

Headline: Pope Francis and climate change

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For the Movement for Climate Justice in the country, Pope Francis' visit highlighted the need for urgent climate actions both at the international and national arenas.

In his opening speech in Malacañang, the "People's Pope" laid out his main intention in coming to the Philippines: "In a particular way, this visit is meant to express my closeness to our brothers and sisters who endured the suffering, loss and devastation caused by Typhoon 'Yolanda'."

The movement is elated at how the Pope went beyond the pastoral, faith-based themes, thus exceeding our expectations; he also talked about social justice, respect for human dignity, care for the poor and the integrity of creation.

Pushing the discourse further, the Pope laid out a general framework that should be pursued domestically as the country confronts the challenges posed by climate change.

According to the Pope, "Today the Philippines, together with many other countries in Asia, faces the challenge of building on solid foundations a modern society—a society respectful of authentic human values, protective of our God-given human dignity and rights, and ready to confront new and complex political and ethical questions."

Pope Francis also elaborated on the role of governments and leaders in the face of this biggest challenge besetting the country vis-à-vis poverty and social ills. "As many voices in your nation have pointed out, it is now, more than ever, necessary that political leaders be outstanding for honesty, integrity and commitment to the common good. In this way they will help preserve the rich human and natural resources with which God has blessed this country. Thus will they be able to marshal the moral resources needed to face the demands of the present, and to pass on to coming generations a society of authentic justice, solidarity and peace," he said.

This provides us the much-needed boost and impetus in defining our intervention in the United Nations Climate Change Conference in Paris this year. It is not a secret that the Pope will come up with an encyclical on ecology which has major elements on the Church's position on climate change. We can only hope for more of the Pope's role in coming up with a new, more sound, fair, ambitious and science-based deal in Paris.

Our joint statement with the Catholic Bishop's Conference of the Philippines—National Secretariat for Social Actions on the occasion of the Pope's visit is but a start of the joint effort of the Catholic Church and the Movement for Climate Justice in the country, as we head for Paris and take the necessary steps that should be taken domestically to squarely face the challenges posed by climate change.

—GERRY ARANCES,

national coordinator,

Philippine Movement

for Climate Justice

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