

AN ENVIRONMENTAL RETREAT

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This collection involves a combination of some personal notes and stories from my preached retreats. I hope these reflections help you to make an environmental retreat. Some general pre-notes to read before beginning such a retreat are found in Appendix 1.

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DAY ONE

Always consider the other person to be better than yourself, so that nobody thinks of his own interests first but everybody thinks of other people's interests instead. (Philippians 2:4)

CONSIDER THE PRINCIPLE AND FOUNDATION "The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius"

We are created to praise, reverence, and serve God our Lord, and by this means to save our souls.

The "we" in the above quotation is the human family, and by extension "we" includes all creatures among whom we are created to praise, reverence and serve our Creator. Our very existence is one of praise, but salvation of the whole depends on the recognition of the Creator of all. When we freely and publicly acknowledge our relationship with our Creator along with all creation, we grow all the more in our willingness to engage in service to others.

The other beings on the face of the Earth are created for us to help in attaining our end.

All creatures assist each other in fulfilling their destiny and enhancing their place in the cosmic order. They are certainly not created to be our servants for, as followers and friends of Christ, we find that expected roles have been inverted: we humans are at the service of creation. So we assist each other in a shared bond of cooperation, not in a sense of elitism, arrogance and dominance.

Hence we are to make use of them in so far as they help in attaining our end and distance ourselves when they block the life-giving purpose of our existence.

We are to practice discernment in choices and find out when goods are truly good for us and when created things lead to addictions and block our progress. Each thing has its place.

Therefore, we must make ourselves indifferent to all created things, as far as we are allowed free choice and are not under any prohibition, e.g., not prefer health, riches, honor, a long life.

Though we have preferences in foods and other basics of life, we do not make these the end-all of our actions. If these things are present, we enjoy them; if they are absent, we can still be content and at peace with our status in life.

Our one desire and choice should be what is more conducive to the end for which we are created.

The choice of the "more" (or *Majoris* in Latin) allows us to constantly search for ways to work more effectively, to share with others in the family of God, and to be alert to that which will be

more fully life-giving and service-oriented in life's journey.

BEHOLD THE GREAT WORKS OF GOD

*Declare this with cries of joy and proclaim it,
and send it out to the ends of the Earth. (Isaiah 48:20)*

We step out into the woods in sunlight and look around: green trees, clear, running water in the creek, and the sound of crickets and birds all about. We step out into the night and look up: the vast array of stars shines out there as far as the eye can see. These are just some of the great works of God. A dynamic nature is never static as is an ideal scene that we simply observe; nature involves the metamorphosis of a caterpillar into a butterfly or a tadpole into a frog, or a tiny seed into a great tree. Amazingly, transformations in nature are marvels surrounding us on all sides. We are called to change, to mature, to grow, to share, and to magnify the glory of God in our lives.

Christ's Glory. In John, Chapter 13, Jesus speaks of being glorified. He is compassionate and merciful, full of concern, and willing to sacrifice; he bestows a peace that is spiritually transformative; and he is willing to suffer and die for us. And he speaks of glory especially at his farewell the night before he goes to his suffering and death -- and subsequent resurrection.

Mary's Magnificat. Mary says that her soul proclaims the greatness of God, for the Almighty has done great things for her. She proclaims to all the world the great gift of Jesus among us. Isaiah says declare it, proclaim it, send it out. Mary affirms and says "yes" in the deepest act of free choice ever made -- and affirms this in her prayer. She becomes the mother of the Savior and first bearer of Good News. We also have great things done to us and are called to be the bearers of Good News to others as well.

Scientists magnify God's glory. We are to change a troubled world that is magnificent and yet damaged in some ways, a world meant to be bonded by love, but often divided by hate. We search for the God who creates and directs us; we search Scriptures; we search in the natural revelations of the world around us. Science speaks in very explicit ways about the marvels of the Creator, and we learn to listen intensely. **Francis Collins** says this in *The Language of God*. **Rene Dubos** also does this in *The God Within*.

Questions: How can we fathom one light year, the distance light travels in a vacuum in one year (5,880,000,000,000 miles)? What about star and planetary distances of millions of light years? What about the ten trillion gene linkages and codes that compose our human body? And what about the much more varied bacterial matter that is within the human body as well? What about the multitude of living organisms beneath our feet, which amount to most of all living organisms? What is more baffling to the imagination -- the macrocosm that is out there beyond us, or the microcosm that is beneath us or within us? Is not our own body a community of living beings within itself? Should we not

invite others to share in a community of loving relationships? *Yahweh, our Lord, how great your name throughout the earth!* (Psalm 8:9).

FEEL CREATION'S TROUBLES

This is why the country is in mourning, and all who live in it pine away, even the wild animals and the birds of heaven; the fish of the sea themselves are perishing. (Hosea 4: 3)

Our Earth is in trouble! In the nineteenth century bounty hunters would ride the trains on the American Great Plains and shoot the American bison for the fun of it. This sport both destroyed the livelihood of the Plains Native Americans and cleared the railroad tracks of any disturbances from crossings herds. By the turn of the century (1900) there remained only two remnant herds of bison in the United States. The fate of the passenger pigeon, which had roosting areas covering many square miles in the nineteenth century, was worse. The last passenger pigeon died in the Cincinnati Zoo in 1915.

Many Problems. Numerous emerging environmental problems face our Earth, tempting us to desolation. They include the following:

* **Land** -- Desertification continues to creep across the Sahal and beyond, threatening millions of Africans as sand covers once fertile farm and pasture lands. One fifth of the Amazon's rain forest has disappeared in the last three decades and, although the rate of cutting has been reduced, cutting still occurs. Today, Indonesia experiences the fastest loss of rain forests.

* **Water** -- Clean drinking water is becoming all the more scarce. Slums with growing numbers of people (almost one billion) have polluted water and lack proper sanitation. Wetlands, known as natural purifying places for water, are being lost through so-called development projects. Pesticides and toxic materials are threats to higher feeders in the chain of being (e.g., eagles and other raptors, which are poisoned by such harmful chemicals).

* **Air** -- Environmental progress made since 1970 has been reversed recently through increased air pollution from non-renewable (fossil) fuel consumption by China and other developing countries. This, in turn, is contributing to an increased rate of global warming (See Appendix 2).

* **Plants and animals** -- Song birds are diminishing in numbers due to reduction in nesting and feeding areas. Unsustainable forest harvest and road fragmentation threaten bird and wildlife habitats, and unsustainable harvesting affects wild plant life as well. Game animals (rabbits, deer, turkeys, etc.) are allowed to increase beyond the carrying capacity of many areas. Introduction of exotic and invasive species (e.g., kudzu, mugwort, Russian olive, etc.) threatens native plant life.

Deeper Questions. Where do we begin? Do we start empirically and discover our human misdeeds in the troubles that afflict what is closest to us, our Earth? Are these troubles not due to the collective or individual wrongdoing or, somewhat uncomfortably, ourselves? Do they not stem from over-consumption

and greed -- and are we not to blame individually and collectively? And if done by others, were we not supposed to have challenged such practices? Are we not to be a confessing people so that a return to glory occurs through a healing of ourselves and this Earth?

CONFESS THAT WE ALL MISS THE MARK

A voice cries in the wilderness: Prepare a way for the Lord, make his paths straight. (Mark 1:3)

Amazing. The first voice calling for repentance comes from the wilderness, the heart of nature's wildlands. John the Baptist's haunting call to the Jewish nation echoes down to us today both individually and collectively: make straight the paths that have been so diverted. Activism involves more than pointing out polluted streams; rather, true activism leads the way to correcting the wrongdoing. And this entails taking responsibility and then making amends with others for environmental damage done.

Nathan Speaks to David. *When there came a traveller to stay, the rich man refused to take one of his own flock or herd to provide for the wayfarer who had come to him. Instead he took the poor man's lamb and prepared it for his guest. (II Samuel 12:4)*

David is incensed by the story of what has happened to the poor man who has cared so tenderly for his little lamb and then sees it sacrificed, and so David demands to know who that rich person is.

Then Nathan said to David, "You are the man...Why have you shown contempt for Yahweh?... You have struck down Uriah the Hittite with the sword, taken his wife for your own, and killed him with the sword of the Ammonites." David was struck down with remorse upon hearing the words addressed to him, not to another. Suddenly he alone is center stage and bears responsibility -- and he repents.

Original Ways. From that first moment of human freedom, our choices have not always been perfect, and we seem to have within us that tendency coming through the millennia to deviate from what is ideal -- that mark of godliness to which we have been created.

Like our first parents we follow their imperfect ways -- and we fail to reach the mark intended. Seeing our own faults is a grace and yet it is a hurdle over which we must pass to be faithful to what we have been called to be. In contrast to the beauty of this Earth, we discover a damaged Earth. In a sense of responsibility we come shame-faced before our God; we come as a confessing people. We see our healing starts at home, at the grassroots, with us.

The Wages of Sin. We see the consequences of our acts gradually over time. When performing them, we can become blind to spiritual values. On the other hand, spiritual insight is a gift from God and it includes two components: sorrow for what has been done wrong and the realization that restitution is needed. But restoring the good order is painful and involves suffering. Just

as Christ suffered for us, so we help fill up, as St. Paul says, what is wanting in the sufferings of the Lord. To help restore what we have mistreated involves healing -- ourselves, our community, our Earth. One shoe of misdeed has fallen, but the second shoe of resulting social and ecological disfunction must be considered. Recognition of a misdeed is one thing; repairing it is not so dramatic and takes time and effort. In making matters right we take on a service role that has few accolades and few rewards; we are called to become practical and unsung caregivers.

DAY TWO

HELP CARRY OTHERS' BURDENS

Come to me, all you who are weary and find life burdensome, and I will refresh you. Take my yoke upon your shoulders and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble of heart. (Matthew 11:28-29)

Our failures are always before us, and yet we hesitate to burden others with our own problems; their burdens are heavy enough for them. For charity's sake, we hold our woes fast within and hope to solve our problems alone. However, as followers of Christ we hear his message of hope: he is willing and anxious to forgive; he can lift the burdens that we bear; he calls out for our trust and willingness to be renewed; and he invites us to assist in the healing of others even when we are not perfect ourselves.

The Yoke of Christ. A yoke is a harness to help bear or pull a load. Christ takes the yoke of the world on his shoulders and that can only be done by one with almighty power. In fact, our individual and collective burdens are lightened immensely when we realize that they are borne by Jesus God-man. As loads are lightened, we are able to look up and out to a burdened world, and we can help assume the burdens of others in the manner undertaken by Jesus. A yoke implies teamwork involving the director and the yoked beasts. We help wash the feet of others and thus become team members with Jesus and others in this world.

Ransom and Bobbie. Bobbie has not let his being blinded in coal mining stop him. He with his wife Beckie sponsor about one thousand volunteers a year to come and help the poor in eastern Kentucky and neighboring Virginia. Once he had to get a load of building materials to a site for a volunteer group that was coming that weekend. He obviously could not do this alone, nor could his cousin Ransom, who had no strength left in his arms (due also to a mine accident), but who had good eyesight. So they decided on teamwork, for by working together they could get the job done. Bobbie steered the truck; Ransom called, "left," "right," "slow," and "stop." They got the load up the mountain -- though the procedure is not really recommended.

We are not supermen -- or women. We cannot carry the burden

alone in a "Brave Hearts" fashion. We know our limitations and our weaknesses and must work with others. We find that there are two conjoined approaches: as individuals, we work with Jesus and others to help bear our burdens; and as communities, we work together.

Unchanging Cove. A little cove on our farm was my own sacred site where I could spend some time alone. I resolved in youthful fervor that it would never be taken from our family, for it was precious land. If need be, we would defend it with our guns. Well, time moved on, and today the cove is buried under the Double A Highway in Mason County, Kentucky. A bold youthful resolution faded. We lack power even with guns to stop inevitable change.

LIVE SIMPLY

*The season of glad songs has come,
the cooing of the turtledove is heard
in our land. (The Song of Songs 2:12b)*

Just as destitution is undesirable, so is over-affluence (and its associated over-consumption) at the other end of the resource-use spectrum, which ranges from virtually nothing to enormous quantities of materials. It is easier to condemn the condition of destitution than that of affluence. While no one wants to be without the basics of life, many consider affluence a special blessing from God to them for living a good life.

Over-consumption. The super rich do not necessarily consume the most goods, but they generally do so, and they can cleverly hide some of that consumption from public view. For instance, their electricity often comes from fossil fuel-burning plants miles away -- and yet they help cause that distant pollution more than do the unfortunate people living near the powerplant. A case against over-consumption is hard to sell in a society that prides itself on having fast and powerful cars, over-sized houses, extensive travel routines, resource-intensive foods often from distant places, and a host of gadgets and recreational vehicles on land, sea and air. In fact, the American consumer culture strives to promote spending more and more on these goods as good economics.

Facing the Facts. Many forget that it is not human numbers (though these can exceed the carrying capacity) but affluent consumer practices by relatively small numbers that cause much of the resource depletion, consumption of the more easily obtainable non-renewable energy sources, and large amounts of air, water and land pollution in our world. Yes, our Americans are less than five percent of the world's people, but we consume one-quarter of the world's resources -- and we cause a comparable amount of the world's environmental damage. If China and India were to consume like us (and they strive to do so), it would take twelve Earths to supply all of us.

A New Insight. We must change our collective lifestyle practices and regulate over-consumption. A moderate lifestyle of

restraint is more healthy (fewer excesses) and less stressful and leads to a higher quality of life. (See Appendix 3 on Fasting.) Sharing resources will raise the living conditions of one billion of the world's poor and hungry. By reducing inequality, we reduce the threat of terrorism and conflict. Likewise, our individual and collective salvation rests on eliminating extravagance as well as destitution. Can changes be made voluntarily? For some, yes, but for the many consumption-addicted people it is unlikely. Should we expect a catastrophe to change our habits? Hardly, for in a catastrophe the poor suffer most. Then in a democratic society should not such changes be made legislatively through strict regulations? If we study history, we find that this is effective and just. Thus a regulated simpler lifestyle is a necessity, not an option. (See Appendix 4 for Examination of Lifestyles.)

CREATE SILENT TIME AND SPACE

After saying good-bye to them he went off into the hills to pray.
(Mark 6:46)

Rene Dubos, who advised us on our early environmental work, told me that he went each year to a monastery (Regina Laudis in Bethlehem, Connecticut) to be refreshed in spirit. These sisters had a small piece of rocky ground that they turned into a fruitful and peaceful place. He was deeply impressed and found during his retreat that he gained a hope that our entire but limited Earth could also be made fruitful and tranquil through work and prayer.

Craving Harmony. We all need to get away and pray. This is part of the human condition. Making room in time and place is what is utterly important, and those who give time for annual retreats are commended for their generosity to themselves -- and to others with whom they live and work. All creatures work in harmony, and together reflect God's perfect harmony, which floods the universe with a sound hardly perceived. However, harmonious sound is heard by those with ears to hear and hearts to throb in love. But to listen demands our silence in the quiet spaces we create and preserve. In defense of the inalienable right to moments of prayer time, the Church, from the moments that she emerged from the catacombs, has promoted regulations to limit servile work. People today also need time to pray. Would that such rights were recognized today in our busy 24/7 shopping world.

Awareness of Disharmony. When we listen, we hear the cries of joy in all of nature around us. Likewise, when sensitized, we hear the cries of Earth's turmoil. Both nature's harmony and human-caused disharmony are evident to listening ears. Amid loud and excessive sounds we can distinguish God's call to us, but we must be silent to do so. Failure to create these moments of silence leads to spiritual confusion. We are like captives in a vibrating steel drum unable to find an exit. We know the surrounding disharmony, but fail to appreciate the effects upon our psychic health and community spirit.

Making Silent Time and Space. Silence is precious; silence is treasured; silence is a drink of cool water for the thirsty soul. To harmonize periods of sound and silence is to create an ideal environment of tranquil surroundings, distant church bells, playing children and cow bells in meadows. On the other hand, excessive sound has placed a heavy burden on ordinary people in congested areas and especially on those who think they can endure it. We come to appreciate harmony through becoming aware of a noisy world in which we initially feel powerless to effect change. Certainly we do not aspire to the silence of deafness. Ideally, we seek after the rhythm of harmonious sounds and silence, and we create meaningful moments of silence by retreating to the mountains, deserts, or sea or lake shores. When unable to get away, we may retreat to our proximate silent space. We insulate our homes with acoustical materials; we plug our ears. When all else fails, we seek to create silent space in the recesses of our hearts -- a place where the divine harmony returns in a grace-filled mysterious manner.

LISTEN TO GOD'S ONGOING CALL

There was a mighty wind, so strong that it tore the mountains and shattered the rocks before Yahweh. But Yahweh was not in the wind...the earthquake...the fire. And after the fire there came the sound of a gentle breeze. (I Kings 19: 11-12)

Read "The Seasonal Calls" (See *Daily Reflections*, 01/23/2005)

Listening is an art and a gift. It does not come automatically but requires the silence that we must find and preserve. God beckons us in many ways and at special times (events in life). But the first calling is not the final event, for we are called over and over (life's journey or process) to come ever deeper into the recesses of the Divine Mystery. Springtime calls are more pronounced; summer or autumn calls remind us of Herman Melville's words in *Moby Dick*, "I am a man running out of time." As good stewards, we have a fragile, time-sensitive gift of life to be used well. We treasure our limited span of time and pray to listen intensely to God's seasonal calls.

Spring Call. At Williams College in the beginning of the nineteenth century several students were caught in a thunderstorm and hid in a hay stack on a knoll (a dangerous place during lightning). In the violence of the storm they promised that, if they survived, they would do missionary work -- and thus was born the American Mission Society. Such is an example of the springtime calls in life.

Summer Call. St. Peter received springtime calls; he was a fisherman, married, and called by Jesus to follow him. But Peter denied the Lord at the time of the passion and death -- and denied him three times as Jesus foretold. At the Sea of Tiberius (John, Chapter 21), Jesus asked Peter three times if he loved him, one affirmation for each denial. This was Peter's summer call, to lead the apostles and go beyond his imperfect past. Peter undertook this mission with some reluctance, but gradually gained confidence through the Spirit's inspiration. He went on to lead the Church for

thirty-two years, longer than any succeeding Pope.

Autumn Call. Sisters Carol and Syra, two retired Franciscans from Wisconsin, came to Appalachia to help the poor. They had few resources but God provided them with a mission -- to tend to poor abandoned children -- and eventually with enough donations to start a farm -- Peace Place. The Franciscan insight was to have animals help the children and children tend the animals. A varied collection of llamas, pigs, chickens, goats, etc. seemed to cooperate in a loving community that drew assistance and support from a wide variety of people. Truly this was a Franciscan autumn call in life.

Winter Call. Joseph Cardinal Bernardin of Chicago certainly was busy, but then he was stricken with cancer, and spent his last months in the hospital where he befriended many in similar conditions. During this time he wrote *The Gift of Peace: Personal Reflections*, which tells about his final winter call. Even in our final days we can receive very profound calls from God, and in these fleeting moments we can be of great service, as the Cardinal attested.

DAY THREE

REVEAL NEW PARADIGM: THE LOWLY WILL RISE

*You have cast down the mighty from their thrones,
and have lifted up the lowly. (Luke 1:52)*

This troubled world has environmental problems that are intertwined with social and economic ones. The social justice that is called for is an eco-justice directed to and for all creatures. Bringing this troubled world back into right order is a major undertaking. One way may be through God's intervention -- a miracle apart from our participation -- but that can hardly be expected. Another would be a voluntary change by affluent people -- but their addiction to consumer products makes this highly unlikely. A third way is through dictatorial or militaristic imposition but that leads to human suffering that is never an adequate solution. A more scriptural approach is that the lowly will rise and take a leading role as bearers of Good News. Throughout Christian history the lowly are the instruments of transformation whether a Francis of Assisi, or Theresa of Lisieux, or shepherders, or very poor and oppressed folks.

The Magnificat. Mary, a humble virgin, in a backwater part of an insignificant province of the Roman Empire, is chosen as bearer of the Good News within herself, not only by words as dramatically spoken through the Lukan account, but also in action by accepting the invitation to be the Theodokos-- "the God bearer." But this is not only the woman who is the central receiver of news, but also she who, in expressing the joy of her heart, proclaims a revolutionary response, which colors all of human history -- the lowly will be

raised up. It is the exaltation of the poor, which is part and parcel of this happy event, for God works in wondrous and ever more surprising ways.

Characteristics of the Change. The poor find that resources are God's gift, not something deserved or handed down on a silver platter by a rich relative. Gifts demand our work to secure and enhance them. Participants are invited, blessed and encouraged to work in an atmosphere of thanksgiving that permeates the carrying out of the process. If we are called to save the world, we see this call to be both undeserved and profound. But nonetheless the results can be part of the divine saving plan with us as God's humble instruments.

The Poor Bear the Good News. It is the poor, not the affluent, who have much to give the world. That is the paradigm that is different; this new way of thinking has shaken missionaries and elite bearers of the truth in the twentieth century (including myself). They (or we) embarked on a journey fortified with what seemed to be truth ideally directed for the poor to hear. But the poor had so much more to give, revealed our impoverishment, and prodded us to change ourselves in order to receive their message.

CELEBRATE THE INCARNATION: GOD IS WITH US

Let the clouds rain down the Just One, and the Earth bring forth a Savior. (Isaiah 45:8) Fourth Sunday of Advent, Cycle C

Down-to-Earth Spirituality. It is fitting that the natural imagery of God coming to the needy creatures is not that of drama such as a fiery chariot from heaven or a volcano from the Earth -- the advent of mighty gods. Rather the image is living water, the gentle shower on the parched Earth, and the springing forth of the fragile and expectant blossom -- shoots that spring up after the rain. We look down to Earth to see our God coming to us, not in noble and regal attire but as a tiny fragile infant, born of a virgin in a cave lit by the love of Joseph and the cows and asses present.

A theology of the Earth. The word of God emerges from the grassroots; it does not come as a grandiose insight by learned gurus from above who lord over us as tyrants. Here nature is a school and wildlife the blackboard. The Christmas creche, which was started by Francis of Assisi, the patron of ecology, is the re-creation of the setting in which Jesus came to us. Here is the manger filled with straw and warmed by animals' breath in the cold winter night; the Holy Family adore; and the infant is the center piece.

A poor child. A world that had forgotten love finds love personified in innocence and the fragile condition of a new-born child. Here hope springs up not in the lofty observatory or lecture hall but in the last hope of a place for a refuge, a homeless family having a child. All people, especially those who know the grassroots, can identify. Bonaventure, Francis' biographer, tells us that the hay, which was the mattress in the manger, when eaten by

sick people and animals proved a cure. The night became as day; the woods with the crowds rang out as did the rocks in jubilation. All Earth sprang up in joy. (Reference: Maria Jaoudi, *Christian & Islamic Spirituality*, (New York: Paulist Press, 1993) p. 82).

The Meeting. Heaven meets Earth in a perfect union. God becomes one of us in an incarnational mystery far too profound to fathom. No other part of this vast universe and no other time is so visited by this Divine happening. We are present and yet we make God present also at choice times and places. And so the awe and wonder of the moment, captured by Francis' simple adoration, extends in space and time to those we visit as well. As baptized into the divine family, we are Christ bearers and instruments of divine grace.

Happenings Occur. A story is told of a century ago when a priest is asked to come and say Mass at Gillette, Wyoming. He completes the Liturgy long before the return train is to arrive and is invited to take a horseback ride through the rolling country. In the distance he and his companion see a woman waving a sheet. Strange sight! They spur the horses. She says, "I knew you would come," though they have never met before. She leads them to a small hillside tent where her brother is dying. Candles are lit. The priest gives the Last Rites and the sick man expires. The same similar story has happened twice in my own life in pastoral ministry.

DO NOT DENY, EXCUSE OR ESCAPE

And who is my neighbor? (Luke 10: 29-37)

The Good Samaritan Parable. The lawyer asks Jesus what he must do to inherit eternal life, and then shows himself to be well versed by quoting Deuteronomy 6:4-7 (loving God above all) and Leviticus 19:18 (loving our neighbor as ourselves). And he goes on to ask Jesus who is his neighbor. Jesus tells him about a victim who is waylaid and neglected by the passing priest and levite and then assisted by a Samaritan, who is despised by many in the audience.

Denial of powerlines. Do we deny someone's presence or a given situation that needs addressing by saying the situation does not exist? The sight and hum of high tension power lines are not things that can be easily overlooked. Our team was performing an environmental resource assessment on grounds intended for a parish and school at Cedar Bluff, Tennessee. We went to a nearby knoll, which contained a series of tennis courts, to videotape the grounds.

The proprietor came out to see what we were doing, and was happy to hear that development and potential customers might result. Thereupon I asked a pointed question about the overhead high voltage transmission lines taking electricity to nearby Oak Ridge. Did the scantily clad tennis players ever show concern about their own safety? His astounding reply was, "What, there are no powerlines?"

Excuse ourselves rather than confront. At the time of an accident, do we excuse ourselves by saying the medics will come and

do a better job, for we are not experts? The Good Samaritan confronts the situation head-on as a neighbor. Mike and Louise were conscientious homesteaders who built a beautiful dream house and their wooded nature trails not too far from where I live. One day the loggers appeared and said they would use an abandoned roadway to get timber from property behind the homestead. Due to unmarked boundaries, the two felt the need to protect their own trees and nature trails. Mike hurried to the county seat to find a lawyer but none would give him a hearing. By the time he secured one, miles away, the logging operation had commenced and trees were cut and the nature trail ruined. The homesteaders called themselves pacifists and chose not to confront the loggers directly, and as a result lost much through futile legal maneuvers. Mike and Louise eventually moved on and abandoned their ruined idyllic home in the woods.

Escape from the scene. Do we seek to escape immediate responsibilities and difficulties? Or do we act like the Good Samaritan and take the time and the resources (medicine and lodging) to tend wounds and care for others in a compassionate way. Our intern Henry was present when our land trust manager was shot and killed. The situation was sudden, unexpected, and quite painful for all of us to experience. Henry simply could not endure the crisis situation (perhaps due to earlier childhood experiences) though we needed his help especially at that moment when we were understaffed.

He immediately packed up and returned to his home and left us with the funeral and consequences of the murder. Do we fault him for his escape? No, some will deny, excuse or escape. But we must act.

DECIDE ON ONE OF TWO STANDARDS: AFFLUENCE OR SIMPLICITY

It is for judgment that I have come into this world, so that those without sight might see and those with sight 'turn blind.'
(John 9:39)

Regardless of what some would want us to believe, the world is divided between the affluent (and super-affluent) and the lowly. There is no trickle down, only a growing concentration of wealth.

On One Side. Imagine an immense battle being waged for the minds and hearts of the people of the world. On the one side are arrayed the forces of power and wealth -- the haves of the world. They have the three great goals: wealth, honor and pride. The forces include: self-centered individuals who strive to get ahead at all costs; corporations which have now entangled themselves in the economies of every nation, rich and poor; and those in government who desire to retain influence and power. The beckoning cry is for power and success in a new and grander economic order, all wrapped up in the industrial/military/political complex. We are enticed to smile, agree and enter into the workings of this "successful" world.

On the Other Side. Imagine the other side being the poor, the marginalized, the forgotten, the abandoned, the small dirt farmers in far away places, the voiceless, the illiterate, the ones with little future on the dusty plains of India or in the slums of Sao

Paulo. In fact, the have-nots far outnumber the powerful and the wealthy, perhaps as much as ten to one. They cry out for justice, a cry coming from the caves and hovels of the world. The swelling of that cry tempts us to deny that it exists, to excuse ourselves from any confrontation, and to escape to better places.

What Side Are We On? In retreat, we strain not just to listen but to observe and see the world for what it is. Decisions need to be made and we are cast in the light of doing something and doing it now. Is it enough to be sympathetic to the poor, or do we proclaim in our lives what Jesus leads us to proclaim?

Lincoln's Insight. Abraham Lincoln was torn between the competing possibilities: allow the slave states and free states to continue co-existing as usual, or make all free of slavery in all its forms. He realized that the two views had been a struggle since the early nineteenth century. During his senatorial and later presidential campaigns this "House Divided" theme kept coming up and demanding a clarification. After becoming president and in the midst of that terrible Civil War, he clearly saw that no nation could continue to exist half slave and half free. In 1862, after many changes and much agonizing, he proposed the Emancipation Proclamation. Doesn't this insight deserve to be expanded to the global level some century and a half later?

The Global Scene. We look again: a thousand billionaires and associated wealthy; a billion emaciated people, forsaken and pale. Jesus looks out from Jacob's Well and sees a field white for the harvest. A world of haves and have-nots cannot coexist. Let us act.

DAY FOUR

REJOICE THAT GOD FAVORS THE POOR

You are the ones who destroy the vineyard and conceal what you have stolen from the poor. By what right do you crush my people and grind the faces of the poor? (Isaiah 14b-15a)

God has a special affection for the poor as shown throughout Scripture and in the ministry of Jesus. Since we are Christ's followers, we need to have a preferential option for those who have been hurt by greed and oppression. Our concern for the poor is more than a mere necessity for our salvation; we act accordingly because God loves the poor and we express our love in loving them also.

The Vast Underserved. In earlier times people saw that there were poor and unfortunate people, but in most societies and those reported to have been viewed by travelers, the poor would have been fewer than those of modest or wealthy means. In other words, the perception of the average person was that the poor or less fortunate were in a minority. Only in the middle of the twentieth century as Robert Muller, who worked with the United Nations, says did we have the data collecting facility to recognize global conditions with any accuracy. Now we know that the poor are the vast majority; for

various reasons the absolute numbers of poor or unemployed will increase by millions while the percentage of the total may decline.

The Difficult Process. Power ultimately resides with the people. One could argue that more attention must be given to the wealthy and the influential as future leaders. But then we ask whether leadership includes persuading the wealthy to give up their position voluntarily -- a very difficult thing to achieve because so many are addicted to their wealth. On the other hand, to persuade the poor to take what is rightly theirs -- in a gentle manner and not by revolution -- is an equally difficult undertaking. Among angry people who experience the differences between rich and poor, this gentle conversion seems to be an impossible approach and in failure may concretize the status quo. Is the ideal a condition where the rich will relinquish their excess and the poor accept it with gratitude? Perhaps not for the wealthy must be grateful also. But it should be a process involving both groups.

Destructive Power of the Powerless. The added feature in the struggle for equality today is that a complex highly technical society can be more easily disrupted by malcontents with far fewer resources than could a simple society a short time ago. And astute people recognize this vulnerability, both those who try to shake the system and those who seek to retain the status quo. In turn, this leads the wealthy to invest more and more into security measures, and diverts attention from supplying the basic needs of the poor majority. Over one trillion dollars a year is being spent for military defense, while a far smaller portion goes for basic services to the poor. This is neither social justice nor eco-justice.

SEE THE POOR; HELP THE POOR; BE POOR

*He was humbler yet, even to accepting death, death on a cross.
(Philippians 2:8)*

Saint Ignatius gives three kinds of humility that are here translated into service for the poor: charity that is necessary for salvation, a more perfect giving, which expresses solidarity with the poor, and finally the decision to be one among Christ's poor. These three approaches can be applied to the individual person seeking perfection or to groups who wish to change the condition of poverty in this troubled world.

First -- Charity. If we do not give to those in need, we will lose our soul through the sin of omission -- "you did not feed me when I was hungry." We will be accountable as was Dives in the parable of Lazarus for being totally insensitive to those at our doorstep who are poor. This first degree of "humility" is a sensitizing of ourselves to unfortunate people wherever they may be and responding through generous giving of our surpluses. Here people support the causes of the poor through charitable giving.

Second -- Solidarity. If we seek as individuals or groups to be more perfect, we will do more than merely experience poverty from a

psychic distance. We will immerse ourselves in the situation and assist those who are poor with a deepening sense of compassion. We seek to realize our deeper kinship with the suffering people who are our nearby neighbors or in other countries -- and here volunteering for periods of time may be an expression of this solidarity.

Third -- Identity. All things considered, it is far better to be identified and to become one with the poor. We forego any honor and rather take insults for the sake of Christ. We prefer to be accounted as worthless and foolish in our ways of acting. Those who truly accept identity will go beyond the proximity of the second degree of companionship and friendship. Here the challenge is not to have a million dollars and give to the poor, but to be poor as poor, and to be willing to bear the risks and vulnerability of the poor.

In order to be more like Jesus, his followers seek to imitate him all the more with those who suffer their own Calvary at this time. We begin to see that we are all one family and each of the poor is a brother or sister to the rest.

Bosnian Venture. A reporter was in Sarajevo at the time of the terrible shelling of the marketplace during the Bosnian War in the mid-1990s. He had a car at the market place when it happened, and suddenly a man with a bleeding little girl in his arms ran up saying, "Get us to the hospital." "Where is it?" the reporter asked. "I'll direct you," was the reply. The race through traffic and around shortcuts was hair-raising. And upon arrival, the man cradling the child said "She died." The reporter was at a loss for words but said, "I'm sorry about your little daughter." The stranger holding the dead child said, "She's not my daughter. I don't even know her name." The reporter commented, "Oh, I thought she was your child." The stranger was somewhat dismayed, "They are all our children."

RECLAIM OUR

COMMONS

You must not molest or oppress the stranger, for you were once foreigners yourselves in the land of Egypt. (Exodus 22:20)

We stand before our God, willing and able to act. But we must act boldly and effectively. The riches of this Earth are to be shared by all, for all have a right to the commons. No one of us is more or less deserving than the next. Some consider that legal means allow them a greater share of the commons than others, but that is not true. Having said this, we have so little time to bring about the redistribution of world resources -- and yet we must do something about it for our corporate salvation is at stake. The terrorism that besets the world is due in part to people's realizing this vast inequality of resources and expressing their despair or anger. The need to reclaim the commons is an emerging truth that flows from the words and actions of Jesus and from the democratic spirit that has emerged through the centuries. It is God calling us to assist and become one with our neighbors who are in need.

Our Course of Action. What must we do? Is it sufficient to be

prophetic in words and then to return to our affluent community and rest in what we have "done"? Or are we to risk actions that will cause us to be vulnerable as to good name, position, safety, remuneration, or future acceptance? We must do more than merely deny problems, excuse ourselves, or seek to escape to other allurements. Choosing the standard of the cross is moving outside traditional ways of proceeding. Do we start on the local level and move out from there to a wider and wider reach of people?

Decisive Steps Are Needed. We place ourselves before the Lord. Being poor is thinking poor and that needs to be achieved with an even temper and with patience, for a method of achievement is not readily available. But we must start at the grassroots and move out from there:

- * simplify our lifestyles so that we practice what we preach;
- * communicate our reasons for change in structures publicly;
- * enter into solidarity with the poor by reclaiming what rightfully belongs to all;
- * point out the dangers of over-consumption to people and Earth herself;
- * forgive the terrorists and the wealthy who are to blame;
- * and follow Jesus as healer, teacher and liberator to where the Spirit leads us.

Undetermined Actions. What more must we do? Here is an area of indeterminacy that is part of openness with the Spirit. We are not able to predict what each of us will do to bring about change. Our openness to change involves risks, namely, the inability to predict where the journey will lead us. A goal of healing our Earth's troubles does not mean we know precisely where, when, on what and with whom we will be working. The temptation is to determine and plan for all future action, even though planning only for what is immediately ahead is more salutary. This indeterminacy is part of the virtue of hope and thus we pray for inspiration.

FORGIVE

But it is only right we should celebrate and rejoice, because your brother here was dead and has come to life; he was lost and is found. (Luke 15: 31-32)

The parable of the Prodigal Son (or Forgiving Father or Unforgiving Brother) is grouped together with that of the lost sheep and the lost coin. Care is needed in the regaining of each lost animal or person, for God is a diligent housekeeper (female image) and one who rejoices over the return of one lost sheep.

Prodigal Sons and Daughters. We are all imperfect in the way we squander God-given time and resources but we must forgive past misdeeds. We seek forgiveness, though the journey is difficult.

Forgiving Father. The father in the parable is one whom it is hard to imitate, even though he is a godly person. If we do not forgive, we can hardly be forgiven, and so forgiveness is a prime mandate of those committed to the road to perfection. The forgiving

father who longs for the son's return looks out each day and finally spots the son from a long way off. The prodigal son has memorized a phrase but the Father does not allow him to complete it, because forgiveness has already come before the son speaks.

Haiti's Prodigal Son. Forgiveness is difficult whether we are to forgive or to ask forgiveness. A priest in the southwesternmost part of Haiti tells of a Mass after the overthrow of Baby Doc Duvalier, when a "Tonton Macoute" henchman returned to his native village. The parishioners brought the captured ex-policeman before the priest who is the court system in this part of Haiti. "Father, what should we do with him?" A great period of silence resulted. The priest asked the unfortunate prisoner if he was sorry for things done, and he was. More silence. One little child volunteered, "Jesus says we must forgive." And other children seconded this opinion. The priest asked the sinner would do it again, and the ex-policeman said no. Therefore priest and people gave him a public penance of community service and let him go free.

Unforgiving Brother. The worst victims are often those relatives of a victim who cannot forgive the perpetrator of a crime. The lack of forgiveness is a double tragedy in this troubled world.

Forgiving comes slowly. Like the unforgiving brother, we human beings often find it hard to forgive. The father could not dissuade him from his own festering anger over what he thought he deserved. A minister experienced much the same. He had lost his mother, wife and daughter in a terrible auto accident, and his friends all said he did not deserve it. He struggled over forgiving the ones who caused the accident and finally was able to find peace. The insight was that he did not deserve those loved ones in the first place; they were God's gifts to him for even shorter than anticipated lifetimes. Seeing the gifts as undeserved, he found that closure and forgiveness came more easily -- and continue life after such a tragedy.

DAY FIVE

BE COMPASSIONATE WITH JESUS AS UNIVERSAL HEALER

I order you: get up, pick up your stretcher, and go off home.

(Mark 2:11)

Healing is a sign of the Messianic age, the initiation of God's reign of love, justice, joy, peace, wholeness, and the conquest of the evil powers still present in the world.

Jesus heals. The world is healed through the redeeming action of Christ, and we are to follow in his action. Christ comes, shares our human condition, and suffers and dies for us. As healer, Jesus makes the world whole again by forgiving and initiating a profound spiritual healing process. Jesus spends time physically healing many sick people both to show compassion for them and to point to a more profound spiritual healing process that he is initiating.

Jesus brings wholeness in its entirety: physical, mental and spiritual. Jesus is not indifferent when confronted with the afflictions of others; rather he is truly compassionate. He is willing to endure suffering in his own person, not to prolong it for others. "Be cured." "Arise and walk." "Sin no more." "Your daughter is healed."

Called to Suffer with Jesus. Jesus shows that those who suffer can praise God through their acceptance of their own suffering with joy and obedience to God's will. Jesus manifests God's power to make whole again. By accepting God's will, whether, as Paul says, by living or by dying, we acknowledge and show our gratitude for the divine love given. And for the seriously ill this becomes a major challenge. Whatever our calling might be, to live, to suffer, or to die, we are invited to open ourselves to Love, for our offerings are extremely important at the time of sickness. And by suffering more perfectly in union with Jesus, we help heal a troubled world.

Called to Be Healers. All of us who are graced with good health and active ministry are to be care-givers and healers to some degree. We follow in Jesus' footsteps: we believe in the possibility and power of healing; we hope that this will occur in its fullness; we love those in need and show compassion for them in their current condition; we encourage them to offer their sickness through Jesus to help in the ultimate healing of Earth and its creatures.

Community healing. As Church ministers, we can actually forgive in the name of the Lord and thus initiate a healing process. As a medical research community we use an array of curative drugs and measures at our disposal and work for spiritual wholeness. Discovering, researching, developing, and dispensing medicines and practices for and to the ill is important caregiving practice. Major progress from leprosy to AIDS is a continuation of our ongoing healing mission. Jesus teaches us to heal gently, patiently, compassionately, for illness is a supreme teaching opportunity for followers of Jesus. Through healing others we are healed as well.

IMITATE JESUS AS MASTER TEACHER

How blest are the poor in spirit;

the reign of God is theirs.

Blest are the sorrowing; they shall be consoled.

[Blest are the lowly; they shall inherit the land.]

Blest are they who hunger and thirst for holiness; they shall have their fill.

Blest are they who show mercy; mercy shall be theirs.

Blest are the single-hearted, for they shall see God.

Blest too the peacemakers; they shall be called children of God.

Blest are those persecuted for holiness' sake;

the reign of God is theirs. (Matthew 5: 2-11)

Blessed Are the Lowly. Jesus as master teacher announces to his listeners the Good News of God's blessings. The hearers of the word can rise and become something more. Jesus proclaims the beatitudes that involve a future element but pertain more to the

present condition of preparing for a meaningful future. Since the reign of God is not just a future event but also an ongoing current happening, the fulfillment has already begun, if we have spiritual eyes to see. This Good News is not a blessing of wealth, success, power, nor of evil doers, the overly competitive, or warmongers. No, Jesus stands on the side of those who are truly blessed, the lowly, the illiterate or the poorly educated, those who have no school to attend or live where conditions make it difficult to study. Each beatitude is a vision and promise of the coming of better times, a new reign where the poor are to receive their blessings -- and God's kingdom comes: a certainty that the Messianic age is approaching.

Elements of a New Teaching: Jesus teaches the multitudes in the fields and hills, in the synagogues and marketplaces, and wherever the crowd gathers. We should discover new places and ways of teaching: printed and electronic media, festivals, the Internet. Jesus teaches in parables that reach the masses in different ways, and these methods of parables and story-telling are still highly effective today. People are drawn to concrete examples from everyday life with which they can identify. Likewise our audience is the whole world, literate and illiterate. Teaching all people means having an acute awareness of what they know and their particular attention span. Finally, the content of our teaching is part of the Good News, a blessing for those who hear. The message must be short, plain, and direct for people who suffer from too much bad news and information overload. Jesus's way of teaching should become ours.

Jonah is not a very likeable person; he seeks to escape God's call for an urgent task ahead. He is finally redirected to where he must go through a whale's rescue. Even after his successful mission at Ninevah, Jonah appears dissatisfied. But God is patient with Jonah and teaches him that he must look beyond his small world and see the fullness of God's own vision and mercy to all people. The Jonah story tells us that we are called to become a teaching opportunity for others even though we sometimes want to dodge the assignment. God hones the reluctant instruments of the Good News.

JOIN JESUS AS EFFECTIVE LIBERATOR

*The spirit of the Lord has been given to me,
for he has anointed me.
He has sent me to bring the good news to the poor,
to proclaim liberty to captives
and to the blind new sight,
to set the downtrodden free,
to proclaim the Lord's year of favor. (Luke 4: 18-19)*

Practically speaking, what can we do with so many destitute in this troubled world? We become quite pessimistic when we survey the conditions of this Earth: rampant population growth, hunger in many parts of the world, the AIDS epidemic, and persistent wars and rumors of wars. Is it the end, the dawn of a new age, or are such questions too overly speculative? Certainly television, radio and

Internet bring the destitute to our doorstep -- and that is very discomfoting. We not only become aware of their condition but we realize that as a community we can and must do something about it.

*** Liberate Ourselves.** With God's grace and our effort we can be liberated from the clutches of sin and be ready to join in the healing and teaching roles of Jesus. We resolve to live simply, waste less, liberate ourselves from the tendencies and cares of over-affluence, and become free of material detachments in order to help serve others. We need God's liberating grace through this process.

*** Liberate Others.** The hungry are all about but so are the means to feed them. Jesus rebuked the disciples who saw only in limited local terms that there were almost no resources for the entire multitude in a far away place. Technology can become the tool of awareness of need (communication), production of goods, and deliverance (transportation). As liberators, our attention is turned to the lowly who are becoming free. We do not give freedom; only God does. We can encourage the lowly to rise and respectfully ask God for the assistance to take what is rightfully theirs, not by violence but still with firmness and determination. Though an ideal procedure, mere persuasion of the affluent to give up their wealth may be time consuming with minimal benefit. But we can show them their addictive condition and set up conditions for their own individual or collective conversion. All should change together.

Environmental Beatitudes. Blessed are the gentle animals and plants; they teach us in their own way. Blessed is the wounded and denuded Earth, for it will flower into fruition this year. Blessed are the ones who sow and plant; they will find satisfaction in knowing there will be a happy harvester in a little while. Blessed are the returning birds; they will find a safe habitat. Blessed are the endangered species; they now have protectors. Blessed are those who seek to live simply; they will be marginalized and considered unpatriotic. Blessed are those who bring peace to a troubled world, for they will see God's goodness shining from all creation. Blessed are they who attack oppressive corporate structures; they will be persecuted just as happened to the prophets of old.

PROFESS THAT ONLY GOD CAN BE OUR FOOD

He replied, "Give them something to eat yourselves." (Mark 5:37)

We need food in order to live like Christ, and be and remain compassionate healers, master teachers and effective liberators. This food must be real spiritual food and yet it cannot be so divorced from the lives that we live that we envision imaginary food, or that it becomes a mere symbol of the final meal that Jesus shared with his disciples. We need a gathering of like-minded and faithful people who celebrate the work being done and who prepare and eat the gift of food that God gives to us. This work is so necessary and so difficult that we need constant nourishment to continue what we are doing. Only God's presence -- not a symbolic meal -- can be food enough for the mighty task before us in these

troubled times. Only Christ himself can be our food.

Our Offering. So we offer back to God the bread and wine that are gathered, crushed, baked, fermented, packaged and brought to the table of the Lord. This bread and wine are truly the works of our hands. In the biblical story of Melchizedek we see a primitive offering of these gifts back to God. This story is part of Abraham's journey of faith and the foreshadowing of the New Covenant. Now within that Covenant we offer the fruit of our hands when we gather and eat together, but we can only be truly worthy when those in community are fed the basics of life. We must share the Eucharist.

Multiplication -- (John 6: 1-15). The John reading parallels that of the other Gospels (Matthew 14:13-21; Mark 6:32-44; Luke 9:10-17). The various passages contain some common elements: the basic trust in Jesus and in what he says; the distrust by the disciples and followers as to whether there is enough food in this world; a miracle of either physical multiplication of the food or the opening of the stored food by the many for others who are nearby (a miracle of charity); the example of a youth who is willing to risk radical sharing of what are his bare essentials; and the example of a gracious God giving us well above what is needed to feed the hungry.

What Miracle? Feeding the hungry is a miracle. Do others feel encouraged enough to open their bags and share with all who are hungry as does the small lad who shares his bread and fishes? Is there a physical multiplication of food in such abundance that twelve baskets remained afterwards? The people are satisfied in their hunger. We need miracles again, and so Jesus shares himself in a multiplying manner -- and we are gifted to be present and take part. We open our hearts to the less fortunate because we are fortunate.

A Concentration Camp Vial. In the midst of that terrible Second World War, a Jewish woman in a concentration camp was given the vial by the priest who was being led to his execution. "Give a piece of this to whoever asks you." The lady said that she was approached at unexpected times and people, even a guard, would ask her -- and the vial never went empty. Truly, it was a miracle but it was only partly unraveled years later for her when she told the story to a priest she was visiting and he explained the Eucharist.

DAY SIX

ENTER WITH JESUS INTO JERUSALEM

As he drew near and came in sight of the city he shed tears over it and said, "If you in your turn had only understood on this day the message of peace! But, alas, it is hidden from your eyes."
(Luke 19: 41-42)

Jesus is mounted on a donkey as he enters Jerusalem, his city

and the focal point of his ministry. The crowds shout, "Hosanna to the Son of David," and yet by Friday some of the same ones will say, "Crucify him." Jesus is not a messiah as the people of his day conceived of a political deliverer; he does not seek to free the people from Roman rule. Rather, Jesus is pensive; he is resigned that cheers can give way to jeers with only a small turn of events - and they will in the days ahead. Peter has pleaded with him to stay away, but Jesus is determined to complete his mission in Jerusalem.

Superficiality. We tend to follow crowds and hesitate to say "no," when really that needs to be said. The media champion the superficial. Praise is a way of winning someone to cooperate with a pre-conceived story line. We are easily influenced by secularists vying for our time and attention. We are expected to shout, clap, motion, or wave for the right team, the popular candidate, the popular television personality. Loners are ostracized, demoted, looked down upon, and marginalized. Who dares to be different in style of clothes, type of automobile, size of home, and friends? Often peer pressure seems to rule our entire way of living.

Longhorn salute. To follow the crowd through sheer emotion is foolishness. I confess that I was very uncomfortable while attending the University of Texas, when the vast crowd of spectators would stand as the football team entered the field and raise their right arms in the "longhorn salute." It was the thing to do if loyal to the home school. Mass hysteria! But some dismissed my attitude as being unsportsmanlike, so I simply stayed away. I wonder if I would have given the Hitler salute, if in Nazi Germany in the 1930s.

Franz Jaegerstaetter was a simple laborer from St. Radegund, Austria, who totally refused to be drafted into the army in the Second World War. This refusal to serve occurred even after the pleading of his wife (they had four young children), his parish priest, his mayor, and his bishop -- and all the townspeople as well. He was eventually arrested and executed for persisting in his refusal. But he died with a clean conscience and in his own words "as a witness for the King, Jesus Christ." Buried in a remote part of his church cemetery with townspeople ashamed of his action, Franz was discovered twenty years later by Gordon Zahn, an American sociologist and pacifist, who wrote a book, *In Solitary Witness*, about Franz. Since then, Franz has been honored by the Austrian government and has received an admission of unjust conviction from the German government. He is now being considered for canonization.

MAKE HIS FATHER'S HOUSE FOR ALL THE PEOPLE

Take all of this out of here and stop turning my Father's house into a market. Then his disciples remembered the words of scripture: "Zeal for your house will devour me." (John 2:16-17)

The Scene. Jesus stands in the immense temple in Jerusalem, the largest religious structure in the world at that time, with the

pinnacle reaching what is equivalent to sixteen stories and the vast arena making up the court of the Gentiles and other assembly areas covering three or more acres. He is in the center of his religious world, the heart of the Jewish culture. And this is his definitive moment as related in all four gospels.

Characteristics of the Prophet.

* Jesus speaks openly and courageously -- no one else accompanies him, and his audience is critical and increasingly hostile. He is motivated by seeing social wrongs inflicted on humble worshippers.

* Jesus speaks plainly and to the point. He is not to be easily misinterpreted and he does not mince words.

* Jesus speaks firmly and yet with a sense of hope that improvement can be made. He is truly prophetic.

* Jesus backs his words with actions in cleansing the temple, which these merchants have "turned ... into a den of thieves." And his action offends the establishment present.

* Jesus acts through the Spirit, for he is in complete union with the Father. He is confident that his actions have moral grounding.

* Jesus' actions become the turning point in his ministry. From now the plotting to kill him starts in earnest.

Making Our Application. We need to have courage to address the social and ecological ills in our society. There cannot continue to be divisions of "haves" and the destitute "have-nots." We too must dare to be prophetic: we must speak openly so all can hear; we must speak plainly so that we are understood; we must go to the center of power and not stay back at a distance; we need to act through the discernment of the Spirit; we need an ever-deepening spirituality to secure the moral integrity required for delivering our message. And as prophets we must be prepared for consequences.

Jesus as Ecologist. Some ask whether Jesus was involved in ecological practices during his ministry. He certainly exhibited compassion for creation and he lived simply. But he was also the perfect model through an inner balance or "ecology" when he acted in the Temple. Jesus showed a perfect control of his sense of mercy for the lowly and his righteous anger with those who were damaging the environment in which people were gathering to worship. Jesus stated boldly that this place could not be the domain of a few but was a place designated for all the people -- a commons.

APPLY THE FAREWELL ADDRESS

I pray not only for these (the disciples), but for those who through their words will believe in me. (John 17:20)

The Priestly Prayer. Jesus' farewell is addressed as much to us today as to the disciples at the Last Supper. We are called to

apply his words in our world. One such application is through the "Sacred Heart Devotion," the spreading of acts of piety that show our seeking and extending God's divine love as expressed through Jesus' words and deeds. At this Farewell Address Jesus gives us a new commandment: to love one another as he loves us.

Oneness. This smothering in divine love shows Jesus' love for us in that he is prepared to suffer and die for all of us. This deepest form of love manifests the oneness of lover and beloved, a oneness of Jesus for us, and is a model of our union and bonding for others. The splits and divisions among Christians or even among our own colleagues manifest an absence of love and weaken our testimony to God's universal love. The ecumenical imperative makes it our special vocation to heal divisions and become one in the name of Christ. Our competitiveness infects us all and enters our bones; it is the drive to be better than others, *numero uno*. The worldly are willing to enhance their wrappings of excessive wealth and power at the expense of others -- but not Christians. Love does the opposite; it is a radical sharing with others so we can reach common goals together.

The Challenge. We are challenged by this new commandment for it goes beyond the two great commandments of the Old Testament -- loving God with our whole heart and soul and mind and strength and loving our neighbor as ourselves. We are called to show others through word and public deed that God has loved us so deeply that Jesus comes to teach us and to suffer and die for us, even while we are sinners. And we are challenged to imitate Jesus in our lives.

The Thankful Widow. In my pastoral ministries I blessed a home once that was perhaps the last assisted-living place in a widow's waning years. It was amazing that, even though some of her children took little part in this final move, she was so utterly thankful for all she had in life -- a loving though departed husband, a wonderful son who moved her to this new residence, and all the amenities of life. Her thankfulness taught me a lesson to be always thankful.

Application. Oh God, show us the oneness of the bond of Father and Son. Allow us to be ever closer ...*and that the love with which you loved me may be in them, and so that I may be in them* (John 17: 26b). We are bonded in Christ and become one with him as we love each other with the love passed on to us. We find that we may be different in little matters, but our good will is one with yours. Help us to become other christs, loving beings as you teach us to love. Lord, help us in today's extended Calvary event to find our oneness with you and to increase in the love that has been given to us since before the world began. Make us ever stronger in your love and the value we place on being loved as part of your infinite love. Help us to bring unity in faith and among nations.

DAY SEVEN

CONFRONT OR ACCEPT ACCUSATIONS

But Jesus was silent. And the high priest said to him, "I put you on oath by the living God to tell us if you are the Christ, the Son of God." (Matthew 26:63)

The Scene at 3:00 a.m. Jesus stands alone between guards. His disciples have scattered and, as the cock crows, Peter realizes that his own denials have occurred as Jesus foretold. The companions who said they would stand behind Jesus during the glory days of his preaching are nowhere in sight. Abandonment reigns. Jesus is alone as well as being entirely innocent. The accusers' fury and the litany of accusations ring throughout the springtime, darkened courtyard. This man would destroy the Temple and rebuild it in three days; he considered himself equal to God. The solemn listing of accusations and the silence of Jesus are pronounced. His is a display of a messiahship never envisioned by this people (though foretold by Isaiah the prophet). It is a decisive moment in human history. The promised Messiah has come, is announced next to the Holy of Holies, and is received with jeers by the authorities and bystanders present.

Being Vulnerable. The Mighty One is silent. We need to consider this when we are accused. Be silent before the accusation if it is directed to us as individuals. Speak strongly if the accusation is against another of our fellow human beings. The difference is to be noted, though it may not hold in every case. Saint Paul certainly appeals to Caesar when accused, and thus is sent to Rome as a citizen worthy of a trial. However, in the long run of things, the accusation is something that makes us vulnerable and deeply hurt. Jesus' public ministry depends on public approbation -- and yet it is now withdrawn through these accusations; now the authorities are accusing him of crimes against the religious state.

Fighting Back. When we hear someone say something that is a half truth or has some misinformation, we develop ways of fighting back and reversing the accusation. When it applies to others we fight back with all our skills and powers. When dealing with ourselves, we follow the prompting of the Spirit to be silent or speak. No one is perfect, and so the accused must face the charges -- and so must the accuser face the deeper reasons for making the accusations. And in our dreams we want to champion dramatic refutations to hypothetical charges as though in an imaginary courtroom. But what do followers of Christ do in real circumstances? We must defend those falsely accused, for they are presumed innocent until proven guilty. Some accusations can be sufficient to destroy one's ministry even without being proven. And in this age when information is easily retrieved, such accusations, once made, can haunt the accused individual all his or her life. And let us each be reluctant ever to be accusers and pray to have the strength to withstand the accusation.

JOURNEY ON THE WAY OF THE ECO-CROSS

1. **Jesus is sentenced to die.** Species on the Earth are endangered or threatened with extinction due to general *environmental pollution*.

2. **Jesus takes up his cross.** People must bear the suffering of their *water pollution* and the resulting lack of potable water.

3. **Jesus falls the first time.** The understory is trampled upon, and soils are allowed to erode for lack of cover through various forms of *land pollution*.

4. **Jesus meets his mother.** *Chemical pollution* results in birth defects and crippling illnesses, which confront poor families.

5. **Simon of Cyrene helps with the cross.** People make empty gestures by washing oil-soaked seals or sea gulls in the *polluted seaways*.

6. **Veronica wipes the face of Jesus.** Reclamation efforts do not erase all the scars of the land, and landfills do not halt the *solid waste pollution* resulting from an excessive consumer culture.

7. **Jesus falls the second time.** The forests and all life suffer from *air pollution*, which weakens the immunity of the biosystems and causes many to fall ill to disease. Coal-fired powerplants belch plumes from their smokestacks.

8. **Women weep for Jesus.** The anguish of people, especially women over the wounded Earth is often drowned out by the discordant sounds of *noise pollution*.

9. **Jesus falls the third time.** The trees are cut away by greedy folks in the tragedy of *clear-cutting*.

10. **Jesus is stripped of his garments.** The Earth is *strip-mined* and denuded when coal and other resources are taken for profits.

11. **Jesus is nailed to the cross.** The Earth is impaled with rows of gaudy signs and other forms of rampant *visual pollution*.

12. **Jesus dies upon the cross.** People die of hunger, the AIDS epidemic and many other afflictions because resources are not expended properly. "Look what they have done to my Earth."

13. **Jesus is taken down from the cross.** The added suffering is the slum dwellers who survive and must carry on by making a living and giving the victims of tragedies decent burial places.

14. **Jesus is placed in a sepulcher.** This tired Earth is laid low but it has hidden life, a resilience that will allow it to rise again and to become a promised New Heaven and a New Earth.

SHOW THAT CALVARY IS PRESENT

The tragedy of life is not death, but what we let die inside us while we live.
Norman Cousins

The Scene. Imagine the mixture of the sounds of Calvary and that of the crowds jeering, boisterously jostling and engaging in loud irreverent conversation. Curses and catcalls. Yet in the shadows of the cross are the few who pray in silent whispers with Mary his Mother. The terrifying scene is too ugly to gaze on for long. The dark clouds are swirling in a foreboding manner, punctuated by lightening flashes all about. The Earth trembles, fully aware that a monumental event is occurring. We smell the sweat of the unwashed, the garbage heap called "Calvary." We taste sour wine and death in the making. If we listen intensely, we hear the groans of all who are suffering -- the suffering Body of Christ today. They are coming to their final dying words and their final hours. It is the final curtain call of life, and the ultimate cry of victims forms the chorus call of the passing from the mortal scene. We experience the Calvary event extended in space and time. Today and every day this year about one hundred thousand people come to the most important moment of their lives, that day written on a granite- slabbed grave. We hear their last words --

"You will be with me in paradise" hears the one who stood up for justice and knows that there is nothing to take beyond death's door but the love stored up over the years.

"Why have you forsaken me?" plead the abandoned, the homeless, the refugees, the ones with no place to turn or go.

"Forgive them" pray the bloodied victims of abuse in one of many forms, who still have the sense of mercy in their hearts.

"Here is your mother," offers a dying AIDS victim to her whimpering child soon to be among thirteen million orphans.

"I thirst" comes from a million parched throats and from those who would die to have one more addictive drink.

"It is consummated" mumble those on the battlefields, the cancer wards, the hospices and the dying beds in a million places.

"Father, into your hands I commend my spirit" are the final words of people who have courageously battled the wasting diseases of our age and who know the end of this mortal life is at hand. It is their final will, their moving out of life in composure to have the living spirit sweep them up into the Light of Divine Life.

The Cosmic Wake. It's silent now, blessed silence, when we pay respects in nods and hugs and few words, for we are speechless in the midst of death that has occurred and with fleeting memories of a life spent in total sacrifice. Even Earth is exhausted after its own upheavals and convulsions. A respectful silence after all the cries of anguish and total desolation. We bury Jesus and wait.

DAY EIGHT

RESURRECTION: DISCOVER NEW LIFE

Yes, it is true. The Lord has risen and has appeared to Simon.
(Luke 24:34)

The early streaks of dawn find the holy women hastening to the tomb and concerned about who will roll back the stone. It is the story of our lives: who will remove the barriers for us? And yet the Lord is risen and transforms us into Easter people. The power of God is at work as Jesus is raised and as the Lord leads us on the way. And the Resurrection mystery includes our being raised also. We must testify to each mystery of faith through the conduct of our daily lives. Twice in the Creed we speak of the "resurrection," and the way we profess this truth in deed is through mutual forgiveness and sharing forgiveness with others.

Miracles. Beyond forgiveness, we have an enthusiastic (meaning the God within) welcoming of new life whether it be a new birth, the germinating of seed, or the unfolding of leaves in springtime. We are Easter people, impelled to discover the miracle of life and new life; our world is rejuvenated and we announce it with eagerness. "He who was as good as dead has come back to life," the father tells the unforgiving brother about his prodigal brother. *There are two ways to live your life. One is as though nothing is a miracle. The other is as though everything is a miracle* (Albert Einstein).

Easter Fire and Water. Two great natural symbols stand for the new life in Christ: fire that burns away the gloss and enlightens us on the way; and water that is needed for all life. Both are prominent on Holy Saturday as we prepare for the Resurrection event. We have been deadened in spirit in a troubled world that is without hope or a sense of a future. We suddenly see the ray of Easter morn and know that we can leave the tomb of our old selves behind, in Christ's new light. Thus we experience a quickening of the bones (Ezekiel) and we come alive. A new light has dawned. Not only am I now quickened, but so is a world around us, our family, our communities, our nation, our planet. It is time for all to discover something new -- The Lord is risen.

The Incubator. In the second grade we were given intensive instructions prior to our first confession, communion and the next week our confirmation (because the bishop came rarely). Poor Sister Imogene, our teacher was doing the best with thirty some students. Hoping to speak of the Eucharist, she asked for an example of a "miracle." I told the class that in our cellar my Mom had an incubator and, though the eggs were laid at different times, yet all the chicks hatched the same day. A miracle! The class and teacher were all startled, and I did not yet know or insert that the turning on of a kerosene heater was the answer. The heat of that device made the eggs all develop at the same time. But isn't the chick hatching a miracle in itself with or without the device?

ASCENSION: REALIZE NEW LIFE

Go out to the whole world. Proclaim the Good News to all creation.
(Mark 16:16)

We look out to the Mount of Olives and see his outstretched arms. "Go out and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them..." The Lord departs in God's good ways so that Jesus may prepare a place for us, so the Holy Spirit may come, and so that we may become other christs to spread the Good News. The Lord is the *Holy Eschaton*, the one who is ahead of us drawing all things to himself. He is preparing us for the New Heaven and New Earth. And we are not to be idly standing there looking up to heaven for Jesus to do something.

We are to go forth; we are to assist in the Lord's great work of salvation; we are to hasten the day of the coming of the Lord. "Why are you looking up to heaven?" is a question for each of us. Why are we idly speculating when we could be about our work of preparing for the Lord is coming -- and making ready in specific ways?

Mission Adobe Maker. One of the many environmental resource assessments that we have performed over the years was near Oceanside, California, at the queen of the Franciscan Missions, Mission San Luis Rey de Francia. An old layman working there had spent three decades perfecting the adobe formulae of eighteenth-century builders. He laid his constructed adobe bricks into curving exterior border walls; these were wonderful for the thousands of California students who visit the historic places as classroom trips. They could feel them and climb on and over them. I showed great interest in his adobe-making process, amount of ingredients, and baking time. With tears in his eyes he said others had never showed such interest. That was truly a shame. Unfortunately he died before we could find a volunteer to go and record his work. Yet his was work that helped hasten the Day of the Lord's coming.

Our dream is that all people have the basics of life in this world, something that is not impossible. If only one-tenth of the military expenditures of over one trillion dollars each year were used for education, housing, potable water, better food distribution, basic health care, and the other basic requirements of life, then the world would be far more secure, and the need for armies would decrease. To fail to dream is to close our hearts to the needs of the poor. Striving to fulfill this dream is the salvation of our collective and individual souls. We are to create a society where all have the minimum necessary for life and where over-affluence is not tolerated. The pervasive insecurity of the world will be lessened and swords can be beat into plowshares.

Terri's Wake. Terri was more than a housewife. As a long line of us waited to view her body and offer condolences to her relatives, the ones in line narrated stories of what Terri had done for them: picked a quart of berries for one because of her depression; found some people to harvest the hay for a husband farmer when he was sick; helped another who was unable to get food stamps. Terri's thoughtful little things meant so much to so many. That was why

there was such a line at her wake. Her life was preparing for the Lord's coming.

PENTECOST: PROCLAIM NEW LIFE

A shoot springs from the stock of Jesse, a scion thrusts from his roots: on him the spirit of Yahweh rests, a spirit of wisdom and insight, a spirit of counsel and power, a spirit of knowledge and fear of Yahweh. (The fear of Yahweh is his breath.) Isaiah 11:1-2

The Holy Spirit comes to the disciples who are locked in a room out of fear. Suddenly a great wind comes and a flash of fire appears over each one's head. The Spirit comes to them, fear evaporates, and they move out to bring forth the Good News to others that very day.

Our Mandate. We are called to prepare a place in the world around us. We are sent on a mission to make ready this tired world for its full fruition -- remade to the image of Christ. After Vatican II, missionary workers awoke to a paradigm shift: the ones going to the rest of the world with something to offer, were not the complete possessors of the treasures of truth, only of a Spirit to share what they had and to receive from others. The going forth was to be a conversation, not a sermon. The initial proclamation is still sacred: Christ is risen and shares new life with us. However, the view of a primary giver as a holder of all treasure to be dispensed has now been replaced with the idea that the giver is also the receiver. A humbling realization! Conversation means not doing all the talking. We share Good News -- giving and receiving simultaneously.

Learning to proclaim. We learn to be good listeners by following Jesus who is obedient through his sufferings and death. We focus on Jesus, and not on distractions or worldly allurements. From the poor we learn to be transparent, to share at the heart, and to strive to converse at a deep level. The poor realize that God alone satisfies and is the Giver of all good gifts. Thus "to proclaim" means we have to be humbled enough to proclaim -- and all creation hears in its own way, because of the triggering that we perform in our opening to them. We publicly proclaim that all share in God's good gifts -- and that is Good News. Through generous and obedient suffering, all creation enters into the divine plan and is open to sharing. We Easter people proclaim the good gifts we have received and we see good gifts offered by others -- for the face of the risen Christ shines in all creation. Within the Paschal Mystery all creation constitutes part of the Good News and believers are the heralds of this message.

Stewardship. The Spirit impels us forward and we are to be stewards of Good News. Stewardship consists in seeing all things as gifts from God, realizing the shortness of life in order to gain wisdom of heart (Ps. 90:12), and doing our best with the time that remains to use those gifts well. Thus we resolve once again at this

retreat to imitate the Lord by spreading the Good News to all creation. Through modern communications we go more easily to all the world; we proclaim that all creation is part of the Good News and that the Risen Lord is going before us. Conclude with the Prayer of Archbishop Romero (*Daily Reflections*, 06/27/04)

MANIFEST LOVE THROUGH DEEDS

...and I have loved them as much as you loved me. (John 17:23b)

Attaining the Love of God. To "attain" is to gain something with an effort, to reach or achieve a goal. Our goal is the Love of God, something we strive to gain as a lifetime's endeavor. We know that Jesus loves us with the love with which the Father loves him. We are smothered in the love of God and that is part of the infinite love shown to all creatures, and especially to human beings. God loves us through spoken word and deed; the Almighty utters this word in the person of Jesus, the Word of God. God's many loving deeds include our own existence and our existence in Christ. God's deeds of love never cease and extend throughout the universe.

Reciprocity. All love includes two parties. What do we do to return this divine act of love for us? The very existence of plants and animals proclaims God's love. For us, there is something more. We show God's love freely and willingly and more perfectly without the fear of damnation for failing to do so. Yes, we can refuse that love through sin and a lack of gratitude. We are able to respond to love by denial, or by assenting half-heartedly, or wholeheartedly.

My Commitment. If smothered in love, I too must manifest that love in words of thanksgiving and in deeds done for others. If that love is so immense, a fitting response will take my entire being, all that I am and all I could ever become. But this mortal life has little left to it. I must see that the mandate to help others is a living commandment that is personally before me, something requiring all that is left in my being. The task is a grand one; the gifts to help bring about love's completion are even grander. "Make me an instrument of your peace" is the only way to combine the vast scope of the task with the infinite goodness, love and grace at our disposal. God disposes, not us; God gives time and gifts to complete the work. We are mere instruments, crude and chipped as they are, in the hands of the Almighty.

Contemplation in Action. Through our active ministry we are not formal contemplatives, and yet we are moved toward the love of God in the midst of our busy lives. What we do in loving Jesus as he loves us is to make visible God's glory in finding our own calling, in seeing the wonders of the gifts given, and in encouraging others to do the same. Our actions tell our love, and the thoughtfulness of these actions tells others that we are contemplatives in action.

We find God in our actions, and this opens us up to seek to glorify God's majesty. And our entire being is meant to give greater Glory of God.

Take, Lord, and receive all my liberty, my memory, my understanding, and my entire will, all that I have and possess. You have given all to me. To you, O Lord, I return it. Dispose of it wholly according to your will. Give me your love and your grace, for this is enough for me. St. Ignatius

APPENDIX 1 CHOOSE A RETREAT SETTING

An environmental retreat should be in a proper setting that adds to the atmosphere and does not distract the retreatant. One can distinguish between an environmental retreat setting for a single event and an ideal site selected for retreats on a frequent basis. Quite often people find the commercial atmosphere of formal retreat houses (with manicured lawns and hotel-styled rooms) distracting.

Characteristics of an ideal retreat setting:

* **Accessibility** -- Many retreatants desire facilities that are not overly difficult to reach and yet not "on the highway."

* **Simplicity** -- The site should be inviting, clean, and yet quite austere and moderately simple. Some cannot climb steps or sleep in a loft; they may need sunlit rooms or require added amenities such as interior heat or nearby toilet or shower facilities. They may prefer simple foods and even wild edibles.

* **Tranquility** -- Under normal circumstances people prefer external tranquility. Generally, silence holds precedence over scenic view and is possible even near congested areas. Silence is augmented by establishing vegetative, wooden or masonry noise barriers, or by selecting sites where topography deflects sound.

* **Seclusion** -- If the site is in a well-chosen enclosed natural space (a cove, valley, dense woods, etc.), seclusion outweighs social connections or proximity to other retreatants. However, a radio, cell phone or pet animal may satisfy retreatants who fear excessive isolation. See on this website a special listing of hermitages.

* **Naturalness** -- The site should be natural but not in a wilderness area that should remain undisturbed. Saint Manchan of Offaly described such a setting fifteen centuries ago --

*A pleasant woodland all about
To shield it [the hut] from the wind,
And make a home for singing birds
Before it and behind.
A southern aspect for the heat
A stream along its foot,
A smooth green lawn with rich top soil
Propitious to all fruit.*

Quoted in *How the Irish Saved Civilization*, by Thomas Cahill, (New York: Doubleday, 1995) pp. 152-53.

Enhancing the Retreat Setting:

* **Remove distractions.** Don't plan extra things to do such as sightseeing while in the wooded area. Don't schedule other activities unless they are related to the retreat.

* **Do some exercise.** Move about in the natural setting. Take care if you are making a backpack retreat to get rest and avoid over-exertion. Strolls from a base camp (with no backpacks) are ideal.

* **Spiritual direction** is recommended for change-of-life decisions; however, the Spirit speaks to one in a natural setting. * **Keep notes.** Recording is part of one's journey of faith. You may wish to revisit these experiences in the future through photos, audio recordings or daybook writings.

APPENDIX 2 BEWARE OF HELL ON EARTH: GLOBAL WARMING

We hesitate in focusing on classical descriptions of hell's eternal fires and torment. However hell exists; it exists among some folks who suffer from drug and other forms of abuse, in dysfunctional homes, in squalid conditions of life, and as an eternal state. Picturing, at least for a short time, these real and frightening conditions is salutary from a spiritual standpoint as long as this is not obsessive. We always strive to replace the paralyzing fear of hell with the love of a kind and merciful God whom we imitate in godly and compassionate ways.

Uncle Pete's Barn. He was a saintly man but not so his smaller tobacco barn. Its upper rails were unspiked and I hated heights anyway; I lacked the confidence to straddle the rails with my feet and keep the hands free to pass up or spread the tobacco sticks and stalks. And I was under a tin roof and the weather outside was past one hundred degrees. Then there was a wasp nest just off to the right. Standing on unspiked rails in that tobacco barn in mid-summer with wasps all around was hell for me. The only comfort was that it was not eternal.

Possible Hellish Conditions Due to Global Warming:

* **Rise of ocean levels** -- Good-bye Pacific island nations and much of Bangladesh. Ocean levels have been rising about 4 mm. per year for the past decade or so. Glaciers are melting at a faster rate than predicted even five years ago. Ocean levels have varied as much over the centuries, but even a one meter rise would flood one-sixth of crowded Bangladesh's surface. The melting of Greenland's ice sheet would raise ocean levels by seven meters and the melting of West Antarctica's sheet (already showing signs of rapid melting) would raise them an additional six meters.

* **Shutdown of the Gulf Stream** -- Currently the stream warms western and northern Europe by about 20 degrees over comparable latitudes in Canada. The *Thermohaline Circulation* pulls in warm salty tropical water. When this water cools, it sinks, drawing down colder Arctic water and bringing in still more tropical water. Excess fresh water from the Greenland icecap could weaken the stream's saltiness, and this seems to have started happening.

* **Hurricane intensity and frequency may be associated with climate change.** Some scientists say that more active hurricane seasons

could be due to increases in ocean temperature. Due to increased activity, the insurance estimates of damage in the American Southeast were \$145 billion for 2004 and \$200 billion for 2005. Will we expect more storm damage with each succeeding year?

* **Droughts and floods** could become more severe due to dramatic climate changes. Deserts could expand, forest fires increase, fertile lands flood, and temperate lands become infested with tropical diseases and pests. Earth will suffer all the more.

APPENDIX 3 PRACTICE FASTING

In order to aspire to a life of moderation some degree of fasting ought to be practiced. That means at times we say "no" to otherwise good things. And this is not just to be hard on ourselves, but to be good to ourselves through proper self-control. Convincing people of this in a consumer culture is difficult. The following are some reasons that help strengthen our resolve to fast at times:

1. Spiritual and mental aspects. Fasting is difficult and is counter to the natural tendency to fill the belly with goodies. Fasting opens the mind to spiritual matters, moves one to repentance, enlivens a soul, sharpens a spiritual focus, and improves one's daily conduct. Fasting allows the mind to rest and focus more deeply on the realms of the spirit. Interestingly, all religious traditions advocate periods of fasting as a means of communion with the divine. Even though some church regulations are moderate to say the least, still it is the fasting practice that is affirmed by all to the degree that one is able. External discipline helps us fast.

2. Physical aspects. Like the rest of our human body, the stomach needs an occasional rest. Care for our physical life is caring for our spiritual life as well. The need to review and curb certain eating habits is a good practice, for dietary practices are involved in about half of all physical maladies, from high blood pressure to obesity. To fast is to control weight gain. Older people see their muscle turn to fat, for sustaining muscle takes far more energy than maintaining body fat. Thus the weight increase of older years is linked to less physical activity.

3. The fasting of Jesus. In due time, Jesus said that his followers as well as those of John the Baptist were to fast. Before beginning his ministry Jesus went into the desert and fasted for forty days -- and he was hungry and he was tempted. In following Jesus, we find that fasting opens us to the reality of what we are about, and we come to terms with our mission in life as well.

4. Solidarity. Through fasting and the slight pangs of hunger one is able to develop a compassion for those who do not have enough to eat this very day. Through fasting we develop a solidarity with the great numbers of hungry people so that we can become compassionate for their plight and help do something about it.

5. Moderation and self abnegation. If we fast to some degree, we can overcome the "give me" culture that says we should use everything that we can get our hands on, lest it fall into other people's hands and they enjoy it instead of us. Fasting helps us draw back and question the consumer culture in which we are immersed.

6. Do it for others. Some actually find that the economic savings from fasting can be put aside and given as charity to those in greater need. In offering up our sufferings during periods of fasting we enter into the suffering of others in a compassionate manner and learn to share radically with them.

APPENDIX 4 TAKE AN EXAMINATION OF LIFESTYLE

Being Christian means that we use God-given resources properly. References are to <www.earthhealing.info>, Daily Reflections section. Do we do the following?

1. Grow some of our food -- If we eat food we grow, we identify with the place, control growing conditions, save transport fees, and experience the joy of gardening (7/13/04).

2. Drive energy efficient vehicles -- If we take only necessary trips and lack easy access to public transportation, an energy efficient vehicle can become a major means of conservation (2/5/04).

3. Install at least five compact fluorescent bulbs -- This switch, if performed by all Americans, would reduce the need for new electric power plants to almost nil (8/23/05).

4. Use appliances sparingly -- Refrain from using unnecessary electric or gas appliances; reduce or stop television use; cut off appliances in standby mode; buy energy-saving appliances (9/9/05); keep cool without air conditioning (7/7-8/05).

5. Use solar energy -- Where the opportunity allows, dry clothes outdoors (4/19/04); install solar space, hot water and greenhouse applications (2/11/04, 7/23/04, 9/8/04, 10/23/04); consider solar food cookers, food dryers and photovoltaics.

6. Heat and cool consistently -- Often people cool to lower temperatures in summer than they find comfortable in winter, and the inverse with heating. Keep year-round at a medium temperature say 70 degrees F (+8 degrees in summer and -8 degrees in winter).

7. Create green living space -- Design and build or acquire relatively small residences, using local construction materials, insulate well, allow for multiple use of interior space, and keep place airy and free of toxic materials (4/5/05).

8. Recycle and reuse when possible -- Discardable materials made of paper, empty metal containers, cardboard, and plastic waste materials should be recycled (6/28/04). Obtain needed clothing and

home furnishings from flea markets and yard sales (9/10/05).

9. Replace lawn with edible landscape/wildscape -- Fuel and other resources are expended in mowing and maintaining lawns; these resources could be redirected to less costly utilitarian or ornamental purposes such as for gardening or fruit trees (5/27/04).

10. Conserve water -- Most of us know most of the many common ways suggested to conserve water (shorter showers, etc.); some people may find the major one (compost toilets) beyond current means. Water savings equal resource savings, considering water purification and distribution to your residence (5/21/04).