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Pope Francis speaks to an interfaith delegation from England during an audience at the Vatica

Pope Francis speaks to an interfaith delegation from England during an audience at the Vatican April 20, 2023. He told the group of religious and civic leaders from Manchester that the world needs new economic models that respect human dignity and protect creation. (CNS photo/Vatican Media)

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The world needs new economic models that respect human dignity and protect creation, Pope Francis told an interfaith delegation from England.

Responding to the needs of people and the environment "also requires a determination to overcome the 'throwaway' culture of waste generated by present-day consumerism and by a globalized indifference that inhibits efforts to address these human and social problems in the light of the common good," he said April 20.

"We need, in a word, to acknowledge that the environmental and social crisis of our time are not two separate crises but one," which, therefore, requires "the creation of new and farsighted economic models," he said.

The pope's remarks came during an audience at the Vatican with a delegation of religious and civic leaders from Manchester.

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Francis recalled the city's legacy of having been a major center of manufacturing during the Industrial Revolution with its "immense technical and economic progress, together with an admittedly negative impact on the human and natural environment."

"It has become increasingly evident, in fact, that our present commitment to safeguarding God's gift of creation must be part of a broader effort to promote an integral ecology that respects both the dignity and value of each human person and acknowledges the tragic effects of environmental degradation on the lives of the poor," the pope said.

He expressed his appreciation for the delegation's efforts "as religious and political leaders to raise awareness of the urgent need to protect the environment and to work concretely to address the effects of climate change."

"You play an important role in contributing to a much-needed 'ecological conversion' grounded in the values of respect for nature, sobriety, human solidarity and concern for the future of our societies," he said.

During an audience at the Vatican April 20, 2023, Andy Burnham, mayor of Greater Manchest

During an audience at the Vatican April 20, 2023, Andy Burnham, mayor of Greater Manchester, presents Pope Francis with a jersey signed by Lisandro Martínez, an Argentine professional soccer player who plays primarily for Premier League club Manchester United and Argentina's national team. Burnham was part of an interfaith delegation from Manchester meeting the pope to pledge their commitment to tackling climate change. (CNS photo/Vatican Media)

An essential part of this change, he said, is the commitment by men and women of faith "to forming the minds and hearts of the young and seconding their demand for a change of course and for farsighted policies that have as their goal a sustainable and integral human development."

The interfaith delegation was led by Bishop John Arnold of Salford and the Rev. Rogers Govender, the Anglican dean of Manchester, and included Andy Burnham, mayor of Greater Manchester, as well as Jewish, Sikh and Hindu representatives.

Govender founded the interfaith group, Our Faith, Our Planet, to see how the city's faith communities could address issues of climate change.

The Religion Media Centre reported April 14 that Bishop Arnold said, "by leading this delegation, we look to use our influence in the wider community, to people of all faiths and none, leading by example and sharing opportunities to learn from each other as we respond to the ecological crisis."