

Prayer points – May 2020



A plan to resurrect

Can we speak of joy in a time of sorrow, hope and the possibility of new life in a time of pandemic? Pope Francis' [Easter meditation](#), 'A plan to resurrect', reflects on these questions, and how we respond to them.

Meditating on the Easter Gospel, the Pope notes that *"like the first women disciples who went to the tomb, we live surrounded by an atmosphere of sorrow and uncertainty that makes us ask, 'Who will roll back the stone from the entrance to the tomb?'"* The stone, he says, *"symbolizes the worry and anguish that 'buries hope'."*

Despite their fear and sorrow, however, the first women disciples continued to the tomb to anoint their beloved Lord. Today, too, the Pope comments, we see people around the world bearing the anointing of care to each other – whether by directly caring for people or by taking care not to put others at risk. And as the women encountered the risen Lord and received Resurrection hope, so we, too, he says, need to trust that *"the Lord precedes us in our walk, removing the stones that paralyze us."*

"This, he adds, is our hope." But just as the Resurrection didn't just transform the women's lives but renewed the life of the whole community of disciples, so this hope isn't just for us, but for our world. The Pope calls us to seek to discern where the Spirit would guide our societies towards *"the new life that the Lord wants to generate at this specific moment in history."* For him, this involves *"uniting the entire human family in the search for sustainable and integral development,"* recognising how our actions affect each other, and being able to see ourselves as *"architects and protagonists of a common history and, thus, to respond jointly to so many ills that afflict millions of brothers around the world."* Will we, he asks, take action on poverty and hunger? On conflict? On inequality? *"Will we as the international community adopt the necessary measures to stop the devastation of the environment or will we continue denying the evidence?"*

It is his hope that we will take positive action. We pray that we indeed will, bearing witness to Resurrection hope in our care for the earth and for each other.

Energy storage solutions

A new renewable energy start-up company [has come up with a low-cost, zero-emissions solution](#) to the thorny issue surrounding what happens when the sun isn't shining and the wind isn't blowing; i.e. how power can be stored for later use. Swedish company Azelio has started to manufacture their patented, industry-first thermal energy storage system that will allow people to keep the energy that their standard PV solar panels generate during the day, so they can use it in the evening. The system improves on the sustainability of earlier options by using recycled aluminium. It would be particularly effective in places with lots of sun and an unreliable electricity supply. We give thanks for this and other developments that make clean energy more efficient and affordable – and we pray for continued innovation around sustainability.

Praying for now and the future

Some have noted that Coronavirus shutdowns will cause global emissions to fall this year, with estimates for the decrease between [5.5%](#) and [8%](#). But while we need to reduce emissions, this kind of sudden shock, with its disastrous impacts on livelihoods, is actually what people working for a just transition are trying to avoid. We pray for all who are struggling to make ends meet. And we pray that the Coronavirus shock doesn't derail progress on real decarbonisation, which has the potential to protect people, livelihoods and our planet.

A moment for meditation

Either outside, if you can, or sitting by a window, take a moment ... close your eyes ... breathe deeply ...

- Listen ... What sounds do you hear? How do they speak to you of God?
- Look ... What can you see? How does it speak to you of God?

"The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork" (Psalm 19:1)

"Bless the Lord, all you works of the Lord; praise and exalt him above all forever." (Benedicite)

For Prayer and Thanksgiving

- Sir John Houghton died on 15 April. Sir John was key to the formation of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), was chief editor of its first three reports, and chaired or co-chaired its Scientific Assessment Working Group for over a decade. A devout Christian, he also played a major role in uniting faith and science and persuading Christians of the seriousness of the climate emergency. His death was marked by an outpouring of [respect and affection internationally](#). We pray for his family, and give thanks for his life and the way he touched the lives of so many others.
- In December 2019, the Dutch Supreme Court ruled that the country's government wasn't responding adequately to the climate emergency. The government is now [adopting 30 key proposals](#) from Urgenda, a foundation that brought the lawsuit behind the ruling. The new measures range from reducing coal use to providing money for household energy measures, paying for change in agricultural practices and offering subsidies for energy efficiency. We give thanks for this action – pray it is effective and inspires others.

Steps towards a good COP and a green recovery

COP 26, the next round of UN climate talks, has been postponed due to COVID – but as UN Climate Change head Patricia Espinosa said: *“Our work in 2020 is not, in any form, on hold. ... We all are working remotely, groups are meeting virtually, and we are maximizing our efforts to ensure that we continue to support global efforts to address climate change and reduce emissions.”*

One of the virtual groups was the Petersberg Climate Dialogue, which [brought together over 30 climate ministers](#) and focused on the need for a climate-friendly recovery. *“The question of how the international community organises restarting the economy is crucial for climate protection,”* German Environment Minister Svenja Schulze said in her opening speech. *“Unlike the coronavirus, we already know the vaccines against the climate crisis. They are available, affordable and make our lives better.”*

Incoming COP26 President, Alok Sharma also spoke: *“We all know that climate risks are growing year by year. And the steps we take now to rebuild our economies can have a profound impact on our societies' future sustainability, resilience and, ultimately, wellbeing of humans, but of course, nature as well ... A resilient and green recovery is the best option for the health of our people and our planet.”* As COP President, he added, *“my team and I will work night and day to raise ambition on climate change.”*

We pray that all nations will choose to 'build back better'. We pray too for the preparations for the UN talks

The churches have a role to play

[A Rocha UK's Andy Atkins comments](#): *“The fundamental question facing society is not whether we rebuild the economy, but in what form? Will the government waste taxpayers money and more years we just cannot afford, to go back to dirty 'business as usual'? Or will they invest in moving fast-forwards to a green and fairer – low carbon, low pollution, high nature, high health – economy? Christians and churches, as citizens and institutions, through our actions and our voice, have a critical role to play in making the latter happen.”*

Our solutions are in nature

Globally, around 25% of all animal and plant species are threatened with extinction. This year the International Day for Biological Diversity is targeted towards raising awareness on the importance of biodiversity as well as global issues on biodiversity loss. Its organisers [state](#): *“As the global community is called to re-examine its relationship to the natural world, one thing is certain: despite all our technological advances we are completely dependent on healthy and vibrant ecosystems for our health, water, food, medicines, clothes, fuel, shelter and energy, just to name a few.”* The slogan “Our solutions are in nature” emphasises “hope, solidarity and the importance of working together at all levels to build a future of life in harmony with nature.”

2020 offers a chance for global leaders to “signal a strong will for a global framework that will ‘bend the curve’ on biodiversity loss for the benefit of humans and all life on Earth.” We pray for all working towards the next UN biodiversity summit – and to effective action coming from it. *“How many are your works, LORD! In wisdom you made them all; the earth is full of your creatures. Psalm 104:24.*