

Prayer points – August 2022



Preparing to 'listen to the voice of creation'

Each year we celebrate Season of Creation from 1 September to 4 October. The theme this year is "Listen to the voice of creation" – and in preparation, Pope Francis has released [a special message](#).

Pope Francis explores a central 'dissonance': *"If we learn how to listen [to] the voice of creation ... on the one hand, we can hear a sweet song in praise of our beloved Creator; on the other, an anguished plea, lamenting our mistreatment of this our common home."*

He explains: *"In this Season of Creation, we pray once more in the great cathedral of creation, and revel in the 'grandiose cosmic choir' made up of countless creatures, all singing the praises of God."* But we also hear *"a chorus of cries of anguish"* These cries come from *"our sister, mother earth, prey to our consumerist excesses,"* from creatures at risk of extinction; from people in poverty, who are gravely at risk from climate impact; from native peoples *"whose lands are being invaded and devastated from all sides";* and from *"our children, feeling menaced by shortsighted and selfish actions,...[who are] anxiously asking us adults to do everything possible to prevent, or at least limit, the collapse of our planet's ecosystems"*

In response to these cries, the Pope calls us all as individuals to an 'ecological conversion', saying *"we must repent and modify our lifestyles and destructive systems ... The present state of decay of our common home merits the same attention as other global challenges such as grave health crises and wars. Living our vocation to be protectors of God's handiwork is essential to a life of virtue; it is not an optional or a secondary aspect of our Christian experience"*

The Pope also calls for conversion among the community of nations, especially as they meet for the COP15 talks on biodiversity and COP27 talks on climate. He asks for a Jubilee moment to restore biodiversity, recognition by economically richer countries of 'ecological debt', proper funding and technical assistance for poorer countries, and action by all nations – with each taking up its own responsibilities. He appeals, too, to businesses, saying: *"In the name of God, I ask the great extractive industries – mining, oil, forestry, real estate, agribusiness – to stop destroying forests, wetlands, and mountains, to stop polluting rivers and seas, to stop poisoning food and people"*.

This is a powerful message. We pray that it will help to create an ecological conversion in many people's hearts and that it will help ensure *"that COP27 and COP15 can serve to unite the human family in effectively confronting the double crisis of climate change and the reduction of biodiversity."*

What next for the UK and EU?

Both the UK and EU find themselves at a crossroads this month – and we pray for wise decisions and right actions. In the UK, the race for leadership of the Conservative Party has seen a [worrying lack of focus on climate issues](#); indeed candidates have made some proposals that could have a negative impact on plans to reduce emissions. At a time when [UK offshore wind is four times cheaper than gas](#) and renewables generally are dropping in price, we pray that [both candidates](#) will see the opportunities in a transition to a green economy and will leave space to pursue it. The EU, meanwhile, is grappling with reduced supplies of Russian gas. In order to cope, EU member states are [working voluntarily to reduce gas usage by 15%](#) and exploring alternatives to replace the missing fuel. In the long term, the aim is to switch to domestically produced clean energy and well-planned demand reduction. In the short term, however, [stopgap solutions include](#) increased use of coal and liquefied natural gas, raising emissions; moreover, higher energy prices in the UK and EU are forcing many people into hardship and imperilling key industries. We pray for wisdom for leaders as they negotiate this energy crisis, for continued unity of purpose, and for help for all affected by energy price hikes.

Psalm 130: 1-4

Out of the depths I cry to you, O Lord! O Lord, hear my voice! Let your ears be attentive to the voice of my pleas for mercy! If you, O Lord, should mark iniquities, O Lord, who could stand? But with you there is forgiveness, that you may be feared. I wait for the Lord, my soul waits, and in his word I hope; my soul waits for the Lord more than watchmen for the morning, more than watchmen for the morning.

Heat and Fire

Across continents, extreme heat is imperilling people and ecosystems. China's heatwave, which has [covered much of the country](#) and affected around 900 million people, has seen temperatures as high as 44 (111) degrees.

[In Europe](#) temperatures soared to 47 Celsius (116.6 Fahrenheit) in Portugal and smashed the UK's heat record with a temperature of 40.3 (104) degrees. [Wildfires have burned](#) large areas: in the UK, the London fire brigade had its busiest day since the Blitz, and roads and runways melted. In the US, a [heat dome](#) has affected parts of the Southwest: [in San Antonio, Texas](#), between the 1st and 25th of July, all but one day crossed the 100 (37.8) degree mark. California has experienced heat and wildfires, including [a terrible blaze](#) in an area close to Yosemite National Park. Commenting on that fire, former vice-president Al Gore warned: "The survival of our civilization is at stake."

We pray for people and ecosystems affected by the heat – especially those that are most vulnerable. We pray, too, that the rising temperatures, with [their clear links to global heating](#), will lend urgency to preparations for COP27.

A call for action at the Lambeth Conference

Climate change is one of the foci of the Lambeth Conference of Anglican bishops, which began at the end of July. Addressing the conference's first session, Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby [explained](#): "*Climate change is already a matter of life and death. It will become much more threatening. John Kerry, the US Secretary responsible for climate change negotiations, said ... earlier this week, not only is it an existential question, it is a question of life or death. He said on the basis of what is happening at the moment, we are not looking at 1.5 degrees, but at 2.5 to 3.2...*

That kind of climate change is not peripheral, it's not on the edges. It is the fuel, the food, for the four horses of the apocalypse. It is also resolvable by campaigning, by science ... Are we capable of campaigning as a Communion in this area? Are we found to be leading and influencing? ... We must be those who ensure that the nations of the world face their responsibilities squarely and act decisively." Pray that leaders everywhere perceive the reality of the threat to the people they lead, act decisively themselves, and campaign for wider action.

Potential progress in the US

Partisan divisions in the US have historically made it difficult to achieve climate action at the federal level - but Senate Democrats have proposed a Bill that, if passed by Congress, would have immense significance. The Inflation Reduction Act of 2022 [contains provisions for \\$369 billion in spending](#) to help the US move from a fossil-fuel-based economy towards a greener one.

The Bill would offer billions of dollars of tax credits for zero carbon power plants, [incentivise the purchase](#) of US-made electric vehicles, [provide](#) "rebates for Americans buying and retrofitting their homes with energy efficient and electric appliances" and offer tax credits to help domestic energy users switch to electric and renewable options. It would incentivise the manufacture in the US of clean energy technologies, create a 'Green Investment Bank', impose fines for methane leaks, and invest in cutting emissions from agriculture. It would also fund conservation of forests and coastal habitats – and [tackle questions of environmental justice](#), "providing \$60 billion to support low-income communities and communities of color that are disproportionately burdened by the environmental and public health effects of climate change." While there are some pro-fossil fuel elements; concessions which were [needed to get the legislation passed](#), its proponents [estimate](#) that it would enable the US to cut its emissions 40% by 2030 – with the hope that state, local, and private actors could help the US meet its full target of a 50% reduction.

We pray that this Bill will become law and that its benefits will meet or exceed the hopes of its framers.

A reflection on **"It is our duty and our joy at all times and in all places to give you thanks and praise"**

"In view of God's great mercy to us, [an] attitude of praise looks not to our own comfort but to the flourishing of others, that they might see the love of God in our words and our work ... As we abandon stances of greed and fear in favour of gratitude and praise, we will be made a joyful people, unburdened by self-defence or self-gain. We will find that the act of worship cannot be contained by models of profit and loss, and that every meagre offering we make will be met and exceeded with an overflow of grace. It is once we begin to live in gratitude and praise that we will discover our duty and our joy to be the same thing. It is my prayer this year that the Church will be made holy in its attention to and defence of every gift we have received, emboldened to live as if we too are a gift to every creature.

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