



# Path to Paris

Examining challenges to be addressed at the 2015 UN Climate Summit

Issue 2

## Extreme weather and the cry of the poor

On November 8, 2013, Typhoon Haiyan, the strongest tropical storm ever recorded, devastated parts of Southeast Asia. The massive storm slammed into the Philippines leaving more than 4.1 million people displaced and 6,000 dead. Many of the approximately 16 million Filipinos living in extreme poverty were affected.

Typhoon Haiyan was not a “natural” disaster. Scientific evidence points to global warming from burning fossil fuels as a cause of the increased frequency and intensity of storms like this. Concentrations of carbon dioxide greenhouse gases in the atmosphere continue to reach record levels, at a record-breaking pace, resulting in more frequent extreme heat waves and heavy rain storms.

The tragedy of Typhoon Haiyan underscores just how vulnerable some countries are to climate change. There is a clear and present need for high-income countries to finance **mitigation** – to reduce greenhouse gas emissions (a root cause of climate change), and **adaptation** – to prepare for the consequences of global warming, such as extreme and erratic weather patterns.

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, a UN body, describes vulnerability to climate change as being determined by three factors: *exposure to hazards* (such as extreme and erratic rainfall), *sensitivity to those hazards* (such as an economy dominated by rain-fed agriculture), and *the capacity to adapt to those hazards* (for example, whether farmers have the money or skills to grow more drought-resistant crops). Mitigation can slow global warming while adaptation can reduce vulnerability.

A basic moral test is how our most vulnerable brothers and sisters are faring. This includes those nations most susceptible to the devastating impacts of climate change.

### The Maryknoll experience



*“We are living with extreme heat during summer, frequent category 4-5 typhoons, increased precipitation – sometimes 24-hours of rain bring the equivalent of one month’s rainfall – storm surges and flash flooding, volcanic eruptions, and drying watersheds. There’s an increase in pests killing trees, and low agricultural output from lack of water. All of this is destroying livelihoods and shelters. Whole communities are being wiped out. The Catholic Church represents more than 80 percent of the population. Raising consciousness among members to respect and care for the Earth can be an overarching and vital agenda of the Church. A Catholic climate action in the Church can be a catalyst for change.”*

— Maryknoll Sr. Marvie Misolas  
Philippines

Photos: (1) A survivor walks on the rubble of houses destroyed by Typhoon Haiyan, Tacloban, Philippines, by [Jordi Bernabeu Farrús](#)/ CC BY 2.0  
(2) Sr. Marvie Misolas, MM, in the Philippines, photo courtesy of Sr. Misolas.

## Make a personal commitment

**C**urbing the world's huge and increasing appetite for food and goods is essential to mitigate the devastation of climate change. We need new, more mindful ways of consuming.

### Share: Use less individually and more collectively

Sharing rather than purchasing new items saves natural resources and energy because less production and transportation is needed. Sharing also reduces the volume of our trash and saves money in purchasing and maintenance costs. You might even make new friends. Try lending items you don't often use; even set up a community tool bank. Also, consider sharing car rides, working in a shared space, or giving away old items.

### Eat less meat and fewer dairy products

Meat and dairy products are responsible for more greenhouse gas emissions than all cars, planes, trains and ships combined. They use thousands of gallons of water and tons of cereals. Consider abstaining one day a week.

### Buy local food

Locally produced food grown during natural seasons is fresher and requires less energy to produce and transport. Also try canning fruits and vegetables for the winter.

## Meditation: *It Is Possible*

it is possible to become so one with Earth that every flower perfumes the soul,	every tide of the sea moves in and out of self.
every snowflake sends icy softness dancing through veins, every drop of rain trickles down vessels of the heart,	it is possible to become one with Earth
every cloud in the sky sails along songlines of the spirit,	just as it is possible to become one with all people, their pain, my pain, their joy, my joy, their struggle and delight an echo of my own.
every earthquake rumbles in the gut,	it is possible to become one.
	it is possible.

## Raise your voice

**F**inancing mitigation and adaption may be the most contentious issue before the nearly 200 nations meeting at the UN Climate Summit in Paris. The mechanism for this is the **Green Climate Fund**. The fund will support low-emission and climate resilient development in developing countries. So far, 37 countries have pledged a total of US\$10.2 billion, and of that, President Obama has committed US\$3 billion.

## Green Climate Fund

A United Nations fund set up in 2010 to:



Raise money from  
wealthier countries



Goal of \$100  
billion by 2020



Transfer money to  
poorer countries  
for climate action

## Tell Congress to support the Green Climate Fund

Now it is up to Congress to make sure the money is allocated in the federal budget. The U.S. contribution is about the price of two B-60 bombers. The Green Climate Fund is a transformational fund to support women, small farmers, and to promote climate resiliency.

Send a letter to your member of Congress. Go to:

<http://bit.ly/Act4GreenClimateFund>

“

*The myopia of power politics delays the inclusion of a far-sighted environmental agenda within the overall agenda of governments. Thus we forget that 'time is greater than space', that we are always more effective when we generate processes rather than holding on to positions of power. True statecraft is manifest when, in difficult times, we uphold high principles and think of the long-term common good.*

”

Pope Francis, *Laudato Si'*

*Meditation by Joyce Rupp, published in The Cosmic Dance: An Invitation to Experience Our Oneness. New York: Orbis Books, 2012.*