News
Environment
EarthBeat



A boy and young man help a woman wade through floodwaters in Busia, Kenya, May 3, 2020. Some African Catholic advocates believe the church needs to do more to advance the ideas in Pope Francis' 2015 encyclical, "Laudato Si'." (CNS photo/Thomas Mukoya, Reuters)

by Catholic News Service

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NAIROBI, Kenya — May 22, 2020

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A Catholic nun is working with young Kenyans to put Pope Francis' 2015 encyclical, "Laudato Si'" into action.

They have had discussions about the environment and have even planted trees outside their meeting places, said Franciscan Sr. Mary Frances Wangari, director of Justice and Peace and Integrity of Creation for the Franciscans in Africa. "This way, we believe we are making our 'little' contributions toward the pastoral wishes of the Holy Father," she told Catholic News Service.

"I am carrying out my mission through the young people -- Catholics and non-Catholics," she told CNS as the church began marking Laudato Si' Week, May 16-24. Each year, she said, she has gathered about 1,000 young Africans to discuss issues addressed in the papal letter. She said she draws primarily from Kenyan Catholic universities.

She said she feels strongly that the church has "room for increasing our commitment on this issue" of the interconnectedness of "our common home," as the pope said in his encyclical.

"Our bishops must make every effort to see to it that this is intensified," she added.

Maryknoll Sr. Janice Mclaughlin, formerly the Kenyan bishops' press secretary, is now based in Harare, Zimbabwe. She told CNS that many bishops are committed to "narrow aspects" of issues raised in Laudato Si', which advocates an integrated approach to every aspect of the global crisis.

"Let us widen up in the issue so that other pertinent issues such as floods, droughts, food security and even the now hard-hitting coronavirus pandemic get incorporated," Mclaughlin told CNS. This would go along with Pope Francis' encyclical and " widen its scope in the human life of the people in Africa."

Franciscan Fr. Benedict Ayodi, head of the Africa program for the Global Catholic Climate Movement, said he agreed that the church in Africa needed to intensify its efforts.

He said he hoped bishops would begin to take stock of their efforts during Laudato Si' Week.

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This story appears in the **Sustainable Development Goal 12: Responsible Consumption and Production** and **Sustainable Development Goal 13: Climate Action** feature series.