

**Pastoral Message on the Human Rights Day
Celebrated by the Church in Thailand**

Sunday, November 21, 2021

Human beings have good health because of nature's support

Dear Christian brothers and sisters

On the occasion of human rights day celebrated by the Catholic Church in Thailand on this Sunday, November 21, there are important events that provide us with an opportunity to reflect on the context of human rights with related cause and effect on the relationship between human beings and God's creation and they are the matters of human dignity and rights bestowed by God so that human beings can live in the relationship among human beings and between human being and the creation.

The first issue is the COVID-19 pandemic in the past two years, which is an example of the vulnerability of human life and the economy that human beings are dependent on today. It is a global human health crisis. The main factor behind this pandemic is that balance of the nature is disturbed and the natural ecosystem has deteriorated with climate change. It is an inevitable test of faith and morality between the need to protect human life and dignity and the maintaining of political and economic balance. This has caused inequalities. The poor, the homeless, people of different nationalities, the disabled, the sick, and the elderly become marginalized who did not get any opportunity and are neglected in accessing health care rights, which is one of the fundamental rights important to human survival.

The second issue is a meeting of the States Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP 26) in Glasgow, Scotland, in early November 2021, where the common goal of this meeting is to take action to help keep the global temperature from rising above 1.5 degrees Celsius. Simply put, the world that is home to all of us can't have higher temperatures than this. In

the past five years, efforts by countries to reduce the increase in carbon dioxide, which is the cause of global warming and resulting in climate change, are ineffective. The rising global temperatures cause various extreme natural disasters such as droughts, forest fires, and floods to occur unexpectedly in places that have never experienced before, occur more severe than usual.

Thailand during the past 2 years of the COVID-19 pandemic has also experienced drought, forest fires, and floods, especially during this September - November 2021. Several provinces were affected by the flood that has damaged houses, habitats, and crops. This situation has impacted household income and caused higher prices of goods, and consequently affect the purchasing power of consumers, the overall economic sector, and ultimately the quality of life of the people as a whole, which is the result of the case that human beings do not respect the nature and the environment.

The two crises had yielded very similar effects across the border. Climate change has occurred for more than 20 years and is becoming more and more severe. However, the COVID-19 pandemic happened fast and was also dangerous. Both crises affected every human being, yet people who were affected first and last long time are the poor who have become the poorest because they were abandoned when faced with these two crises at the same time.

Both crises are related to ecological and social justice, which are the values rooted in the ministry of God's creation. All things and human beings that He has created are related and linked. The creation exists to enable human beings to survive fully and carry out the mission of love and service to friends, brothers, and sisters. When human beings benefit from the creation they need to share the responsibility in taking care of, preserving, restoring the nature and the environment in this world that would be handed down to the next generations so that they would be able to survive safely amid a perfect natural environment. This is the right with primary and foremost importance which God has given to human beings.

The time when human health is weak is a time for reflection on nature's weakness. Pope Francis cares deeply and calls on the world community and the Church at all levels to take action in restoring this big home as a safe place with a good, clean and sustainable environment. In addition, he also calls for all Christians to start a new way of living a life that comes from a true ecological conversion so that human society could coexist in a way that does not abandon, neglect, or push anyone to become poorer. Action in our daily life to preserve, restore, slow down to prevent the natural environment from being lost further or more damaged as an effort to address the current human health problems and for the healthy life of everyone in the long run. It is a concrete responsibility that each Christian has to be a true witness.

'There is no time to waste' May this appeal of Pope Francis inspire each and every Christian to join hands in uniting the natural environment with human beings in praising God. Human beings have good and strong health because they get support from nature.

'Oh Lord, please use me as your instrument to build peace between brothers and sisters and all the living creatures in nature to praise You.'



(Bishop Philip Banchong Chaiyara)

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