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### Special Interest Articles:

- The Sad Truth – US bishops and climate change.
- Reef in Crisis – a new report.
- A Matter of Choice – Euthanasia bill.

## LAUDATO SI'

ON THE CARE OF  
OUR COMMON HOME



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## The Sad Truth

After Pope Francis, in 2015, published his landmark teaching document on “our common home” that called for action on climate change, Archbishop Joseph Kurtz of Louisville went before the National Press Club in Washington, D.C., and described an urgency “to act as true stewards.” At the time, Kurtz was president of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, which represents bishops and archbishops across the country on national issues.

The sad truth is, however, that Kurtz and most US bishops were largely silent on the subject from 2014 to 2018 in the columns they wrote in official Catholic newspapers or newsletters to their parishioners. Elsewhere in Kentucky, no climate mentions in the bishop’s columns in official publications of the Dioceses of Owensboro, covering the western third of the state.

“It makes me frustrated, and it makes

me sad, and it makes me angry,” said Daniel DiLeo, a theologian whose research interests include Catholic social teaching. “The bishops are responsible for teaching the fullness of Catholic faith and that includes climate change. “Our numbers show they have failed their duty.”

“The facts speak for themselves,” said Jose Aguto, the executive director of the Catholic Climate Covenant, an independent organization that grew out of the bishops conference and works closely with it to energize climate awareness and action in dioceses across the country.

While the bishops have largely been silent in public about climate, Aguto said, between 20 and 30 dioceses out of 178 nationally are “actually doing work with regard to Laudato Si’, and many of them have been doing so for years.”

*J.R.Sanchez CP*

## An International Joke

Australia’s climate policies have been ranked last out of 64 countries and that nation among the worst offenders for emissions, renewables and energy use. The country slipped four spots to 58<sup>th</sup> overall place in the latest Climate Change performance Index unveiled at the COP26 summit at Glasgow, ranked behind Kazakhstan, Saudi Arabia, Russia and Brazil in terms of climate policy.

Delegates at the climate summit were left stunned by Australia’s national pavilion, which included exhibits from fossil fuel companies. The Climate Council’s head of research, Dr. Simon Bradshaw, told *The New Daily*, “They seem to be here doing the bidding of the fossil fuel industry.”

Other countries included exhibits from their energy sectors, but their focus was more geared towards renewable energy and conservation. Meanwhile, Australia focused on controversial technologies such as carbon capture, which critics claim is ineffective and gives fossil fuel companies a licence to pollute. Carbon capture involves syphoning carbon dioxide produced by fossil fuels and storing it deep within the Earth’s surface. A study from Stanford University found this to be inefficient and can ultimately do more harm than good in terms of overall emissions. Is there any doubt that the Coalition has no intention of doing anything about climate change?

*J. R. Sanchez, CP*

## JPIC Happenings



I mentioned in the last edition that I was going to discontinue the monthly blog articles due to lack of apparent interest. It was an experiment to see if any objections would be raised. None were, though I did receive a number of messages of understanding. Thank you for that support.

On other news, at the end of October, I presented a parish mission (the first since the pandemic began) to the parish of Star of the Sea, Cleveland. Being the 3<sup>rd</sup> mission program, one day is dedicated to the subject of social justice and ecology. Around 80 people attended both in the morning and evening sessions, and it was a great opportunity to do some adult faith education around the theme of JPIC (Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation). What resonated particularly with those attending was my description of how, when I was first asked to take on the chair of our JPIC committee, I was

overwhelmed by the scope of material covered under that subject heading. There are so many problems of a social justice and ecological nature, and these are so enormous, that it becomes disempowering to think of what difference one person can possibly make. I explained, therefore, that I saw the only way forward, apart for general awareness raising through vehicles like Parish missions or this JPIC newsletter, was to pick one subject that I was passionate about and put my energies into that. The subject I chose of course was human trafficking, and so I joined ACRATH (Australian Catholic Religious Against Trafficking in Humans). I encouraged those listening to do the same. I am sure that a survey of the membership of our province would yield an incredible list of areas that each member pursues. This gives me hope.

*J.R.Sanchez, CP*

*"There is no alternative. We can achieve the goals set by the Paris agreement only if we act in a coordinated and responsible way."  
(Pope Francis)*

## Pope Francis & COP26

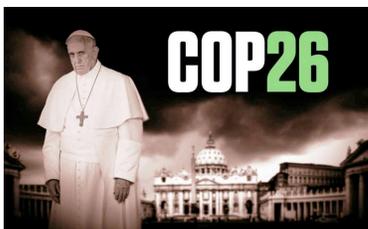
Addressing the U.N. climate summit with his pen rather than in person, Pope Francis called on world leaders assembled here to demonstrate "political will" and stop deferring the action required to avert the worst catastrophes of climate change. Cardinal Pietro Parolin, the Vatican secretary of state, read an excerpt from the message on the pope's behalf on Nov. 2, the second day of a two-day summit of world leaders.

"As the Glasgow Conference begins, all of us are aware that it has the vital task of demonstrating to the entire international community whether there really exists a political will to devote — with honesty, responsibility and courage — greater human, financial and technological resources to mitigating the negative effects of climate change and assisting the poorer and more vulnerable nations most affected by it. Sadly, we must acknowledge how far we remain from achieving the goals set for tackling climate change."

The pope likened the "wounds" caused by climate change and the coronavirus pandemic to those inflicted by World War II. As in the post-war period, he said, a similar international response of collegial efforts and farsighted actions is required now.

"We need both hope and courage," he said. "Humanity possesses the wherewithal to effect this change, which calls for a genuine conversion, individual as well as communitarian, and a decisive will to set out on this path." It is increasingly clear, the pope added, that there is no time to waste. "Now is the time to act, urgently, courageously and responsibly," Francis said, "not least, to prepare a future in which our human family will be in a position to care for itself and for the natural environment."

*From an article by Brian Roewe.*





## Sleeping with the Enemy

Every year the Commonwealth government undertakes a process to handover more ocean acreage to oil and gas companies for fossil fuel exploration. The areas are selected based on what the oil and gas industry ask for, with no environmental assessment first. The 2021 acreage was already released in May this year, and is positioned just 5 km from the 12 Apostles in Victoria.

Now, out of the blue last week, the government released the proposed 2022 acreage, even though it is not yet 2022 and even though companies haven't finished bidding on this year's acreage. It appears to have been brought forward to coincide with the COP26 conference in Glasgow.

It says it all – the Morrison government had to make it clear to their friends in the oil and

gas industry where their loyalties lie. But the world knows oil and gas exploitation must stop. Also, until a few months ago, most Australians didn't even realise that marine fossil fuel acreage is released each year without environmental assessments or any meaningful community engagement.

To have a safe climate, where communities and biodiversity thrive, Australia absolutely mustn't hand over our most important places to these fossil fuel industries. Places like the Great Australian Bight, the Kimberley, Munga-Thirri/Simpson Desert and Wollemi need our protection, not fossil fuel exploitation. Write to your local member and express your concern to help protect these places for generations to come.

Ray Sanchez CP



## Reef in Crisis

According to a new report from an impact study of multiple climate extremes by Australia's James Cook University, just 2% of the Great Barrier Reef has escaped coral bleaching over the past 3 decades. Lead author, Terry Hughes says 80% of the reef has been "severely" bleached since 2016.

"We no longer have the luxury of studying individual climate-related events that were once unprecedented or very rare," Hughes said in a media release. "Instead, as the world gets hotter, we have to understand the effects of sequences of rapid-fire catastrophes, as well as their combined impacts."

Up to half a billion people worldwide rely upon coral reefs for their protection, income and food. One estimate by the United States Environmental Protection Agency suggests the world's coral reefs contribute almost US\$30 billion per year to the global economies. The Great Barrier Reef specifically supports 64,000 Australian jobs.

While the Federal Government has committed to achieving net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050, they have not updated or tightened our emissions reduction targets for the next decade, which is critical if the world is to limit

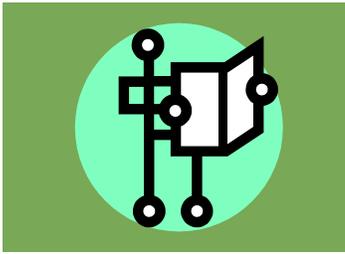


warming to under 1.5 degrees Celsius. The government did pledge, however, \$500 million for reef protection in 2018, the nation's largest single injection for reef security.

"But this is not enough," said Hughes. "A drastic cut in greenhouse gas emissions by all countries is vital for the future of coral reefs and for the hundreds of millions of people who depend on them."

In July, our government blocked a campaign by the World Heritage Committee to categorise the reef as an 'in danger' site.

J.R.Sanchez, CP



## The Trump Playbook

Taking another page out of the Trump and Republican playbook, the Morrison Government is trying to push through Parliament, in its final weeks of the year and with a Federal election looming, laws designed to make it harder for first nation people to vote.

Aboriginal communities already face enormous barriers to electoral participation and voting. The government's proposed voter ID laws will strengthen those barriers and see indigenous citizens turned away from polling booths because they don't have the right identification documents.

There are valid reasons why someone might not have ID: if they live a significant distance from a government agency, if they live below the poverty line, if they don't have a fixed address. The proposed laws are a real threat to the right to vote for our indigenous people. In many Aboriginal communities in rural and remote areas, the process of voting is not simple. From non-conventional addresses being wiped from the electoral roll with no notice, to erratic

and unannounced time windows weeks before election day for when voting will be available in communities, voting is not easy for many. Even the most basic voter enrolment programs in the NT have been defunded by the Morrison Government.

From calls to legislate proper sacred site and cultural heritage laws, to equitable funding of health services and social housing to banning fracking in the NT, the Morrison Government seems hell-bent on stifling Aboriginal voices. It seems clear that the Coalition, with the backing of Pauline Hanson, do not want Aboriginal voices and aspirations to be heard. While this latest move will disenfranchise First Nations people, it will also make voting harder for so many others, including young people, homeless people and people escaping family and domestic violence. It is a blow to our democracy and should be a concern for us all.

*J.R.Sanchez CP*

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## A Matter of Choice

The issue of Euthanasia is an emotive one because people on both sides are passionate in believing that they are fighting for what is right. Those who are for legalising euthanasia are motivated by compassion and pain, often because they themselves are suffering from chronic pain or disability and just want it to end, or else they know someone who they love who is suffering. Those against are not lacking in compassion, but are concerned for the sanctity of life, and that it sets our society on a slippery slope where the practice inevitably expands.

From 2017 in Victoria, Queensland and NSW the conditions under which the service is to be available have expanded. There is plenty of evidence of this also happening in Europe and Canada. The reason is that if a patient chooses Voluntary Assisted Dying (VAD), then two doctors must assess the patient's eligibility. But the doctors, understandably, are likely to shy away from making a purely medical judgement and prefer to rely on what the patient wants. This presumes that we know when life is no longer worth living.

The argument for VAD focuses on the person's right to die with dignity, rather than suffer with incurable and debilitating illnesses for an unknown period until natural death occurs. A counter argument states that the practice of palliative care would provide relief from distressing symptoms and pain, and offer support to the patient as well as the care giver, and provides, therefore, and active, compassionate and creative care for the dying.

My own concern is that in an era of declining morality and justice, isn't there a real possibility of misusing euthanasia by family members or by the State? When a patient hears from a doctor, regarding their condition, that nothing can be done anymore, it can prejudice their view. If instead they hear that a lot can be done through palliative care, that the symptoms can be controlled, now and in the future, perhaps many would no longer want euthanasia anymore.

*J.R.Sanchez CP .*

