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EarthBeat



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Pope Francis met briefly during his general audience April 17 with Greta Thunberg, a Swedish teenager and climate activist who inspired a million students around the world to take part in a global strike last month to protest politicians' inaction on climate change.

The pontiff approached Thunberg at the end of the audience and the two spoke for a few minutes. As Francis walked toward her, the 16-year-old held up a small sign encouraging people to take part in the planned second global strike, which is being held May 24.

In a video message after the meeting, Thunberg said Francis had been "very kind" in their moments together and had even expressed support for the climate protests.

Thunberg noted that the next strike will take place on the fourth anniversary of the publication date of Francis' 2015 encyclical "*Laudato Si*', on Care for Our Common Home," which embraced the scientific consensus on climate change and urged the entire world's population to act, lest we leave to coming generations a planet of "debris, desolation and filth."

The young Swedish woman began her climate protests last fall, holding a sign outside her country's parliament reading, "School strike for climate." Her action inspired other young people to follow suit in various countries, eventually leading to the first global strike in March, which included an estimated 1.4 million youth.

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A day before she met with the pope, Thunberg addressed the European Parliament. She urged the body to respond to climate change as they would their own house burning down, and as the global community has in pledging to rebuild the fire-ravaged Notre Dame Cathedral in Paris.

Thunberg has been nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize, and was named April 17 to Time Magazine's annual list of the world's 100 most influential people.

"We will take it to the streets and we will continue to fight for our future, until the politicians do something," she promised in her video from Rome.

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