Opinion
EarthBeat



Environmental activists march to the U.S. Capitol during a climate change protest Oct. 15 in Washington. (CNS/Reuters/Jonathan Ernst)



Tomás Insua

View Author Profile



Dan Misleh

View Author Profile

Join the Conversation

Send your thoughts to *Letters to the Editor*. Learn more

November 18, 2021
Share on BlueskyShare on FacebookShare on TwitterEmail to a friendPrint

Over the past weekend, two contrasting events brought us both despair and hope as we race to find solutions to the climate crisis.

On the one hand, COP26, the annual meeting of parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, wrapped up in Glasgow on Nov. 13. While some additional progress was made, most observers — including us — feel the conference did not rise to the urgency of the moment.

What was missing was decisive action and a global commitment to dramatically reduce greenhouse gas emissions at a pace needed to avoid ecological catastrophe. Missing, too, was a strong commitment to assist developing countries, which are least responsible for climate change and yet most vulnerable to its impacts.

The one bright moment came when the agreement included annual new commitments to reduce emissions each year, rather than five years from now. But the honest truth is that we have fewer than 100 months to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by half.

That's the target we need to meet to keep global warming below 1.5 degrees. Every fraction of a degree past that means an even greater risk of stronger storms, growing deserts and rising seas. This leads to more risk of hunger, sickness, conflict and migration.

We are acutely aware that the climate crisis is not a "someday" event. It is already with us. We already have stronger storms. We already have growing deserts. We already have the sickness, hunger, conflict and migration that scientists told us to expect. The simple truth is that we don't have even one more year to find solutions.

Which leads us to hope. Catholics in the United States and around the globe are standing together in faith to develop the tools we need.

On Nov. 14, the Vatican's Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development officially launched the Laudato Si' Action Platform, which Pope Francis has invited the universal church to join. The Laudato Si' Action Platform offers concrete tools for all institutions, communities and people to assess their practices and take meaningful action together. Information about the concrete progress achieved through the Laudato Si' Action Platform will be shared publicly. This transparency and accountability are signs of our commitment to real action.

Advertisement

The Laudato Si' Movement and Catholic Climate Covenant are grateful to support this project. It is a way that we can come together, within the U.S. and beyond, to stand with the church in Rome as it steps up to take action that political leaders won't. The Laudato Si' Movement provides facilitation support for the platform as a whole, and Catholic Climate Covenant has created the God's Planet website to share resources, tools and expertise to help boost the platform in the U.S.

One of the most deeply moving days in Scotland was a discussion of an upcoming documentary film about *Laudato Si'*. The documentary features a teenage climate activist from India, a girl named Radhima.

Radhima has lived her entire life under the threat of a looming environmental disaster. Unlike those of us who are older, Radhima has never lived in a world of hope for our planet. She only knows that things will get either worse or much worse.

Radhima is sure that she will not solve the climate crisis on her own. But, she said, she has to do something.

Radhima puts things so simply. We cannot solve this crisis on our own. But we will, we must, do something.

We earnestly pray that policy makers will hear us. Until then, we are stepping up together, acting in faith to protect our planet and its people.

[Tomás Insua is the executive director of Laudato Si' Movement. Dan Misleh is the founder of Catholic Climate Covenant.]

Related: Faith groups' work on climate must continue after COP26, says UNEP official

This story appears in the **COP26 Glasgow** feature series. View the full series.