

Fiji FNU Student's - Climate Peace Rally Stopped by the Police - *John McEvoy*

Catholic Students from the various FNU (Fiji National University) campuses throughout Fiji decided to hold a Rally at 'My Suva Park' on Saturday 6th November in union with the hundreds of thousands of youths from all over the world praying for and supporting those attending COP 26 in Glasgow. They were calling for the same thing as World Leaders in Glasgow which is a reduction in carbon emissions, political determination and action against global warming and climate change. (Keeping 1.5 degrees alive).

On their behalf Atalemo Laticakaudrove, FNU student from Nasinu campus had got a permit from the Fiji Roads Authority stamped by the Suva City Council. He was told that there was no need to get a police permit since the march would be along the footpath, not on the road. Archbishop, Peter Loy Chong and Adi Mariana Waqa (Pacific Council of Churches) would address the gathering at 'My Suva Park'



Many students from FNU Natabua came from Lautoka. Fr Frank Hoare, Vitalina Vukinagauna (Columban Communications Coordinator) and Nani Mo'unga (Columban Lay Missionary Coordinator) had worked with the FNU students throughout the year, invited other students from various Suva Parishes as well as students from PRS, and Corpus Christi Teachers Training College. The students decided to start the rally with a Mass at the Columban Formation House, which was celebrated by Fr John McEvoy (Columban leader in Fiji).



After the Mass all proceeded to the Japanese Garden, opposite the Pacific Theological College to join other youth waiting there, as well as members of other faith groups. It was here that the police intervened and stopped the students from proceeding to 'My Suva Park' on the context that they had no police permit to march. But of course, they were not using the road only the footpath and didn't need a permit to do so. Four officers stopped the students, priests, seminarians and private citizens to take part in this peaceful march/walk for climate change. They requested them to remove their banners and disperse.



In the meantime, World leaders at Cop 26 in Glasgow are trying to come up with a new road map for our future and for a more sustainable world. A delegation of 36 from Fiji including the Prime Minister and the Attorney General are in Glasgow expressing their concerns about these urgent matters regarding the future of the world and especially small Pacific nations. Are the youth of Fiji not entitled and allowed the freedom to express the same concerns and worries for Mother Earth our Common Home now under threat at the present time? The question must be asked who will put into practice any resolution that may come out of COP 26? Surely it will be the young people emerging as the new leaders of tomorrow.

One writer on Social Media summed up the situation well “While our leaders’ campaign in Glasgow about climate change, young people in Fiji cannot. The Police say that to march on the Suva sea wall footpath you need a permit from the road’s authority - nonsense”

The students were eventually allowed to go and have their gathering at PRS (Pacific Regional Seminary) where they were addressed by Adi Marian Waqa with a very inspiring speech on the dire situation that our world is facing. Fr Petero Nimelote (M.C. for the event) and Fr Frank Hoare thanked all for coming to Suva for the Rally in solidarity with thousands of their fellow youth who could gather, march and protest throughout the world on this very sane day.

The Sunday Fiji Times had a picture of participating youth on its front page under the heading ‘Police halt march’ and reported on the proceedings on page 3 with the heading, ‘Police stop peaceful march by Catholic youths.’









