


December 2021

Please click [here](#) for a simple text version.

 SISTERS of ST. JOSEPH of TORONTO



Journey for Justice

Listen! Learn! Act!

From the Ministry for Social Justice, Peace, and Creation Care

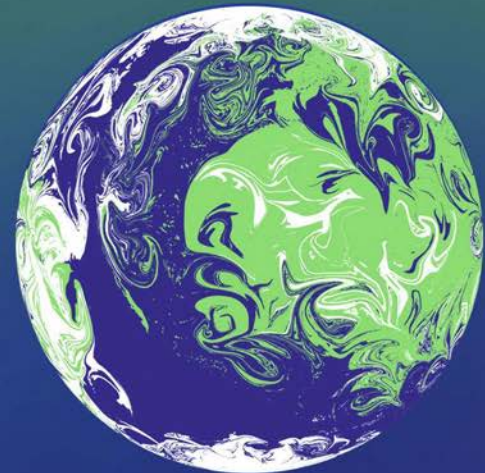
UN Climate Change Conference (COP26) by Sabrina Chiefari, Creation Care Animator

I had the privilege of virtually participating as part of a delegation representing For the Love of Creation, under the United Church of Canada, for the first two weeks of November for COP26.

Being a member of that virtual delegation meant that I was observing the goings-on at COP26, and determining paths to advocacy through an informed, faith-based lens.

Contrary to what one may think, it was quite easy to approach this massive conference of major import as an engaged Catholic.

Continued next page.



COP26 (cont'd)

Each of the last three Popes have issued clear, concise, and critical statements on our ecological crises, the foremost being climate change. There is nothing left unsaid about where the Church stands.

Cardinal Pietro Parolin, at the end of the World Leaders' Summit, highlighted Pope Francis' urge "for commitment on the part of all, particularly those countries possessed of greater means. These countries need to take a leading role."

Before COP26 could even open with its flurry of speeches, peppered with imperatives, pleas, and appeals, Pope Francis added the voice of the Church to not one but two major joint statements from Religious Leaders addressing COP26. Setting more ambitious GHG emissions reductions is possible as we press our elected representatives to act swiftly and justly to effect high-level changes here in Canada first.

Financially supporting the Global South as

they adapt, recover, and rapidly transition their communities away from dependence on extractive industry is possible as nations continue to band together and make their needs understood.

And implementing the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples is all the more possible with steadily increasing understanding of the priority role Indigenous Peoples around the world have in safe-guarding biodiversity and implementing effective conservation strategies.

I'm infuriated that over the course of my lifetime, so many people, often disenfranchised and in peril from the real effects of climate change, are fighting tooth and nail to prevent as much loss as they can while still grieving what they realize they will never have. COP26 concluded on November 13 with the issue of the Glasgow Climate Pact.

Concluded next page.

COP26 (cont'd)

While not a setback exactly, the international pact does little to advance the widespread changes needed to curb the very worst, the unrecoverable point of climate change.

There was always going to be work after this conference, and so now that work takes center-stage: the work of advocating for the mechanisms to fight climate change in our homes; the

work of enabling our planet to heal; and the work of effecting just changes. There are more conferences of this scale on the horizon, and the work must continue to, through, and beyond those as well.

COP26 Resource Links

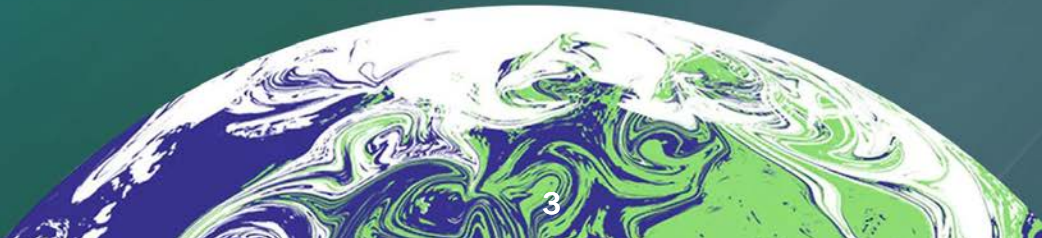
[The Glasgow Climate Pact](#)

[For the Love of Creation: Information on the Ecumenical Delegation](#)

[Religious Leaders Issue Joint Appeal Ahead of COP26 \(September 8, 2021\)](#)

[World Religious Leaders and Scientists Make pre-COP26 Appeal \(October 5, 2021\)](#)

[Earth to COP: A Video Message](#)



Migrant Workers Justice

By Rufina Saeni

Rufina is a Seneca Social Service Worker Immigrant and Refugees Program student whose field placement is with our Ministry for Social Justice, Peace, and Creation Care.

Last night, I was making a salad for my family's dinner with the lettuce I picked up from my neighborhood grocery store. Lately, I have intentionally bought produce grown in Ontario to support the local agriculture and reduce greenhouse gas emissions related to product transportation.

While I was cutting this nutritious vegetable, I began to wonder: who was the migrant worker who harvested it? Were they paid fairly? Did they endure unfair or abusive treatment?

As part of my field placement, I gather and document cases of migrant workers in abusive work situations.

Upon hearing migrant workers' stories of widespread injustice and exploitation, I found myself asking: why do the workers endure such treatment? After some research, it became clear that parts of the Temporary Foreign Worker Program (TFWP) are designed to facilitate this exploitation.

The employer-specific work permit prevents workers from changing employers.



Continued next page.

Migrant Workers Justice (cont'd)

Every Canadian worker has the right to labour mobility. But for migrant workers, employer-specific work permits restrict them to one employer only, even if they may be suffering from mistreatment, even if they may be working unpaid.

Since the late 19th century, labour migration through the TFWP has seen predominantly racialized workers leaving their families behind every year to work low paid jobs in our country. Once in Canada, workers experience repetitive psychological, physical, and financial abuse by owners and supervisors. There are countless reports of workers having to share tiny and unsanitary living spaces.

In 2020, these workers were deemed 'essential' enough to continue to migrate and work when the rest of the country was locked down. Many were placed in situations where safe physical distancing was impossible and several workers died.

The employer-specific work permit poses significant barriers for workers seeking to improve their situations. As a solution, the government of Canada introduced the Open Work Permit for Vulnerable Workers (OWP-V). It allows abused or at-risk workers to leave and find another employer. However, a recent study, *Band-aid on a bullet wound*, revealed many shortcomings in this program.

To successfully apply for an open work permit, applicants must first have an employer-specific work permit, meaning they are vulnerable to reprisals should they try to change employers under this program. Migrant workers must provide evidence of employer abuse that can be impossible for them to acquire. The application requires strong English or French skills to complete, leaving applicants dependent on translators and other supports that can be beyond reach.

The report concluded that the OWP-V was an inadequate to facilitate labour mobility.

Concluded next page.

Migrant Workers Justice (cont'd)

Most of us in Canada buy food knowing little or nothing about where it is grown or who grows it.

There is so much to choose from in our local grocery stores that we barely think about the challenges migrant workers face by coming to respond to Canada's workforce shortages. Migrants are working not only in agriculture but in any industry experiencing labour shortages.

I must ask: what is the morally acceptable number of exploited migrant workers for us as Canadians

before we mobilize in action? 50 workers? 20,000 workers? 100,000 workers?

As a human being and a Christian, I cannot accept those injustices. I will urge our government to abolish the employer-specific work permit and allow workers the labour mobility that most of us have. I have signed a petition urging politicians to grant status for all migrant workers. In the spirit of December 18, International Migrants Day, I invite you to do the same.

Resource Links

Please consider adding your name to the *Status for All* petition at migrantrights.ca/status-for-all

You can [click here](#) to read *Band-aid on a bullet wound*.



Truth and Reconciliation in Fort St. James, British Columbia

Sister Divinia Pedro's ministry is in Fort St. James as a pastoral assistant at Our Lady of the Snows Parish. She ministers to a community that is 80 per cent Indigenous. Here, she shares her recent experiences with us.



As a pastoral assistant since 2010, I serve a community that includes the Carrier First Nations people of Binche Whut'en, Nak'azdli, Tl'azt'en and Yekooche. When I first arrived here in Fort St. James, I knew little about the residential school system, but I learned soon enough from listening to some people in the communities I serve.

It took me awhile to be accepted by some of our first nations people in the places I serve. Much of this is due to the intergenerational effects of the residential schools which have led to grief, loss, and addiction to drugs and alcohol. I meet women who struggle with addiction issues

and some suffer from violent relationships. There was a time when I approached a woman sitting outside the grocery store. I had met her before; I told her I wanted to help her more. "What else do you want me to do to help you?"

She stood up and told me: "You've done it all Sister. You accept me and you love me. Now give me a hug." And I did. I recognize more deeply then that my call is to journey with them, to console them, to listen, and to love them by sharing our charism of unifying and reconciling love.

Continued next page.

Truth and Reconciliation (cont'd)

Father Frank Salmon, OMI, and I are often called to their homes, to the hospital, sometimes even in the evening or after midnight, when someone is ill, or in pain, or in need of our presence and comfort. We try our best not to refuse anyone. We are there to walk with them in their joy and pain.

The church is full at most funerals. Father Frank and I have seen a lot of deaths during the pandemic, some from illness and some from overdose and suicide. Wearing a mask and face shield at times, I give a hug to some surviving family members who are grieving.

Like our first Sisters who faced the epidemic of their time, we now face the COVID-19 pandemic. I am

fully vaccinated. As a Sister of St. Joseph of Toronto, I respond to the needs of the people, vaccinated or not.

On one occasion, I spoke to a senior recovering from COVID only to discover that she was not vaccinated at all. Another time, I was asked to bless a homeless shelter after an overdose. Although I knew there was COVID there, I went anyway, taking the necessary precautions and living our charism of unifying love by blessing the shelter with holy water.

One time at a wake, I listened to an Indigenous man who told me: “The Catholic Church, your church, is the cause of all the poverty that we experience.”

After he finished, I responded by saying: “That is why I am here and why Father Frank is also here in this parish and in this community: to serve the people with love and to apologize for the role of the church in the history of colonialism and racism.”

I saw him again at an Addictions Awareness Week healing workshop and he expressed the same sentiment about poverty caused by the Catholic Church. I shared with the group a bit of my life growing up poor in the Philippines. I did not show anger; instead, I was attentive and gentle.

Concluded next page.

Truth and Reconciliation (cont'd)

The next time I saw him, he greeted me and was friendly and respectful.

One of the things our First Nations brothers and sisters complain about is the loss of their language due to residential schools.

Father Frank and I seek to support them by praying with them the Stations of the Cross in Carrier on Fridays in Lent, and including the Carrier versions of Our Father, Hail Mary, and Glory Be in the hymn and prayer books we use at wakes. They drum and sing healing songs at funerals.

At Sunday masses, we encourage and support our Indigenous brothers and sisters to sing and pray in their own language. Since

I have been here for 10 years now, I have learned to drum, sing and read their prayers in Carrier language.



A lesson I learned from my time here: I must always speak to people in a way that is inviting but not demanding. I never say to an Indigenous person, “See you at Mass” or “See you at church.” It implies they are required to attend. Instead, I say, “There is Mass tomorrow” and then add, “And you

are welcome.”

I understand that there is great trauma in this community and a need for openness and understanding. I am not here to change the people in Fort St. James. I am here to journey with them.

Because the stories I have heard are truly painful, it has been clear to me that we must spend a great deal more time hearing and recognizing truth before we can arrive at healing and reconciliation.

For further reflection

Consider signing up for *Listening to Indigenous Voices: Dialogue Circles* which begins on January 19. You can [click here](#) for full details.

Tread Softly...

In this column, Cécilia Meunier encourages us to consider how small changes can have an impact.

Life is in the falling leaves. That small red leaf that dances its way to the ground tells a story, a story about life, death and the journey we are all on. The leaf lives a short time and then as the sun sets on summer, it dies and falls but its journey does not end. As it decomposes, it protects, nourishes and replenishes the earth. The leaf is infused with magical power.

We too are imbued with magical powers. As the leaf must let go of the branch to fulfill its role, we are entreated to relinquish our past practices and espouse those that will re-establish harmony with Mother Earth. But where do we begin?

We begin with an awareness that our smallest actions have ramifications.

Water is indispensable. Repairing leaky faucets and turning off water while brushing teeth decreases our consumption of this life-sustaining resource. Reusable bags are gentler on the environment than plastic. Avoiding disposable plates, cutlery, and napkins reduces the burden on our planet. Composting enriches the soil with essential nutrients and bacteria, and puts our household and garden waste to work.

Plant a tree. Trees remove sulphur dioxide, nitrogen oxides and small particles from the air. Trees, and their leaves, are vital to our planet. Our actions make a world of difference.



Continued next page.

Tread Softly... (cont'd)

In Cameroon, malaria, spread by mosquitoes, continues to be endemic and the first major cause of morbidity and mortality in children under five. The mosquito net you buy could save a life. One in ten people worldwide live without clean water. Purified water will

transform the lives of villagers in Mali. We are empowered to inspire others with our gifts at Christmas and throughout the year.

We share the magical power of the leaf in our role as caretakers of the life force. As we realize that every

action matters, as we step softly, as we weigh each decision judiciously, we create a ripple of change that affects the entire living web we call home. Every deliberate step we take brings us closer into harmony with all creation.



For gifts this Christmas, consider:

Gifts where the proceeds support international aid charity
chalice.ca/gift-catalogue

A donation to Canadian Physicians for Aid and Relief
cpar.ca

Sustainable & Ethical Products
donegood.co

Sustainable Clothing
tentree.ca

Looking Back on Creation Care in 2021

By Sabrina Chiefari, CSJ Creation Care Animator

2021 was a special year with numerous key developments in creation care and social justice. Join me in looking back at the past year.



January

The first month of 2021 continued the [Laudato Si' Year](#) that began in 2020. The UN also launched its [Ecosystem Restoration 2021 – 2030](#) movement, a rallying cry to revive and restore our planet's damaged ecosystems.



February

Charles, Prince of Wales, launched the [February Half Term Challenge](#) where children were encouraged to plant seeds, create art from natural materials, and to become closer to their local environment.



March

On March 5, the Government of Canada announced the [Federal Greenhouse Gas Offset System](#) to create opportunities for businesses to earn revenue from greenhouse gas reductions and removals.

Continued next page.

Creation Care in 2021 (cont'd)

March (cont'd)

Global Days of Climate action resumed in March, with organizations like [GreenFaith](#) and [Fridays for Future](#) hosting events across the globe. [World Wildlife Fund's EarthHour](#) was record-breaking this year, with 192 countries and territories participating, and billions of online engagements.



April

Earth Day on April 22 opened with a [video message from Pope Francis](#).



May

May 16 – 25 was [Laudato Si' Week](#), a celebration of the Catholic Church's journey to ecological conversion and closing out the Laudato Si' Year. Also this month, the Vatican Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development announced the [Laudato Si' Action Platform](#).



June

On June 22, the [United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples](#) became law in Canada.



Continued next page.

Creation Care in 2021 (cont'd)

July

From July 13 – 15, Creighton University and the Catholic Climate Covenant held a [conference series on Laudato Si'](#).

On July 20, Canada launched its program in [Just Transition engagement](#), asking Canadians to share their views on adapting to a net-zero carbon economy.

On July 28, the Global Catholic Climate Movement changed its name: it is now the [Laudato Si' Movement](#).



August

On August 9, the [Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change](#) released a report on how climate change is widespread, rapid and intensifying.

On August 12, Catholic Conscience launched its webinar series, [The Beauty of Creation](#), focusing on the role of nature in our spiritual lives.



September

On September 1, Pope Francis, Ecumenical Patriarch and the Archbishop of Canterbury released [a joint message for the Protection of Creation](#) as the Season of Creation got underway. The pre-COP Youth Summit also took place in Milan.



Concluded next page.

Creation Care in 2021 (cont'd)

October

The Feast Day of St. Francis, October 4, marking the end of the Season of Creation, also saw the Vatican host a [pre-COP gathering](#) in the hopes of “raising ambitions” for the conference.

On October 16, the [eighth Parliament of the World's Religions was held virtually](#), gathering the world's global interfaith movement together. This was followed up by a week of global, multi-religious action from October 17 - 25 called [Faiths 4 Climate Justice](#). Then, on October 26, a record [72 faith institutions divested from fossil fuels](#). This encompassed more than \$4.2 billion in assets, the largest joint-divestment in history.

On October 30, For the Love of Creation held a [Fall Symposium on Creation Care](#). On October 31, the [UN Climate Change Conference \(COP26\)](#) began and continued to November 12.



November

During this month, the [Beyond Oil and Gas Alliance](#), led by Costa Rica and Denmark, saw six full members, including Quebec, announced during COP26. This is the first government alliance of its kind committing to the phasing out of oil and gas production.

On November 13, the UN Climate Change Conference issued the [Glasgow Climate Pact](#). The next day, to coincide with the World Day of the Poor, the [Laudato Si' Action Platform](#) was officially launched.



**As we look to the next year, let us continue the forward momentum
in protecting and healing our shared home.**

Subscribe to Our Newsletter

We hope this newsletter will inspire our readers to listen, learn and act to create a just and equitable world. The next issue will be released in Spring 2022.

Signing Up

Please visit csj-to.ca/journeyforjusticesignup to subscribe to our next issue.

Get in Touch

If you have any suggestions or want to connect with us, you can email us at vkalaydzhieva@csj-to.ca.

Land Acknowledgement

The Sisters of St Joseph arrived in Toronto 170 years ago. As an order of Catholic women religious, our charism to care for the dear neighbour led us from Le Puy-en-Velay, France to the United States, and finally here to Toronto.

For our 170th anniversary, we are Celebrating our Oneness with God, Creation & Neighbour.

We acknowledge that Tkaronto has been a home to many nations since time immemorial. These include the Huron-Wendat and Petun First Nations, the Seneca, and the Mississaugas of the Credit River.

These nations were irrevocably harmed by the arrival of European settlers who have systematically tried to erase these indigenous communities and their teachings.

In our ongoing journey towards reconciliation, we are relearning the history of this country and this land, critically examining the ways we have benefitted from systemic racism and the role the Catholic church has played in systems of oppression in Canada.

We are committed to redressing these harms.



Journey for Justice
Listen! Learn! Act!

From the Ministry for Social Justice, Peace, and Creation Care



SISTERS *of* ST. JOSEPH *of* TORONTO