



### It Is I Who Must Begin

Vaclav Havel, (*Teaching With Fire*, ed. by S.M. Intrator and M. Scribner)

It is I who must begin.  
 Once I begin, once I try –  
 here and now, right where I am,  
 not excusing myself  
 by saying things would be easier elsewhere,  
 without grand speeches and ostentatious gestures,  
 but all the more persistently  
 -- to live in harmony with the "voice of Being,"  
 as I understand it within myself  
 -- as soon as I begin that,  
 I suddenly discover, to my surprise,  
 that I am neither the only one, nor the first,  
 nor the most important one  
 to have set out upon that road.

Whether all is really lost or not  
 depends entirely on whether or not  
 I am lost.

## Loving God by Loving the World (Richard Rohr)

*I have often wondered what might compel more Christians to take personal responsibility to mitigate climate change. With all the scientific evidence we've been given, it doesn't seem to be a head issue but a heart one. Scholar Sallie McFague (1933–2019) offers both theological and ethical reasons for us to make some much needed changes at an individual level. She writes:*

As St. Augustine puts it, sin is “being curved in upon oneself” rather than being open to God. In our ecological age, we now see that being open to God means being open to the other creatures upon whom we depend and who depend upon us. We do not meet God only in Jesus of Nazareth, because God is also incarnate *in our world* as the universal Christ. . . .

To love God by loving God's world has meant different things to different people in different times. For us . . . it is epitomized by climate change . . . the central crisis of the twenty-first century. Put simply, climate change is the result of too many human beings using too much energy and taking up too much space on the planet. Through excessive energy use and its accompanying greenhouse-gas emissions, we are changing the planet's climate in ways that will make it uninhabitable for ourselves and many other species. This is a strange “crisis” to face: It does not have the immediacy of a war or plague or tsunami. Rather, it has to do with *how we live* on a daily basis—the food we eat, the transportation we use . . . the luxuries . . . [and] long-distance air travel we permit ourselves. We are not being called to .. fight an enemy; rather, the enemy is the very ordinary life we ourselves are leading. . . . Yet, for all its presumed innocence, this way of life lived by well-off North Americans [*and prosperous people in other countries - RR*] is both unjust to those who cannot attain this lifestyle and destructive of the very planet that supports us all.

What, then, would be [an appropriate] ethic for twenty-first-century people and especially for well-off, religious people? One of the distinguishing characteristics of many . . . religions is some form of self-emptying. Often it takes the form of ego-lessness, the attempt to open the self so that God can enter. . . . In the Christian tradition, *kenosis* or self-emptying is seen as constitutive of God's being in creation, the incarnation, and the cross. In creation, God limits the divine self, pulling in, so to speak, to allow space for others to exist. . . . In the incarnation, as Paul writes in Philippians 2:7, God “emptied the divine self, taking the form of a slave,” and in the cross God gives of the divine self without limit. Likewise, one understanding of Christian discipleship is [as] a “cruciform” life, imitating the self-giving of Christ for others. . . .

Could we live and move and have our being in the universal Christ, participating in the insight and power of God incarnate in the world as we deal with . . . the basics of existence—space and energy—so we can live in radical interdependence with all other creatures? We are not alone as we face this challenge—the universal Christ is in, with, and for the world as we struggle to deal with climate change.



Martha Postlethwaite in the poem **Clearing** tells us that the only way we will know how to give ourselves to the world is “to create a clearing in the dense forest of [our lives] and wait there patiently, until the song that is [ours] alone to sing falls into [our] open cupped hands and [we] recognize and greet it.”

*Elaine*