

The Earth is God's

The late author and theologian, Fr. Joseph Donders, who spent most of his life in ministry in Africa, tells a true story about an encounter with a refugee from Ethiopia:

“The young man stood in front of me, he had blazing eyes, looking thin and wiry. He told me about his hunger and his country and he asked for a piece of bread. I gave him a piece – it was not much ... but I hadn't any more.

Suddenly, he got very excited. He got very excited: he knelt on the ground – and striking it with his fists cried out:

“This earth is not yours! It is not mine! This earth is God's; this earth is God's; this earth is ours! Your food is not yours; your food is not mine. All food is God's food, ... all food is ours; not yours, not mine ... but God's... ours!!!

And wrapping the piece of bread in some brown paper, he left and waved to me from the corner of the street.”

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Sisters and brothers, I share this powerful story as we join with the Church in commemorating Respect Life Month: celebrating that *every* human being without exception is equally sacred; that *all* Creation is a gift from God; that our *Mother Earth* is a fragile valuable gift — and that *all* of Creation is *interdependent*. *We're ALL connected!*

The powerful story of the Ethiopian refugee is a 21st Century version of today's message from the Prophet Isaiah and Jesus' parable of the murderous tenants. The God of Life created the global vineyard as a common home where brothers and sisters would live in unity; where justice and peace would prevail, where every human life would be respected as equally sacred – where all of Creation would be regarded as sacred. A global vineyard where all of life would be understood as interconnected – dependent on one-another.

But, the tenants – humankind – saw the vineyard as theirs alone – manipulated it, abused it and exhausted it to satisfy their own needs or pleasures.

Isaiah and Jesus and the Ethiopian Refugee Proclaim:

“This earth is not yours. This earth is God's — This earth is ours!”

In these days, the Global vineyard continues to be impacted by the Covid-19 Pandemic. Last Friday, Pope Francis addressed the United Nations General Assembly on its 75th Anniversary. His message is a challenge for all of us in the Global Vineyard at this critical moment in history.

He stated in part:

(continued...)

“The pandemic, indeed, calls us “to seize this time of trial as a time of choosing, a time to choose what matters and what passes away, a time to separate what is necessary from what is not.” [2] It can represent a concrete opportunity for conversion, for transformation, for rethinking our way of life and our economic and social systems, which are widening the gap between rich and poor based on an unjust distribution of resources. On the other hand, the pandemic can be the occasion for a “defensive retreat” into greater individualism and elitism.”

I would say that’s the choice of our upcoming election in the U.S.

The Pope continues:

“We are faced, then, with a choice between two possible paths. One path leads to the consolidation of multilateralism as the expression of a renewed sense of global co-responsibility, a solidarity grounded in justice and the attainment of peace and unity within the family, which is God’s plan for the world. The other path emphasizes self-sufficiency, nationalism, protectionism, individualism and isolation; it excludes the poor, the vulnerable and those dwelling on the peripheries of life. That path would certainly be detrimental to the whole community, causing self-inflicted wounds on everyone. It must not prevail.”

The Pope concludes:

“We never emerge from a crisis just as we were. We come out either better or worse. This is why, at this critical juncture, it is our duty to rethink the future of our common home and our common project. A complex task lies before us, one that requires a frank and coherent dialogue aimed at strengthening multilateralism and cooperation between states. The present crisis has further demonstrated the limits of our self-sufficiency as well as our common vulnerability. It has forced us to think clearly about how we want to emerge from this: either better or worse.”

Isaiah, Jesus and the Ethiopian refugee remind us:

“This earth is not yours! This earth is God’s! This earth is Ours!”

Amen!