

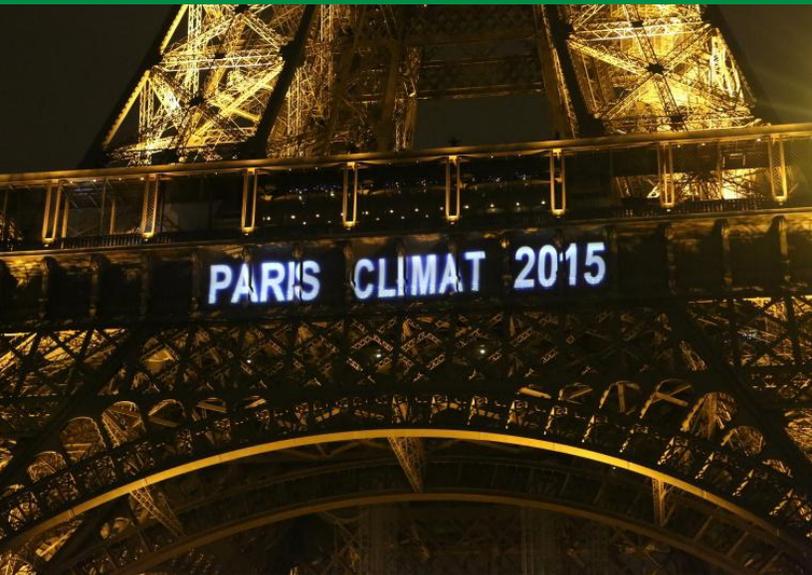
# WHAT IS COP21?

More than two decades ago, members of the United Nations met in Rio de Janeiro for the “Earth Summit.” At this extraordinary gathering, attendees agreed on some basics about climate change and how to tackle its human causes.

This agreement is called the **United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change**, or “UNFCCC.” In it, 196 nations agreed to meet every year to fashion a treaty on how to keep the planet from warming to dangerous levels, and how in the meantime to help affected people.

These nations are “parties” to the UNFCCC agreement. Together we call this gathering of 196 nations the **Conference of Parties**, or **COP** for short.

The COP has been meeting every year since 1994. This November 30, they will convene for the 21<sup>st</sup> time. And that’s where we get the term **COP21**.



## WHY IS COP 21 IMPORTANT?

Although the parties have been meeting for 21 years, we don’t yet have a binding agreement that helps us keep global temperatures within acceptable levels. As everyday people who work closely with nature—like farmers in Africa, fisherpeople in New England, and vulnerable people the world over—notice more impacts to their livelihoods, it is increasingly clear that time is running out.

As people of faith, we are called to protect both Creation and our vulnerable sisters and brothers. COP21 is an important chance to enact those values on a scale that is large enough to make a difference. As Pope Francis said in *Laudato Si'*, “True statecraft is manifest when, in difficult times, we uphold high principles and think of the long-term common good.” (178) It’s important for the international community to come to a fair, decisive agreement on how to confront and alleviate the human causes of climate change.

# WHAT DOES CATHOLIC TEACHING SAY ABOUT CLIMATE CHANGE?

First, the Church has always affirmed the goodness and order of creation. The Church's catechism says, for instance, that we must "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." (CCC 339)

Saint John Paul II, Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI, and Pope Francis built on these foundations. All three spoke about human-caused climate change and urged us to solve it.

Most recently, Pope Francis synthesized the long history of Catholic teaching on ecology and climate change in his encyclical *Laudato Si'*. This official teaching document decisively points to how God's revealed truths help us discern what to do about climate change, and its many related ecological, social, and life issues.



"Once the human being declares independence from reality and behaves with absolute dominion, the very foundations of our life begin to crumble ..." (117)

Catholic teaching from Genesis to June's papal encyclical on ecology strongly supports protecting Creation and vulnerable people by helping solve climate change.

## WHAT CAN YOU DO?

### Sign up to #Pray4cop21

Since September, the Global Catholic Climate Movement has been "praying without ceasing" for a strong and ambitious climate treaty to be adopted at the COP21.

You can join us by signing up for the [#Pray4cop21 prayer chain](#).

Sign up to pray during any 1 hour time slot that works for you. You could pray the rosary, attend Eucharistic adoration, celebrate a special mass, or host a prayer vigil. Parishes or religious communities with perpetual adoration can register here to adopt longer prayer periods.

Be sure to check out our [#Pray4cop21 webpage](#) which has several prayer resources, including a special #Pray4cop21 prayer.

### Tell the U.S. COP21 Negotiator to Stand for Real Change

Todd Stern, the lead U.S. negotiator to COP 21, needs to hear from people of faith. Strong statements from a faith constituency show the U.S. negotiating team that they have the support they need to make the decisions that matter.

We've sent over 3,600 messages to Todd Stern. This is a loud, clear message—and your voice is needed to make it clearer. Tell our leaders that we want a commitment to real change. [Write Todd Stern now](#).



The Global Catholic  
Climate Movement



Catholic Climate Covenant™  
Care for Creation. Care for the Poor.