

FORUM



IMCS - MIEC PAX ROMANA



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THE INTERNATIONAL MOVEMENT OF CATHOLIC STUDENTS- IMCS/MIEC PAX ROMANA

103 Year Old Legacy

Mobilizing students for peace and justice since 1921..

IMCS Pax Romana is a global movement for Catholic students, empowering young people to act for peace, justice, and the integrity of creation. Join us as we build on over a century of Spirituality of Action.

Honouring Pope Francis

Shepherd of the Margins, Prophet of Peace

The future starts today, not tomorrow. – Pope Francis



This March–April 2025 edition of FORUM Magazine is dedicated with deep respect and gratitude to the memory of His Holiness Pope Francis.

A shepherd of simplicity and courage, Pope Francis led with compassion, justice, and an unwavering faith in the power of the young. He called us to be “agents of social change” and “protagonists of the revolution of charity and service” (Christus Vivit, 174), a mission that remains at the heart of IMCS Pax Romana.

During our centenary and especially in the private audience he granted us in 2024, he affirmed our identity as a movement committed to dialogue, peace, and service.

His legacy reminds us that faith is not passive—it is action, solidarity, and hope made real in the world.

Through this dedication, we remember a Pope who walked with the marginalized, listened to the cries of the earth and the poor, and believed deeply in the vocation of young people to lead with conscience and compassion.

Thank you, Pope Francis, for your prophetic voice and your trust in us. May your spirit guide our steps as we continue the journey you helped shape.

International Movement of Catholic Students (IMCS-MIEC) Pax Romana

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IMCS-MIEC Pax Romana

Argho Saimon Sku

Media Coordinator
International Youth Training
Centre (IYTC)

+33 6 37 09 39 32 📞

office.imcsmiec@gmail.com ✉️

www.imcs-miec.org 🌐

FAITH, LEADERSHIP, AND THE JOURNEY OF TRANSFORMATION

In an era marked by rapid change and global challenges, the need for deep reflection and transformative action has never been more urgent. **FORUM Magazine** continues to serve as a platform for young people's intellectual engagement, encouraging thought-provoking discussions on the contemporary issues that shape our world. From faith-based advocacy for social justice to the urgent calls for climate action and peace, the voices we amplify here represent today's **change-makers**.

Faith and **action** are inseparable on the journey of every believer who seeks to create a just and peaceful world. In this edition of *FORUM*, we present stories of **servant leadership**, where young leaders embrace their calling with humility—not seeking power, but striving to serve others. Through the experiences shared by participants in programs like the **Catholic Youth Leadership Academy (CAYLA)**, we witness the true essence of leadership: leadership that listens, serves, and uplifts. These reflections remind us that **leadership** is not defined by titles, but by the journey of **service** to the community and the world at large.

The **CAYLA Program**, an initiative by **IMCS Pax Romana**, the **International Youth Training Centre (IYTC)**, and the **Laudato Si' Pax Romana Centre**, answers **Pope Francis'** call for young people to be "**agents of social change**" and "**protagonists of the revolution of charity and service**" (*Christus Vivit*, 174). This program is more than just leadership training; it is a transformative journey where **faith meets action**, inspiring young leaders to create lasting, positive change on a global scale.

In this issue of *FORUM*, we invite you to reflect on the transformative journeys of these servant leaders and be inspired by their unwavering dedication to creating a more just and compassionate world. Their stories serve as a powerful reminder that every young person has the potential to make a difference—to lead with faith and to serve with love.

As Pope Francis reminds us, "**Youth are not the future. They are the present**" (*Christus Vivit*, 174). Together, let us embrace our shared mission of leadership, service, and faith as we continue to shape a future grounded in **justice, peace, and solidarity**.

ACHIEVING CLIMATE JUSTICE IN AFRICA: A CALL FOR FAIR POLICIES AND RESILIENT COMMUNITIES



Author

Muhwezi Innocent
University of Ghana,

Country:

Uganda

CLIMATE JUSTICE

1. Introduction

"Climate justice is not just an environmental necessity; it is a moral obligation," said Desmond Tutu, underscoring the imperative for equitable solutions to the climate crisis. Climate change disproportionately affects Africa, despite the continent contributing less than 4% of global greenhouse gas emissions (IPCC, 2022). This imbalance highlights the necessity of climate justice, which emphasizes fair policies, community-driven solutions, and equity in international climate finance. As stated by UN Secretary-General António Guterres (2023), "Climate change is the defining issue of our time, and its impacts are being felt most acutely by those who have contributed least to the crisis." Similarly, Wangari Maathai, the renowned Kenyan environmentalist, once said, "We can no longer afford to ignore the realities of climate change and the burdens it places on our most vulnerable communities." Furthermore, environmental justice advocate Robert Bullard (2021) noted, "The fight for climate justice is inseparable from the fight for human rights and equity."

Furthermore, the African Group of Negotiators at COP27 (UNFCCC, 2022) emphasized that Africa requires a unique approach to climate justice that integrates economic growth with resilience building.

The Stockholm Environment Institute (2021) adds that for Africa, climate justice must focus on reducing vulnerabilities while addressing historical inequities in emissions and resource allocation. Climate justice in Africa is inherently linked to addressing the historical inequalities in global development patterns, which have left the continent disproportionately vulnerable to climate change. The World Resources Institute (2022) notes that Africa's limited industrialization, coupled with its dependency on natural resource-driven economies, has constrained its adaptive capacity. This structural disadvantage is exacerbated by global inequities in climate finance allocation, as high-income nations prioritize mitigation over adaptation efforts in their funding commitments (Climate Policy Initiative, 2021). Similarly, Bond (2020) argues that global financial architectures often marginalize African nations by limiting access to climate adaptation funds. According to Okereke and Coventry (2016), the failure of international climate finance frameworks to account for Africa's specific development contexts further entrenches these disparities. Consequently, African countries, including Uganda, often lack the resources to implement large-scale climate resilience programs effectively.

Additionally, the concept of climate justice in Africa extends beyond immediate environmental impacts to include broader social and economic dimensions. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP, 2022) stresses that climate-induced challenges such as food insecurity, displacement, and water scarcity disproportionately affect marginalized groups, particularly women and children. In Uganda's Kabale District, for example, women bear the burden of walking longer distances to fetch water due to prolonged droughts, undermining their economic productivity and well-being (Kyambogo University, 2020). These gendered impacts are echoed by Leach et al. (2018), who note that climate change deepens existing gender inequalities, especially in rural African communities. Addressing such disparities requires integrating gender-sensitive approaches into climate adaptation and mitigation strategies, as highlighted by ActionAid International (2023). In support, Vincent et al. (2017) emphasizes that community-based adaptation efforts in sub-Saharan Africa are more successful when women are actively involved in planning and implementation processes.

A transformative approach to climate justice also demands rethinking global economic structures that perpetuate Africa's vulnerability. The African Union's Agenda 2063 emphasizes the need for regional self-reliance, urging member states to invest in sustainable energy, green infrastructure, and local capacity building (African Climate Policy Centre, 2023). Moreover, the Stockholm Resilience Centre (2021) advocates for international partnerships that prioritize equitable technology transfer and capacity development, enabling African nations to leapfrog to low-carbon economies. According to Sachs (2021), dismantling unjust trade and investment frameworks is critical for achieving a climate-just transition in developing regions. In addition, Scholz and Turok (2020) argue that empowering African cities and communities through inclusive governance models fosters resilience and innovation in the face of climate risks. Such initiatives not only address the root causes of climate injustice but also empower communities like those in Kabale District to lead the transition toward sustainable development.

This essay explores the disproportionate impact of climate change on African countries, with a specific focus on Uganda's Kabale District. It highlights local adaptation and mitigation strategies, examines international climate finance mechanisms, and calls for inclusive policies to create resilient communities across the continent.

2. Disproportionate Impact of Climate Change on Africa

2.1 Climate Vulnerability in Africa

Africa's unique vulnerabilities to climate change stem from its geographic, economic, and social contexts. These effects are particularly severe in Uganda, where over 70% of the population relies on climate-sensitive sectors like agriculture (World Bank, 2020). In Kabale District of Uganda, unpredictable rainfall, prolonged droughts, and soil degradation have undermined food security and livelihoods. The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO, 2021) highlights that erratic weather patterns in Uganda have reduced crop yields by up to 30%, particularly affecting smallholder farmers. Additionally, a study by the International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED, 2022) found that rural districts like Kabale are disproportionately impacted due to inadequate access to climate-resilient technologies and weak institutional support for adaptive practices. According to Twongyirwe et al. (2019), farmers in Kabale face a "double exposure" to both environmental degradation and socio-economic limitations, heightening their climate vulnerability. Similarly, Nabikolo et al. (2014) indicate that limited knowledge on climate-smart agriculture significantly hinders adaptation among Ugandan smallholders, especially in highland districts like Kabale.

Africa's climate vulnerabilities are further magnified by systemic economic dependencies and limited infrastructure resilience. In Botswana, where 80% of the country's population relies on groundwater, climate change has exacerbated water scarcity, threatening agricultural productivity and access to clean drinking water (Botswana Institute for Policy Development, 2021). Similarly, Ghana has experienced intensified coastal erosion and flooding, particularly in Accra, which has displaced thousands of residents and disrupted economic activities (World Resources Institute, 2022). These examples highlight how climate change disproportionately affects countries with fragile infrastructure and economies heavily dependent on natural resources, amplifying socio-economic disparities. According to Adelekan (2016), urban areas in West Africa are particularly susceptible to climate hazards due to poor urban planning and overstretched municipal services. Conway et al. (2019) further argue that climate resilience in Africa is constrained by low adaptive capacity and limited investment in infrastructure, particularly in semi-arid regions. Brown et al. (2011) add that economic dependence on rain-fed agriculture exacerbates vulnerability in Southern and West Africa due to increasing temperature variability and extreme weather.

Moreover, climate justice advocates such as South Africa's Climate Justice Charter Movement argue that addressing these vulnerabilities requires a multi-pronged approach combining community action with institutional reforms. South Africa's experience with prolonged droughts, such as the Cape Town water crisis of 2018, accentuates the need for sustainable water management policies and infrastructure investments (Water Research Commission of South Africa, 2020). Community-driven initiatives, like the Climate Action Network Ghana, emphasize empowering local groups to implement adaptive measures such as rainwater harvesting and agroforestry. In Botswana, the Maun Reforestation Project has successfully combined traditional knowledge with modern techniques to combat desertification, benefiting over 50,000 residents (UNEP, 2021). These case studies demonstrate the potential of integrating grassroots activism and institutional support to address Africa's climate vulnerabilities comprehensively. Ziervogel et al. (2017) advocate for co-production approaches that bridge the gap between scientific knowledge and local experiences to ensure adaptation strategies are contextually relevant. Similarly, Taylor et al. (2020) highlights the importance of participatory governance in fostering resilience, noting that top-down approaches alone often fail in fragile and diverse African contexts. The Centre for Climate Change and Social Transformations (CAST, 2023) emphasizes that Africa's rural communities, like those in Kabale, face compounding risks as climate change interacts with existing inequalities. Additionally, the UN Development Programme (UNDP, 2022) has reported that Uganda could lose up to 2.8% of its GDP annually due to climate-related impacts, exacerbating poverty in rural districts.

2.2 Inequities in Global Emissions

The climate injustice lies in the fact that Africa bears the brunt of the crisis despite contributing minimally to its causes. According to World Bank data (2020), Africa's per capita carbon emissions are just 0.8 metric tons compared to the global average of 4.8. Yet, African countries are disproportionately burdened by climate-induced disasters, from floods in Nigeria to locust invasions in East Africa (FAO, 2020). According to the Climate Justice Alliance (2023), international emissions policies fail to address the systemic exclusion of Africa in global mitigation frameworks. This exclusion perpetuates a cycle where African nations are unable to access sufficient climate finance and technologies to mitigate the impacts of climate change effectively. Scholars such as Okereke and Coventry (2021) argue that Africa's marginal role in global emissions does not translate into equitable treatment in international climate negotiations. Similarly, Bond (2016) emphasizes that the global economic order reproduces climate injustices by limiting African nations' participation in climate governance mechanisms.

UNEP (2021) warns that without urgent action, 118 million extremely poor people in Africa will face climate risks by 2030, with food insecurity, displacement, and water scarcity worsening. The African Climate Foundation (2023) emphasizes that Africa is at a crossroads: while its emissions are minimal, the continent's vulnerability makes it critical for global policymakers to include African perspectives in climate solutions. Similarly, the Stockholm Environment Institute (SEI, 2022) stresses that African nations face significant barriers in accessing promised funds under the Paris Agreement, further exacerbating the disparity in global climate action. As noted by Atteridge and Weitz (2019), Africa's challenges are not only technical but also deeply institutional, rooted in weak international accountability mechanisms. Furthermore, Climate Analytics (2020) points out that many African countries lack the technical and institutional capacity to navigate complex climate finance frameworks, leaving them sidelined in major funding initiatives.

Moreover, Oxfam International (2022) notes that high-income countries have failed to fulfill their climate finance commitments, such as the \$100 billion annual pledge to developing nations. This funding shortfall disproportionately impacts Africa, where adaptation costs are projected to reach \$50 billion annually by 2050 (AfDB, 2022). As African nations strive to implement mitigation and adaptation measures, the systemic inequities in global emissions frameworks undermine their capacity to build climate-resilient societies. Roberts and Weikmans (2017) highlight how climate finance mechanisms often favor middle-income countries with better administrative capacities, to the detriment of least developed countries in Africa. Similarly, Omari-Motsumi et al. (2019) point out that procedural complexities, donor-driven criteria, and delayed disbursements limit the utility of climate finance for many African states.

3. Community-Driven Approaches to Adaptation and Mitigation

3.1 Adaptation Strategies in Kabale District

Farmers in Kabale District have adopted climate-smart agriculture practices such as intercropping, agroforestry, and water harvesting. These methods have improved soil fertility, reduced vulnerability to drought, and increased yields (Uganda Climate Change Department, 2021). For instance, research by Kyambogo University (2020) indicates that intercropping maize with beans can improve land productivity by 40%. The International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA, 2022) has documented similar successes in other Ugandan regions, noting that agroforestry practices increase resilience by 60%. Likewise, a study in Nature Climate Change (2021) highlights how localized water harvesting projects have mitigated water scarcity for over 12,000 households in southwestern Uganda.

Grassroots initiatives, particularly those led by women, have also played a significant role in reforestation. Women's groups in Kabale have planted over 100,000 trees to combat soil erosion and mitigate landslide risks, reducing occurrences in hilly areas by 25% (NEMA, 2022). These efforts align with Uganda's Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) under the Paris Agreement, emphasizing community engagement for climate resilience.

Climate activist Vanessa Nakate (2023) emphasizes that empowering local communities, particularly women, is key to sustainable climate action in Africa. She advocates for investments in grassroots solutions, noting that these initiatives not only address environmental challenges but also strengthen economic empowerment for marginalized groups. Similarly, Wangari Maathai's Maathai, (2009) earlier work portrays the importance of combining environmental conservation with social equity. Her Green Belt Movement demonstrated how tree planting can address immediate environmental needs while fostering long-term community development

Moreover, authors like Munang and Mgendi (2022) stress the role of innovative financing to scale such local projects. They argue that mobilizing public-private partnerships can expand the reach of agroforestry and water harvesting initiatives, enabling broader climate resilience across Uganda. Together, these perspectives highlight the necessity of integrating activism, policy, and localized solutions to address climate challenges effectively.

3.2 Renewable Energy and Green Infrastructure

Across Africa, renewable energy projects are empowering communities while reducing emissions. In Uganda, initiatives by Barefoot Power Uganda have enabled rural households to adopt solar home systems, benefiting over 70,000 families (IRENA, 2022). These systems reduce reliance on firewood and kerosene, improving air quality and cutting greenhouse gas emissions. Further supporting this, the Global Green Growth Institute (GGGI, 2023) notes that transitioning to solar power in rural areas could reduce Uganda's household energy emissions by 30%. Similarly, a report by REN21 (2023) emphasizes that decentralized renewable energy systems, such as Kabale's mini-hydropower projects, are critical for achieving energy equity in Africa. According to Kaggwa et al. (2021), decentralized solar systems in Uganda have shown significant potential in improving health outcomes and extending study hours for children in off-grid areas. Mutambi and Muyambi (2020) also argue that the deployment of off-grid solar in Uganda has enhanced local economic activity by powering small businesses and reducing energy expenditure. Sovacool et al. (2017) note that community-based renewable energy projects are essential for building resilience in rural Africa, especially where national grid infrastructure is weak.

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In Nigeria, the Nigeria Electrification Project (NEP) has successfully deployed solar mini-grids in off-grid communities, providing sustainable energy to over 200,000 homes and businesses. According to the World Bank (2023), these mini-grids have not only improved energy access but also reduced reliance on diesel generators, cutting local air pollution. Experts such as Akinbami et al. (2022) note that integrating renewable energy into Nigeria's rural electrification strategy could address energy poverty for 85 million people while driving economic growth. Beyond infrastructure, regional initiatives are also fostering green innovation. For instance, Kenya has introduced solar-powered irrigation systems in Machakos County, enhancing water availability and agricultural productivity for over 5,000 farmers (UNDP, 2023). Likewise, Morocco's Green Energy Program has supported 50 small enterprises in renewable energy, creating over 1,200 green jobs and scaling up sustainable practices in local industries (African Development Bank, 2022). Oyedepo (2012) emphasizes that distributed energy systems can enhance national development through reduced operational costs and localized energy autonomy. In Uganda, solar and mini-hydro projects in Kabale emphasize the importance of decentralized solutions in bridging energy access gaps, especially in remote areas. Adopting lessons from Kenya, Morocco, and Nigeria, Uganda could further enhance its energy resilience through regional collaborations, innovative financing, and supportive policies. As Musoke and Namatovu (2021) suggest, cross-border renewable energy learning networks are crucial for scaling up innovations in Uganda's energy landscape. Such initiatives demonstrate how renewable energy serves as a critical pillar for addressing climate change while promoting equity and economic development.

4. International Climate Finance Mechanisms and Their Equity

4.1 Shortcomings in Climate Finance Allocation

Africa continues to receive less than 5% of global climate finance, despite its high vulnerability to the impacts of climate change (Climate Policy Initiative, 2021). This shortfall has significant implications, as African countries are facing increasingly severe climate risks, such as droughts, flooding, and extreme temperatures, which disproportionately affect their agricultural productivity, infrastructure, and communities (Kaiser et al., 2020). A 2022 report by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) emphasizes that adaptation funding needs to increase fivefold to meet the specific climate resilience needs of African nations (UNEP, 2022). However, bureaucratic hurdles and restrictive donor conditions often prevent these funds from reaching the communities that need them most. As noted by Tiemtore et al. (2021), complex and lengthy application processes, as well as the emphasis on large-scale projects, make it difficult for smaller, local entities to access financing, exacerbating the gap in adaptation efforts across the continent.

A recent analysis by the Grantham Research Institute (2023) reveals that only 11% of Africa-focused climate finance is allocated in a way that aligns with community-level priorities. This misalignment occurs due to donor-driven financing models that often prioritize projects designed by international organizations, rather than those developed with the input and leadership of local communities. As a result, the interventions may not be contextually relevant or sustainable (Buchner et al., 2020). Oxfam International (2021) further argues that grassroots organizations are marginalized in the decision-making process, despite their intimate knowledge of local climate challenges. Such top-down approaches often fail to account for the diverse needs of African communities, leaving local stakeholders without the resources or autonomy to implement effective solutions. Research by Hesselberg et al. (2019) highlights that financing models that exclude local participation are less likely to succeed in building long-term resilience and adaptive capacity in vulnerable regions.

The limited involvement of local communities in climate finance allocation is compounded by the unequal distribution of funds across African countries. While some countries, such as South Africa and Kenya, have managed to attract substantial climate finance, others remain underfunded, particularly those in the Sahel and parts of Central Africa (Anderson et al., 2020). According to the African Development Bank (2022), the mismatch between financing availability and the actual needs of African countries highlights the inadequacy of current climate finance mechanisms. As the Climate Policy Initiative (2021) suggests, this issue is further exacerbated by the complex regulatory frameworks imposed by international donors, which may not reflect the unique socio-economic and environmental contexts of African nations. In response, scholars like Wanjira and Rinkel (2023) argue for a shift toward climate finance mechanisms that prioritize equity, ensuring that funds are allocated based on the specific vulnerabilities and priorities of African communities. Moreover, they advocate for the inclusion of local knowledge systems in the design and implementation of climate projects, which can improve both effectiveness and sustainability.

4.2 The Role of Global Initiatives

Initiatives like the Green Climate Fund (GCF) and the Adaptation Fund have potential but require reforms to enhance equity. A 2023 study by the International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED) highlights that only 8% of GCF funding has reached grassroots organizations, with much of the finance funneled to large-scale projects managed by international NGOs or government agencies (IIED, 2023). To address this imbalance, experts like Kamau et al. (2022) argue that financial mechanisms should prioritize local actors who have firsthand knowledge of climate impacts and adaptation needs. Similarly, Schalatek and Nakhooda (2016) emphasize that community-based organizations often lack direct access to global funds due to complex application processes and donor preferences for intermediaries. In Uganda, for instance, scaling projects like the Integrated Water Resources Management Project, which is funded by the GCF, could significantly enhance climate resilience by involving local communities in managing water resources. This participatory approach not only empowers communities but also ensures that climate interventions are more contextually relevant and sustainable (Atela et al., 2017).

Furthermore, the African Climate Finance Hub (2022) stresses that capacity-building programs must accompany funding to ensure effective implementation. These programs are critical for equipping local communities and organizations with the necessary technical and managerial skills to access and utilize climate finance effectively. For example, Swaziland's Community-Based Adaptation Program (UNDP, 2022) demonstrates how financial support combined with capacity-building initiatives can help local communities implement effective climate adaptation strategies. Research by Agrawal and Lemos (2015) supports this view, noting that local institutions are essential in shaping adaptive responses but often lack adequate capacity without sustained investment. Similarly, the Overseas Development Institute (ODI, 2023) calls for robust accountability measures to track the impact of international funds on vulnerable communities. These measures are essential to prevent misallocation of resources and to ensure that funds are effectively channelled to those who need them the most (Weikmans et al., 2020).

In Egypt, the Green Climate Fund has supported projects like the Egypt National Adaptation Strategy, which aims to reduce vulnerability to climate change, particularly in the Nile Delta, where rising sea levels threaten millions of people. However, reports from the Egyptian Environmental Affairs Agency (2023) suggest that while financial resources are available, the lack of local capacity to implement such large-scale projects remains a significant barrier. Elasha (2010) argues that North African countries like Egypt must integrate bottom-up approaches into adaptation planning to ensure relevance and effectiveness. By incorporating more local stakeholders and ensuring community participation in decision-making, Egypt can improve the implementation of these strategies. In Ghana, the government has successfully utilized climate finance to support the development of the Renewable Energy Act, which provides incentives for private sector involvement in renewable energy projects. This funding, however, has not reached small-scale rural communities, which continue to face energy poverty.

As highlighted by the Ghana Environmental Protection Agency (2022), international funds need to be redirected to smaller, community-based initiatives to meet local energy needs. A study by Boateng et al. (2022) suggests that enhancing local participation in climate finance projects can bridge the gap between policy and practice, ensuring that funds reach the communities most in need. Tambo and Wünscher (2017) also outlines the importance of integrating traditional knowledge and community structures into project planning to improve outcomes. These examples from Egypt, Swaziland, and Ghana accentuate the need for reforms in climate finance mechanisms to prioritize equity, local empowerment, and transparent monitoring.

4.3 Towards Fair and Inclusive Financing

To achieve climate justice, African nations must push for a fair share of international climate finance, focusing on grants over loans, prioritizing adaptation projects, and empowering local governments to manage funds. Research by the African Climate Policy Centre (2023) highlights the importance of participatory budgeting to ensure funds are allocated based on local needs. Wabomba et al. (2022) also note that direct funding to local governments increases the likelihood of successful projects due to their better understanding of local challenges. Rwanda's Green Fund, established in 2013, exemplifies this approach, successfully incorporating participatory budgeting and empowering local governments to manage climate finance, promoting sustainability and community ownership (Rwanda Environment Management Authority, 2022).

The International Centre for Climate Change and Development (ICCCAD, 2023) advocates for localizing climate funds, arguing that direct financing to communities can boost project success rates by 50%. This view is supported by Sunkari and Mthembu (2023), who highlight that decentralized funding systems allow local actors to tailor interventions to specific needs. For example, Senegal's "Climate Resilient Agriculture Program" has successfully used a community-led approach, with local stakeholders managing adaptation funds to enhance crop yields and flood resilience (Senegal Ministry of Environment, 2021). Similarly, Namibia's Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan (2022) emphasizes integrating local knowledge into decision-making for more effective and equitable use of climate funds.

Furthermore, a report by the Heinrich Böll Foundation (2022) emphasizes the importance of gender-responsive budgeting in climate finance to address disparities, noting that women, particularly in rural areas, are disproportionately impacted by climate change. In Namibia, a project focused on enhancing climate resilience in rural areas has incorporated gender-sensitive strategies, involving women in both planning and implementation. This approach has led to increased participation of women in sustainable agriculture and renewable energy projects (Namibia Ministry of Environment, 2023). Similarly, Rwanda has prioritized gender equality in its climate finance allocation, providing rural women with access to funding and training for climate adaptation (Rwanda Gender Monitoring Office, 2023).

5. Building Resilient Communities: A Call to Action

5.1 Policy Recommendations

Achieving climate justice in Africa necessitates inclusive policies that address systemic inequalities while promoting sustainable development. Governments should:

- **Prioritize Local Participation:** Policies must empower communities to lead adaptation and mitigation efforts, recognizing their unique insights and capabilities (ActionAid International, 2023).
- **Invest in Education and Capacity Building:** Equipping youth and women with climate knowledge and skills can drive innovation and resilience. For example, Uganda's Youth Climate Innovation Hub has trained over 3,000 young people in sustainable practices (UNDP, 2022).
- **Strengthen Regional Collaboration:** African nations should unite to negotiate better climate finance terms and share best practices for sustainability. The African Union's Agenda 2063 emphasizes continental cooperation as a pathway to resilience.

A study by Climate Analytics (2023) highlights that fostering interregional collaborations enhances climate resilience by pooling resources and expertise. Additionally, the World Resources Institute (WRI, 2023) emphasizes that integrating indigenous knowledge into policy frameworks can improve the effectiveness of adaptation strategies.

5.2 My Contributions as a Climate Justice Fellow

As a climate justice fellow, I am committed to advocating for equitable policies and sustainable solutions. My work in Kabale District focuses on mobilizing communities for reforestation, promoting renewable energy, and facilitating dialogues between local leaders and policymakers. Therefore, amplifying African voices, I aim to drive transformative change for a just and sustainable future.

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6. Conclusion

Climate justice is not an abstract ideal; it is a necessity for Africa's survival and prosperity. Therefore, addressing the disproportionate impacts of climate change, empowering communities, and reforming international climate finance, we can build a resilient continent that thrives amid adversity. As Africans, we have the knowledge, creativity, and determination to overcome this crisis. Let us seize this moment to champion fair policies, foster resilience, and secure a sustainable future for generations to come.

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BRIDGING THE GAP:

A HEARTFELT COMMITMENT TO ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP AND SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY



Author

Victor Kweku Ayertey

Former Secretary General, IMCS-MIEC 2021-2023

Country

Ghana

The escalating climate crisis underscores the urgent need for a thorough reevaluation of our relationship with the Earth. Central to this discourse are Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 13, which calls for immediate action to combat climate change and its impacts, and the principles outlined in Pope Francis's encyclical *Laudato Si'*, which emphasises care for our common home. This article examines the intersection of environmental stewardship and justice within the frameworks of SDG 13, *Laudato Si'*, and Catholic Social Teaching (CST), highlighting their implications on youth and communities regarding SDGs 2 (Zero Hunger), 4 (Quality Education), and 6 (Clean Water and Sanitation).

Despite our intrinsic connection to the Earth, industrial activities and political decisions often create a gap between humanity and the environment. This disconnect degrades the planet and undermines human dignity as well as indigenous wisdom, particularly among vulnerable populations. Recognising the Earth's inherent dignity, as emphasised in *Laudato Si'*, calls for an acknowledgement of the planet's capacity to "fight back and warn us to change our ways" through various environmental phenomena. Addressing this crisis necessitates tailored solutions that respect the unique contexts of diverse communities, moving beyond one-size-fits-all approaches.

Care for the Earth and Justice for the Planet in the Context of SDG 13

SDG 13 urges immediate action to combat climate change and its impacts. *Laudato Si'* complements this goal by advocating for an "integral ecology" that recognises the interconnectedness of environmental, economic, social, and cultural dimensions. Pope Francis emphasises that "intergenerational solidarity is not optional, but rather a basic question of justice, since the world we have received also belongs to those who will follow us." (*Laudato Si'* 159). This perspective aligns with CST's call for stewardship, urging humanity to protect and preserve the environment for future generations.

Impact on Youth and Communities in relation to SDGs 2, 4, and 6

SDG 2: Zero Hunger

Climate change has significantly exacerbated food insecurity, particularly in marginalized communities. Erratic weather patterns, such as droughts and floods, have disrupted agricultural productivity, leading to hunger and malnutrition. These examples underscore the continuous urgent need for sustainable agricultural practices and equitable resource distribution, as highlighted by *Laudato Si'*. Without addressing these challenges, achieving SDG 2 by 2030 remains improbable.

- Food insecurity in sub-Saharan Africa remains severe, with 346 million people undernourished as of 2025 (Wudil et al, 2022). Climate-induced crop failures, livestock losses, and economic challenges such as inflation and weak infrastructure have worsened the situation. Acute malnutrition affects 12.8 million children, and food import costs are projected to rise significantly. Despite some policy efforts, the region continues to face slow progress in achieving food security. Climate-induced crop failures, livestock losses, and economic challenges like inflation have worsened the crisis.
- The Horn of Africa experienced its worst drought in decades (2021–2023), leaving 22 million people acutely food insecure and displacing millions. Over 13.2 million livestock died, causing devastating economic losses for pastoralist families. While the drought ended in early 2023 with above-average rainfall, subsequent flooding has compounded the humanitarian crisis, highlighting the region's vulnerability to climate extremes. While improved rainfall in 2023 alleviated drought conditions, subsequent flooding compounded the humanitarian crisis. Somalia alone faces a worsening situation, with 4.4 million people projected to experience hunger by mid-2025 due to erratic rainfall, conflict, and funding shortfalls. (UN OCHA, 2023)
- Pakistan's catastrophic 2022 floods inundated 2.9 million hectares of land, destroying 57% of Sindh's cropland and heavily impacting rice, cotton, and sugarcane production. Recovery efforts include international funding for climate-resilient infrastructure and livelihood restoration initiatives. The floods displaced 33 million people and caused widespread food insecurity by disrupting supply chains and livelihoods. However, many affected communities still face inadequate housing, limited access to services, and ongoing food insecurity, highlighting the prolonged challenges of rebuilding after such large-scale devastation. (Qamer et al, 2023)

SDG 4: Quality Education

Education is a transformative tool for fostering environmental awareness and sustainable development. The Baku Guiding Principles emphasize the importance of Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) to empower youth as agents of change. Yet, the irony persists: those most affected by climate change often lack access to quality education. However, climate change disrupts education systems globally:

- Typhoon Rai (2021) devastated the Philippines, destroying over 4,000 classrooms and displacing more than 631,000 people. This disaster disrupted the education of around 2 million children, compounding the effects of prior COVID-19 school closures. Efforts to rebuild schools and provide disaster-resilient learning spaces are ongoing, but significant challenges remain in restoring educational continuity and preventing permanent dropouts (UN OCHA, 2022). Education in Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Mozambique, Pakistan and the Philippines are most severely affected by heatwaves, cyclones, floods and storms (UNICEF, 2024)
- In Syria, prolonged conflict combined with climate-induced water scarcity continues to force millions of children out of school. Many schools remain damaged or inaccessible, while displacement and poverty prevent families from prioritising education. The dual impact of war and environmental stress has created a generational education gap, with limited resources to address the crisis. Education facilities in Syria are severely strained, impacting access to education and learning opportunities. The PiN for the education sector has thus increased by 8 per cent from 7.2 million in 2024 to 7.8 million (Humanitarian Action, 2025).
- Severe droughts in East Africa, particularly in Kenya and Zimbabwe, have led to widespread school dropouts as children are forced into labor or migration to support their families. Hunger and water scarcity have further disrupted learning, with students struggling to concentrate or attend classes. In Zimbabwe alone, nearly 2 million children are at risk of dropping out due to drought-induced poverty, underscoring the urgent need for food security and educational support initiatives. (UN OCHA, 2024)

SDG 6: Clean Water and Sanitation

Access to clean water is increasingly threatened by climate change. Initiatives like the Baku Dialogue on Water for Climate Action stress the need for integrated water management strategies. Catholic Social Teaching (CST) advocates equitable resource distribution to ensure universal access to clean water. Nonetheless, droughts and contamination of water sources have left millions without safe drinking water:

- In Cape Town (South Africa), as far back as 2018, the "Day Zero" crisis highlighted urban water vulnerability due to prolonged droughts. Currently, the city has implemented the New Water Programme (NWP), aiming to deliver 300 million litres per day from alternative water sources by 2030. This includes groundwater extraction, desalination, and water reuse projects¹². The Berg River to Voëlvlei Augmentation Scheme (BRVAS) is under development to add 23 million cubic meters of water annually to the Voëlvlei Dam by 2027.
- In Yemen, conflict coupled with water scarcity has led to cholera outbreaks affecting millions. Yemen remains in a severe humanitarian crisis, with conflict and water scarcity driving one of the worst cholera outbreaks globally. Over 17.8 million people lack access to safe water, and as of late 2024, nearly 250,000 suspected cholera cases were reported. The collapse of health and water infrastructure, coupled with funding shortfalls, continues to exacerbate the crisis, leaving millions vulnerable to waterborne diseases. (WHO, 2024)

- The Colorado River Basin in the U.S. faces critical water shortages due to prolonged drought and overuse, with reservoirs like Lake Mead and Lake Powell at historically low levels (29% and 32%, respectively). Snowpack reductions and climate change further strain water supplies, prompting mandatory water cuts in states like Arizona and Nevada. Despite policy measures to conserve water, long-term solutions are urgently needed to address the escalating crisis. (Deborah/Western-Water, 2025)

The Way Forward

The outcomes of COP29 reflect a global acknowledgment of the need for enhanced climate action and support for vulnerable nations. Developed countries have agreed to provide at least \$300 billion annually by 2035 to assist vulnerable countries with climate change mitigation and decarbonisation. The inclusion of children, young people, their education, and health in the Global Adaptation Goal underscores the recognition of youth as pivotal stakeholders in climate resilience efforts. Therefore, addressing the climate crisis necessitates a multifaceted approach that integrates environmental stewardship with social justice, as advocated by Laudato Si' and CST.

- **Faith-Based Engagement:** Religious communities play a vital role in mobilising grassroots support for environmental initiatives. The Laudato Si Movement exemplifies how faith-based organisations can effectively promote ecological awareness and action.
- **Contextualised Solutions:** It is crucial to recognise the unique environmental, cultural, and economic contexts of each community. Tailored interventions help ensure that climate actions are both effective and equitable, respecting the principle of subsidiarity in Catholic Social Teaching (CST).
- **Youth Empowerment:** Investing in education that fosters environmental consciousness equips young people to lead sustainable initiatives. Programs like the "Laudato Si' Animators" training empower youth to advocate for ecological justice within their communities.
- **Integrated Policies:** Developing policies that simultaneously address climate action, poverty alleviation, and social equity aligns with the holistic vision of Laudato Si'. The "Baku Initiative on Human Development for Climate Resilience" exemplifies efforts to harmonize education, health, and social protection with climate resilience.

CONCLUSION

The convergence of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 13, Pope Francis's Laudato Si', and Catholic Social Teaching (CST) offers a comprehensive framework for addressing the climate crisis with an emphasis on care and justice. The impacts of climate change on SDGs 2, 4, and 6 demonstrate that vulnerable communities bear a disproportionate burden. Tackling these challenges requires urgent global action through sustainable practices, inclusive policies, and initiatives that empower youth. By implementing solutions tailored to specific contexts, empowering young people, and integrating environmental stewardship with social equity, we can foster a sustainable and just future for all, respecting the dignity of both the Earth and its inhabitants.

“WHAT DID YOU EAT FOR BREAKFAST?”:

How a Simple Question can Cast-Off the Transient Nature of Student Accompaniment



Author

Marina D'Costa

Chaplaincy Commission, IMCS Pax Romana

Country

India

Prologue to Perspectives

I and a young person (living in Europe) connected over a Zoom Video Conference to work on a document, it was a winter morning for this person and a humid afternoon for me. Randomly I started the conversation saying, “Good Morning, so what did you eat for breakfast?”. With a humble smile the person replied, “Just some bread and soup”. That word “just” as interpreted later by the person meant “I don’t have enough food to sustain myself”. I asked myself, how many students (young people) I have asked “What did you eat for breakfast?” – making it my spiritual code for accompaniment.

For me, the real journey of accompaniment began from these two following questions uttered by two scholars, Fr. Gustavo Gutiérrez “How can you tell a hungry man that God exists when he is hungry?” and Oscar Lewis, “How do the lived experiences of extreme poverty create a unique subculture?”

Gustavo Gutiérrez, the founder of Liberation Theology, famously addressed the issue of poverty and faith by emphasizing that preaching the Gospel must be accompanied by concrete actions that address social injustice. Oscar Lewis, an American anthropologist who developed the concept of the “culture of poverty” aimed to explain how poverty persisted across generations, particularly among marginalized communities. He argued that poverty is not about just lack of money; it is a set of values, behaviors, and attitudes that develop in response to economic hardship. Using these two perspectives, from a lens of someone who struggles each day on how best to accompany young people, I wish to reflect on student accompaniment to understand, poverty (students’ lived experience) and providence (students’ faith in action).

Accompanying young people means listening to their questions (even when they don’t speak), walking alongside them in their struggles, and helping them connect faith with action. Gutiérrez reminds us that faith is not passive. It must be a commitment to justice, hope, and transformation. And Lewis points out that, it is important to understand how poverty affects not just material conditions but also mindset, aspirations, and opportunities. However, these two approaches need to prioritize empowerment over stereotypes.

Fight or Flight

University students always have faced a wide range of challenges, from financial hardship to systemic inequalities, mental health struggles, and political instability. This is not new to us, what stays crucial is how we understand their world through the lens of their lived experience. Learning about their lived experience gives us access to where we can build bridges of accompaniment.

Many university students, especially those from low-income backgrounds, struggle with tuition fees, student debt, housing insecurity, and the need to balance work with studies. This often limits their ability to fully engage in academic and social life. How can we as a network of catholic universities address this? How can we ensure that students are able to achieve their higher education, get decent employment and pursue a life where they experience financial freedom? I questioned, is it so difficult to make this possible?

Coming from a lower-middle class income family in India and also being the first-generation learner, my parents always insisted me to focus on my education. Higher education in South Asia is often seen as a pathway to social mobility and attaining status in the immediate circle. If you are not getting any flow of income, you aren't doing anything. Yet for many university students in India, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Bangladesh and others, the conversation of not having enough remains a major barrier. Financial struggles, lack of resources, poor infrastructure, and systemic inequalities create significant challenges for students, especially from marginalized backgrounds.

In India, for example even with government scholarships, the cost of private coaching for competitive exams makes higher education inaccessible to the poor. Families often take loans to send their children to university, leading to financial stress. At this backdrop, if we look from the Lewis' theory, we may predict that students from poor families may prioritize short-term survival over long-term investment in education. Many may drop out to work and support their families, believing that university education is a luxury rather than a necessity. While looking from the perspective of Gutiérrez, education is a right, not a privilege. Therefore, economic systems should ensure equal access to education.

So, choose between fight or flight? Accompanying young people means rejecting a deficit-based view of poverty and instead uplifting their strengths, resilience, and potential. Instead of seeing poverty as a culture and leading to a 'subculture' that traps them, we should see young people as agents of transformation in their own lives and in society. This takes courage!! I see this spirit in IMCS students and especially our student leaders. It is grace to have these chosen young people who put their prime age at stake leaving their families behind to lead a global movement like IMCS. Thus, accompanying student leaders becomes even more essential. Do they have an option 'flight'? Certainly not! And, will they fight alone? No, if you choose to accompany them, they will fight.

Faith in Action

Around the world, many Catholic students struggle with financial hardships while pursuing higher education. In India, for example, students from Dalit and tribal communities often face economic discrimination and limited access to scholarships. In the Philippines, some university students live in informal settlements and take on multiple part-time jobs just to afford tuition. In parts of Africa and Latin America, young Catholics sometimes have to walk miles to attend school or share books because they cannot afford their own. In Nepal, students migrate to cities leaving behind the mighty mountains to ensure they get themselves an educational degree. However, despite these struggles, faith and resilience have helped many succeed.

By trusting in God's providence and taking proactive steps, students can overcome these challenges. Seeking scholarships from Catholic institutions or social service programmes that fund education, advocating for just educational policies, and engaging in purposeful work-study programs can ease financial burdens. For instance, in Kenya, Catholic organizations offer work-study programs where students gain practical skills while earning stipends to support their education. Similarly, Catholic universities in the United States of America and Europe provide tuition assistance and community support for first-generation college students.

While the financial structures are developed to support students, chaplains and lay animator and persons who accompany students, can provide guidance. This means fostering faith-based communities where students can support one another, connecting them with resources and financial aid opportunities, and empowering them to become leaders in social justice. When students understand that their education is not just for personal success but also a means to uplift their communities, they become agents of change. Through faith, action, and solidarity, Catholic students worldwide can transform education into a pathway to dignity and opportunity. Their challenges may be great, but with God's providence and the support of a committed faith community, poverty should never be a barrier to their future.

The story of Blessed Pier Giorgio Frassati, a devout Catholic student and member of IMCS - FUCI (Federazione Universitaria Cattolica Italiana), dedicated his life to serving the poor while pursuing his studies, reminds us that faith and education go hand in hand. As a university student studying engineering, Pier Giorgio balanced academics with a deep commitment to the poor. He often gave away his money, clothing, and even his own bed to those in need. Despite his privileged background, he rejected materialism and spent time in orphanages, hospitals, and the streets, serving the less fortunate.

As shared by Joseph Spataro, "They spoke to me about Pier Giorgio before I went to Turin and he was introduced to me. I was then the General President of the FUCI. They spoke so highly of him that, knowing that the Circolo Balbo was in crisis, I proposed Pier Giorgio as President. They replied that he would accept because he was very keen to work for the Club, but that he did not want any positions. As soon as I arrived in Turin, I wanted to meet him: in his simplicity, with his very sincere eyes, he immediately inspired sympathy, respect and trust in me".

Paradigm Shift in Education

John Henry Newman's *The Idea of a University* (1852, 1873) is a foundational work on the purpose and philosophy of higher education. Newman argues that a university's primary role is to cultivate the intellect through the pursuit of knowledge rather than simply providing professional or technical training. He emphasizes that education should develop a broad, well-rounded mind, capable of critical thinking, moral reasoning, and civic engagement. Newman also highlights the importance of liberal education, which integrates various disciplines—literature, philosophy, science, and theology—into a unified whole. He asserts that theology must be a central part of university education, as religious truth shapes human understanding and moral development. While universities prepare students for various careers, their deeper mission is to form individuals who seek truth, wisdom, and virtue.

In his work, *The idea of University*, John Henry Cardinal Newman writes, "And this is the sense of the word 'grammar' which our inaccurate student detests, and this is the sense of the word which every sensible tutor will maintain. His maxim is 'a little, but well'; that is, really know what you say you know: know what you know and what you do not know; get one thing well before you go on to a second; try to ascertain what your words mean; when you read a sentence, picture it before your mind as a whole, take in the truth or information contained in it, express it in your own words, and, if it be important, commit it to the faithful memory. Again, compare one idea with another; adjust truths and facts; form them into one whole, or notice the obstacles which occur in doing so. This is the way to make progress; this is the way to arrive at results; not to swallow knowledge, but (according to the figure sometimes used) to masticate and digest it."

To echo his ideas, an excerpt from "We Have Ceased to See the Purpose" by Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn reads "Human nature is full of riddles and contradictions; it is their complexity that engenders art—that is, the search for nonlinear formulations, imaginative solutions, complex explanations. One of these riddles is: how can people utterly pinned down by slavery nevertheless muster the inner strength to rise up and free themselves, first in spirit and then in body; while those who soar unhindered over the peaks of freedom suddenly lose the taste for it, lose the will to defend it, and, fatefully adrift, begin almost to crave slavery. Or again: why is it that societies benumbed for a half-century by forceful lies find within themselves enough lucidity of heart and soul to see things in their true perspective, to perceive the real meaning of events; whereas societies with access to every kind of information suddenly plunge into lethargic mass blindness, into voluntary self-deception?"

IMCS as movement has thrived to make sense of what it real means to educate oneself, the immersion programmes and theological reflections have been beyond the glorious walls of a university. IMCS encourages students to see education as more than just personal advancement—it is a tool for social transformation. By engaging with Catholic Social Teaching (CST), students learn how faith and justice intersect, inspiring them to take action on pressing issues like economic inequality, climate change, and migration. IMCS equips students with the skills to advocate for justice at local, national, and international levels. Whether lobbying for better education policies, sustainable development, or human rights protections, student members learn how to translate faith into action. I have lived it, it is truly my lived experience as a student of IMCS, especially being part of AICUF (All India Catholic University Federation) – IMCS India.

While we may have students who struggle to pay their tuition fees, these are the very students who make the difference to society. These are the very souls that transform their lived experience of poverty to the grace of providence continuing to live their faith in action.

Cast Off the Transient Nature of Student Accompaniment: A Call to Deeper Engagement

In today's fast-paced academic environment, student accompaniment is often reduced to surface-level interactions—offering quick solutions, providing temporary support, or merely ensuring students meet institutional goals. While well-intentioned, such an approach risks treating accompaniment as a transaction rather than a journey. Students are not just young minds passing through universities; they are souls in formation, grappling with deeper questions of identity, faith, purpose, and justice.

Too often, we think of student accompaniment as temporary and reactive, addressing only immediate academic struggles or personal crises. But true accompaniment demands depth, consistency, and commitment. It requires walking alongside students through their joys and doubts, struggles and breakthroughs—not just when they need help, but as they seek meaning in their lives.

Going Beyond the Shallow Approach

1. Beyond Problem-Solving: Formation Over Fixing

- Instead of simply offering financial aid, career guidance, or crisis intervention, accompaniment should focus on holistic growth—nurturing faith, character, and resilience.
- Like Christ with His disciples, we must not just provide answers but walk with students in their search for truth.

2. Beyond Temporary Relationships: Lifelong Friendship

- Many students experience deep loneliness and a lack of meaningful relationships. They don't just need advice; they need mentors who truly see and believe in them.
- Chaplains, educators, and student leaders should build relationships that continue beyond graduation, forming a faithful network of support.

3. Beyond Individual Success: Self and Social Transformation

- Accompaniment must also inspire students to think beyond themselves, challenging them to engage with issues of poverty, injustice, and moral responsibility.
- Universities are not just places to earn degrees but to cultivate a vision for a just and compassionate world.

To cast off the transient nature of student accompaniment, we must stop thinking shallowly and start engaging deeply with presence, intentionality, and faith. The goal is not just to accompany students through university life but toward a greater calling—toward Christ, toward service, and toward lasting transformation.

In *Christus Vivit* (Christ is Alive), Pope Francis emphasizes the importance of deep, consistent, and faith-filled accompaniment for young people. He made it clear, “Accompaniment as a Lifelong Journey”. He shared, “Accompaniment cannot be prescriptive and programmatic, but must take on the style of Jesus, who walked with his disciples on the road to Emmaus (cf. Lk 24:13-35).” (*Christus Vivit*, 296). Like Jesus, we must walk with students, listen deeply, and help them discover meaning rather than just giving pre-planned answers. Authentic accompaniment is not about imposing rules but guiding students in love, truth, and faith. Pope Francis reminds us that accompaniment is not just about helping students succeed in university course or overcome challenges—it is about journeying with them toward Christ, purpose, and social transformation. By embracing deep, intentional, and Christ-centered accompaniment, we help students become the saints, leaders, and changemakers that the world so desperately needs.

Epilogue: Pilgrims of Hope

As Catholic students navigate the challenges of poverty in pursuit of higher education, they are not merely individuals seeking academic success—they are pilgrims of hope, journeying toward a future rooted in faith, justice, and service. Their struggles reflect the greater mission of the Church: to walk in solidarity with the poor, to challenge unjust structures, and to embody the transformative power of God’s providence in action.

Like the disciples on the road to Emmaus, these students may experience moments of doubt and despair. Yet, through faith, community, and perseverance, they encounter Christ along the way—in the kindness of a university professor, in the support of a campus minister, in the opportunities provided by Catholic institutions, and in their own resilience. Every scholarship received, every exam passed despite hardships, and every act of solidarity with fellow students is a testament to the Gospel in action. And so, pray for them and bless them.

To be a pilgrim of hope means believing that education is more than personal advancement—it is a pathway to justice, a tool to uplift communities, and a response to God’s call to serve the marginalized. It means embracing faith not as an escape from struggle, but as a force that empowers us to confront and transform it. And with this hope, I know that higher education is no more a dream, it is a reality we all work towards in the spirit of accompaniment.

So next time when you meet a student try this spiritual code, “What did you eat for breakfast?”

LIVE - LEAD - LOAD...



Author

Afou Chantal Bengaly

Former IMCS pan African Coordinator (2011-2015)

Country

Mali

I would like to share this short article for the IMCS Forum magazine. Believing in God is a way of life fulfillment I have seen God working in my life throughout. The Bible say you are the salt and the light of the world; I have been living this in my life throughout. Our life has lay people in the church should be an inspiration and motivation and example in following our Lord Jesus Christ Even though sometime this can be difficult, but it is the only way to contribute to a just and peaceful world.

Live: Luc 10: 27-28 “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind”; and ‘Love your neighbor as yourself. You have answered correctly,” Jesus replied. “Do this and you will live.

Our living in this world should have a purpose, this purpose should be for the betterment of our fellow human beings and the betterment of our society. I have learned to do this in my life as leader for this great movement (IMCS Pax Romana) many years back and I'm still living this purpose in my professional life even today. One must say that a life without purpose is meaningless, many people in today's world are living their lives without a purpose to fulfill. But it is very important to set a clear goal in your life by putting God before because your goals without God in is not a clear purpose for life.

But then, how do you know that you got the right purpose as a human being? From my experience I have knew and defined the purpose of my life based on several things and factors, build your faith in God it starts with that, believe that everything in this world was created by God including you, and your purpose is to work and to live in a way that all those creatures live peacefully in harmony.

One might say that this is difficult thing to do but I would say that the more you live the purpose of contributing to maintaining a peaceful world you got a peaceful mind and a peaceful heart, and you live happily but it takes a faithful people with a strong faith to enjoy living that way. In our today's world whatever you touch, whatever you said or do should be in line with God's creation protection and nurturing. You want to live in a peaceful and just world, start by living a peaceful family life, raise and educate your kids to live a peaceful life and to serve the society peacefully that's our purpose, teach your children to live in harmony with our mother earth to be respectful to nature, teach them to be respectful and compassionate, to respect human dignity, inspire them by living the teaching of the church in your daily life. Because we are called to live and to serve as Jesus has lived and served.

Lead: 2Tim2:2 ..Take the teachings that you heard proclaim in the presence of many witnesses, entrust them to faithful people who will be able to teach others also.

Leading has never been an easy way, but if someone wants to be a great leader, he should first be a great servant. This was taught to us by our Lord Jesus Christ. How difficult is this in our world? Many people wanted to lead but they don't want to serve, they rather want to serve themselves first. This attitude of serving oneself first is against church teaching.

I have been striving to be always a good leader wherever I am, in my family, in my professional life, in society. Leading is sacrificing, leading is compassion, leading is serving others, leading is protecting others, leading is leaving a legacy to others. Today's leadership has become profit leadership whereby human beings are no longer the center of development rather a profit. Humanity should be in the center of leadership, and this should be applied in every things that you do. As, leaders, we must strive to imitate our Lord Jesus Christ, this won't be an easy thing to do but with prayers, patience and compassion.

Load: This is something you've been given in your life by God. Your health, wealth, position, and so on. This is yours to deal with. It cannot be taken from you. It is your responsibility to carry it.

Giving to others what you have received sometime is not easy but one must strive to give back to society. I have always said that the way we educate our children, the way we educate the next generation, what we give to them through our education, is what they will give to society, to the world. So, let's make sure that we load the right things in their lives and every Christian must strive to fulfill this in this life for the betterment of our world. One might say that I have not received the right things so I cannot give the right things to society. But every human being who has the capacity to think can at some point build themselves and integrate into their personality some great human values that they did not receive from their parents. It is about personal choice, determination, purpose and vision, it's about decision making. God has granted all of us with talents, faith and prayers will help you to discover your talents and use them to give back to society.

In conclusion, Ephesians 6:10 "Finally, drawn your strengths from the Lord and from his mighty power" Christians who want to live a happy life must strive to live a life that fulfills their fellow human being's life, to lead in serving humanity and to give to the society.

GIORGIO LA PIRA (1904-1977) AND HIS CONTRIBUTION TO EVERLASTING PEACE THROUGH LAW AND DIPLOMACY



Author

Francesco Fonte

Member of Federazione Universitaria Cattolica Italiana (FUCI)

Country

Italy

1. Uniting cities for uniting nations

“Uniting cities for uniting european nations: make peace, unify, denuclearize Europe in order to ensure peace, unify and denuclearize the World;[1] Unified at the roots, the world will be capable of being unified at the apex”.[2] Such quotations could be grasped from the Giorgio La Pira's [3] address to the Congress of United Cities, held in Leningrad in 1970.

[4] According to La Pira, cities shall have a unique function in the international realm. Indeed, such entities could operate their policies irrespective of any national political orientation and central government's program.[5] Therefore, cities could even pursue peace-making endeavors even within enemy nations.[6] Such conclusion could be reached by the three layers program laid down by La Pira at the Paris Congress of United Nations of 1967. Its discourse firstly contemplated that cities must take into account, within their policies, the present times in their intrinsic peculiarity: an, as defined by the former mayor of Florence, apocalyptic era in which in a blink of an eye every place on earth may be transformed in a new Hiroshima.[7]

Secondly, since in cities gathers the identity of people and nations, State do not detain the right to obliterate such heritage by the usage of nuclear weapons[8] and therefore cities shall pursue active policies of denuclearization.[9] Thirdly, as could be grasped from the title of the intervention “unite cities to unite nations”, cities shall involve themselves in active programs of city twinning and city diplomacy in order to foster the mutual development in culture, science, technology, society, politics, spirituality, to “organically” unite all the cities of the earth.[10] As recently pointed out, city diplomacy was the occasion for the cities to reach a mutual understanding between them “above and beyond borders and bi-polarity logic”.[11]

[1] G. La Pira, *Unire le città per unire le nazioni*, in B. Bagnato, *La Costruzione della Pace*, Florence, 2019, pp. 454 ss.

[2] *Id.*, p. 456.

[3] For a biographical note on La Pira see, *inter alia*, G. Spinoso, C. Turrini, *I capitoli della vita di Giorgio La Pira*, Florence, 2019.

[4] G. La Pira, *Unire le città per unire le nazioni*, p. 454 ss.

[5] Several scholarly works were concentrated on the understanding of the diplomatic action of cities. Reference is hereby made, *inter alia*, to L. K. Grandi, *City Diplomacy*, London, 2020.

[6] Such circumstance was evident since the meeting held in Florence contemplated the presence of Mayors from cities located in countries of the two different blocs in contraposition. A deep historical review of such meetings is contained in M. De Giuseppe, *La Diplomazia delle città, Giorgio La Pira e la diplomazia delle città unite*, Florence, 2022.

[7] G. La Pira, *Unire le città per unire le nazioni*, p. 469.

[8] G. La Pira, *Crisi e Ruolo delle città*, Firenze, 1954.

[9] *Id.*

[10] G. La Pira, *Unire le città per unire le nazioni*, p. 469.

[11] P. L. Ballini, *La Pira, il dialogo e la pace*, in *Id.*, *La Pira sindaco*, Firenze, 2014, pp. 183.

2. Historical and Philosophical Background to La Pira's idea of peace:

In light of the nuclear and technological development of nations in warfare in the second half of the 20th century and the arduous geopolitical tensions stemming from the juxtaposition of the two blocks, a crucial element in La Pira's intervention is the necessity of maintaining peace at the cost of the, as he called it, apocalyptic destruction of the earth.[12] As pointed out by scholarly works, it can be certainly assumed that, in such a harsh condition within international relations, multilateralism was not the principal decisional method: the function of cities could be indeed the one of overcoming the resistances of such a geopolitical scenario, therefore creating alternative means of constructing IR, in opposition to state policies.[13] Drawing their conclusion from the city diplomacy initiatives organized by the former Mayor of Florence in the 60s, some historians highlighted the fact that so called "para-diplomacy" has grown in importance and consideration within the decades following such meetings and even in recent times.[14] Such conclusion shall not be conceived in the sense of the mere twinning of cities, for cultural and ideological purposes. It is in fact the inherent vocation of the cities, made up of an intrinsic "soul" and destiny, which would unite the different people of the world.[15]

La Pira's action is consistent with the invitations contained in Paul VI's encyclical letter *Populorum progressio*. As recalled by the same former mayor of Florence, "development" is the new name of peace.[16] La Pira's shares the view that to foster peace it is necessary to pursue negotiation, agreements, and cooperation between the North and the Global South. [17] The former assumes a central role in his perspective; that is evident from the meeting held between La Pira and Ho-Chi-Minh with the purpose of establishing peace in Vietnam.[18] The inevitable need pacific solution of dispute is therefore a recurring leitmotiv in La Pira's writings. [19]

"May the flood of fire (the bombings) end and the rainbow appear (negotiations and peace): bridges are no longer destroyed, but rather built; cities are no longer destroyed, but rather rebuilt.".[20]

[12] M. Primicerio, *La Pira e i rapporti internazionali*, in P. L. Ballini, *La Pira sindaco*, Firenze, 2014, pp. 221 ss.

[13] *Supra*.

[14] *Inter alia*, R. Balbim, *The geopolitics of cities. Old challenges, new issues*, Brasilia, 2018, pp. 136-140

[15] *Ibidem*.

[16] G. La Pira, *Unire le città per unire le nazioni*, pp. 460 ss.

[17] Paul VI, *Populorum Progressio*, 76-78. "Extreme disparity between nations in economic, social and educational levels provokes jealousy and discord, often putting peace in jeopardy. As We told the Council Fathers on Our return from the United Nations: 'We have to devote our attention to the situation of those nations still striving to advance. What We mean, to put it in clearer words, is that our charity toward the poor, of whom there are countless numbers in the world, has to become more solicitous, more effective, more generous.' When we fight poverty and oppose the unfair conditions of the present, we are not just promoting human well-being; we are also furthering man's spiritual and moral development, and hence we are benefiting the whole human race. For peace is not simply the absence of warfare, based on a precarious balance of power; it is fashioned by efforts directed day after day toward the establishment of the ordered universe willed by God, with a more perfect form of justice among men. Nations are the architects of their own development, and they must bear the burden of this work; but they cannot accomplish it if they live in isolation from others. Regional mutual aid agreements among the poorer nations, broader based programs of support for these nations, major alliances between nation to coordinate these activities-there are road sign that point to the way to national development and world peace". On La Pira's writing reference is to be made to G. La Pira, *Discorso al quarto colloquio mediterraneo*, Firenze, 1964.

[18] The facts relating to La Pira's endeavours towards the construction of peace in Vietnam. In particular, reference is made to the meeting with Ho-Chi-Minh are largely analysed by M. De Giuseppe, *La Diplomazia delle città, Giorgio La Pira e la diplomazia delle città unite*, pp. 200 ss.

[19] Stemming from the 1954 address to the Red Cross in G. La Pira, *Il diritto alla pace*, Parigi 1954, whose facts are described by B. Bagnato, *I tempi e la storia*, Giorgio La Pira e la pace inevitabile, in *Id*, *La Costruzione della Pace*, Florence, 2019, XXXI.

[20] G. La Pira, *Abbattere muri e costruire ponti*, in B. Bagnato, *La Costruzione della Pace*, Florence, 2019, p. 371.

Such quotation is grasped from La Pira's intervention on peace, commenting Lyndon Johnson initial presidential speech, which according to the Sicilian jurist, has betrayed his predecessor's method in favour of the adoption of a juxtaposition policy with Vietnam and the eastern bloc.[21] The overall approach to IR showed, as pointed out by scholarly works, a strong belief in the militarized solution of international controversies.[22] Rather, it must have been seen the need, according to the main contemporary Church's teachings on peace, of affirming the unity of the world as the unity. That is an inevitable outcome. Through the socialization of economic structures[23] and the ideal reduction of the distances through the conquering of space and increasing connection the world gradually appears more similar to the largely mentioned thomist idea of *multitudo ordinata* (disciplined multiplicity).[24] In such a perspective, it is worth recalling the reference made by La Pira to the Catholic Jurists of the Salamanca School. According to Francisco de Vitoria indeed, *Totus mundus est quasi una res publica*. [25] As stated by the Spanish philosopher, peace is a natural right, inherent in the human community and accomplished by the mutual communication within peoples.[26] Cities are therefore "the other institutional side of the United Nations", which can contribute, in La Pira's perspective to the edification of an international order characterized by peace. As highlighted by Massimo De Giuseppe, such "organic pluralism" of which cities are endowed with is the manifestation of Mayor of Florence's will to utilize the doctrines of Thomism to solve the geopolitical crises stemming the Cold War.[27]

[21] *Id.*

[22] Pointed out by B. Bagnato, *I tempi e la storia, Giorgio La Pira e la pace inevitabile*, in *Id., La Costruzione della Pace*, Florence, 2019, XXXI.

[23] Among the writings G. La Pira, *Socialità della persona umana* in U. De Siervo, *Principi contro i totalitarismi e rifondazione costituzionale*, Firenze, 2019, pp. 875 ss. as well as G. La Pira, *Valore della persona umana* in U. De Siervo, *Principi contro i totalitarismi e rifondazione costituzionale*, Firenze, 2019, pp. 76 ss.

[24] G. La Pira, *I problemi della persona umana* in U. De Siervo, *Principi contro i totalitarismi e rifondazione costituzionale*, Firenze, 2019, p. 392

[25] *Inter alia*, F. De Vitoria, *De Indis et de lure belli relectiones*, Salamanca, 1532.

[26] *Id.*

[27] M. De Giuseppe, *La Diplomazia delle città, Giorgio La Pira e la diplomazia delle città unite*, pp. 200 ss.

3. The Role of the city in the international sphere and the dignity of mankind

The justification of the centrality of the city in order to reach lasting peace is rooted in La Pira's idea of man as an inherent social being.[28] The society, in which the human being dwells, is organically structured since the basic structure of the family towards the one of the international order. In this perspective, cities are the first stage in which the individual and families are organically entrenched with one another. Such social aggregations are "living unities, microcosmos" in which is situated the home of man and ultimately, the place in which God resides. In such realities, La Pira affirms, are condensed

"the essential values of past history are concentrated, and true centres from which values for future history itself radiate - which constitute the entire fabric of human society and civilization".[29]

In La Pira's speeches, a recurring theme is the tension of the city of man towards the city of God, the eternal Jerusalem.[30] The city of God is inherently universalized. Such conformation of the eschatological city should be the projection of the construction of the secular city. La Pira identifies a precise political program in a passage from the book of Prophet Isaiah, according to which:

In days to come, The mountain of the LORD'S house shall be established as the highest mountain and raised above the hills. All nations shall stream toward it; many peoples shall come and say: "Come, let us climb the LORD'S mountain, to the house of the God of Jacob, That he may instruct us in his ways, and we may walk in his paths." For from Zion shall go forth instruction, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. He shall judge between the nations and impose terms on many peoples. They shall beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks; One nation shall not raise the sword against another, nor shall they train for war again.[31]

The custody of the heritage contained in the realities of cities is the ultimate responsibility of citizens. The Sicilian Jurist in the address to the International Committee of the Red Cross makes reference to an extract from the Justinian Digest, namely a passage from the jurist Papinian, in which is disciplined the legal institution of the trust in roman law. As a trustee who received goods as the effect of a testament with the obligation of preserving their integrity with the finality of being delivered to a third subject designated in the testament. Such is the object of the office of the Mayor, i.e. preserving, together with the collectivity which makes up the city its own heritage in order to foster, in light of the cooperation to development, the sustenance of future generations. The achievement of such condition entails a substantial analysis of the conception of the value of the human persons. La Pira's personalism could be summarized by the following statement:

"If all the capitals of the world were united, there would be only one homeland ... only united peoples will be able to impose their presence on the governments that rule them. We must fight for the value of the human person. And that means that no one can remain unemployed, without medical care, without education, without his church... And if the law doesn't work, change the law. St Thomas said that if the law is harmless, it means that it has been corrupted. When states use the law to oppress people, it means they have corrupted the law.".[32]

It appears that a pre-condition to the correct development of the diplomacy of cities is the preservation of the dignity of the citizen: only an authentic social policy could allow the full development of the person and therefore, the ultimate capacity of cities to cooperate as to counter the political directive of governments.[33]

In parallel to such developments La Pira will recall, in the occasion of the address given at the polish session of UNESCO in Warsaw in late 1975, that the major political authorities of his time, namely President Gerald Ford and Secretary Leonid Il'ich Brežnev have agreed that the only solution to the ongoing conflicts was the so-called global negotiation.[34] Provocatively, La Pira asserts that "Von Clausewitz era had finished".[35] Rather, he advocated for change on the economic level by converting armament plans onto solid economic programs.[36]

[28] *Supra*.

[29] G. La Pira, *Unire le città per unire le nazioni*, in B. Bagnato, *La Costruzione della Pace*, Florence, 2019, pp. 454 ss.

[30] M. De Giuseppe, *La Diplomazia delle città*, Giorgio La Pira e la diplomazia delle città unite, p. 59

[31] *Is*, 3, 2.

[32] M. De Giuseppe, *La Diplomazia delle città*, Giorgio La Pira e la diplomazia delle città unite, pp. 302-303

[33] *Supra*.

[34] G. La Pira, *L'età di Clausewitz è finita*, Paris, 1975.

[35] *Ibidem*.

[36] *Ibidem*.

My Journey with CAYLA



Author

Niru Maya Tamang

IYTC Intern (Participant and group facilitator CAYLA)
International Youth Training Centre -IYTC / IMCS Nepal

Country

Nepal

From Mistaken Identity to Meaningful Leadership:

I still vividly remember the day I first joined the International Youth Training Center (IYTC) and heard about CAYLA in a discussion. At the time, I mistakenly thought it was the name of a girl. Unaware of the acronym, I wondered why so many initiatives were being carried out in her name. However, as I delved deeper into the program, I discovered that CAYLA stands for the Catholic Youth Leadership Academy, a program with a profound purpose and vision.

CAYLA Vision:

To nurture young Catholic leaders who are committed to faith, social justice, and transformative leadership, fostering a just and sustainable world.

CAYLA Mission:

To empower youth through leadership training, faith formation, and advocacy on global issues, equipping them with the skills and values to serve their communities and beyond.

Today, not only do I fully understand its significance, but I can confidently conduct a session on it. What an incredible transformation it has been, from misinterpreting its name to facilitating the very program that shaped my growth!



CAYLA was more than just an experience, it was a journey of learning, sharing, and self-discovery. Over the course of 11 enriching days, my knowledge expanded in areas such as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the United Nations and its bodies, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), Catholic Social Teachings (CSTs), the history and structure of IMCS, and partnerships across different nations. Beyond intellectual growth, the program also deepened my spiritual reflections and strengthened my relationship with God.

CAYLA brought together 17 participants from various Asian countries, including Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, India, Indonesia, Nepal, Vietnam, and a coordinator team representing South Korea, Malaysia, Bangladesh, Nepal, and Indonesia. The event was a melting pot of cultures, ideas, and intellectual exchanges. The diversity among us fostered a rich learning environment, where we not only shared knowledge but also built lasting friendships.

Throughout the program, I was entrusted with the responsibilities of timekeeping and ice-breaking sessions. This role gave me the opportunity to engage with all the participants and witness their creativity and enthusiasm in designing interactive sessions. Keeping time was a challenge, but with collective effort, we managed to instill punctuality while maintaining a lively and engaging atmosphere.

I was also honored to be the group facilitator for Group Christus Vivit and Group Luke. My incredible team members displayed outstanding participation, dedication, and teamwork in every activity. Together, we navigated various challenges and celebrated numerous achievements. Some of my most cherished memories include choreographing group dances, participating in dress code challenges, engaging in thought-provoking group discussions, and experiencing profound spiritual and cultural moments. The night vigil, the Laudato Si' Stations of the Cross, and our exposure visits to organizations such as AIPP, CCA, and Doi Tan Temple were particularly meaningful. Each experience provided deep insights into faith, social justice, and intercultural learning, culminating in a vibrant and memorable cultural night celebration.



CAYLA has been a transformative experience: one that has enhanced my leadership skills, broadened my perspective, and deepened my faith. From a simple misunderstanding of its acronym to becoming a facilitator within the program, this journey has been nothing short of remarkable. I am deeply grateful for this opportunity and look forward to continuing my path of learning, leadership, and service.



CAYLA Program Reflection



Author

Warnakulasooriya Marian Sonali Coonghe

Representing

Freedom Fellowship Team

Country

Sri Lanka

"Faith in Action: A Journey of Servant Leadership and Spiritual Awakening through CAYLA"

Life is a series of experiences that shape our perspectives, challenge our beliefs, and help us grow into the individuals we are meant to become. For me, the CAYLA Program was one such experience—a profound journey of self-discovery, faith, leadership, and cultural immersion. As a young Catholic student from Sri Lanka, this program was my very first opportunity to travel outside my country, and it proved to be a life-changing adventure.



It offered me the chance to engage with people from diverse backgrounds, learn about servant leadership, and deepen my faith in ways I had never imagined.

One of the most valuable lessons I learned from the CAYLA Program is the true essence of servant leadership. Before this program, my understanding of leadership was largely influenced by authority and responsibility. However, my time at CAYLA helped me realize that true leadership is not about holding power over others but about lifting others up with humility and compassion. As a Catholic young student, I learned that being a leader means serving those around me, listening to different perspectives with an open heart, and striving to make a meaningful impact in the lives of others. Through various sessions and discussions, I was introduced to the Vatican encyclicals, which provided me with a deeper understanding of Catholic Social Teaching. This knowledge, combined with insights into the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), opened my eyes to the interconnectedness of faith, leadership, and social responsibility.

The CAYLA Program deepened my faith and broadened my perspective on how spirituality connects people across cultures. Being in a different country and experiencing new ways of worship and community engagement reinforced my belief that faith is a universal force that transcends borders, languages, and traditions. One of the most profound aspects of the program was the emphasis on starting and ending everything with Jesus. This principle became a source of strength throughout my journey, reminding me that faith is the foundation of true leadership. Through prayer sessions, group reflections, and shared spiritual practices, I felt a strong sense of unity with my fellow participants. Our faith became a bridge that connected us, despite our cultural differences.

Among the many enriching experiences I had at CAYLA, my visit to a village in Chom Thong was particularly meaningful. As it was my first time outside my country, I initially felt uncertain about interacting with the village people. However, I quickly realized how warm and welcoming they were. Their kindness and hospitality touched my heart, and I saw the beauty of God's creation in a new light. This visit helped me appreciate the simple joys of life and reinforced the importance of community. Witnessing the villagers' resilience and deep-rooted faith was inspiring. It reminded me that no matter where we come from, we are all connected by the love and grace of God. Another unforgettable experience during the program was my first-ever vigil. Spending an hour alone with Jesus in silent prayer was a moment of deep spiritual connection. Time seemed to fly, and I felt an overwhelming sense of peace and clarity. It was during this sacred moment that I truly understood the power of stillness and reflection. In addition to the vigil, other spiritual practices such as the Way of the Cross, outdoor Holy Mass, and the six-direction prayer were profoundly meaningful to me. Singing hymns together with my fellow participants created an atmosphere of divine unity, making me feel even more grateful to be part of this journey.

One of the most striking aspects of the CAYLA Program was the warmth and kindness of everyone involved. From facilitators to interns and caregivers, each person played a crucial role in making the program a success. Their humility and friendliness made it easy for us to engage, participate, and feel at home. This sense of community was a reminder that leadership is not just about individual growth but also about fostering meaningful relationships. The support and encouragement I received from my peers and mentors motivated me to embrace new challenges and step out of my comfort zone.

The lessons I learned at CAYLA have become an integral part of my daily life. I have incorporated Catholic Social Teaching and prayer into my routine, and I now practice yoga with a newfound sense of purpose. Moreover, I have been sharing my experiences and insights with the youth members of my parish, hoping to inspire them to become faith-driven leaders in their own communities. Through these small but significant actions, I am striving to make a positive impact in the lives of those around me. The CAYLA Program has instilled in me a sense of responsibility to carry forward the values of servant leadership, compassion, and faith. As I move forward, I am committed to discerning and following God's plan for me. The vow I made during the CAYLA Program serves as a constant reminder of my mission to serve others with love and humility. I now have the confidence to embrace greater responsibilities and encourage others to do the same. I am deeply grateful for this opportunity and for everyone who contributed to the success of the program.

The experiences I gained at CAYLA have shaped me in ways I never expected, and I feel truly blessed to be part of this incredible journey. I now understand that each of us is chosen by God for a unique purpose, and I am excited to continue discovering mine. As I reflect on my time at CAYLA, I am filled with immense gratitude. To the organizers, facilitators, mentors, and fellow participants—thank you for making this experience so meaningful. Your guidance, kindness, and faith have left an indelible mark on my heart. I walk away from this program with a renewed spirit, a strengthened faith, and a deep commitment to servant leadership. May God bless each of us as we continue our journeys, and may we always remember that we are loved beyond measure. Thank you, CAYLA, for this unforgettable journey.

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We also acknowledge the **IMCS Pax Romana International Coordination team**, the **International Youth Training Centre (IYTC) Laudato Si' Pax Romana Centre** for their ongoing support and for providing young leaders with the tools to make a meaningful impact on the world.

Lastly, our deepest gratitude goes to **Pope Francis**, whose unwavering commitment to young people and social justice continues to inspire us all. His call for youth to be the “**agents of social change**” and “**protagonists of the revolution of charity and service**” (*Christus Vivit*, 174) echoes through the work of **IMCS Pax Romana** and its programs.

Together, we are united in **faith, service**, and the shared mission to build a more just, peaceful, and sustainable world.



Let's Work Together



IMCS-MIEC Pax Romana

International Movement of Catholic Students
Mouvement International des Étudiants Catholiques
Movimiento Internacional de Estudiantes Católicos

☎ +33 6 37 09 39 32

✉ office.imcsmiec@gmail.com

🌐 www.imcs-miec.org

🏠 5 Rue Bernard Valuet 74800 La Roche
Sur-Foron, France