

## Cardinal Turkson, CAFOD Pope Paul VI Memorial Lecture 2015



Cardinal Peter K A

Turkson, President of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, Rome, (who is now at the Paris Climate talks) gave the Pope Paul VI CAFOD Memorial Lecture, on Friday, 4 December, entitled: 'Care for all Creation: a door to our common home.' During his London visit the Cardinal also spoke with ICN. We will be publishing his interview later this week.

### Introduction

Thank you for inviting me to deliver this year's Pope Paul VI memorial lecture. His predecessor, Saint John XXIII, is famous for throwing open the windows of the Church and bringing us the great ecumenical council Vatican II. In a quieter way, Blessed Paul VI dedicated his much longer pontificate to opening doors of reform and renewal, and it is with this image that I would like to explore our theme, 'Care for all Creation.'

Cardinal Turkson meets CAFOD director Chris Bain

There is truly a great feeling of occasion with this conference today, and the image of doors seems an apt way to express it.

Last Sunday began the season of Advent. Advent is the door to the whole liturgical year. This season opens to the past, to the birth of Jesus Christ over 2000 years ago. It also opens to the future, to the second coming of Christ at the end of time. Advent alerts us that something is coming. How should we prepare? What should be our prayer? What must be our action? What can be our hope?

Today was the fifth day of the Climate Conference COP21 in Paris. Nearly all Heads of State and thousands of negotiators are meeting to agree on how to slow down climate change. At stake is the very possibility of human life on the blue planet. Will COP21 reach a fair, effective, legally binding and properly-financed agreement to curtail greenhouse gas emissions and arrest global warming? If so, it will prove to be the door to a sustainable future for our common home. If not, humanity will keep on

shutting the door on itself...

Next Tuesday, 8 December, at St Peter's Basilica, the Holy Father will solemnly open the Holy Door for the Jubilee Year of Mercy. The Jubilee is an opportunity to care about creation, about the planet, and show mercy for the poor. Both nature and society are threatened by degradation. During this year of prayer and reconciliation, may we help to bring God's mercy to our common home and all who dwell therein.

In this evening's talk, I would like to suggest five doors through which to see and judge the crisis in our social and natural worlds. We could then consider action: what can and must be done here in the UK and elsewhere. Finally, a sixth door of education and celebration is ready to give us the courage and strength to keep opening the previous five. So, this is really an Advent talk; it's really a COP21 talk; and it is really a Jubilee of Mercy talk addressed to the entire CAFOD family and much beyond.

### **A. Five Doors to approach the Current World Crisis**

*First door, the crisis affects everyone and everything.*

Climate change, pollution and degradation of the natural environment affect everyone. Rising temperatures respect no borders. Gated communities do not hold back floods and fires. When species of animals or plants die out, no one can appreciate them anymore, and God's beautiful creation is degraded.

There is a lot at stake right now. At stake is justice between people and generations, the dignity of those who inhabit the planet now and those who will inhabit it in the future. At stake is the very possibility of human life on earth. At stake is respect for all creatures, all created by the same loving Father.

To justice and respect, Pope Francis adds fairness. The wealthier parts of the world cause most of the greenhouse gas pollution. The bottom six billion people account for only about six percent of the carbon emissions that choke our planet. Yet even though they play almost no role in climate change, they are most affected by it, because of where they live or because they lack the means to escape or protect themselves.

The United Nations has been warning for several years about millions of "environmental refugees" predominantly from the poorest areas of the world. The current refugee crisis is the worst since the Second World War. But even this will be dwarfed by the population upheavals if climate change worsens over the course of the century.

The first door is "everyone and everything at risk." It invites us to open our eyes and minds and hearts. Otherwise, if we refuse, this door will slam shut hard in the faces, first of the poor and then of everyone else.

*Second door, everyone must act.*

On 18 June, *Laudato si'* was released. Its message is for everyone, for every Catholic and every Christian, for every believer and every inhabitant of the planet. It invites everyone to honest dialogue, to compassion and to action.

About four months later, on 26 October, nine Cardinals, Patriarchs and Bishops jointly issued an Appeal to COP21 Negotiating Parties. They were the heads of six continental associations of Bishops' conferences (like the CCEE and COMECE here in Europe), along with leaders of national conferences in the United States and Canada and of the Catholic patriarchs of the Orient. Here are the high points of the Appeal.

- "We join the Holy Father in pleading for a major break-through in Paris, for a comprehensive and transformational agreement supported by all based on principles of solidarity, justice and participation."
- In the name of all "the people for whom we care", we call for "a just and legally binding climate agreement."
- "We advance a ten-point policy proposal, drawing on the concrete experience of people across the continents, and linking climate change to social injustice and the social exclusion of the poorest and most vulnerable of our citizens."
- The Appeal calls for complete de-carbonisation by 2050, an ambitious mechanism to bring short-term goals into line with the long-term goal, and the full phase out of fossil fuel emissions, replacing fossil fuels with renewable energies.

Launching the Appeal was an historical occasion. It was the first such initiative by continental bishops' federations to come together, pool their experience as pastors, and translate the Pope's general teaching into specific policy proposals.

In *Laudato si'*, Pope Francis is very clear: we need "one world with a common plan" (§164). Countries acting alone will not solve the ecological crisis. We need "enforceable international agreements" (§173). The Holy Father is not afraid to chastize the international community for making zero progress, despite the promises that go all the way back to 1992 and the Rio Earth Summit. In a direct reference to COP21 he says: "we believers cannot fail to ask God for a positive outcome to the present discussions, so that future generations will not have to suffer the effects of our ill-advised delays" (§ 169). Last week in Kenya, speaking about Paris, he said: "It would be sad, and I dare say even catastrophic, were particular interests to prevail over the common good and lead to manipulating information in order to protect their own plans and projects."

The 40,000 leaders and negotiators at Paris: are they global ecological citizens? Their mind-set must not be that "of short-term gain which dominates present-day economics and politics" (§181). Pope Francis denounces such "obstructionist attitudes" which include "denial of the problem; indifference; nonchalant resignation; or blind confidence in technical solutions" (cf §14). Flying home from Africa on Monday, he said: "We are on the verge of suicide, to use a strong word, and I am certain that people in Paris are aware of this and want to do something about it."

But it's not only about politicians and experts and technicians. Everyone must act. The Pope gives nearly a dozen everyday examples of simple good habits, such as separating waste, recycling, using less water and electricity, and car-pooling.

And more broadly, there needs to be a popular movement of citizens to act communally and to demand courageous action by leaders and negotiators.

*Third door, everything is connected.*



All living beings, human groups and systems as well as nonhuman ones - that is, all of creation - are fundamentally interconnected. This integration is ancient wisdom and still held by indigenous peoples. Now, everyone needs to act accordingly.

Pope Francis repeatedly highlights connections between the natural environment, social issues, economics, technology and politics. The world's "problems cannot be dealt with from a single perspective or from a single set of interests" (§110). All branches of science and every form of wisdom including culture, religion and spirituality (cf §63) need to combine in an integral ecology so as to reverse the degradation of nature and the human world. We see more real, vibrant harmony between faith-based and secular voices on environmental topics - e.g., editorials favourable to *Laudato si'* in major scientific journals.

Pope Francis shows clearly that how we treat the earth affects how we treat our fellow human beings, and vice versa. Everything is connected. We should not think in terms of different social and environmental crises, but rather in terms of a single crisis with both a social and an environmental dimension. We are called upon to hear and heed the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor: these are

different aspects of the same cry: "the misuse and destruction of the environment are also accompanied by a relentless process of exclusion" (Pope Francis at the United Nations, 25 September 2015).

It's not just that ecology is tied to economics. It's also tied to politics and to issues of war and peace. Consider the devastating conflict in Syria. The instability in that region certainly has many causes, but climate change is surely one of them. Syria suffered its worst drought and most severe crop failure in recorded history from 2006-10. This drought affected 1.3 million people. Herders lost 85 percent of their livestock, and 75 percent of farmers suffered crop failure. The mass migration to Syria's cities was a key factor in Syria's breakdown. Likewise, drought in the Sahel region in West Africa and also in the Horn of Africa is adding to political instability and proving fertile ground for violence and terrorism.

Global warming so far has only reached one degree Celsius above pre-industrial levels. COP21 is far from over. How much further warming of the atmosphere will the world risk? That is like asking, how much more pain, danger and ugliness is acceptable? I leave the precise number - 2%, 1.5% or whatever - to science and the difficult arts of negotiation among sovereign powers with complex agendas. May they all remember: This is one earth. We are one family. As so many traditions say, we must do to others as we would have it done to us. COP21 must truly care for our common home.

*Fourth door, be truthful.*

We must have the courage to identify the problems. There are so many who still deny the evident facts of what we are doing to our planet and to each other, "masking the problems or concealing their symptoms" (§26). We must be honest - about the good as well as the bad. For instance, fossil fuels enabled huge human advances in the past two centuries. But time marches on, and now they threaten to make our planet uninhabitable. Further, we must stop pretending that there is an infinite supply of the earth's resources (§106). And we must stop pretending that progress can be assessed by economic growth alone, heedless of its impact on the environment.

Just how urgent is the situation? The global atmospheric concentration of carbon dioxide today is nearly fifty parts per million higher--roughly 15% higher - than when Saint John Paul II first addressed climate change in 1990. At over 400 parts per million, they are at the highest level in 3 million years.

The truth we must admit can pertain to a single local situation, as this example from Brazil shows: "The mud surged through rural communities and into the Rio Doce, the major river in southeast Brazil. Since November 5th, it has been slowly working its way downstream - contaminating the drinking water of hundreds of thousands of people and turning protected forest and habitat into a desert of mud. The tragedy will continue to spread over 500 kilometres as contaminants from the sludge make their way towards the Atlantic coast, eventually endangering the Abrolhos National Marine Park."

*Fifth door, practice dialogue.*

Pope Francis decries the selfishness and short-term thinking that sabotage progress on saving the environment. He insists on dialogue "as the only way to confront the problems of our world and to seek solutions that are truly effective". Authentic dialogue is honest and transparent. It does not permit the particular interests of individual countries or specific groups to dominate discussions. The Holy Father offered this ideal in his remarks in Nairobi: "What is needed is sincere and open dialogue, with responsible cooperation on the part of all: political authorities, the scientific community, the business world and civil society. Positive examples are not lacking; they demonstrate that a genuine cooperation between politics, science and business can achieve significant results."

Catholic social teaching contains helpful principles for true dialogue. How to have dialogue? Solidarity means we care about the concerns of others as much as our own. Subsidiarity means we accept others as equals, they speak for themselves, we listen, and we help them to participate if they need such help. As for the what of dialogue, Catholic social teaching tells us to always focus on the common good and to show special concern for the poor and for the earth.

Dialogue is transformative. It inspires a culture where the Other is truly a person, not something impersonal. When we open this door and find persons on the other side, not objects, what develops is "a culture of care - care for oneself, care for others, care for the environment - in place of a culture of waste, a 'throw-away culture' where people use and discard themselves, others and the environment" (Pope Francis, Nairobi, 26 November 2015).

## **B. A Transformational Global Agreement**

The time is now. In the words of Pope Francis on November 26 in Nairobi, "we are confronted with a choice which cannot be ignored: either to improve or to destroy the environment." What sort of Agreement will be an adequate response?

At the COP21 Leaders Event on Monday last, Cardinal Pietro Parolin articulated the Holy See's expectation. His words echoed what Pope Francis had said in Nairobi. Cardinal Parolin summarized: "The Holy Father encourages everyone to do their utmost so that COP21 may conclude with the adoption of a transformational global Agreement with a clear ethical orientation, which conveys a strong signal to all stakeholders involved, and embodies a vision integrating the three long-term goals we have mentioned: to alleviate the impacts of climate change, to fight poverty, and to promote human dignity."

## **C. Action: Current, Anticipated and Needed**

People marched all over the world on November 29 in support of climate change action. They are rallying to the cause; they are acting in their own communities. Parishes and dioceses in some countries have 'gone green'. In some cities, such as in South America, people outside the formal economy survive by recycling unwanted goods and other waste. So much can be done. For instance, I am pleased to learn that, as of June 2015, 19 of your Catholic parishes have received CAFOD's "Live

Simply Award" for introducing sustainable measures such as solar energy, restricting car use, fair-trade practices and the use of creation theology in liturgical practice. But clearly much more effort lies ahead, as there are more than 3,000 parishes of the Catholic Church of England and Wales.

Your government has announced its five goals for COP21. It endorses the target of limiting the global average temperature increase to a maximum of 2 degrees C. It wants legally binding rules, long-term commitments to decarbonisation targets, and a five year cycle of reviews of progress.

Finally, of special interest to developing nations, it calls for the inclusion of climate finance and adaptation support to ensure a balanced and ambitious deal, and to help the most vulnerable countries take action to reduce emissions and adapt to climate impacts. In this vein, on 27 September, your Prime Minister announced a further £5.8 billion of UK climate finance to 2021 (from existing Office of Development Assistance funds), a 50% increase on the £3.87 billion to be delivered from 2011 through 2016. This will help millions more vulnerable people cope with the impacts of climate change, and increase access to clean energy, while supporting global efforts to tackle the emissions that cause climate change.

In 2009, developed countries committed to a goal of jointly mobilizing \$100 billion of climate finance a year by 2020 from a wide range of sources. An OECD report on 7th October assessed that mobilized climate finance in 2014 was \$62 billion. This is good progress. We are therefore on track to reach the \$100bn goal.

Laudato si' calls for action at every level. Remembering that "realities are more important than ideas" (§110), may everyone at the UN Climate Change summit be inspired to commit not just to words of agreement but also to concrete measures. For your part, may I suggest you exercise your 'ecological citizenship' ... Please do so with a sense of solidarity with all members of the human family and with grateful awareness that we live in a common home which God has given as a gift and entrusted to us.

#### **D. The Sixth Door**

Finally, sixth, the Pope tells us to pray. Prayer, the deeper dialogue within ourselves with our Creator, may not generally be the fashion today. It takes humility and daring, because it challenges the hubris of our supposedly advanced, highly secular civilization.

The first words of an encyclical always become the title. They are chosen carefully to signal the theme: think of *Pacem in terris*, about peace on earth; *Humanae vitae*, on human life. *Laudato si'* starts with a prayer. the opening words of a canticle of Francis of Assisi: 'Be praised, O Lord, for the gifts of the beautiful earth, our sister and mother.'

I think the Pope begins in this unusual way because he wants to shake us up. We humans might end life on earth. And not by doing our worst, through war and terrorism. We got into this crisis while we thought we were doing our best, with constantly advancing science and technology and amazing feats of industry and commerce.

Therefore, our current normal 'best' is not good enough. We need "profound interior conversion" (§217). The COP21 Agreement has to be transformational--individual humans need transformation too! We must begin thinking and acting in new ways. We need to adopt a bigger, higher vision! Prayer can get us looking and yearning and hoping in the right direction.

And non-religious people need profound interior conversion too, but instead of expecting them to pray, let us join them in meditation, mindfulness, reflection - whatever helps any of us to achieve profound interior conversion, transformation.

Most people know an excellent prayer about the vision of ecological citizens: "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven."

What might be our Father's will in heaven? Does our vision of heaven include toxic waste dumps? Gated communities? Stupid behaviour that causes living conditions to deteriorate? Divisions between haves and have-nots? Obviously not.

Let this thought help everyone to align with the encyclical. All people, religious and non-religious alike, need to imagine the heavenly place for each other and for generations to come, and then join together in making it happen. How? By caring for our common home.

## **E. Conclusion**

A door to our common home ... What is the door waiting for you to open: as a UK resident, as a CAFOD supporter, as a parishioner? What is the door waiting to be opened in each Diocese, in each Justice and Peace commission?

Pope Francis is helping to open doors for dialogue and action! His warmth and simplicity, his directness and frank speaking and his overwhelming compassion have garnered immense attention: not since the time of Saint John XXIII has admiration and fascination for the Holy Father been expressed so strongly by people with no religious affiliation as well as adherents of other faiths.

The results are visible. Many leaders say the Pope and his encyclical have galvanized movement in a positive direction. Throughout Catholicism and Christianity and other faiths, believers are joining in prayer and calls to action. Buddhists, Hindus, Jews and Muslims have issued climate statements. There are multi-faith campaigns for the earth. LS is motivating "people of good will" and reaching out to every inhabitant of the blue planet. And last Sunday, hundreds of thousands of people--believers and non-believers of every hue and persuasion--marched together in hopeful harmony to declare their desire for action to improve natural environment and related social conditions.

The encyclical ends with two lovely prayers, one appropriate for Christians and the other for non-Christian believers in God. With such prayers and others, including the Our Father, let us pray that COP21 succeeds. Pray for the earth and humanity, pray for bold decisions now for the sake of our future descendants and of the planet's future. Let's hold the door wide open for all the world's people to flourish, especially the poor and the excluded, and for those not yet born. Leave no door unopened so



that, as new people, we can preserve this earth as our beautiful common home. Amen.

Cardinal Turkson - CAFOD - Independent Catholic News