

## Goal 13:

# CLIMATE ACTION

The earth's climate has always changed, but not as quickly or dramatically as we are experiencing today. Emissions of greenhouse gases such as CO2 and methane are causing the atmosphere to warm up, leading to higher average temperatures and more extreme weather. Across the globe, people are experiencing more droughts and floods and more extreme weather phenomena in general. The consequences are very serious: Drought causes crops to fail and drinking water to dry up, while floods and hurricanes destroy people's homes and livelihoods. More and more people are being forced to flee their homes when water disappears and their livestock die. Climate change is fundamentally unfair. The rich countries are responsible for most of the emissions, but the poor countries are the hardest hit by the consequences.

Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 13 states that we must take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts. Unfortunately, human-induced climate change is already underway, but we can still slow it down. In order to prevent the most dramatic changes, we must ensure that the average global temperature does not increase by more than 1.5 degrees. It is possible to achieve this target, but this will require the countries of the world to collectively reduce their greenhouse gas emissions by 50 per cent before 2030.<sup>11</sup> If we are going to make this happen, we need to work together in a global effort, where individuals, civil society, the business community, countries and international bodies all take their share of the responsibility.



## Biblical reflection

In the world of the Bible, the powers of nature appear sometimes as personal beings that may become demonic in their destructive strength. The disciples feared that the storm and the waves would drag them into the darkness of the sea (Matthew 8:23-27). We also sometimes experience nature as capricious; when exposed to the powers that it may trigger, we realise that we are small and vulnerable.

This became dramatic in times with prolonged drought and crop failure. The Bible tells about climate changes in Egypt and about Joseph who acted as a wise political leader when engaging in resilience, disaster preparedness and relief work, assisting the victims of "the seven years of famine" (Genesis 41). Thanks to this response, the country and its inhabitants survived. Today's political agenda likewise requires similar measures responding to the dramatic consequences of climate change, in particular for the poorest and most vulnerable.

In contrast to the times of the Old Testament, today's climate change is largely caused by humans. We cannot blame nature and its caprices, we must recognise our shared responsibility, and not least, express this responsibility through faith and action. Affirming our belief in God's continued reign over the world, God who once brought the Great Flood to an end and established the rainbow as a sign of the future and hope (Genesis 9:11-17).

## Questions

- How can our faith in God as Creator motivate us to help stop climate change and to improve people's readiness to adapt to climate change?
- The Old Testament portrays the rainbow as a sign of God's covenant and his promise that he will not destroy creation. Does this understanding have relevance today?

## Challenge

We cannot solve the climate crisis unless politicians take action. How can you challenge politicians at the local and national level to cut greenhouse gas emissions in line with the Paris Agreement?

## Prayer

*Lord, we feel your creation groaning  
Under the weight of our incessant striving.  
Grant us the grace to help us turn around,  
Even when the changes cost.  
Along with the rest of creation, we yearn for life  
and health for our earth.  
Give us strength in our struggle and our hope.*

*We commit everything and everyone, into your  
hands, Lord. Amen.*