

The Crisis of Our Time

Since 9/11, I have regarded the most critical spiritual, moral and political crisis of our time to be the cancerous growth of our national security state — not the economy, not education, not social welfare, not racism, not health care, not our abysmal criminal justice system, as important as all these are.

Our democratic way of life has become increasingly imperiled by politically repressive measures, massive surveillance, disregard of constitutional protections and human rights and a host of other odious practices undertaken in the name of an idolatrous national security.

It's become increasingly clear, however, that another spiritual, moral and political crisis may soon be recognized as so overwhelming in its implications and consequences that nothing else will much matter if this threat cannot be countered and somehow resolved.

I'm referring to global climate change.

Pope Francis, who is now preparing an encyclical on climate change, has stated, "A Christian who does not protect creation is a Christian who does not care about the work of God."

When coastal cities begin to flood and drought-parched expanses are abandoned due to water and power shortages, when consumption of fossil fuels is outlawed because everyone understands their destructiveness, when money will no longer buy food and water because there's just not enough to go around, when regions and cities and neighbors start fighting each other to obtain the minimal resources for human subsistence, and when most of them lose this fight, there will be massive economic, social and political chaos, and human suffering on a scale the planet has never seen.

It's not clear whether or how this doomsday scenario can be avoided. It is clear that we have not yet come to our senses regarding the physical limits that the ecological habitat we call Earth place upon us. The negative effects of global climate change continue to accelerate. This process must be slowed, now, and then reversed.

If we have not already reached the tipping point, beyond which lies massive die-off of the human and most other species, we soon will. I may not live to see the consequences, but I fear my children and grandchild will. If they do, I hope things will not be as devastatingly brutal as depicted in the multitude of dystopian movies that frequent our cinemas these days. Don't count on some messianic action hero to save the planet.

Pray the living will not envy the dead.

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