

Laudato Si in Action

Opening Up to What is Possible in a Crisis

As I mentioned last week, the coronavirus pandemic is challenging all of us. And many in the world are suffering and even dying because of Covid-19. In addition, many more people throughout the world are suffering because of the efforts to reduce or stop transmission of the coronavirus. These efforts, while saving lives, have, unfortunately, adversely affected people's livelihoods. In addition, some people can no longer get the medical care or other services that they need. This brings me great sadness, of course, and should not be minimized.

At the same time, our effort at social distancing has actually done some good, in terms of our carbon footprints. In a recent article in the NY Times, Christopher M. Jones, lead developer at the CoolClimate Network, an applied research consortium at the U.C. Berkeley Renewable and Appropriate Energy Laboratory, said that "all these extra precautions that schools and businesses are taking to keep people home are saving lives, and that's clearly what's most important."

In fact, the efforts of so many have reduced the carbon footprints in a number of areas, including transportation -- both commuting and airplane travel are way down. People have reduced their shopping and their eating out too, which also should have a positive effect on climate change.

The net effect is a reduction in our carbon footprints, but perhaps just as important, is the realization, that people can rise to the occasion and change their habits when it is important. Let's hope that the lessons learned from this pandemic can empower us when the emergency is over and we again turn our attention to the climate crisis.

Until then, please continue to hunker down, practice social distancing and good hygiene. And don't forget that acts of kindness are always appreciated, as long as they don't put you at unnecessary risk.

Working together, we can help take care of our common home.

Paul Litwin