



St. Basil's Mission and Social Justice Committee

ON THE PATH TO A GREENER FUTURE APRIL 2019

St. Basil's has joined the "Green Parish" movement. This is one of many ways that Catholics are putting the words of the encyclical of Pope Francis called *Laudato Si'* into practice. Where do things stand now regarding the involvement of the worldwide Church in climate change matters?

The encyclical came out in June 2015. The Church participated vigorously in COP21, the December 2015 Paris conference at which most countries undertook to work on limiting global warming to 2° (Celsius) above the pre-industrial average. But given the poor performance of many States since then and accelerated warming, the recent scientific consensus is that a reduced target of 1.5° warming is essential to avoid disaster.

So COP24 in December 2018, in Katowice, Poland, had three objectives. Officially, the aim was to develop the rulebook on measuring and achieving emission reduction targets, making the Paris commitments a practical reality rather than vague niceties. Unofficially, it tried to push the more aggressive reduced target of 1.5° warming. And it tried to address the staggering lack of political will to act in time. (/2)



The Church was there in Katowice: official representatives, bishops' conferences, Vatican offices and Catholic NGOs were involved. Leading up to it, there was a major Vatican conference in June 2018; a joint statement of six continental bishops' conferences in October¹; positions announced by Polish bishops; and a 'climate march' from Rome to Katowice. The Holy See's Secretary of State, its Permanent Observer to the United Nations and others addressed the conference; all stressed the need for urgent action and the peril faced by multitudes of the world's poor from changing climate conditions.

After the Conference, the Vatican issued a worried Final Statement. Although there was progress on the rulebook, it says too little about "human rights, critical in reflecting the human face of climate change, which affects the most vulnerable people on earth. Their cry and that of the earth demand more ambition and greater urgency.... Faith and reason must come together enabling us to make positive choices in our lifestyles, in how our economies are run, and in building a true global solidarity necessary to avert this climate crisis."²

Most critical is the continued lack of will. This was stated vividly by a 15-year-old Swedish activist, Greta Thunberg, who accused the older generations, especially the world's decision-makers, of immaturity, cowardice and hypocrisy: "You say you love your children above all else, and yet you are stealing their future in front of their very eyes."³

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THE MISSION AND SOCIAL JUSTICE COMMITTEE WISHED TO PROVIDE AN UPDATE ON THE IMPORTANT TOPIC OF CLIMATE CHANGE THAT HAS THE MOST SIGNIFICANT IMPACT ON THE VULNERABLE PEOPLE OF THE WORLD.

Mission and Social Justice Committee

¹ Available at: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1RNyH9cDBuEvt54Yi1PnUADDE8lnOdUSm/view>

² <https://press.vatican.va/content/salastampa/en/bollettino/pubblico/2018/12/19/181219c.html>

³ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VFkQSGyeCWg>. See also <https://edition.cnn.com/2018/12/16/world/greta-thunberg-cop24/index.html>