

# Path to Paris

Examining challenges to be addressed at the 2015 UN Climate Summit

Issue 4

## Climate justice is a movement toward lasting peace

“We can hardly consider ourselves to be fully loving if we disregard any aspect of reality,” Pope Francis says in *Laudato Si'*. “Peace, justice and the preservation of creation are three absolutely interconnected themes, which cannot be separated and treated individually without once again falling into reductionism. Everything is related, and we human beings are united as brothers and sisters on a wonderful pilgrimage, woven together by the love God has for each of his creatures and which also unites us in fond affection with brother sun, sister moon, brother river and mother earth.”

Yet, diminishing agricultural productivity due to climate change is pushing communities and nations into social unrest. We see this most drastically in Syria and Egypt.

The lowest income countries are experiencing the sharpest losses. In particular, crop yields for cereals, the staple food in most of developing world, will decline by about 10 percent by 2050 in nearly all countries in Sub-Saharan Africa. Research has indicated a clear threshold at 30 degrees Celsius for corn, after which increases in temperature result in sharp reduction in yields. Reduction in crop yields is forcing households to diversify their income sources and make the drastic decision to migrate.

In Tanzania, drought has pushed thousands of people to abandon farming and move to Dar es Salaam, one of Africa's fastest-growing cities. Internal migration due to climate change is often a silent disaster, leaving the most vulnerable – the sick, the unemployed – destitute and dying. It also fuels social conflict and war.

In this season of Advent, let us commit ourselves to a renewed dedication to Earth and to those inhabitants suffering the worst consequences of climate change.

### The Maryknoll experience



“Rains were once predictable and planting according to the known weather pattern ensured a good harvest. Now rains are very unpredictable, making farming a very risky venture. Rains come heavier and for a shorter period of time. The current rainy season started a month late but once it did start it has rained so hard that the fields are saturated making planting next to impossible. When farmers cannot get their usual harvest, food is scarce and food prices rise. When food prices go up, people who usually had three meals a day now eat only twice a day. And people who had two meals a day now eat only once a day. This is especially tragic for people with HIV / AIDS who are taking antiretroviral therapy. Regular meals are an important part of their treatment. Without proper nutrition, their immunity is compromised further.”

— Joanne Miya, Maryknoll Lay Missioner  
Mwanza, Tanzania

Photos: (1) Solar panels on homes in Lesotho, South Africa by Pixabay user [HBieser](#) / Licensed in the public domain  
(2) Joanne Miya (left) in Mwanza, Tanzania, 2014. Photo courtesy of the Maryknoll Lay Missioners.

[www.maryknollogc.org](http://www.maryknollogc.org)

## Make a personal commitment

The following ideas are offered by Interfaith Power and Light, an organization working with hundreds of congregations of all faiths to mobilize a religious response to global warming.

### Have a green Thanksgiving

Consider replacing your traditional meat dishes with vegetarian alternatives. If you eat meat, look for free-range organic options. Visit your community farmers market to buy local harvest. And overall choose foods with less and more eco-friendly packaging.

### Become a cool congregation

Consider joining the Cool Congregations program to address four areas: energy efficiency, renewable energy, grounds & water conservation, and inspiring people to make positive changes at home. Learn more at <http://www.coolcongregations.org/>

### Pray before meals

“That moment of blessing, however brief, reminds us of our dependence on God for life; it strengthens our feeling of gratitude for the gifts of creation; it acknowledges those who by their labors provide us with these goods; and it reaffirms our solidarity with those in greatest need.” – Pope Francis, *Laudato Si'*

## Prayer before meals

Earthmaker and Lord of All Creation,  
we are mindful that this food before us  
has already been blessed by the sun, earth and rain.  
We pause to be grateful  
for the hidden gifts of life in this food.

Bless our eyes and taste  
so that we may eat this food  
in a holy and mindful manner.

We lift up this bread;  
may it be food and symbol  
for all of us who shall eat it.  
Amen.

*From Prayers for the Domestic Church: A Handbook for Worship in the Home by Edward Hays. Kansas: Forest of Peace Books, 1979. 110.*

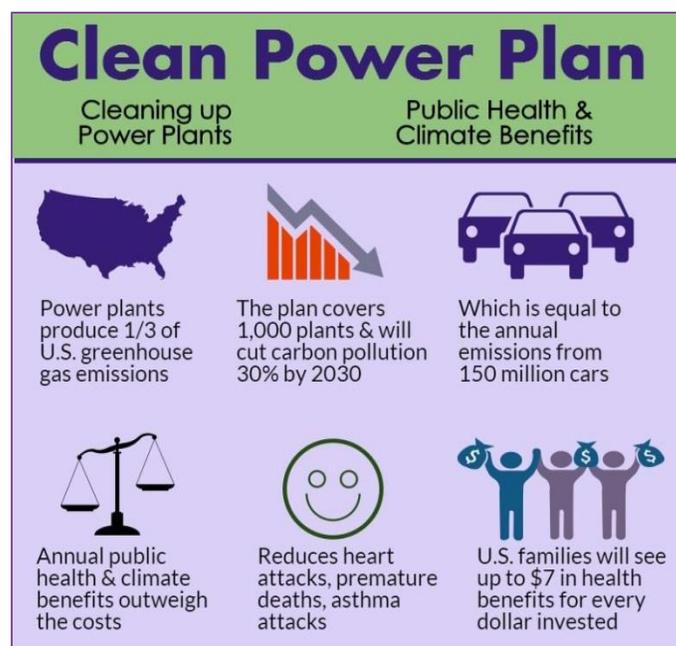
## Raise your voice

Some key issues that will be addressed during the Climate Summit in Paris are: phase out fossil fuels and extractive models; keep global temperature rise below 1.5°C; and protect people's right to home, energy, food and water.

### Support the Clean Power Plan

Each nation joining the UN Climate Summit is tasked with submitting a plan to reduce greenhouse emissions. As the world's largest contributor to global warming pollution, the plan the Obama Administration submitted is especially important: Called the Clean Power Plan, it establishes the first-ever national carbon standards and limits on carbon pollution from power plants, which are the single largest source of carbon pollution in the U.S. Urge Congress to support the Clean Power Plan.

<http://www.catholicclimatecovenant.org/act/advocate>



### Join the Global Climate March

On November 29, join millions of people in major cities around the world as we march to show that we care about climate change and ask governments for bold action. Join a march in a city near you.

<http://catholicclimatemovement.global/global-climate-march/>