



## Anthony Bucci

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### **The Arkbuilding Generation**

I appreciate this opportunity to speak on the most pressing issue of our day, climate change, here in Vatican City ahead of the 2018 Synod of Bishops On Young People, the Faith, and Vocational Discernment. I was raised on the shores of New Jersey in the United States of America where I committed to protecting our planet while attending an environmental science high school. I saw the effects of climate change first-hand when, in 2012, Hurricane Sandy devastated my local community, flooding our barrier islands and displacing thousands. Today, I work on environmental justice and community engagement at the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency on a team that protects human health and the environment from hazardous waste. As someone raised in a Franciscan Catholic family, I believe we have been blessed with Pope Francis and the direction in which he is leading our Church.

Brothers and sisters, it is the greatest honor of my life to be joined with you today. For the next thirteen years—to 2030 and beyond—we will be sailing an ark in solidarity as we work to protect our common home, to build the future we want, and to shepherd in a new Age of Sustainable Development. These are the faces we will turn to as we strive to accomplish the Sustainable Development Goals. Once again, humanity is calling on her youth to bear the shared weight of the world, fight the battles of past generations, and preserve the dreams of ‘tomorrow.’ We are here to accept this responsibility.

Before we sail into 2030, we must understand how we got here.

Over 250 years ago, in the hopes of building a better world for their families and future generations, our forefathers launched a global revolution. From their revolution were born new technologies that advanced standards of living and extended life expectancy. From their revolution were born new countries—like my own—centered on radical new definitions of individual freedom and equality. Their Industrial Revolution brought about existential changes not only in the course of their lives, but also in the lives of future generations.

Today we walk in the shadow of their history; the history a people who, in a scientific sense, knew not what they did. Beneath the invisible clouds of greenhouse gases that once held their dreams are the visible inequities that the pursuit of those dreams left behind. Plagued by colonialism, racism, and greed, the promise of the Industrial Revolution was never fully realized.

Today, we are facing the pains of climate change first hand. From my home country alone, sea level rise is redrawing the geographic boundaries of our Gulf States, wildfires rage throughout the West, and hurricanes have taken the homes and power away from my Puerto Rican brothers and sisters, who were already bereft of the political and economic power needed to have a seat at the table. These are the marks of a Planet crying out for a renewed balance.

Yet, in 2015, humanity answered the call. 193 countries of the United Nations came together to launch the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, complete with a set of 17 Global Goals aimed at nothing short of saving the world from its greatest challenges. In December of that year, the world came together to gavel in the Paris Climate Agreement, setting the ambitious goal to cap global warming by 1.5 to 2 degrees Celsius by 2100.

I am proud to have been even a small part in the making of history in Paris while working at the United Nations Foundation. Never had I been filled with more hope. I knew that, once again, the older generations in power were planting their seeds of hope in us—the youth—to build a world they would never get to see.

As we consider the opportunities born out of the new hopes, values, and technologies present today, we must check our own sustainable revolution against an uncompromising test: how do we meet the needs of the present without compromising future generations’ abilities to meet their own needs?

When faced with such a daunting question, it is often best to begin looking for answers through our faith. Here I turn to the book of *Genesis*, wherein God calls upon Noah to build an ark to house two of every species on Earth while he purges it from sin with the floods. Noah dutifully builds an ark to protect the biodiversity and future of a planet threatened by extreme weather.

Today, I call on each of us to take on the same mantle of leadership and responsibility to become the Arkbuilding generation to protect our common home.

**Our sustainable revolution must be inclusive.**

In *Laudato si'*, Pope Francis calls on us to “enter into dialogue with all people about our common home.” It is our responsibility to bring that conversation home.

As Arkbuilders and Global Goals Advocates, we must recognize that we all have a role and responsibility to act on climate.

We must reach out to everyone, beyond those who agree on how we should set our sails to 2030. Remember, it took the United Nations several attempts to produce a climate agreement. Jesus, a carpenter, brought together a tax collector and a businessman, fishermen and tradesmen, a revolutionary and a prostitute all through His message of Love. By coming to the same table to discuss our shared goals, we *will* become a more fraternal society.

We must become disciples for all global goals, teaching people that in our respective fights for freedom and equality, we are not only acting as patriots, but also compatriots in a cosmopolitan struggle for human dignity.

We must engage our brothers and sisters on the front lines of environmental justice issues so no one is left behind.

### **Our sustainable revolution must be accessible.**

Too often do global gatherings take place in a vacuum where those without the means or status are unable to contribute.

As Arkbuilders and Global Goals Advocates, we must remember that it was the poor widow whom Jesus says contributed most into the temple offering by contributing *all* she had. Let us continue to bring the offertory basket of ideas to our brothers and sisters without the means or knowledge of how to participate themselves. I am proud that today that this important conversation is digitally recorded so that we may share the best practices we learn here with our communities at home.

We must speak plainly to communicate the Global Goals to broad audiences, allowing anyone to plug in to the conversation. Indeed, there are millions of people around the world who are doing the work of the Global Goals without the United Nation’s lingo. We must integrate their work into the global movement.

We must educate our companies and workplaces on the value of the global goals and integrate those goals into their corporate social responsibility practices.

We must encourage the leaders in our daily lives to take on the moral responsibilities embedded in these global goals, particularly as they have the power to impact the environment and the most vulnerable of us.

### **Our sustainable revolution must be championed.**

The tools and technologies exist to help us build and sail this ark, but we still need to steer it to success during its long journey. As Arkbuilders and Global Goals Advocates, we must use our platforms to shout the successes of our sustainable revolution from the rooftops and the airwaves, with Pope Francis’ leadership as a shining example.

We live in an attention economy, and the more time we spend sharing the hope and promise of the Global Goals, the greater our ripples of positive change we will be. Tangibly, this means writing articles in our newspapers, making television appearances, fostering partnerships for the goals, becoming active on social media, advocating to our political officials, and otherwise bringing the conversation to every local, national, and international audience possible.

The United Nations set an ambitious target: teach 2 billion people about the Global Goals and train 700,000 people to become advocates for them. I find the work of Dr. Jeffrey Sachs’ Sustainable Development Goals Academy—a team I now volunteer for—to be particularly fascinating, as it brings together the world’s top academics to co-teach courses on the Global Goals. I encourage us to be even more ambitious if we are to meet the United Nations’ targets: how many new people would learn about the Global Goals if Pope Francis—a former teacher himself—co-taught a multilingual course on ‘saving the world’ with the heads of United Nations agencies, religious and non-governmental organizations, and recognizable and admirable leaders on a platform such as Netflix, BBC, or CBS. How many people could we engage and connect if we, as SDSN Youth, gave these watchers the tools to activate on these issues in their communities?

Inclusion. Accessibility. Attention. This is how we build a tangible, sustainable revolution. This is how we steer the ship to 2030.

We must look to each other for inspiration as role models and pass the microphone to amplify the news of our good works.

We must understand that—while we do not have the hundreds of years that Noah had to save the world—we, too, may never get to see a world in perfect harmony with Nature. We must put our faith in the youth of *that time* to continue to protect our common home.

In the words of Bono, U2's humanitarian singer: "every generation gets a chance to change the world. Pity the nation that won't listen to your boys and girls. Cos the sweetest melody is the one we haven't heard."

I would like to thank God for this wonderful blessing of life and the opportunities He has afforded me. Thank you to Dr. Tony Annett, Dr. Jeffrey Sachs, the Sustainable Development Solutions Network Youth, and the Pontifical Academy of Sciences for this opportunity, our Holy Father Pope Francis for his leadership on climate and many other issues, and my parents, family, faith leaders, and personal mentors, without whom I would not be here today.

So let us sail on, an ark against the current, into Providence, into the world we want, into a sustainable future.