

2021 Franciscan Sermon Global Warming/ Climate Change

“One Franciscan’s approach to climate change”

O God, where hearts are fearful and constricted, grant courage and hope.
Where anxiety is infection and widening, grant peace and reassurance.
Where impossibilities close every door and window, grant imagination and resistance.
Where distrust twists our thinking, grant healing and illumination.
Where spirits are daunted and weakened, grant soaring wings and strengthened dreams.
All these things we ask in the name of Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen.

Today I would like to take the past several years of discussions in my Franciscan order about global warming and evolve it into some personal advice for myself and perhaps for you.

I want to thank and acknowledge numerous Franciscans in my order including Finn Pond, Jeff Gohlier, and Mark McDonald for the conversations in virtual meetings about climate change we have held in the last two years. Also, thanks to Larry Sibley on showing me the power of lament.

Knowing what I am planning might help your plans. No charts, endless data about climate change; I believe folks tune that out anyway. It manages to make me feel bored and terrified at the same time. I will be using the word you, but I am mostly speaking to myself. It is far easier to tell others what to do than to do it yourself; yet I believe this is the path for me to follow in the coming days and years. If this path or parts of it seem helpful to you, please consider it. I do not have any answers, just suggestions, methods, to guide you to discover your own path. Do not expect perfection from yourself; just make an effort and move on to the next step. You are living your lives and stuff is happening all around you, like you are in a rainstorm or perhaps a hail storm. So this also takes some focus on the tasks you should try to complete as the hail of everyday life falls on you. Climate change is big and scary, lasting for many generations. Look to what is bigger and

more powerful than that: the powers of lament, wisdom, justice, kindness and of course God.

Francis of Assisi loved God, passionately. He strove to act, to behave as he believed God wanted him to act so that he could be part of God's loving plan for all creatures. He looked to himself to modify his behaviors so that he could be more and more in line with God's specific call to him, to Francis.

1. **Seek rest in God.** Abide in God's love, in nature in our interconnectedness. Rest in the wonderful Nature that is now. If we can find this rest now and then, all the rest follows automatically. Love those closest to you, your family, your pets, the flowers and tree in your yard. Rest in the first gospel, the created Cosmos that we find ourselves dwelling in. Like sleep it may not be entirely restful. You are remembering your interconnectedness with that neighbor you dislike, with that racist uncle you are embarrassed by. Do your best and move on. Don't get stuck here. Getting stuck is its own problem. Keep moving.

2. **Seek justice for the oppressed.** Climate change is directly connected to colonialism; the same system that has brought suffering to so many people in the past and also continues today. The great and continuing injustice of colonialism is the root cause of global warming. Man's greed and injustice have gotten us to this point. So seek justice. Reach out to seek justice for the oppressed, lament, listen to the oppressed for what you should do. Approach this humbly; your assumption that you know what is best for others is itself a product of colonialism. Expansion of commerce in the domineering, plundering, land stealing, slave making, murdering method of colonialism created injustices that last to the present day in the descendants of oppressed peoples, in the way the environment is exploited, and in the subtle and powerful ways white people behave. Seek out what they are and strive to end them.

Exploitative colonialism exists now in Brazil, Canada and many other countries where multinational corporations influence governments to act against their own interests so that resources and people can be plundered. Social effects of colonialism exist in the descendants of the ruling class; how we white folks treat Native Americans, black

Americans, Asian Americans. Our expressing regret and grieving for suffering is called lamenting. Lament has been a part of our religion and Judaism for centuries and we need to renew that aspect in our religious life now. The psalm we read was one of lament. Part of moving ahead is honoring and grieving past tragedies, to free us to move ahead while honoring past wounds... Lament to others, if appropriate, or lament to God regarding the suffering and injustice that you become aware of.

Reconcile yourself to God's truth by learning about the history of oppressed peoples. Gain a new more renewed and liberated view of yourself in this process. Native Americans may tell you that work to mitigate climate change is also justice for them. Look to others for guidance and of course to God, which will bring us to the next step.

3. Seek a close relationship with God who will let you know what is yours to do.

In Francis's last words: God has shown me what is mine to do, may God show you what is yours to do

Focus on your own resilience. Live simply. Learn to do without. Become a cheapskate with goods and material possessions and extravagant, even outrageous with giving away your love. Simplify your heart by letting go of those things you grasp. Increasing effects of climate change will force us to confront this or ignore it to our increasing peril. We have lost much in this global pandemic; social contact, physical contact, health and life itself. Some of these losses have been healed by a return to a newer reality. More losses are to come, not necessarily in health, but in loss of property, in increased refugees and other social upheavals. Practice letting go.

Please realize that we are entering the desert and do your best to open your hearts, offer your losses to God and allow God to enter your hearts and show you what is yours to do. Many people are responding to these forces with work to slow climate change, lamenting past evils, seeking justice and restoring our souls. Look and learn from them; do what they do and stand where they stand, until you feel God's entry into your own heart and then do as God guides you. Even in the desert God is there. To quote Ilia Deleo "God is alive. God is love. Love is pulling us on to do new things and we need to trust the power

of God in our lives to do new things. . . . We need to unwire ourselves to recognize that the God of Jesus Christ is, you might say, the power beneath our feet, the depth of the beauty of everything that exists, and the future into which we are moving. “

Abide in nature, seek justice, live simply, offer your losses to God and allow Him to enter your heart and join with those humble people who follow where God would lead us.

So, this is what I discern is my path. What is yours? Hope to see you along the way.