

Daily Meditation 09/30/2022

Hurricane Ian, Community Building & Waking Up About Climate Change

Good morning.

Today we are addressing the tragedy occurring in Florida with Hurricane Ian, clearly a very severe disaster going on.

And in the title of my essay for our common reflection, it goes like this: "Hurricane Ian, Community Building, and Waking Up About Climate Change."

So as I pointed out, the word community means literally to share common tasks together. I remember when I was in college, my first year of college, in Dubuque, Iowa, the Mississippi River overflowed. And all kinds of people went down to the waterfront. And we were given sandbags, to fill and to erect along the banks. And there were college students, there were older people. There were seminarians from Lutheran, Presbyterian and Roman Catholic seminaries in the city. And it was just a great experience of elbow to elbow work, shared work. Because of a common threat, no one was asking your age, or your religious affiliation, or your political party. We were all involved in this one effort.

So I take that experience, and I apply it to Florida today. That of course, there are people who are skilled, those who can begin to set up the electrical grids again, those who are still rescuing people in boats. Those who are weathermen and journalists are telling the people what the future holds and so forth.

Struggle brings out the best in us and the best in the community. And it melts, it melts the divisions between people.

We cannot hide our heads in the sand that Florida has been led for years by senators and governors and Congress, people who have been explicitly denying climate change, and have done nothing to address it. There were votes in Congress this year, and the entire Republican Party turned its back on the invitation to put up funds for climate change, because of climate change.

And I tell the story of attending a gathering of religious leaders who wanted to deal with climate change a number of years ago in Florida. But I didn't tell this footnote to the story. Yes, I learned that the governor had just that week forbidden government employees to use the word "climate change" in any email, or any correspondence, or any public event.

But also on that very trip, we gathered in our conference, it was in northern Florida, where also the capital is located. I visited Miami on that trip, in the South. In Miami, there were four inches of water on the sidewalks.

And up in the north, in the same state the entire political party was saying, "What, me worry? What, me worry? Climate change, what, what's that?" And when water rises like that, you have all kinds of issues around sewage. And, of course, the flooding of freshwater sources, et cetera, et cetera.

So we just cannot pretend that a whole political party in America for decades has been pretending that climate change is not an issue. Why would they do that, unless they're in bed with fossil fuel champions who are making lots of money on Wall Street and all the rest by promoting and pushing fossil fuels, the very cause of climate change, the very cause of the excessive dimensions to hurricanes that are now hitting Florida and other states as well.

And the wildfires that are hitting the West.

So truth matters, and facts matter, and alternative facts -- there is no room for alternative facts when it comes to climate change.

Thank you. We'll see you tomorrow.