

Our summer journey continues as we meet the discouraged, worried, greedy, selfish, and the many longing for a new life and new hope.

“What shall we do?” A question, a cry, a plaintiff sense of loss, felt by so many this very day. The people in Ukraine victims of needless hatred by those who want to “build bigger barns” to store up what they do not need. The “bountiful harvest” of God’s good earth abused and uncared for, and the truth of its climate crisis too often denied; the people of Kentucky, whose life and homes are gone in an instant with raging waters; the too many victims of drought and heat; and the raging fires, again frantically driving people from their homes far away and close.

Days and times when the question of Ecclesiastes becomes ours: *“What profit comes from all the toil, anxiety of heart, and all the labor under the sun?”* It is all gone in an instant; *“days of sorrow and grief have become an occupation.”* A sentiment and feeling, which, touches each of us in varying ways at different times. It is hard to find an answer, to grasp the monumental impact of it all, as the wimper of children echoes through the universe, and the earth itself cries out in unrelenting anguish. Amid it all, amid the “vanity of vanities,” Jesus stands, in every part of this weary world, among so many victims filled with grief and loss. Standing on the good earth of God’s creation, he weeps and suffers with the people, perhaps himself wondering why the loss is so great and the pain so deep. Wondering why the beauty and wonder of God’s creation is so carelessly abused. With the people and the earth, he still carries the cross, as he hears that haunting question, coming from the lips of the many who watch the terror from a distance and feel the ravages done to God’s good earth: “What shall I do?”

He answers: This is what you are to do, what you must do together: *“Seek what is above.”* Finally believe and act on what you say you believe. Put to death immorality, evil and greed. Stop lying and stop

believing lies: take off the old self and the old way and put on the new. Let yourself be renewed, and work to renew the face of the earth. Embrace the whole human family as your sisters, brothers, neighbors, whom you must love—for it is among them that you will find me. Guard against all greed—life does not consist in possessions. Do not store up treasure for yourself, but for others. These ways are the “open door” to enter beyond the struggles endured today. Not a simple way, not a magical solution, but a way to enter, to begin.

The truth of God’s word, is that the rich man in the gospel asking the question, *“What shall I do?”* is all of us, all of humanity—the many who fail to see beyond themselves, who cannot imagine their own part in the suffering of so many today, who do not believe that we are all connected, who will not see what we are doing to God’s earth, who cannot or will not, envision that their goal of storing many good things for themselves in larger and larger barns, has catastrophic effects on the lives of others and on God’s good earth. Too many, “rest, eat, and drink,” while the climate changes, as bigger barns are built to store what the many need to live, making drought, floods, fire, starvation and even war, ravage the world, as *“days of sorrow and grief become an occupation.”*

But we are here, we believe, and we choose to live in hope. *“Our goal must be to become painfully aware, to dare to turn what is happening to the world into our own personal suffering and thus to discover what each of us can do about it.”* Laudato Si’ Ch.1, #19

We are there in the wars, the floods, the fires, the loss, and grief.

“What shall I do?”

*“If today you hear God’s voice, harden not your heart.”*

