

Pope presses environment message in Ecuador

By NICOLE WINFIELD
Associated Press

QUITO, Ecuador — Pope Francis pressed his case for a new economic and environmental world order Tuesday during his South American tour, saying the goods of the Earth are meant for everyone and must not be exploited by the wealthy few for short-term profit at the expense of the poor.

Francis’ call, delivered on his final full day in Quito, is particularly relevant for Ecuador, a Pacific nation that is home to one of the world’s most species-diverse ecosystems but is also an OPEC country heavily dependent on oil extraction.

He delivered the challenge in back-to-back speeches at Catholic University and then in a meeting with business leaders and indigenous groups, the latter of which have championed his recent encyclical denouncing what he says is the profit-at-all cost mentality of wealthy nations exploiting the poor and destroying the planet in the process.

“The goods of the Earth are meant for everyone, and however much someone may parade his property, it has a social mortgage,” Francis said. “The tapping of natural resources, which are so abundant in Ecuador, must not be concerned with short-term benefits.”

Ecuadorean President Rafael Correa has been harshly criticized by environmentalists and indigenous groups for pushing mining



Pope Francis blesses the faithful as he arrives to San Francisco Square aboard the popemobile in Quito, Ecuador, Tuesday.

and oil drilling in the Amazon, which together with the Galapagos Islands give Ecuador an unrivaled designation as one of the Earth’s environmental priorities. That push, coupled with high crude prices, allowed Correa to lift 1.3 million people out of poverty in his eight years in office.

Francis has called for environmentally responsible development, one that is aimed at helping the poor without sacrificing the planet. The oil industry, and its supporters particularly in the U.S., has criticized the pope’s anti-fossil fuel campaign as irresponsible and uninformed.

“As stewards of these riches which we have received, we have an obligation toward society as a whole and toward future generations,” Francis said. “We cannot bequeath this heritage to them without proper care for the environment, without

a sense of gratuitousness born of our contemplation of the created world.”

It’s a message he is likely to repeat later this week in Bolivia, the next stop on his three-nation South American tour, where he will meet with grass-roots groups, environmentalists and indigenous representatives. Bolivian President Evo Morales has been hailed as an environmental hero to many for demanding rich nations do more to halt global warming, but he has been assailed by conservationists at home who say he puts oil and gas extraction ahead of clean water and forests.

Francis began his last full day in Ecuador with an open-air Mass that drew more than 1 million people and featured readings in Quichua, the native language mostly spoken in Ecuador, and Ecuadorean vestments for the pope.

In his homily, Francis

urged Latin Americans to channel the same urgency that brought them independence from Spain two centuries ago into spreading the faith on a continent where Catholicism is losing souls to evangelical movements.

The Mass location, at Quito’s Bicentennial Park, was appropriate given that Ecuador was where the first cries of independence against Spanish rule arose in Latin America in 1809.

“There was no shortage of conviction or strength in that cry for freedom which arose a little more than 200 years ago,” Francis said. “But history tells us that it only made headway once personal differences were set aside.”

Latin America counts 40 percent of the world’s Catholics, but the church is losing out to Protestant evangelical ministries that have focused on the continent’s poorest communities with real-life guidance on employment and education.

While the drop-off in Spanish-speaking South America hasn’t been as sharp as it has been in Brazil, it is notable: Some 95 percent of Ecuador’s population was Catholic in 1970, and now the figure is down to 79 percent, according to the Pew Research Center.

In a bid to counter the trend and return the Catholic Church to its evangelizing origins, Francis has called for the church to return to being a missionary church that looks out particularly for society’s poorest and most marginalized.

EOTEC: Legislature also approved \$4M for improvements to I-84

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Thanks to a \$1.6 million appropriation, the college will be able to add an Early Learning Center to the \$2.5 million workforce training center at the Port of Morrow that voters approved in May as part of BMCC’s bond issue. Children of the students being trained at the center will be able to attend preschool at the Early Learning Center while their parents attend classes.

The legislature also earmarked \$3.3 million for an Animal Science Education Center for BMCC.

Other projects specific to Umatilla and Morrow County that will be funded if Governor Kate Brown signs the spending bills include:

- \$4 million for improvements to Interstate 84

between Pendleton and La Grande

- \$11 million for the Umatilla Basin water supply
- \$900,000 for Port of Umatilla water systems
- \$7.5 million for an Oregon Department of Transportation project near Meacham

- \$130,000 for additional funds for wolf compensation

Other funding allocated by the legislature could result in more money for Eastern Oregon, including \$300 million for seismic upgrades in public schools, \$45 million for Connect Oregon infrastructure improvement grants and \$12 million to the Regional Solutions team.

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JESUS: Only visible from a small portion of the resort

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religious endorsement.”

Bolton maintained that there is, and he said the Forest Service only granted the permit to quell public outcry after word spread in 2011 that the statue might be removed.

Bolton came under sharp questioning from one of the judges, N. Randy Smith, who seemed skeptical of whether the Wisconsin-based Freedom From Religion Foundation has standing in the case. He asked Bolton which particular member of the group has been harmed by the Forest Service’s decision.

Bolton answered that a Montana-based foundation member, Pamela Morris, would like to ski at Big Mountain but has avoided it for decades since encountering the Jesus statue as a teenager.

Smith countered that the statue is only visible from a small portion of the resort and it’s possible to ski all day without seeing it.

“In other words, there’s no reason to even avoid it,” the judge said. “She has to

go specifically looking for it.”

“That’s not true, your honor,” Bolton said.

“Well, that’s what the evidence says,” Smith replied.

The Knights of Columbus put up the statue to memorialize soldiers who died while fighting during World War II. The returning veterans who built it were inspired by the mountain shrines and statues they saw during their service in Italy.

U.S. Justice Department attorney Joan Pepin said the Forest Service acted with neutrality and approved the permit because the statue has local historical significance. She told the judges that the statue is primarily a meeting place, a photo backdrop and a “quirky local landmark,” a reminder of how the city of Whitefish used to be.

“It’s usually wearing a ski helmet,” she said of the statue. “There’s nothing about its context that suggests devotion is encouraged.”

The judges gave no indication of when they might rule.

TAX: Proposed gas tax would sunset in 10 years

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She pointed out that there were only a few months between Tuesday’s council meeting and when ballots would go out to voters. In addition, due to an extended vacation, the city would be unable to utilize Public Works Director Bob Patterson for part of that time.

Hill drew opposition from councilors who said the infrastructure needs of the city were too great to wait any longer.

“If we lose, so what?” Councilman Al Plute said. “We lose. Then we still get between now and next May

and improve on whatever anybody said against it and had problems with.”

Hill ended up being the only councilor to vote against a November gas tax ballot question, with the other seven members voting for it.

The proposed tax would sunset in 10 years, though city council would review it every five years and a list of street projects would be updated annually.

After originally being rebuffed at the last infrastructure committee meeting, Councilwoman McKennon McDonald was able to build support to reintroduce a

sunset provision. Initially, city staff recommended the tax come off the books in five years.

In addition, the council unanimously voted to institute a \$5 transportation utility fee to all residences and businesses.

Both the gas tax ballot question and the utility fee must be approved in the form an ordinance or resolution. The ballot issue will need to be voted on soon to meet the Umatilla County Election Division’s deadline. City Manager Robb Corbett promised to draft a resolution to approve the utility fee by September.

No amount of debate could bring the council to a consensus on proposed bonds to build a fire station and pay for deferred maintenance for city facilities.

After two motions from Councilman Al Plute for a \$15 million bond — \$10 million for deferred maintenance and another \$5 million for neighborhood streets — died from lack of a second, the council was too divided on whether to pursue the bond in November or at a later date.

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KIMBER: Could be prone to pneumonia because she inhaled river water

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laid her on the bank. Phillips said she then collapsed and screamed for help.

Tony Aguilar said he was there with his family and heard shrieks and yells to call 9-1-1. The 40-year-old Pilot Rock father said a crowd rushed to the creek, and he followed. He said he reached the girl and found she had no pulse. He said he covered her chest with his palms and pumped, mimicking CPR he saw in movies.

Tabetha Koehler, a Umatilla County dispatcher, also was there to celebrate the day with friends, including Melinda Wachter and Gregory Denton of Pilot Rock. Koehler said others tried and failed to call 9-1-1 because of a lack of service, and at first she had no luck. She said she moved away from the bank to higher ground, got a signal and got through. Moments later a quick response team from Ukiah was en route with a Pendleton ambulance also on the way.

But Kimber was still not breathing. Koehler said she saw Denton make his way through the crowd to the girl.

Denton, 50, is a mechanic for Boise Cascade’s mill in Pilot Rock. He said he knows CPR from company training but never thought he would have to use it on a small child. Denton said he does not remember seeing Aguilar in the commotion, and Aguilar doesn’t remember seeing him, either. But right away Denton saw what could be wrong with the girl — blocked airways.

Green moss covered Kimber’s nose, he said, so he peeled it away and cleared more river gunk from her mouth and moved her tongue to make a clear passage for

air. He said he put her on her side, slapped her back, gave her one breath and “kept working on her” for more than a minute.

Phillips was frantic, and over and over wailed: “Make her breathe.”

Denton said he focused on her eyes, and one pupil rolled forward, then the other. Denton said he gave the girl another pat on the back and she let out a squeak. She started to breathe.

“I hope I never have to do it again,” he said.

Wachter said Denton, her boyfriend, returned to their camp by himself and sought quiet. He is a bit macho, she said, but later when he talked about what happened he teared up.

Phillips said she only remembered glimpses of people helping. She said she could not even remember how her daughter got back to camp, where emergency responders from Ukiah showed within moments of the 9-1-1 call. The team is not qualified to transport patients but made sure the girl was stable.

“I stood there for 45 minutes just holding on to her while we waited for the Pendleton ambulance to get there,” Phillips said, and a crowd of maybe 30 stood around them.

The Pendleton crew took mother and daughter to St. Anthony Hospital, Pendleton, and aside from a minor “breathing episode” that night, Phillips said Kimber

was fine and by Sunday was back to her rambunctious self.

Phillips said doctors told her Kimber could be prone to pneumonia because she inhaled river water, but if she shows no signs of illness or fever by Sunday, she would be out of the woods. Phillips also said her son is her “little hero,” and called her daughter a miracle, and those who helped were at the creek that day for a reason.

“I’m just so grateful,” she said.

Phillips said that was her first visit to Camas Creek, and it will be her last.

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