

Pope, Cardinal Parolin call for concrete action at COP26 summit

As the U.N. Climate Change Conference began, Pope Francis urged world leaders to take action in stemming the adverse effects of climate change.

Addressing pilgrims gathered in St. Peter's Square Oct. 31 for his Sunday Angelus address, the pope called on Christians to pray "so that the cry of the Earth and the cry of the poor might be heard."

As world leaders gathered in Glasgow, Scotland, for the conference, also known as COP26, he also said he hoped it "might provide efficacious responses, offering concrete hope to future generations."

The pope met with several world leaders who were in Rome for the G-20 summit before attending the Oct. 31-Nov. 12 conference in Glasgow. Among those he met were U.S. President Joe Biden, South Korean President Moon Jae-in and Indian President Narendra Modi.

Cardinal Pietro Parolin, Vatican secretary of state, was leading the Holy See delegation to the COP26 summit.

In an interview Oct. 30 with Vatican News, Cardinal Parolin said the need to address climate change is a "cultural challenge to promote the common good and a change of outlook that will set human dignity at the center of every action."

The COVID-19 pandemic has shown a need for a "change of direction" in addressing the climate crisis by strengthening "the covenant between human beings and the natural environment, with particular concern for the most vulnerable

peoples," he said.

While recent data regarding the efforts of the international community to combat climate change indicate a lack of "clear political will," he said, a serious change of direction must involve everyone, especially young people.

"In the words of the appeal signed by the religious leaders: 'We have inherited a garden: we must not leave a desert to our children,'" the cardinal said, quoting representatives who gathered with the pope at the Vatican in early October to rally support for real action.

"COP26 represents an important occasion for affirming concretely how we intend to accomplish precisely that," he said.

"It is the Holy See's hope that COP26 will reaffirm the centrality of multilateralism and of action, also with regard to the so-called nonstate actors," the cardinal said. "Given the slow progress made so far, the Glasgow conference will prove quite important, for it will measure and motivate the collective will and the level of ambition of individual states."