

COP26 – Why is it important?

What kind of world do we want to leave to those who come after us, to children who are now growing up? (Pope Francis – Laudato Sii)

Jim Roarty writes: ‘Everyone, other than those who also think that the Earth is flat, accepts that climate change is happening, and that it is happening because of the impact of human beings on our atmosphere. Increasing levels of carbon dioxide, methane and other greenhouse gases (gases which act like a greenhouse in retaining the sun’s heat in the Earth’s atmosphere) are resulting in an overall warming of our planet. Were it simply a degree or two more with no other side effects that would be quite nice, particularly here in Scotland!’

The reality is that increased heat in our climate brings much higher level of volatility, in other words, more extreme weather variations. The scientists have been predicting this for years and it is happening – more hurricanes, more rainstorms, more droughts, more extreme temperatures leading to wildfires devastating huge areas of our world. And if the increase in global average temperatures is not checked, there is much worse to come - increased drought, floods washing away topsoil, rising sea levels because of the melting of the huge Antarctic and Greenland ice sheets (40% of the world’s population live on or near the coast) will drive levels of famine and therefore movements of people creating a refugee/immigration problem such as we have never seen before. The reality is that, even now, with relatively low levels of global warming, people are dying on every continent because of extreme weather, and it is only going to get worse

The importance of COP26 is that we **can** halt the progress of climate change. The world’s governments, acting together and using the scientific evidence available to us, can make the difficult decisions - which will be difficult for them because these decisions will be difficult for us, the electorate – that can halt the progress of climate change and help protect our planet not just for ourselves but for our children, and their children.

At our weekend Masses and in our private prayers, let us join, therefore, with the millions of others around the world praying for the success of the vital conference.

Many things have to change course, but it is we human beings above all who need to change (Pope Francis – Laudato Sii)’