



Compassion

Faith doing justice in the Central and Southern Province...and beyond

April 2019

Earth Day 2019

April 22, 2019 marks the 49th anniversary of Earth Day, a secular celebration that many faith communities have incorporated into their annual calendars for awareness and action. Catholic Climate Covenant is joining with the Earth Day Network in this year's campaign to [Protect Our Species](#).

Human activity (climate change, deforestation, habitat loss, trafficking and poaching, unsustainable agriculture, pollution and pesticides) is directly linked to the rapid reduction of plant and wildlife populations throughout our common home. Humans are the main drivers of species loss but can also be the main protectors of all of God's creation.

Because April 22 is also Easter Monday, the Catholic Climate Covenant is encouraging Catholic groups to celebrate Earth Day at any time during the Easter Season – but definitely celebrate it! They have created a program that explores the scriptural and ethical dimensions of our call to be stewards of all of God's creation, examine the importance of biodiversity and species loss, and discuss how we, as Catholics, must respond. The one-hour educational program includes a Facilitator Guide (with all the instructions to host an Earth Day educational event) and a Program Guide (for participants) with prayers, readings, a short video, and suggested activities. The program may be used by a parish, school, youth group, university, religious community, or any group interested in exploring how we as Catholics can work individually and collectively to answer the call to “respect the particular goodness of every creature, to avoid any disordered use of things which would be in contempt of the Creator and would bring disastrous consequences for human beings and their environment.”

Download the 2019 Earth Day Program



All Creation Gives God Praise: Protecting Biodiversity in a Time of Climate Crisis

New Home for Education for Justice Website

After its founding and many years under the auspice of the Center of Concern, the Education for Justice Website (EFJ) recently found a new home with the Ignatian Solidarity Network. Education for Justice is a digital subscription membership service that provides resources for those who wish to study, teach, and practice Catholic social tradition. EFJ offers members access to a growing library of thousands of text-based and multimedia resources, a monthly e-newsletter, and other benefits to help them approach the world's headlines through a faith and justice lens. This library includes prayers and prayer services, bulletin inserts, lectionary reflections, film discussion guides, lesson plans – and much more! Subscription levels range from \$58 for one person to \$500 for up to fifty usernames. Learn more at: educationforjustice.org.

Action Alert on the “Remain In Mexico Policy”

In January 2019, the Department of Homeland Security issued new policy guidance for “Migrant Protection Protocols.” Under the new *Remain in Mexico* policy, certain asylum seekers, including families and children, who arrive by land at the U.S.-Mexico border (both at and between official ports of entry) and who pass a credible fear screening with a U.S. asylum officer (a first step in the process for requesting asylum) are sent to Mexico to await their asylum hearing in U.S. immigration courts. This process could take months during which people are living in dangerous and inadequate conditions.

This past week, the application of that policy was extended to the El Paso region. While the impacts are still evolving there, the potential could be catastrophic for asylum seekers who must seek assistance while trying to navigate the asylum process with even more limited access to legal assistance. In addition, there is grave concern about the capacity of humanitarian organizations in Mexico to respond to further influxes of families and individuals seeking assistance, particularly for extended periods of time.

Earlier this month, following a three-day meeting in El Paso, Texas, the Catholic bishops of dioceses along the Texas portion of the U.S.-Mexico border and their Mexican counterparts (often referred to as the Tex-Mex Bishops) issued a [statement](#) expressing concerns regarding U.S. border policy and “complete disagreement” with the Trump Administration's “Remain in Mexico” policy. The U.S. Conference of Catholic

Bishops also issued a [statement](#) expressing concern and amplifying the voice of the Tex-Mex Bishops.

The Ignatian Solidarity Network is urging people to contact Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Secretary Kirstjen Nielsen to ask DHS to revoke the Remain in Mexico Policy and permit asylum seekers presenting themselves at the US-Mexico border to have the opportunity to remain in the United States for the adjudication of their asylum claims. Please take a minute (*really that's all it takes!*) to do so by clicking here - <https://ignatiansolidarity.net/blog/2019/03/22/action-alert-remain-in-mexico/>

Cyclone Idai: Realities and Response

On March 14, 2019, Cyclone Idai, with wind speeds of over 106 miles per hour and rainfall of up to 16 inches in a day made landfall at Beira, moving on into eastern Zimbabwe and Malawi. As of March 22, it was estimated that more than 500 people lost their lives across three African countries, while 1.7 million have been affected. The number of dead is expected to rise as water recedes and bodies are retrieved.

Fr. A.E. Orobator, SJ, the president of the Jesuit Conference of Africa and Madagascar, said in a recent statement:

The Jesuits in Africa and Madagascar join the rest of Africa and the world in mourning the loss, interruption and destruction of lives and livelihoods caused by Cyclone Idai. The scale of devastation it caused is enormous. 90% of the city of Beira is reported to have been destroyed, floods have wiped out entire villages, key infrastructure such as roads, hospitals, schools, have been destroyed. The devastation has made the affected areas difficult to access, hampering aid efforts by individuals and organizations. The scale of the destruction can thus only be fully ascertained later once these communities are accessible.... [But] We are in

close solidarity with the communities that have been affected. The Jesuits in Zimbabwe, Mozambique, South Africa, Zambia and Malawi have already initiated campaigns and appeals to raise resources needed to bring relief to these communities.... The response to the plight of the affected people, especially within Catholic circles, has been overwhelming. Such moments help us restore our faith in humanity."

Jesuit Refugee Services has reported that the storm has also impacted refugees they are serving in the area. The Tongogara refugee camp located near Chipinge, Zimbabwe is home to more than 10,000 refugees, the majority of whom have fled from the Democratic Republic of Congo. Cyclone Idai caused massive damage in the camp, which sits in a low-lying area next to a river. The families and individuals impacted have already suffered greatly, fleeing from their home countries in search of safety and security.

JRS is seeking donations to help them rebuild and continue their work to accompany, serve and advocate for refugees and asylum seekers in the Tongogara Refugee Camp and throughout Southern Africa. [Donate here.](#)

Donations to help Cyclone Idai victims can also be made through [Catholic Relief Services.](#)

