concludes John. §

Faith in action: Maryknoll lay missionary Peg Vamosy in El Salvador works with a local parish-based agricultural program to improve food security through crop diversification and sustainable, climate-resilient organic production. Read about Peg’s programs in Maryknoll Magazine <https://bit.ly/PegVamosyNews>. Watch a recording of a webinar with Peg at <https://bit.ly/PegVamosy>

Korea Could Be Place for U.S. China Cooperation

The international peace group Women Cross DMZ point to peacebuilding diplomacy on the Korean peninsula as a much-needed opportunity for U.S.-China cooperation. <https://bit.ly/WomenX-DMZ>

A new report by Women Cross DMZ, a group of thirty international women peacemakers, shows how the Korean Peninsula has become the fault line for rising U.S.-China tensions. Titled “U.S.-China Competition and the Korean Peninsula: From Confrontation to Peacebuilding,” the report argues that peacebuilding in Korea offers a much-needed opportunity for U.S.-China cooperation, which would help to reduce tensions, build trust, and, most crucially, avoid a possible war: “With tensions running dangerously high on the Korean Peninsula, it is urgent that the Biden administration take a proactive approach through peaceful diplomacy,” said Christine Ahn, Executive Director of Women Cross DMZ. “This report shows that cooperating with China to officially end the Korean War would go a long way toward building a more peaceful and stable Northeast Asia.”

“China’s growing influence and Washington’s efforts to contain that influence through assembling an anti-China alliance in East Asia are promoting the relentless militarization of the region,” said Kevin Gray, Professor in International Relations at the School of Global Studies at the University of Sussex and leading editor of the report.

“This zero-sum competition between the two countries is also having highly negative implications for peace on the Korean Peninsula. However, tackling the seven-decade long unended war in Korea will conversely provide an opportunity for Washington and Beijing to establish areas of cooperation between the two countries while limiting the potential of war in the region.”

“South Korea is increasingly being caught up in the rivalry between the United States and China, which is inflaming tensions with North Korea,” said Youkyoung Ko, an author of the report and representative of the Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom. “Rather than escalating the situation by continuing the arms race, the U.S. and China should work to reduce tensions by cooperating on officially ending the Korean War.”

“There needs to be support for local and transnational civil society peace initiatives to increase interactions across the DMZ on the Korean Peninsula and establish the conditions for genuine peace in East Asia, and beyond,” said Dong Jin Kim, a Senior Research Fellow in Peace and Reconciliation Studies at Trinity College Dublin.

“At a time when U.S.–China relations are veering toward conflict, this report shows the urgent need for cooperation between Washington and Beijing,

and it offers a vital issue – peace and diplomacy on the Korean Peninsula – on which U.S.–China cooperation would help all sides turn away from a disastrous great power conflict,” said Jake Werner, Research Fellow at Quincy Institute for Responsible Statecraft.

The four key findings of the report are:

First, U.S.-China tensions have had a chilling effect on relations between North and South Korea, as North Korea has aligned itself more closely with China and Russia, while South Korea has become increasingly integrated into a trilateral alliance with the United States and Japan.

Second, a zero-sum U.S. strategy towards China limits the space for cooperation and has led to a cycle of provocations that could easily escalate into a military conflict on the Korean Peninsula and beyond.

Third, the resolution of the Korean War is an obvious area in which the United States and China, both signatories to the 1953 Armistice Agreement, could work together. Cooperation toward peace in Korea would also remove a key point of contention between them and lay the foundation for addressing urgent global crises such as climate change and pandemics.

Fourth, overcoming the ever-deepening structures of militarism in East Asia requires moving beyond state-to-state diplomacy and involving the participation of civil society, especially women’s peace groups. A broader regional response is also required to achieve peace and denuclearization in Northeast Asia.

The authors of the report argue the United States must pivot away from its current zero-sum approach towards a human security framework that centers frontline communities, prioritizes the resolution of conflict through diplomatic means, and avoids war at all costs. §

Faith in action: Read the report from Women Cross DMZ: <https://bit.ly/WomenX-DMZ>

Ask Congress to support H.R.3446, which calls for diplomacy in pursuit of a peace agreement to formally end the Korean War, establish liaison offices, and review travel restrictions. <https://bit.ly/UrgeKoreaPeace>

Watch day two of the Catholic Korea Peace Forum at Catholic University held on Oct. 6, 2022, to explore ways to overcome the deep distrust between Koreans and the United States. <https://bit.ly/CatholicKoreaPeaceForum>

World AIDS Day Prayer Vigil

Join the World AIDS Day prayer vigil on the first of December.

World AIDS Day is held on December 1 each year around the world. It is an opportunity to raise awareness, commemorate those who have died, and celebrate victories such as increased access to treatment and prevention service.

Sign up for a one-hour time slot during the 24-hour vigil at <http://maryknollogc.org/aids-day-vigil>

Data from UNAIDS on the global HIV response reveals that during the last two years of COVID-19 and other global crises, progress against the HIV pandemic has faltered, resources have shrunk, and millions of lives are at risk as a result.

Four decades into the HIV response, inequalities still persist for the most basic services like testing, treatment, and prevention, and even more so for new technologies.

That is why the theme for World AIDS Day 2022 is “Equalize.”

The “Equalize” slogan is a call to action. It is a prompt for all of us to work for the proven practical actions needed to address inequalities and help end AIDS. These include:

- Increase availability, quality and suitability of services, for HIV treatment, testing and prevention, so that everyone is well-served.
- Reform laws, policies and practices to tackle the stigma and exclusion faced by people living with HIV and by key and marginalized populations, so that everyone is shown respect and is welcomed.
- Ensure the sharing of technology to enable equal access to the best HIV science, between communities and between the Global South and North.
- Communities will be able to make use of and adapt the “Equalize” message to highlight the particular inequalities they face and to press for the actions needed to address them.

Even today, HIV-positive children face obstacles and adolescents living with HIV face a higher propensity toward suicide. At the 24th International AIDS Conference in Montreal in July, Maryknoll Fr. Rick Bauer stressed “stigma and discrimination are sins; Christians are called to embrace a theology of hospitality.”

Sami Scott, a Maryknoll lay missionary, says this about responding to the needs of those impacted by HIV and AIDS: “I believe it is our call as people of faith to not only seek out the sick and marginalized, whether it is physically, mentally, or spiritually, but to help heal them.”

“Maybe we cannot completely heal them, but we can give them life, value, and dignity.”§

Prayer

God of all compassion,
Comfort your sons and daughters
Who live with HIV.
Spread over us all your quilt of mercy,
Love and peace.

Open our eyes to your presence
Reflected in their faces.
Open our ears to your truth
Echoing in their hearts.

Give us the strength
To weep with the grieving,
To walk with the lonely,
To stand with the depressed.

May our love mirror your love
For those who live in fear,
Who live under stress and
Who suffer rejection.

Mothering, fathering God
Grant rest to those who have died
And hope to all who live with HIV.

God of life, help us to find the cure now
And help us to build a world in which
No one dies alone and where
Everyone lives accepted
Wanted and loved.

Faith in action:

- Learn more about World AIDS Day
www.worldaidsday.org/
- Join the World AIDS Day prayer vigil on December:
Sign up for an hour timeslot during the 24-hour vigil
maryknollogc.org/aids-day-vigil
- Pray with the Maryknoll AIDS Task Force prayer
bit.ly/MaryknollAIDSprayer

Bumble Bee Tuna Fails Forced Labor Test

Greenpeace East Asia has asked the U.S. Customs and Border Protection agency to ban imports of fish supplied by the parent company of Bumble Bee Tuna after uncovering suspected illegal fishing and human rights abuses in the supply chain.

There is a chance the tuna sold by Bumble Bee Tuna in your grocery store was caught by forced labor, says Greenpeace East Asia and Greenpeace U.S. in a report released in September. The International Labor Organization blames lack of training, inadequate language skills, and lack of enforcement of safety and labor standards for making fishers on vessels far out at sea particularly vulnerable to forced labor.

The U.S. seafood brand Bumble Bee Tuna created its “Trace My Catch” (TMC) system in 2015 to enable consumers to enter can codes into an online system to track the source of its tuna products. But when Greenpeace East Asia and Greenpeace U.S. entered codes from 73 cans collected from U.S. supermarkets, they found the system often provided information that was incomplete and inaccurate, raising suspicion that the company allows for illegal fishing and human rights abuses in its supply chain.

Among Greenpeace East Asia’s findings:

Over 10 percent (13) of the 119 Taiwanese-flagged/owned vessels identified in the sampling that supplied Bumble Bee had violated Taiwanese fishery regulations, and were on the Taiwan Fisheries Agency’s illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) list.

Indicators of forced labor were identified in the reports of fishers that worked aboard six of the vessels that supplied Bumble Bee and its Taiwanese parent company FCF.

Catch from Taiwanese-owned vessel Da Wang, whose crew were indicted on charges related to forced labor and human trafficking, has been used to supply Bumble Bee, raising concerns that seafood tainted with forced labor has already been sold in the U.S. market. In addition, one migrant fisher died while working on Da Wang after an accident occurred, reportedly causing the other workers to quit due to the excessive physical abuse they endured.

“We are not surprised at the high level of disparity between what Bumble Bee tells U.S. consumers and what was uncovered in this investigation,” said Mallika Talwar, Senior Oceans Campaigner at Greenpeace U.S. “Bumble Bee claims to be for people and the planet, but what we see in this report is a company skirting its responsibilities in order to make profit.”

As one of the world’s largest seafood importers, the United States can wield significant influence in bringing forced labor at sea to an end, Talwar said. “Knowing that there is a high chance of seafood tainted with such abuse entering the U.S. market, we call on the U.S. Customs and Border Protection to block the importation of [Bumble Bee Tuna’s parent company] FCF’s tainted products.”

Faith in Action: Tell Bumble Bee Tuna to protect workers in its supply chain. <https://bit.ly/BumbleBeeTuna>

Living Gospel Nonviolence: Advent Reflection Guide

Download the 10-page guide produced by the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns. The guide offers reflections, small group questions, prayers, and actions based on each week’s Gospel reading and concerns raised by Catholic peacemakers on the urgent need to advance peace and nonviolence throughout the world.

Find the guide on our website at
<https://bit.ly/MOGC-Advent-2022>

“Today’s gospel calls us to stay awake as we await the coming of the Messiah. We invite you to tend the flame of nonviolence in your heart and in the world throughout this Advent season. We begin with a prayer, that we might begin to disarm our hearts, kindling the spirit of nonviolence, becoming an ever-brighter light in the darkness.

“And soon, another candle will be lit. And then another, and another, until Emmanuel, God among us, is born.” §

Resources

1. **Two-pager on COP27**, the UN Climate Conference in Egypt Nov. 6-18, produced by the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns. <https://bit.ly/MOGC-COP27>
2. **Guide to COP27**, the UN Climate Conference in Egypt Nov. 6-18, produced by the Justice Coalition of Religious <https://bit.ly/JCoR-COP27>
3. **Final Report: African Climate Dialogues on COP27**. African Church and civil society leaders share their realities and perspectives on key topics related to the UN climate conference COP27. <https://bit.ly/ACDCOP27>
4. **Living Gospel Nonviolence**: Download the 10-page Advent reflection guide for Advent which starts Nov. 27 <https://bit.ly/MOGC-Advent-2022>
5. **World AIDS Day Prayer Vigil**: Sign up for one hour of prayer on Dec. 1 for all people impacted by HIV and AIDS. <https://bit.ly/WorldAIDSDay2022>
6. **Maryknoll AIDS Task Force Prayer**: We offer this prayer to be used for World AIDS Day on Dec. 1. <http://bit.ly/MaryknollAIDSprayer>
7. **Report from the UN: “Little Progress Combating Systemic Racism Against People of African Descent.”** More than two years since the murder of George Floyd by a police officer in the United States sparked the global Black Lives Matter movement, there’s been only “piecemeal progress” in addressing systemic racism, according to the UN human rights office (OHCHR). <https://bit.ly/UNRacismReport>
8. **Report: “Signs of the Times: A Theological Reflection on Loss and Damage”** reflects on the issue of Loss and Damage, to be addressed at the UN Climate Conference COP27, in light of Catholic social teaching principles and Church teachings, and concludes that climate finance to help communities already affected by climate change is the preferential option for the poor. <https://bit.ly/LossDamageCOP27>
9. **Interview: The Cosmic Common Good with Daniel Scheid, PhD**, Duquesne University about his book “The Cosmic Common Good: Religious Grounds for Ecological Ethics” hosting by the Yale Forum on Religion and Ecology. <https://bit.ly/CosmicCommonGood>
10. **Article: “42 Months on, How Does Sudan’s Democracy Movement Endure?”** by U.S. Institute of Peace <https://bit.ly/SudanDemocracyUpdate>
11. **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>
12. **Book: “The Voice of the Shepherd”** about Cardinal Álvaro Leonel Ramazzini in Guatemala, features extracts from his radio program broadcast between 1997 and 2021. <https://bit.ly/VoiceShepherd>
13. **Film: “The Illusion of Abundance”** about three women rights defenders from Brazil, Honduras and Peru. Read more about the interview to Erika González (co-director) <https://buff.ly/3T1hN8V>
14. **Documentary: “The Letter”** about Pope Francis’ encyclical Laudato Si, available to on Youtube at <https://bit.ly/MOGCLetter>
15. **Report: Emergency Human Rights Delegation to Guatemala** documents the impacts of the democratic backsliding and destruction of rule of law on human rights defenders. <https://bit.ly/HumanRights-Guatemala>
16. **Maryknoll Sisters Podcast: Educating the Youth in East Timor** with Sr. Rolande Kahindo. <https://bit.ly/MKSrPodcast>
17. **Maryknoll Missioners Webinars**: Dr. Damian Costello, PhD teaches about indigenous spirituality in North America on Nov. 2. Recordings available of webinars featuring Fr. John Barth in Thailand, Lay Missioner Peg Vamosy in El Salvador, and more. <https://www.maryknoll.us/Resources/webinars>
18. **Report: “U.S.-China Competition and the Korean Peninsula: From Confrontation to Peacebuilding,”** by Women Cross DMZ, argues that peacebuilding in Korea offers a much-needed opportunity for U.S.-China cooperation. <https://bit.ly/WomenX-DMZ>
19. **Take action for peace with North Korea**. Ask Congress to support H.R.3446, which calls for diplomacy in pursuit of a peace agreement to formally end the Korean War, the establishment of liaison offices, and a review of travel restrictions. <https://bit.ly/UrgeKoreaPeace>