**St. Michael and St. John’s R. C. Church Parish Forum September 2021**

**Camino to COP 3rd - 5th October 2021**

**What is the Camino?**

In September 2021, 40 Christians set off from London to walk the 500 miles to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP26) in Glasgow.

The aim of the walkers is to talk about climate justice and to inspire others to raise their voices and demand that our World Leaders treat Climate Change as an emergency. The walkers are staying over in Clitheroe and Newton from Sunday 3rd to 5th October 2021. Our Church together with Trinity Methodist Church has been asked to provide lunch for approx. 50 people on Monday 4th October at 12.30 at St. Mary Magdalene’s Church Hall on Church St. Clitheroe. We have been asked to provide mainly vegan and vegetarian food as well as soft drinks such as tea and coffee.

**What is COP 26 and is it important?**

COP stands for Conference of the Parties which refers to the 197 nations who are members of the 26th Annual UN Convention on Climate Change. The purpose of the Conference is to enable all the Parties to finalise their plans to cut their greenhouse gas emissions as per the Paris Agreement (COP21). COP 26 is important because the deadline has arrived and yet not all Parties have are able to produced meaningful Plans which will ensure that they are able to fulfil the pledges that they signed in 2016. Their common goal was to ensure that their Action Plans would lead to a reduction in their greenhouse gas emissions so as to prevent the World’s average temperature from rising by 2 Degrees C and preferably by less than 1.5 Degrees C compared to pre-industrial levels.

**So what are Greenhouse Gases and the Greenhouse Gas Effect?**

Greenhouse gases include Carbon Dioxide and Methane which are caused by drilling and/or burning fossil fuels such as coal oil and natural gas. The Greenhouse effect occurs when sunlight energy enters the Earth’s atmosphere and warms the Earth’s surface through absorption. Some of this energy passes back into space but increasingly it is trapped in our atmosphere by greenhouse gases causing our world to heat up. Therefore, the Greenhouse Gas Effect is the rise in temperature that the Earth is experiencing as a result.

**What are some of the potential consequences of an increase in a Global Temperature of 1.5 Degrees C?**

An increased number and intensity of heatwaves

Extreme rainstorms

Water shortages / drought

Lower crop yields

Melting icecaps / glaciers

Higher sea levels

Increased migration through starvation / loss of habitat

**What do our Scientists say about Climate Change?**

The International Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) is the UN’s authority on climate change. In 2018 it published its Special Report on Global Warming of 1.5 degrees C. It said that although it was still possible to limit global warming to 1.5 degrees C it would require “deep emissions reductions” and “rapid far-reaching and unprecedented changes in all aspects of society”.

According to the UK Met Office, in 2020 the global average temperature had already reached 1.2 Degrees C above pre-industrial levels, making it amongst the third hottest year on record.

**It’s Not Fair!**

Sadly, the most vulnerable communities in our world who have contributed the least to Climate Change are the most affected with millions facing hunger and displacement due to increased droughts and other extreme weather events.

**What is the Challenge for COP 26?**

Many commentators are looking around at all the distrust, discord and disharmony in the world and pondering with alarm the chances of all 197 States coming to a meaningful agreement in November 2021, not least because the four biggest emitting countries of Greenhouse gases are China, USA, India & Russia.

**Should we Despair?**

Should we as Catholics lose hope? Should we say, “to hell with it” or “we are already doomed”.

Luckily for us Catholics, we know that to despair is a mortal sin as it challenges God’s infinite capacity for forgiveness and therefore, we will not give in to despair. As such, we will continue to campaign for global justice and for a better future for our children and grandchildren.

In June 2015, Pope Francis published his encyclical on ecology “Laudato Si – On care for our Common Home”. This was addressed to “every single person living on this planet” urging each and every one of us to listen to “the cry of the Earth and the cry of the poor”.

***In his encyclical, Pope Francis said “We need a conversation which includes everyone since the environmental challenge we are undergoing and its human roots, concern and affect us all. Regrettably, many efforts to seek concrete solutions to the environmental crisis have proved ineffective not only because of powerful opposition but also because of a more general lack of interest. Obstructionist attitudes even on the part of believers can range from denial of the problem to indifference, nonchalant resignation or blind confidence in technical solutions...everyone’s talents and involvement are needed to redress the damage caused by human abuse of God’s creation.”***

**So, it’s over to us**

This is why we are asking for your help. The Camino to COP is a peaceful and hopeful attempt to interact with local people and to highlight the importance to us all of a successful COP26. It is an opportunity to raise awareness of the issues and to get involved in campaigning for Climate Justice to help those in the developing world who are most badly affected by Climate Change. If you would like to find out more about what we can all do as individuals, please support the Camino to COP by coming along and interacting with the Walkers and/or by helping out with the lunch our Church is providing. Please contact Mark Wiggin or me for further details. Once again, thank you for inviting me to speak at this meeting.

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