

We tend to divide ourselves by country, religion, race, and any number of other subsets, but that doesn't change the fact that—as the Psalmist puts it in the Hebrew Scriptures “The earth is the Lord's and all that is in, the world and those who dwell in it” (Ps. 24:1). For all our efforts to have more or be more than our global neighbors, God sees creation as one indivisible whole.

As a Christian, I rely utterly on the conviction that God so loved the cosmos that God came to be present in and among messy, earthy, corporeal beings. God did not come just for the wealthy, white, well-educated, straight people, but for all—as well as for all creeping crawling things; the sun, moon and stars; the waters, mountains, fields, and all. It is counter-cultural indeed to embrace the common good over the survival of the fittest, but it is Christian, and it is an tenet of faith in many religions.

That's why Pope Francis was wise to indicate in his encyclical that “In the present condition of global society, where injustices abound and growing numbers of people are deprived of basic human rights and considered expendable, the principle of common good immediately becomes, logically and inevitably, a summons to solidarity and a preferential option for the poorest of our brothers and sisters.” If your head aches or your feet are sore, your whole body feels awful. In the same way, if our global neighbors from Argentina to Uganda and everywhere between are in crisis, then we in the United States are also in crisis.

It would be nice if we would always take into consideration how our individual and corporate actions (and inactions) affect others, but we are mortal, after all. We are inclined to ignore or neglect others when their needs encroach on our wants. Christians call this predicament “SIN” and Pope Francis clearly grasps its power, for he includes this provision in *Laudato Si*: “Enforceable international agreements are urgently needed. Global regulatory norms are needed to impose obligations and prevent unacceptable actions, for example, when powerful companies dump contaminated waste or offshore polluting industries in other countries.” Rules are not required to punish a few but to uplift us all as a whole.

We are at our best as human beings when we are being creative, joyful, and cooperative. When we peel back all the things we imagine separate us culturally or religiously in order to acknowledge our common needs, we are strengthened and nurtured collectively and individually. That's why we need a global consensus on climate change. Once we agree there is a problem, we can get to work on a solution. Not just a remedy for this nation, but one that takes into consideration how all people, waters, air, and land can work together to create a harmony more lovely than any single melody can be.

We must stand together and raise up our voices and the voices of those less likely to

be heard—children, the elderly, the disabled, and the non-verbal parts of creation—beasts and fields, air and seas. For again we recall that we in this time and place are precious, but we are only part of God’s story, not the whole of it. God’s dream cannot be complete in all its beauty until it is cherished in its entirety.

I conclude with a quote from the Christian Scriptures: “Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of services, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good” (1 Cor. 12:4-7).

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