



# COLUMBAN JPIC NEWSLETTER

## DECEMBER 2021: ISSUE 7



Missionary Society  
of St. Columban

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## **"An Ever Wider We"**

*by Amy Echeverria (Central Admin)*

Recently the Society gathered for the first time in an international migration webinar prepared by our Migration Working Group. We heard testimonies of courage, faith, and hope by migrants, refugees, asylum seekers, seasonal workers with whom Columbans walk every day. With each story of sadness, even despair, the same voices spoke of gratitude and love. As I scanned the faces of the participants as the testimonies played, I could see the deep listening and hearts outstretched with compassion and solidarity.

Pope Francis is calling us to 'An Ever Wider We', that is, to move away from this notion of "the Other" towards Us, together, the entire human family and even inclusive of all Creation. Sometimes I think Francis has a one-track mind - love, love, love is his message in as many ways as he can say it: *Laudato Si'*, *Evangelii Gaudium*, *Fratelli Tutti*, *Amoris*

*Leticia*, Synod for Young People, Synod on the Amazon, Synod on Synodality, Catechism of Care...

Why is it so hard to love? What are we afraid of? To reveal our true selves? To realize our vulnerability? To experience our interdependence? To feel loss? I know I am afraid of these things. But I am more afraid of not loving, so the journey continues. Like the migrants' stories we heard, one step in front of the other in the trust of God that with Love all things are possible.

May we continue to be guided by the same bright star that illuminated the earth the day of Jesus' birth.

With love and good wishes for Christmas and the New Year.

Amy



## Unknowingly Entertaining Angels

by Wesley Coccozello (USA)

The gospels of Matthew and Luke tell us that Joseph and Mary traveled to Bethlehem before the birth of Jesus. When they were unable to find a place to sleep for the night, an innkeeper allowed the young family to stay in his stable.

Every Advent season, Hispanic communities throughout the Americas reenact this holy quest for safety and shelter. It's called Las Posadas Navideñas, or, the Christmas Inns.

During the reenactment, two people dress up as Mary and Joseph and walk to different houses that have been designated as "inns." Mary and Joseph knock on a house, ask for shelter, but are rejected. This continues until the last stop finally welcomes the couple and then the community celebrates the birth of the Savior within singing, praying, and feasting.

This devotion is practiced in many countries including Mexico, the United States, Guatemala, Honduras, Cuba, and Spain.

Las Posadas Navideñas teaches us that the Holy Family's journey two thousand years ago and the journey of migrants today are one-and-the-same. It reminds us that Christ is present in the lives of those who are made poor and are exploited.

As illustrated by our the Society's recent

international migration webinar, this is a truth Columbans around the world give witness to. In each of our regions, we are asking ourselves, "what should the Church's posture towards migrants be?" "How are these migrants Christ for me and how could I be Christ for these migrants?"

For example, on the US/MX border, Columbans are accompanying migrant families who are being told there is "no room in the inn" of the United States. We sponsor many shelters, that gives migrants access to food, medicine, and a safe place to live.

Columbans also sponsor a livelihood project that allows migrants to work in dignified conditions. They gather at Corpus Christi parish in Anapra to embroider bags with beautiful designs, some of which you just saw in the pictures.

The author of the letter to the Hebrews instructs us "[to] not neglect hospitality, for through it some have unknowingly entertained angels." This is a lesson Columbans everywhere are learning firsthand.







## News from the JPIC Network

### **JPIC Personnel Update**

*by Amy Echeverria (Central Admin)*

The Society JPIC Team gives our thanks to Taaremon Matauea in Taiwan who served as the TMU JPIC Coordinator for the last three years. Taaremon's heart for justice, peace, care for the earth, dialogue comes through in his enormous smile and gentle ways.

We also welcome Kim Jung Woong, who will now serve as TMU's JPIC Coordinator. Jung woong is also a member of the Society's Creation Covenant Working Group. With a passion for caring for the earth and deep spirituality, we look forward to how Jung woong will shape JPIC in the years ahead.

I'm happy to share that Peter Hughes (Chile), will continue to serve as the British Region's JPIC Coordinator. With decades in the JPIC ministry, and a personal mentor of mine, Peter embodies a long Columban tradition

of solidarity and preferential option for vulnerable people and the earth.

A warm thank you to Taaremon, Jung Woong, and Peter for their service in the JPIC ministry.

When I took up the role as the Society's Central JPIC Coordinator in 2013 a key question at the time was, "Is JPIC dying in the Society?". I must have been crazy to say yes to the invitation with questions like that floating around! In 2013 with just over half of the RMUs having JPIC Coordinators identified, I can understand why the question arose.

Today the JPIC picture looks like this:

- Not only do all RMUs have JPIC Coordinators, but many, if not all RMUs have JPIC teams and/or teams of collaboration between JPIC, IRD, and SIM.
- Our JPIC Working Groups all continue to grow and are walking together in a way that encourages

participation, collaboration, and creativity: Migration, Biodiversity, Peace-Nonviolence, Anti Racism.

- The Society's Creation Covenant Working Group is going through a process of discernment which we hope will contribute to the Society's ongoing ecological conversion.
- We have held and are planning to hold webinars on all of the Society's major JPIC themes.
- We have begun to experiment with JPIC meetings and communications in multiple languages to encourage greater participation.
- CLM has held webinars and trainings on JPIC themes.
- We have reached out to Columban Sisters and students in Formation who are now involved in JPIC working groups. We held a Society prayer service for the first time for the Season of Creation.
- Our Society JPIC Newsletter is published quarterly and is in its second year.
- We have contributed to and participated in the birth of major international networks like REPAM, the Laudato Si' Movement, Catholic Nonviolence Initiative, RAOEN

- We have participated in high level processes like the UN COPs on climate change and biodiversity
- We have developed close working relationship with the Vatican's Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development

I believe that the JPIC ministry was never dying really because I do believe that all Columbans, ordained, lay missionaries, coworkers, students all have a heart for the poor and for the wounded earth, for healing wounds, and bridging divides. We just needed to create spaces and processes that brought us together.

As I reflect on the developments in JPIC over the last 8 years, I am especially grateful for not only what we've done, but that we have done it together. We've been walking the synodal path for years which is why there is something very familiar about Synod on Synodality. It's been a while since I heard the question asked, Is JPIC dying? I think that's because we are making a cultural shift to focus on being in relationship, rather than outcomes. It is such a paradox that the less we focus on the product and more on the process, the more meaningful both become.



## CCAO: New Look, Same Mission

by Scott Wright (USA)

The Missionary Society of St. Columban established the Columban Center for Advocacy and Outreach (or, CCAO) in Washington, DC in 1985. This was after decades of working with vulnerable communities across the globe to create equitable and sustainable conditions within their countries. But they realized that their work was often impeded by economic and military policies supported by the United States' government. CCAO was created to bring the experiences of the Columbans to lawmakers in order to help advance more just, peaceful, and sustainable policies.

Now it's been more than 35 years since Columbans first came to

Washington, DC. As we enter a decade that vulnerable communities and scientists are telling us will be especially pivotal for the future of our planet, the US Region felt the need to update CCAO's brand, messaging, and programming to better reflect who we are and all we have to offer.

Because now more than ever, in the face of so much injustice, many people of faith across our country feel like it's a struggle to advocate for justice. They feel like they don't have enough information to engage in meaningful discussion or that they don't know what else they can do after taking an initial action.



**ST. COLUMBAN MISSION**  
**FOR JUSTICE, PEACE AND ECOLOGY**

That's why we're here! We believe that each person can be empowered to help build a society that liberates the poor, welcomes all migrants, and cares for the earth.

So starting in January 2022, we will now be known as the St. Columban Mission for Justice, Peace, and Ecology (or, Columban JPE). We are grateful to Jao Resari (CLM in Taiwan) for designing our new logo. It represents the global hope for a more just future, a hope that each of us can share when we are filled with the fires of empowerment.

We'll also be getting a new website, which will launch in January 2022 as well. You'll be able to find us at:

<https://www.columbanjpe.org>

On our website, you'll still continue to find all the Society's position statements, as well as *Jubilee for the Earth*, the Society's podcast on biodiversity.

We'll also continue to be on Facebook and Twitter but at @ColumbanJPE.

What will remain the same since we started in 1985 is our mission: we equip people of faith with the skills they need in order to evaluate public policy, build bridges between communities, and advocate for the common good.

In order to make this vision a reality, we're excited to offer a number of new programs in 2022, including a monthly "Advocate's Newsletter" and monthly virtual workshops. Old programs will also continue, especially our advocacy skills trainings, which we offer multiple times throughout the year. The picture below is one of our pre-pandemic cohorts, representing states from Texas to Nebraska and beyond.



If you're signed up for our emails and live in the United States, you'll also continue to receive email "action alerts," inviting you to advocate to your Members of Congress or the Presidential administration whenever an urgent issue related to US/MX border policy or ecology arises. Finally, we'll still be creating free resources - like our "Border Solidarity Toolkit" - that helps people put their faith into action.



## **A Prayer for Justice**

Jesus, you have called us to courageously bridge the gap between our knowledge of injustice and our actions to overcome it.

Open our hearts to this challenge! Help us to not only advocate in solidarity with those facing injustice, but to equip ourselves with the tools to be builders of God's kingdom of justice.

Empower us with your Spirit, O God, that we may help build a society that liberates the poor, welcomes all migrants, and cares for the earth.

Amen.





### **Refugees and Migrants: A Poem**

*By Fr. Shay Cullen, SSC (Philippines)*

Look there see the rubber boats with refugees out at sea,  
They are risking all to find another life and whatever they can be.

The world so rich rejects them and their borders are closed and shut.  
They call themselves Christian and ignore the asylum seekers that have traveled by  
boat and foot.

The world is mean and selfish without love beyond their own,  
They cannot share with others and offer the poor a proper home.

This is so immoral, a broken world, greedy and corrupt,  
One day I will implode and end in violence, quickly and abrupt.  
They cannot share the vaccine to save many from pain and death.  
They are suffocating in the luxury from the plundered stolen wealth.  
The victims of colonial rule, migrants, refugees, it is Justice they demand.  
May the power of truth and compassion transform the world and give them welcome,  
peace, in a new and blessed land.



## Christmas Cards that Celebrate the World that God so Loves

*Fr. Vincent Busch, SSC (Philippines)*

The Subanens are an indigenous people whose ancestral habitat is the highlands of Western Mindanao in the Philippines. With the help of the Columban Sisters, who had been living and working with the Subanens since 1983, I began working with the Subanens in the year 2000. I came to see how they kept their habitat healthy, and how, in turn, their habitat provided them with food, fuel and housing materials. I also came to see how the beauty of their habitat evoked in them an awareness of the spiritual dimension in the natural world, and I came to appreciate how they communicated with that dimension through music, ritual, and dance.

The Subanen way of life had a long crafting tradition. They developed, for example, clever ways to shape rattan, bamboo, grasses, and palm leaves into baskets, tools, furniture, mats, hats, roofs, walls, musical instruments and even the walls and roofs of their homes. Attracted by their crafting tradition I worked with Subanens to form a project called Subanen Crafts. Each year, as part of that project, we create Christmas cards whose images celebrate ordinary, thoughtful ways that Joseph and Mary cared for each other. In this article I'll share stories and reflections about how these cards celebrate Christmas, Creation and, and Caring people.

The process we developed to design our cards began with listing thoughtful

ways that the Subanen people care for each other. From that list we then selected caring activities that Joseph and Mary might have done while living in a stable. My job was to create card-sized drawings of Mary and Joseph doing those activities.

The first design you see below is a simple line drawing of one of our cards. This drawing shows Mary holding Jesus securely in a Subanen-style sling while Joseph repairs the manger. Subanens constantly have to repair their tools, belongings and homes so it was natural that we wanted a card that showed Joseph using his skill as a carpenter to repair the manger. The second image shows what that same card looks like after the Subanen crafters carefully hand-colored it and inlaid the images of Mary and Joseph with colored paper.





Instead of a stable the card shows Mary and Joseph within an image of our planet – the temporary shelter of all God’s creatures. Above Mary and Joseph the sun is setting over the mountainous homeland of the Subanens whose climate, forest, rivers, and soil provide them with a safe and bountiful habitat. The Subanen people know that just as Joseph made the manger a safe resting place for Jesus they need to make their habitat a safe and healthy place for their children.

This next card shows Joseph giving Mary some soup. Subanens make nutritious soups using leaves, vegetables and root crops from their small garden plots. To cook these ingredients they need water and firewood which are readily available if their forest is healthy and its streams are flowing.

This card calls to mind the words in the Lord’s Prayer, “Give us this day our daily bread”. The two words in that phrase

that make it a prayer for the common good are “Us” and “Our”. How limiting that prayer would sound if it said, “Give me my daily bread.”



In the Philippines economic policies that many thought would promote their nation’s development turned out to be hostile to the common good. These policies allowed extractive industries to make quick profits at the long-term cost of polluting and degrading the nation’s seas, rivers, forests, air and farmland. For example, from 1950 to 1990 logging companies deforested large areas of the Subanens’ homeland. These companies made large profits which allowed their owners, shareholders, and workers to acquire “daily bread” for themselves and their families but in the process they caused permanent damage to the food-producing forest and topsoil of the Subanens. The harmful consequences of this deforestation spread beyond the Subanens’ homeland. Without the water-absorbing forest monsoon rains



quickly became torrents of muddy water that cascade down the mountains clogging irrigation systems in lowland ricefields, and smothering coastal reefs and fisheries. In the aftermath of this deforestation many Subanens left their homeland to seek work in cities and towns as servants and menial laborers. The Subanen crafters are working with the reforestation programs of the Columban Sisters which are restoring their God-given habitat so that its ecosystems might continually provide a better life for all.

The next card shows a thoughtful shepherd bringing some kindling wood to Mary and Joseph for their warming fire. This image has a meaningful background story. I once saw a Subanen man carrying a huge bundle of kindling wood down a steep mountain trail. I learned later that this man regularly hiked 10 kilometers or about 7 miles to the town so he could sell his burden for a few coins - enough to buy a few handfuls of rice for his family. The Subanen People belong to families who supported each other through such ordinary but profound acts of love. This card honors one such act and, in doing so, helps us appreciate the sacrifices that Joseph and Mary will make for their family.



In this next card Joseph is sweeping the stable while Mary spreads a blanket over the manger. It looks like Joseph has stopped working to look at Mary and Jesus. I can imagine him experiencing in that moment the deep bond parents have with their children. Mary and Joseph will deeply feel the joys and sufferings of Jesus throughout their lives.





The Bible points to this parent-child bond as an example of God's enduring love for his people: "Can a woman forget the baby at her breast and have no compassion on the child of her womb? Though she may forget I will not forget you." (Isaiah 49:15). Jesus expands the embrace of God's love to include all creation: "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation." (Mark 16: 15). In our cards the globe represents the whole of creation that God so loves.

This last card Joseph is pouring water into a basin while Mary puts fresh straw in the manger. For the Subanens, fetching water often involves a steep downhill hike to a forest-fed stream. The Subanens can easily imagine Joseph needing to go some distance to get water.



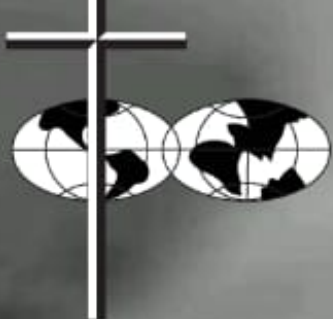
As deserts spread throughout our overheated planet thousands of people, mostly women, have to walk ever greater distances to get water for their

families. Jesus praises those who give drink to the thirsty (Matthew 25: 37-40) so it makes sense that he would praise people who, through their work and their way of life, enhance and protect the ecosystems that provide that water.

As Joseph pours he looks at Mary who is preparing a comfortable resting place for Jesus. When I look at this card I wonder, "What if Mary saved the straw she was holding and somehow it was passed down to this day as a relic of the place where Jesus was born?" Such a relic would be venerated in all our churches. No doubt, when Mary and Joseph fled Bethlehem to escape Herod's soldiers that straw remained behind as animal feed and, once eaten, it would be recycled as dung to fertilize the soil where it would become, yet again, a nurturing resting place - this time as fertile soil for plants and trees.

In the vastness of the universe the Earth is but a tiny, fragile "stable" for all God's creatures. God so loved the world that he sent his Son to be born in our "stable". In a wee corner of our stable I have come to know many Subanens who are restoring their life-giving habitat. Their Christmas cards celebrate the ordinary yet profound ways that people care for each other and for the world that God so loves.





# WEBINAR

**COLUMBANS CELEBRATE  
INTERFAITH HARMONY  
WEEK: CONNECTING  
PEACE, NONVIOLENCE, AND  
INTERRELIGIOUS DIALOGUE**



**01 FEBRUARY**

**18:00PM HKT - 2022**



## **Comunicado Pastoral Columbana de Migrantes Chile** *Sudamérica RMU*

En nombre de la Pastoral Columbana de Migrantes en Chile, rechazamos y denunciaremos los sucesos ocurridos el día sábado de fecha 25 de Septiembre del presente año, en la ciudad de Iquique, región de Tarapacá, Chile, donde algunos lugareños llevaron a cabo una marcha y concentración frente a plaza Brasil de la presente ciudad, la marcha tenía como motivo NO + MIGRANTES, la cual terminó con actos violentos hacia las personas que acampaban en esta plaza quienes eran migrantes de muchas nacionalidades y en su mayoría Venezolanos, fueron atacados, insultados, tratados de delincuentes y al final le fueron quemadas sus pertenencias creando una fogata y solicitando que fueran desalojados del lugar y expulsados del país. En varios videos e imágenes se puede apreciar que se quema su ropa, colchones, juguetes de los niños, carpas,

tiendas, y demás objetos propiedad de las personas que allí acampaban. En otros lugares fueron insultados y atacados personas de diferentes nacionalidades que se encontraban fuera de casas de cambios y de envíos de dinero internacionales, en una ocasión por el ataque algunos locales deciden cerrar las puertas resguardando a las personas y niños quedando dentro del lugar, pero un niño comienza a sufrir un ataque de ansiedad donde luego termina asfixiándose y mientras se pide auxilio los manifestantes ignoran la emergencia y se pone en riesgo la vida del pequeño, de igual manera locales iquiqueños logran prestar la ayuda al niño afectado, sin que hubiera resultado fatal.

Hechos como estos son verdaderamente lamentables, todos y todas somos extranjeros y extranjeras en el planeta tierra, todos y todas somos hijos e hijas de un mismo Dios, todos y todas somos hermanas y hermanos hijos e hijas de un mismo padre, no podemos



comenzar a crear odio hacia el ser humano que necesita ayuda, partamos de las enseñanzas de Jesús, "Amad al prójimo, como a ti mismo", con hechos como estos solo se demuestra que el ser humano carece de mucho amor propio, pero de igual forma estamos para tender la mano, seas de cualquier nacionalidad, cualquier raza, religión u orientación sexual y género.

Sabemos que existe el crimen y la delincuencia en todos lados, para eso están las autoridades competentes y formadas para resguardar al ser humano de la delincuencia, no podemos tomar justicia por nuestras propias manos si no aportamos solución a un problema. Creemos soluciones no problemas, creemos esperanza no la detengamos, creemos sueños no los rompamos, creemos vida no la quitamos.

Los invitamos a crear mesas de trabajo para que en conjunto encontremos soluciones viables a esta crisis humanitaria que enfrenta el mundo entero, en vez de ser noticia de minutos por actos como estos hagamos historia con diálogos y verdaderas soluciones que sean el ejemplo para otros países. Recuerden que "Como Jesucristo Fuimos obligados a huir", el papa francisco nos

llama a practicar estos cuatro verbos con los hermanos y hermanas migrantes "Acoger, Proteger, Promover e Integrar", y en un pasaje de la biblia podemos leer "Porque fui extranjero, y me acogieron como huésped..." Mateo 25: 35 y también "Porque nosotros, extranjeros y advenedizos somos delante de ti, como todos nuestros padres; y nuestros días sobre la tierra, cual sombra que no dura" 1 crónicas 29: 15.

## **COMUNICADO DE PARROQUIA SAN COLUMBANO**

### **ANTE LOS HECHOS DE VIOLENCIA ACACIDOS ESTE FIN DE SEMANA PASADO EN IQUIQUE - CHILE**

Ante los tristes e impactantes hechos que afectaron a familias migrantes en la ciudad de Iquique, así como por las miles de ocasiones en que el abuso, intolerancia

y xenofobia han afectado a nuestros hermanos y hermanas que llegan desde otros países a esta "copia feliz del Edén"; queremos expresar:

La Parroquia San Columbano de la Zona Sur del Arzobispado de Santiago. Se suma al rechazo de tan deleznable actos de vandalismo y violencia contra hermanos y hermanas que hoy son el rostro de Cristo sufriente y migrante en tierras extrañas.

**"Todos y todas somos extranjeros y extranjeras en el planeta tierra, todos y todas somos hijos e hijas de un mismo Dios, todos y todas somos hermanas y hermanos hijos e hijas de un mismo padre, no podemos comenzar a crear odio hacia el ser humano que necesita ayuda."**



Nuestro amor fraternal y las plegarias que surgen espontáneas para pedir a Dios por el bienestar de quienes han dejado la patria que les vio nacer, hoy se redoblan y hacen solidaridad procurando su bien y tranquilidad.

No olvidemos que San José, Santa María y el Niño Jesús, también fueron migrantes en tierra extranjera; hoy la figura de la Sagrada Familia se nos vuelve a mostrar en las dificultades de todos estos hermanos que solo buscan una tierra que puedan sentirla y llamarla patria.

Que El Santo Espíritu nos bendiga e ilumine para que se haga vida nuestra fe en el Señor Jesús, y así, podamos decir con confianza que somos cristianos y verdaderos hermanos en la Fe.

¡Amén!

## Watch the Columban Migration Webinar

The Migration Working Group is happy to share with the Society the recording of our Migration Webinar on December 8. We thank those who attended and to the courageous men and women who shared their lives with us.

**You can watch the recording by clicking [here](#) or on the image below.**



Please note that this recording is meant for internal Columban viewing out of respect and protection of the people who appear in the recording. That said, RMU leaders and JPIC Coordinators are invited to share within your RMU, for those who may not have been able to attend.

A second migration webinar will be in 2022. The exact date is to be confirmed.

May the Holy Family inspire us to love and welcome without exception.

# JUBILEE

-FOR THE-

# EARTH

## Season 2 - Coming Spring 2022

### Episode Themes

Episode 7 - Young People

Episode 8 - Indigenous Peoples

Episode 9 - Food Insecurity/GMOs

Episode 10 - Climate Change

Episode 11 - Grassroots Action

Episode 12 - Spirituality of Biodiversity



Missionary Society  
of St. Columban



## **COP26 Faith Vigil**

*By James Trewby (Britain)*

A huge project during COP26 in Glasgow was '24 Hours for the Climate', a global online vigil for Catholics and people of faith to pray and advocate for the success of the climate summit.

It ran 5-6 November 11, 2021 from St Aloysius Jesuit Church in Glasgow and involved present and past Faith in Action volunteers. James Trewby was the key organiser and partners included the Laudato Si Movement, Justice and Peace Scotland, Don Bosco Green Alliance, CAFOD, SCIAF and many more.

Video material was presented at the vigil from partners internationally and in

the UK. Participants were invited to write messages that would be delivered to COP26 negotiators, calling on them: "to agree to stop all fossil fuel extraction by 2040, protect and restore ecosystems, and financially support developing countries as they adapt to climate change."



Every hour, a prayer experience themed around God's creation and ecological spirituality and the story of a community impacted by climate change was broadcast. In the first few hours participants experienced prayer with Assumption

Sisters, a Laudato Si' Liturgical Dance from the Philippines, a 'River Guardians' presentation from a CAFOD partner in Colombia, a Prayer for Creation and Myanmar by Catholic Student Action



in Myitkyina Diocese, and a climate reflection from Columban missionaries in Chile and Peru. Teachings from Pope Francis featured.

In the afternoon Glasgow Churches Together presented 'Wisdom from the Global South' and the Glasgow Catholic Worker highlighted their regular witness against nuclear weapons at nearby Faslane Nuclear Base.

'Growing Our Future' was presented by Jesuit Missions. Evening prayer was led by CAFOD and Columban International Youth Encounter. During the night,

participants experienced 'Praying for a climate of peace' with Pax Christi of England and Wales and 'Voices from the margins' from EcoJesuits in the Philippines. A Typhoon Hainan survivor spoke about 'Fossil fuel companies killed my family' and Columban eco-theologian Fr Sean McDonagh gave an interview, 'Climate Change and the Churches'.

An Eco-Stations of the Cross was filmed and then broadcast during the night. It was exciting to see a Columban team in El Paso, on the US/Mexico border, tweeting a photo of them sitting in front of a

screen watching the vigil. Columbans in Australia participated too. The 'Stations', led by James Trewby, the Columban Education Worker, and Danny Sweeney of Justice and Peace Scotland, were intensely moving. Danny sang at regular intervals the haunting refrain, 'If the field are parched - have mercy' by Chris Juby. For Station 13, where the body of Jesus

is taken down from the Cross, we prayed: 'O God who makes all things new, help us hold on to our faith, hope and love when we feel overwhelmed and discouraged by the daunting challenge of the ecological crisis.'



After a concluding Mass, pilgrims were then blessed and sent forth for the Glasgow march during a COP26 'Day of Action', which involved around 120,000 climate campaigners.





## **Climate Change in the Pacific and How It Will Impact Children**

By *Adi Mariana Waqa (Fiji)*

*Editor's Note: Adi Mariana Waqa is from Taveuni, Fiji. She went with her family to Melbourne as a six year old child and was educated there. While living in Sydney, she worked in managerial positions in a number of hotels and completed a Bachelor's degree in theology. She has been working in Fiji with the Methodist Church, Columban missionaries, and the Pacific Council of Churches for the last 5 years. This speech was delivered on 6/11/2021 at the COP26 March for Creation in Suva, Fiji.*

Religious leaders, distinguished guests, families, and our children - A good afternoon to you all and thank you for being present today as we call upon the international community to do more towards reducing greenhouse emissions and alleviating the human-induced stress we have caused on the earth.

Almost 16,000km away from Suva the world has gathered in Glasgow, Scotland in an attempt to save our planet from climate catastrophe and the threat to life as we currently know it. Over 100 global leaders along with their negotiators, representatives, business leaders, non-governmental organisations, and private citizens are engaged in 12-days of talks to determine not only the future of our natural environment but the survival of humanity and all living things.

In August of this year, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) released a report confirming that human activities have without a doubt been a contributing factor to a warming planet, and that climate change and its impacts are now "widespread, rapid, and intensifying."

Scientists around the world are also providing further research that demonstrate how climate change is fuelling increasingly severe weather patterns such as floods, heatwaves, and droughts. Alongside this, the extinction of animal species, melting of ice-sheets, and rising sea levels, coincide with greenhouse emissions already within the earth's atmosphere which are set to heighten temperatures further if we do not do make drastic changes now!

COP26 is a pivotal moment for international diplomacy and negotiations as countries update their climate action plans under the 2015 Paris Agreement and for large economies, this provides yet another chance, particularly for large economies, to pursue ambitious targets towards 2030 through their Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC) to reducing THEIR greenhouse gas emissions.

I say THEIR "greenhouse gas emissions" because when looking at the 2015 Paris Agreement and the % of Greenhouse gases for each country, it is evident that small islands states such as those of the Pacific region contribute between 0.00% to 0.01%, and yet it is our people and communities who are amongst the most

vulnerable to climate change impacts in the world.

COP26 has global leaders negotiating on trillion dollar climate financing schemes that are already spread thin across regions and at best trickle down to the communities who are in need of it the most, leaving those of us in the Pacific, fighting for the survival and dignity of our children and a future that can very well leave them with nothing!

This is not a game for us, our Pacific cohorts at COP26 come to the table of climate negotiations to remind the international community that the future of our children and their children's children is at stake and with the guidance of our elders, traditional leaders and faith leaders, we can promise you that our generation will not go down without a fight.

This continued rhetoric of international commitments to net zero of greenhouse gas emissions are in the expression of Greta Thunberg earlier this year, BLAH BLAH BLAH to those of us at the frontlines of this environmental emergency. The Kainaki declaration of 2019 from Tuvalu implored G7 and G20 countries to phase out inefficient fossil fuel subsidies and

the just transitions from the use of fossil fuels to renewable energies for the sake of our Pacific islands and people.

Yet our close neighbour here in the region, Australia, through the leadership of Prime Minister Scott Morrison, has bolstered its efforts on protecting the fossil fuel industry. Not only that, but we now hear news from Glasgow that the Australian pavilion is sponsored by Santos - Australia's second largest independent oil and gas producer.

**"Let us not be a generation of people who are ever hearing, but never understanding; ever seeing, but never perceiving. Let us not be callous in heart and close our eyes and ears to the violence against God's creation and most especially our countries on the frontline who are bearing the blow of human destruction."**

*-Adi Mariana Waqa*

Is this some kind of joke at the expense of Pacific people and the future of our island homes and oceans? How many times do we need to shout from our rooftops that climate change is real and it is destroying the livelihood of our communities?

How many images does the international community have to see of king tides, threats to our food security, category 5 cyclones and their destruction on our homes and families? It's a foolish mockery of our dignity as Pacific people, to be recipients of aid in the aftermath of a violent storm when those very countries delivering the help and touting their financial contributions in the millions, are on the other hand upholding industries that subliminally contribute to the increasing severity of

storms in our region.

A recent Greenpeace report has confirmed that the Pacific region will experience increased salinity in our waters and that rising sea levels will inevitably continue, meaning that islands in Kiribati, Vanuatu, and the Solomon Islands will become uninhabitable. The 2009 Moana declaration by Pacific church leaders issued a prophetic statement on climate induced calamities on the region's food and water security, as well as the now lived realities of the forced relocation and displacement of entire villages in our region.

Our peoples are exhausted from having to tell and retell our shared experiences to the world with little to no effect. The Pacific is not here to entertain or be a testing ground for wealthy countries to hypothesize on the impacts of climate change for when it finally reaches them. Not only is that unjust and immoral, but we can assure wealthy countries that if you do not act fast enough to change the course of our current trajectory towards what is being predicted as being 3.6 Celsius degrees above pre-industrial levels by 2100, then you too will suffer the same fate.

Next year, it will be 30 years since the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) began, meaning that when I was a child, world leaders at the time already knew that the catastrophic climate events of our generation would occur.

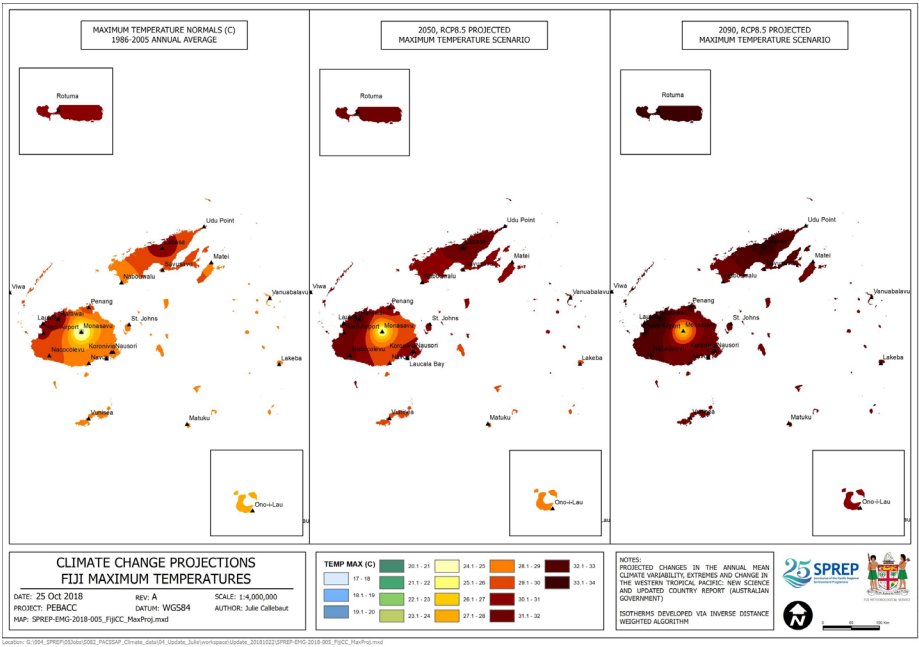
So, knowing what we know right now about the unbearable effects of human activity and greed on our planet earth, what can we do today? I hope that in 30 years' time our Pacific children will

not look back and accuse us of not doing enough for their future and the safeguarding of their identity and protection of their island homes.

I would like to suggest that as Pacific

leaders' fight for the survival of our island homes on international platforms, whereas back here in our communities, we as Pacific people must prioritize the education of all children. We must not forget the children or sideline them at this pivotal time of our history.

To our children and youth of school age throughout the Pacific, please, work and study hard, because education is going to be one of your most powerful tools





to not only navigate the current state of the world but to also give back and support your communities because the Pacific region can no longer wait or rely on others to help us.

Climate change impacts in the Pacific go beyond our natural environment and into homes where increased cases of domestic violence and abuse can be symptomatic of external pressures such as lack of food or fresh water upon the family unit.

As a region, the faith of our Pacific people is widely known as the backbone of our societies. This afternoon we stand together with our religious leaders knowing that their continued prayers for the region has contributed to the ecological conversion of many believers to speak up and advocate on behalf of God's "good and precious" creation.

We are called to be good stewards of our natural environment which is a gift and life-giving force, without which humanity could not exist.

Let us not be a generation of people who are ever hearing, but never understanding; ever seeing, but never perceiving. Let us not be callous in heart and close our eyes and ears to the violence against God's creation and most especially our countries on the frontline who are bearing the blow of human destruction.

COP26 must not fail to accelerate international efforts towards net zero carbon emissions by 2050, because

if we fail, the consequences will be astronomical, beginning with our children and people.

The earth is our common home, and in these unprecedented times where climate change is no longer a threat, but a reality for those of us in countries on the frontline, the international community cannot continue turning a blind eye or deaf ear to what is happening to our people. It is unjust and immoral to think that what is happening to us is okay because we may not have the economic power and fortitude as smaller developing states in this post-modern world.

Our survival is not your testing ground for climate change resilience where you sprinkle your loose change to determine what environmental mechanisms work or do not work – YOU MUST ACT NOW!

To our leaders at COP26, I will end with a quote from a children's book titled, "The Lorax" by Dr. Seuss: "Unless someone like you cares a whole awful lot, Nothing is going to get better. It's not."





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