



**THE GLOBAL CATHOLIC
CLIMATE MOVEMENT**



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

September 26, 2017

Media contact:

GCC: Cecilia Dall'Oglio, cecilia@catholicclimatemovement.global, +393331271680

JPEuropa: Stefan Lunte, stefan.lunte@comece, +33680179422

European Justice and Peace Commissions Unite in solidarity for Care of Creation



The Conference of European Justice and Peace Commissions is promoting care for Creation as part of its international workshop and general assembly meeting.

The Conference of European Justice and Peace Commissions is a network of 31 national Justice and Peace Commissions, which are mandated by their bishops' conferences. The gathering, which is themed “On Spiritual Roots and Political Fruits,” is a pilgrimage for justice and peace and care of Creation, 22-25 September. It took place at the Taizé monastic community. Cardinal Peter Turkson, Prefect of the Dicastery for the Promotion of Integral Human Development, attended the first two days of the gathering, and Rev. Claire Sixte-Gateuille, National Secretary for International relations of The United Protestant Church in France and delegate of CEC addressed the audience as well.

Cecilia Dall'Oglio, Italian Justice and Peace Commission and GCCM European Manger, introduced the symbolic action for Season of Creation and delegates of National commissions of Justice and Peace, the attending bishops and the brothers of Taizé physically enacted their commitment to care for Creation. All removed their shoes, standing barefoot on Earth to demonstrate radical renewal of a connection with Creation. Participants then placed soil taken from wounded sites in their countries into a container, symbolizing unity in the face of common social and environmental devastation.

Each contribution of soil was meaningful. For example, the German Commission brought soil from the UN Climate Secretariat in Bonn as a sign of encouragement to the UN climate negotiators. The Portuguese Commission brought soil from central Portugal, which was devastated by wildfires that were driven in part by climate change. The Luxembourgish Commission brought soil that has been contaminated by industrial pollution and the use of agricultural fertilisers and pesticides and the Albanian commission brought soil from the former communist prison of Spaç in Albania.

A description of each commission's soil contribution follows.

Mgr. Jean-Claude Hollerich, Archbishop of Luxembourg and President of the Conference of European Justice and Peace Commissions said: 'The event was a moving show of solidarity with the cry of the Earth and the cry of the poor. The European Justice and Peace commissions, are strongly engaged in the worldwide task of implementing the thoughts and spirit of Laudato Si''.

Brother Alois, Prior of the Taizé Community, prayed:

'God of all love, we entrust to you the victims of violence, of injustice, and of natural disasters. Inspire us to act to alleviate suffering, beginning with the people closest to us. You ask us to be creators of justice and peace among human beings, and to care for your creation. You listen to the cry of the very poor. Enable us to be close to them, and to hope with them. And may we be able all together to sing the new song of your love.'

Tomás Insua, Executive Director of Global Catholic Climate Movement, which helped organize the symbolic action, encouraged the event by saying: 'The participants physically demonstrating our intimate relationship with Creation and our united strength as we care for it together was a strong statement. While people around the world continue to suffer from unusually strong hurricanes, monsoons, and droughts, it is important that social and environmental protection be entwined with our work on justice and peace.'

[Global Catholic Climate Movement](#) is a community of over 400 member organizations and thousands of Catholics responding to Pope Francis' call to action in the Laudato Si' encyclical.

###

Contributions of soil from European Justice and Peace Commissions

The Albanian JP Commission brought soil from Spaç, Albania

This soil has been taken from the former communist prison of Spaç in Albania. It is a remote and desolate

location surrounded all around by mountain tops. The prison of Spaç was one of the most cruel instruments of oppression during the times of communist dictatorship in Albania.

It was functional from 1968 to 1989. The prisoners were subjected to inhuman treatment and forced labour in the mine adjacent to the prison. The place became notorious for being the favourite destination of the regime to send political opponents. A great number of catholic priests, some of them among the recently canonized martyrs, have suffered and died there. Nowadays efforts are being made to turn into a museum with the purpose to commemorate the victims and to pass down history to the new generations so the mistakes of the past will not be repeated at greater cost.

The Justice and Peace Commission of Albania, in collaboration with Renovabis and Maximilian Kolbe Foundation, is playing a leading role in this initiative.

The Belgian JP Commission, Flanders, brought soil from the Flanders region, Belgium

Knowing that 1 of every 7 of our inhabitants experience social exclusion or poverty, in a rich country with one of the highest ecological footprints of the world, the Justice and Peace Network of Flanders brings soil of the whole region, thus handing over more than 150 registered moments of prayer during this Season of Creation, and the efforts of over 180 groups, parishes, schools, movements, organizations and religious institutions that became partner of Climate Network Flanders by making a concrete climate plan and adding it to the website of Ecokerk.

The Belgian JP Commission, Francophone, brought soil from Burundi, Africa

Through its Central Africa Working Group, Justice and Peace conducts policy analysis, advocacy and awareness work in Belgium on the situation in Burundi. A specific issue on which Justice and Peace has recently been working is the one of the conflict minerals, raising awareness on human rights violations and environmental degradation perpetrated for the control of natural resources essential for the production of new technologies (tin, tantalum, gold)

The Czech JP Commission brought soil from D8 motorway, Czech Republic

Grounding of the D8 motorway from Prague to Germany. Mining in the quarry near Lovosice caused burial of a part of the already built highway. During construction, many rules were not respected in the perception of the landscape itself. It is built where our grandfathers and grand-grandfathers would never build a motorway in the past due to landscape and historical uniqueness, and regardless of the patterns they have seen in some areas for hundreds of thousands of years.

The French JP Commission brought soil from disasters that concern us all, worldwide

Faced with the disasters that concern us all, the church in France wants to commit itself to acting in a concrete way and to participate in a genuine alert and action movement. The "Green Church" label is launched. It covers parishes, movements, etc. It is about promoting the one hand ecological practices in the premises, celebrations etc. and on the other hand to inform, to animate, to awaken on the ecological realities.

The German JP Commission brought soil from Bonn, Germany UN Climate Secretariat

The 23rd Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP 23) will take place in Bonn from 6 to 17 November 2017. The conference is organized by the Bonn-based UN Climate Secretariat (UNFCCC) and will be convened under the presidency of Fiji.

“The cry of the earth and the cry of the poor“ can be heard on Fiji islands more directly, but it finds resonance also in the work of the UN Climate Secretariat (UNFCCC) – Thanks to God! The Ecumenical pilgrimage to Paris in autumn 2015 (En marche!) stopped at points of present suffering and points of hope. Pilgrims from all over Europe and JP held a service with the staff of UNFCCC in front of their office,

reminding the injuries to creation. Since then backdrops and problems have risen. By this symbolic action, we want to give a sign of solidarity and encouragement to staff members of UNFCC.

The Italian JP Commission brought soil from Cagliari and Vesuvio, Italy

From Cagliari, where the 48th Social Week will be held in October, entitled "The work we want to be free, creative, participative and solid", we bring the soil of a land that seems to have no more opportunities to offer to its own young people. This land has been made wet with the tears of all young unemployed people who are losing themselves, after losing all their dreams and hope. A land where you can also see the beauty of Creation that could also offer job opportunities in sustainable tourism and development.

From Campania we bring ash from the Vesuvius volcano. This is what remains of the "Land of fires," which is still burning, fed by the dirty paper of money, the idol of all sorts of mafia.

The Luxembourgish JP Commission brought soil from Luxembourg

We bring soil contaminated by industrial pollution and the use of agricultural fertilisers and pesticides, thereby injuring creation and limiting sources of drinking water.

Also on the same soil of Luxembourg, human dignity has also been injured by public letters addressed to politicians that contain descriptions of the beggars who have come from Eastern Europe that qualify them as scum. An appropriate reaction has not been given in response to this shameful public display of humiliation.

The Maltese JP Commission brought soil from Maghtab, Malta

We bring soil from Maghtab, where years of waste dumping and landfilling have transformed the face of the earth, and which reminds us of the urgent need to change the ways how we live and consume.

The Portuguese JP Commission brought soil from central Portugal

In the last summer Portugal was devastated by a large amount of fires. In some regions about 80% of the forest area was burned. In this period, the burned area in Portugal was about one half of the whole burned area in the European Union. With this comes most severe human, ecological and economic damages.

There are several causes for this situation, but all of them concern a certain kind of lack of care for the creation. And climate change will contribute to aggravate the problem in the future. This is a piece of burned land from central Portugal

The Scottish JP Commission brought soil from the shores of Gareloch, Scotland.

The Scottish Justice & Peace Commission bring the soil of the shores of the Gareloch, Scotland where the shore and water have been polluted and spoiled by litter and contaminants."

The Slovak JP Commission brought soil from Petržalka (part of Bratislava city), Slovakia

Petržalka, a big housing estate of the capital Bratislava has been built in 1980s as a town without God and with little respect to the environment, gardens destroyed and no parks and churches planned. In the past year Petržalka is developing, new parks and zones for rest have been built and several churches too, after 1990. In 2003 we had the honor to host an open air Holy mass in the middle of Petržalka where the Saint John Paul II. has said our martyrs from the communist time blessed. On September 30th we will have again a big celebration in the same place when Titus Zeman, a salesian priest will be said blessed. He has helped to other priests and seminarists to escape the border of communist Czechoslovakia to be able to study in Italy. He was tortured and sentenced to years in prison because of this.

The Slovenian JP Commission brought soil from an old zinc factory in Celje, Slovenia

In the last 200 years, the area of Old Cinkarna Celje has been the site of heavy metallurgical waste with disposal of zinc waste, ore and tar. In addition, extra pollution was happened by the non-selective demolition of industrial facilities in 2005, after which the area became a wild dumping ground for construction waste. In the soil there are high levels of: lead, zinc and cadmium, in some cases arsenic, molybdenum, copper, sulphate and high tar content. In addition under this place there is a huge mass grave – about 10.000 victims killed during the communist revolution in 1945-46.

La Selva del Camp and l'Albiol Justice and Peace commission brought soil from Tarragona, in the south of Catalonia, Spain

In our territory, we have a serious problem of air contamination by the petrochemical industries, nuclear power stations and others. This provokes an increase of cancer, respiratory problems and masculine infertility.

The Swiss JP Commission brought soil from Zurig, Switzerland

Zug is a center of international trade of commodities. The injury to creation doesn't take place here - but trading leads in many places in the south to destruction of natural resources and human dignity. Members of our commission will bring some soil from a place that stands for peace and political influence of christian spirituality: Niklaus von Flüe is the national saint of Switzerland and was born 600 years ago. His official feast is the 25th of September, during the Taizé meeting. He was a very important person, a humble a farmer and politician who contributed to a peace agreement of the Swiss cantons 550 years ago.

And finally, on the behalf of all the other Commissions:

"Justice and Peace Europe" brought soil from BOIS NOIR, Allier/Loire, France

In BOIS NOIR an uranium mine was exploited from 1954 – 1980. Today there is an artificial lake filled with 1.3 million tons of mine tailings, nuclear waste and chemical products.

The Global Catholic Climate Movement brought symbolic soil from countries worldwide that are particularly affected by climate change

GCCM offers our prayers for the U.S. and India, countries that have been torn by hurricanes and monsoons that are intense and unpredictable because of climate change. GCCM also offers a prayer for the Amazon, a rainforest in which multinational powers are jostling to take control of natural resources at the expense of local population and biodiversity. To care for this soil, which is wet with tears and blood, is urgently needed, as we seek to live Laudato Si'.