



CONFERENTIA EPISCOPALIS PACIFICI

EPISCOPAL CONFERENCE OF THE PACIFIC

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Creation Is God's Gift

“The earth is the Lord’s and all that is in it.” (*Psalms 24:1*)

Pastoral Statement on Deep-Sea Mining from the Episcopal Conference of the Pacific (CEPAC)

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

Peace!

As pastors of the Episcopal Conference of the Pacific, we write not simply to address an important public issue, but to accompany our people in prayerful discernment. The ocean that surrounds our islands is more than a geographical reality. It is God's gift to us—a source of life and nourishment, a sign of our interconnectedness, and a sacred trust that we are called to preserve for generations yet unborn.

Pope Francis reminds us in *Laudato Si'* that “the earth was here before us and has been given to us.” All of creation draws us into the presence of God. It is not ours to exploit according to our own desires, but God's gift entrusted to our care. As we read in Genesis 2:15, humanity is called “to till and keep” the garden. We are stewards, not owners; custodians, not proprietors. Creation, therefore, cannot simply be reduced to a resource for economic gain.

In continuity with Pope Francis' *Laudato Si'*, Pope Leo XIV reminds us in *Magnifica Humanitas* that authentic human progress can never be separated from care for our common home, responsibility toward future generations, and the universal distribution of the goods of creation. True progress is measured not simply by what we are capable of achieving, but by whether our decisions uphold human dignity, protect creation, and promote the common good. This vision invites us to ask not only what we can do, but what we ought to do as faithful stewards of God's gifts.

For generations, humanity has extracted the mineral resources of the earth to sustain economic development, often without fully considering the long-term consequences for our common home. Today, commercial deep-sea mining in our region appears increasingly imminent. Large areas of the Pacific seabed, including waters surrounding American Samoa and areas near the Mariana Trench Marine National Monument, are now being considered for commercial leasing. 33 million acres in the waters surrounding American Samoa are about to be offered for commercial lease. Recently, the area has increased to 70 million acres near the Marianas Trench Marine

National Monument. These developments have prompted governments, scientists, Indigenous communities, churches, and many people of goodwill to engage in an important conversation about the future of our ocean and the legacy we will leave to those who come after us.

As pastors, our responsibility is to proclaim the Gospel and to illuminate these questions in the light of the Church's social teaching. The resources of creation are entrusted not only to our generation but also to those who will come after us. History teaches us that when science remains uncertain about the consequences of actions that may cause serious or irreversible harm, wisdom calls us to proceed with humility, prudence, and prayerful discernment.

For Pacific peoples, this conviction is deeply rooted in our way of life. Many of us learned from our parents and grandparents that the ocean is far more than a highway or a storehouse of minerals. It is woven into our identity, our cultures, our livelihoods, our stories, and our spiritual memory. We are not separate from creation; we belong to it. When the ocean flourishes, our communities flourish. When it is wounded, something within us is wounded as well.

The Mystery of the Deep Ocean

The deep ocean remains one of the least understood ecosystems on Earth. Scientists acknowledge that much about its biodiversity, its ecological relationships, and its long-term resilience is still unknown. Decisions taken today may therefore have consequences that cannot easily be reversed.

For this reason, the Church urges caution. When there exists a genuine possibility of serious or irreversible harm, the absence of complete scientific certainty should never become an excuse for proceeding without due care. Prudence is not an obstacle to progress; it is the virtue that enables authentic progress to serve both humanity and creation.

The Church does not oppose scientific research or responsible economic development. Rather, she calls us to ensure that technological advancement always respects the dignity of the human person, protects the integrity of creation, and serves the common good.

An Integral Ecology

Care for creation cannot be separated from justice, peace, culture, and the dignity of peoples. As Pope Francis reminds us, *"the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor"* are inseparable. For Pacific Islanders, the ocean sustains fisheries, food security, livelihoods, and cultural traditions. These values are often overlooked in a purely utilitarian understanding of development. Decisions concerning the seabed therefore affect not only fragile marine ecosystems but also the lives of families, villages, Indigenous communities, and future generations who will inherit this ocean after us.

Walking Together

We are encouraged by the thoughtful leadership already shown by public officials, scientists, community leaders, Indigenous Peoples, and many churches that have called for careful discernment before irreversible decisions are made. Their voices remind us that choices affecting the future of our Pacific home cannot be determined solely by economic interests but must also

consider moral responsibility, environmental stewardship, and the well-being of future generations.

As Christians, we approach this conversation not with fear but with hope. We believe that respectful dialogue, sound science, responsible governance, and moral wisdom can work together in the service of the common good. We encourage continued collaboration among governments, scientists, local communities, Indigenous peoples, churches, and all people of goodwill so that decisions may reflect both truth and justice.

Hope for the Pacific

The Pacific has long taught the world that creation is not merely something we possess but something that shapes who we are and binds us together.

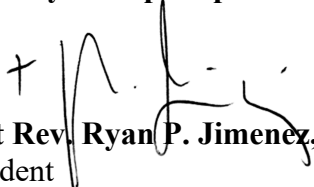
Our Christian faith deepens this conviction. The sea, the islands, the coral reefs, and even the hidden depths of the ocean proclaim the glory of their Creator. They are part of the inheritance that God has entrusted to our care.

Therefore, we respectfully encourage all who bear responsibility for decisions concerning deep-sea mining to proceed with wisdom, transparency, humility, and genuine concern for the common good. Until there is convincing evidence that such activity can be undertaken without causing serious or irreversible harm, prudence calls us to exercise great caution.

May our generation be remembered not for what it extracted from creation, but for what it protected.

May Christ, through whom all things were created and in whom all things hold together (Colossians 1:16-17), grant wisdom to our leaders, courage to our communities, and hearts that remain attentive to both the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor. May the Holy Spirit guide us to make decisions rooted in truth, justice, and charity, so that future generations may inherit an ocean that continues to proclaim the glory of God and sustain the peoples of the Pacific.

Issued by the Episcopal Conference of the Pacific (CEPAC)


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