

The Pastor's Column - July 20th, 2023



I remain captivated by last week's scripture from St. Paul to the Romans:

"All creation is groaning in labor pains even until now..."

St. Paul is making the point that it is not only humankind that is the object of God's salvation through Jesus Christ, but the whole created reality: The earth, the sky, the waters, the birds of the air, the creatures on the land, all sea life, and so on. For more on this, I commend to your reading *Creation and the Cross: The Mercy of God for a*

Planet in Peril by Elizabeth A. Johnson.

Like no other time in human history, creation is groaning more than ever. Seven of the hottest days ever recorded on planet Earth happened just last week. Storms like the one that flooded upstate two weeks ago that are supposed to happen every 1000 years seem to happen every other year. Abnormal forest fires in Canada turn our sky orange with smoke. Sea levels are rising threatening coastal populations. It's a good thing they put those giant steel doors on the Brooklyn Battery Tunnel.

For some, these events are met with a shrug of the shoulder, dismissed as fake news, as something that won't really impact us in this lifetime, or something that has nothing to do with human activity so we will just need to build higher sea walls, manufacture stronger air conditioners, and move the weekend home from the Hamptons to the Poconos.

Others are groaning along with creation. A study by the American Psychological Association (APA) reports that 56% of U.S. Adults said that climate change is the most important issue facing the world today. We see on television all those whose lives are devastated and traumatized by heat waves, wildfires, hurricanes and floods. The APA found another troubling impact of global warming. *Nearly half* of young adults 18 to 34 said they are experiencing climate anxiety—an *overwhelming* sense of fear, sadness and dread in the face of a warming planet or anxiety or worry about climate change and its effects.

Could generational differences on this matter be summed up by that old urban myth: You put a frog in a pot of boiling water it will instantly leap out. But if you put it in a pot filled with pleasantly tepid water and gradually heat it, the frog will remain in the water until it boils to death. Are millennials desperately trying to leap out of the preverbal pot, while boomers merely ask for a refreshing mai tai with a paper umbrella?

Scientists around the globe, perhaps the modern equivalent of the Biblical prophets, are going out of their minds trying to tell us to change our ways before it is too late. But most people are befuddled by how we can even start to make a difference. Turn off the a/c? Go Vegan? Stop getting on airplanes? Ride mass transit? In one New York word: Fuhgeddaboudit! Sadly, human history tells us we most likely won't respond constructively until way too many lives are lost and too much damage is done.

Now that I have totally depressed you and me, all I can say is that we need to GROAN with creation, and literally come to Jesus on this. For my part I am going to

stop ignoring the issue and force myself to read more about this. **The New York Time Book Review** last week recommended *The Heat Will Kill You First: Life and Death on a Scorched Planet*, by Jeff Goodell. It's on my Kindle and will be in our bookstore soon. Then, I hope to find others who want to discuss this and figure out ways to think globally and act locally.

Salvation begins when we turn from our self-interest and turn to one another and all of creation with the same love God has for everyone and everything.

Peace to you,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Fr. Eric". The letters are fluid and connected, with a prominent initial "F" and "E".

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