

## **Pope's climate change stance aimed at influencing Paris COP 21 talks**

Written by Giovanni La Via on 29 June 2015 in Opinion  
Opinion

Pope Francis's new encyclical on climate change comes at a critical moment in the fight against climate change, argues Giovanni La Via.



"Laudato Sì", Pope Francis's new encyclical on climate change, the environment, and human ecology, published earlier this month, appeals to all of us to engage in "a new dialogue about how we are shaping the future of our planet".

This call and the values contained within the encyclical are to be welcomed.

Climate change is already upon us, as the Pope has recognised and climate scientists have concluded. It is one of the greatest risks facing the world, as record greenhouse gas emissions continue to raise average global temperatures, leading to more frequent extreme weather events such as heat waves and changing rainfall patterns.

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Those who continue to downplay the issue are ignoring a clear and harsh reality that is already being felt across Europe and the rest of the world.

The Holy Father has very deliberately released his encyclical at this particular time, just six months before the COP 21 international climate summit in Paris which will frame global climate action beyond 2020.

The moral imperative to act contained within the encyclical has the strength and authority to galvanise the global community into laying the foundations for an ambitious global agreement as well as highlighting a new path for economic growth which recognises our planet as a gift and respects both human dignity and the natural environment.

Encyclicals have been used in the past by the Catholic Church to make a critical impact across the world on sensitive social issues.

At the end of the nineteenth century, the focus was on the struggle of workers in the industrial revolution, and the growing threat of class conflict; today, it is the protection of our environment, fostering sustainable economic growth and tackling the social issues exacerbated by climate change.

This is also a position upheld by the European People's Party, whose core value is human dignity, and my own centre-right party in Italy.

Here, in the EU, we are already leading the global fight against climate change, but the message from the encyclical is that we need to do much better.

Earlier this month, the European parliament's environment, public health and food safety committee, which I chair, called on the EU to make an even more ambitious pledge for climate action, under a Paris agreement, to move towards a fairer, greener and more efficient and prosperous European economy.

We must also continue to heed the Holy Father's call for a "healthy" politics, "capable of reforming and coordinating institutions, promoting best practices and overcoming undue pressure and bureaucratic inertia". Concrete actions must be achieved without delay.

If they are not, we will be faced with concrete repercussions: noting the current threat to biodiversity, for example, the Pope writes that "each year sees the disappearance of thousands of plant and animal species which we will never know, which our children will never see, because they have been lost for ever".

I am certain that the encyclical will be able to stir the consciences of my fellow politicians and influence our upcoming decisions at this crucial time: Europe must continue to show leadership and work closely with others, with strong diplomatic efforts, to reach an ambitious agreement in Paris in December able to protect a "common home" we can be proud to leave future generations.

## About the author

Giovanni La Via (European People's Party, Italy) is chair of parliament's environment, public health and food safety committee

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