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EarthBeat



A video grab from a footage made available by environmental activists, shows two members of Ultima Generazione, or Last Generation in English, glued their hands on the Roman statue of Laocoön and His Sons, one of the masterpieces of the Vatican Museums collection, to protest against climate change, Aug. 18, 2022. The activists displayed a banner reading, "Last Generation No Gas No Coal" urging politicians to listen to the call from the scientific community and act against climate change. (Ultima Generazione Via AP)

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Vatican City — May 23, 2023
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Three Italian environmental activists will face their second trial hearing at the Vatican on Wednesday (May 24) for having glued themselves to the famous statue "Laocoön and His Sons" in the Vatican Museums last summer.

Ester Goffi, a 25-year-old art history student, and Guido Viero, a 61-year-old health worker, glued their hands to the marble statue in August of last year in a sign of protest urging world leaders to combat climate change, while another friend, as yet unnamed, was filming on her cellphone. The statue was not damaged, and Vatican police eliminated the recording on the device after sequestering it.

The three will stand trial at the Vatican, facing charges of vandalism.

The environmental activists belong to the Italian movement Ultima Generazione, which translates to "Last Generation" in English, and is responsible for several public vandalism acts to major artistic and historical sites in Italy aimed at drawing attention to the danger of climate change. On Sunday, Last Generation activists filled Rome's famous Trevi Fountain with black coloring to protest fossil fuels.

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During the first hearing on March 9, the activists chose not to come to trial. The Vatican's legal system uses canon law, and its criminal law is based on the Italian

penal code from 1889. "The lawyers who are authorized to defend us in the Vatican State are too expensive and we can't afford them," a spokesperson for the Last Generation movement told local media outlets.

Last Generation activists will gather Wednesday afternoon near the Vatican in protest.

In the interview they pointed to the floods that have overrun the northern region of Emilia Romagna in Italy, which has already claimed 14 lives, as "a sour taste of what awaits us in the coming years."

"We must change the course immediately and cut public funding to fossil fuels if we wish to limit the escalation of extreme events and save innocent lives," the organization said. "Our actions have this objective: protect the lives of our fellow citizens and people living in the rest of the world. Ours is a desperate cry before the lack of action by politicians who have the responsibility to protect the environment and the populations."

Pope Francis is considered an ally of environmental movements ever since he published his "green encyclical" *Laudato Si*' in 2015 promoting the care of creation and the fight against climate change. In a new book called *The Taste for Change: Ecological Transition as the Path to Happiness*, Francis wrote in the preface that "we must admit sincerely that it is the young people who embody the change we all objectively need."