

Pope and ecumenical leaders: Caring for God's creation requires commitment



In a joint message for the 2021 Season of Creation, Pope Francis, Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, and Archbishop Justin Welby of Canterbury stress the importance of cooperation and valuing sustainability over short-term advantages as essential parts of our common response to the threat of climate change and environmental degradation.

By Benedict Mayaki, SJ

“For more than a year, we have all experienced the devastating effects of a global pandemic—all of us, whether poor or wealthy, weak or strong. Some were more protected or vulnerable than others, but the rapidly-spreading infection meant that we have depended on each other in our efforts to stay safe.”

These observations begin the “Joint Message for the Protection of Creation” issued on 1 September by Pope Francis, Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew I, and Justin Welby, Archbishop of Canterbury.

The religious leaders note that in facing this worldwide calamity, “no one is safe until everyone is safe,” because “our actions really do affect one another,” and “what we do today affects what happens tomorrow.”

Choose life

The joint message comes in the midst of the 2021 Season of Creation running from 1 September through 4 October, which presents “an opportunity to pray and care for God’s creation.” It also comes as world leaders prepare to meet at the UN Climate Change Conference (COP26), scheduled to take place in November, in Glasgow, Scotland, to deliberate on the future of our planet.

Urging everyone to action so that we may “not waste this moment”, the religious leaders invite everyone to “decide what kind of world we want to leave to future generations,” stressing that we must choose to live differently and “choose life”. More so, God mandates that we “choose life, so that you and your children might live” (Dt 30:19).

The message, thus, invites all of us, regardless of belief or worldview, to “endeavor to listen to the cry of the earth and of people who are poor, examining their behaviour and pledging meaningful sacrifices for the sake of the earth which God has given us.”

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