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Pope Francis arrives to meet with the participants at the interparliamentary meeting on the U.N. climate conference, COP26, in the Paul VI Hall at the Vatican Oct. 9. (AP Photo/Gregorio Borgia)

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Pope Francis called on lawmakers worldwide Oct. 9 to overcome "the narrow confines" of partisan politics to quickly reach consensus on fighting climate change.

The pope addressed parliamentarians who were in Rome for a preparatory meeting before the annual U.N. climate conference, which begins in Glasgow, Scotland, on Oct. 31.

Francis referred to a joint appeal he and other religious leaders signed Oct. 4 that calls for governments to commit to ambitious goals at the U.N. conference, which experts consider a critical opportunity to tackle the threat of global warming.

"To meet this challenge, everyone has a role to play,'' Francis told the visiting lawmakers from many countries. "That of political and government leaders is especially important, and indeed crucial."

"This demanding change of direction will require great wisdom, foresight and concern for the common good: in a word, the fundamental virtues of good politics,'' Francis said.

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Francis said earlier he intended to participate in the upcoming conference, but the Vatican announced Oct. 8 that he would not attend and the Vatican delegation would be led by the secretary of state, Cardinal Pietro Parolin.

No explanation was given, but the 84-year-old pope underwent intestinal surgery in July.

The pope expressed hope Oct. 9 that the lawmakers' efforts at the climate conference and beyond "will be illuminated by the two important principles of responsibility and solidarity."

"We owe this to the young, to future generations," he said.

Caring for humanity's "common home," Francis said, "is not just a matter of discouraging and penalizing improper practices, but also, and above all, of

concretely encouraging new paths to pursue" that are better suited to climate-protection objectives and to contributing "to the positive outcome of COP26."

Before his speech, Francis gave a private audience to Nancy Pelosi, speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives.

"His Holiness's leadership is a source of joy and hope for Catholics and for all people, challenging each of us to be good stewards of God's creation, to act on climate, to embrace the refugee, the immigrant and the poor, and to recognize the dignity and divinity in everyone," Pelosi said in a statement after her audience with Francis.

She called the pontiff's 2015 encyclical *Laudato Si'*, exhorting people to protect the environment, "a powerful challenge to the global community to act decisively on the climate crisis with special attention to the most vulnerable communities."

During their encounter, Pelosi expressed gratitude "for the immense moral clarity and urgency that His Holiness continues to bring to the climate crisis," the statement said.