**Revelation in a Time of *Survival*: Spirituality and Sustainability. A Zoom Series from Spiritual Leaders of the Greater Boston Area on Climate Change and the** **Pandemic.**

Session Six: **“Sustaining Civilization, the Laws of Man and the Law of God”**

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**Michael Donlan:**

*{ HELLO – GOOD FOLKS: I come before you this evening, to present some new penetrations and foray – by the Legal Process - into the dramatic,* ***new*** *and looming challenges (and resultant changes) to our Civilization -- due to the advent of* ***Global Warming and Climate Change*** *to our Planet. The Rule of law is being brought toward a* ***meaningful moral metamorphosis*** *via the first major advent of International Law, and the challenge of survival for All Humanity. This is a moment I have prepared-for for 50 years (in my study of Human Rights) – as it has matured over millennia. And proper Moral Leadership must and will evolve.}*

**The LEGAL PROCESS is being drawn toward a true embrace of JUSTICE and HUMAN RIGHTS – as Civilization Reckons with PLANET EARTH’s sudden lurching toward COLLAPSE, due to GLOBAL WARMING!**

Michael Donlan

The Legal Process has been a long-standing civilizing feature and sustaining modality to Civilization; and will always become especially responsive, when Humanity is at full risk due to history-making moments of *troubling inflection.*

Today, for the first time, the flow of history presents both a disturbing existential challenge to Humanity; and – YET - does so at a time – when - for the first time - the Code of Human Rights has been integrally-codified (through the good offices of the United Nations) – and the UN culminated their advance thereof by elevating-such to the level of binding Intentional Law.

It is important to point out that - until today – virtually all law had been spawned to serve within national geographic boundaries; and gained maturity only within *national boundaries.* But my foray - before you today - seeks to dramatize and assert that this moment of *existential inflection* - arising from Climate Change and Global Warming (and, even further, in 2020, by Covid 19) - mandates that the Legal Process and its Rule of Law remediate these mounting and ultimately-existential Planetary forces. The Legal Process must counter and cope; and, to do so, legal jurisprudence must draw upon recognized principals of jurisprudence – national and international. And – to that end – recognize and mandate that all further usage of **Fossil Fuel** (anywhere on our Planet) **impacts *dangerously* *and unjustly***upon all Humanity. Hence, Civilization’s Jurisprudence must bring resonating and effective relief to all Humanity.

No prior singular Legal Process, and no prior Rule of Civil Law, had ever sought to protect all Humanity – indeed save all Humanity. And, if you will – we purport to promote new, sustained evolutions by our Civilization, which are much-*needed* Legal Processes to **emerge via International Legal Process (in tandem with all, respective, existing Domestic national laws that govern the regulation of energy and environment)** – and such pioneering symbiotic-confluence of Legal Processes (national and international) will reach – inexorably - toward a critical and culminating embracing the Code of Human Rights -- as a new-normative in the Rule of Law. And - indeed – most of such refashioning of a new Legal Processes are being cast and fashioned; and such are well on their way – both Internationally and Domestically!!

And, despite the ominous threats being thrust upon humanity, **there is much good news**; in that broad international and national leaderships and institutions are being mobilized all about our Planet toward a new recognition and rescue for ALL HUMANITY. BUT THE STAKES ARE MUCH TOO HIGH: as our fellow Humanity faces ultimate existential demise -- if Global Warming is not brought to heel – and, to achieve such, all Civilization must immediately start a sustained process of DECARONIZATION.

And, again, there is good news – as such decarbonization is being planned out in 10+ states here in New England and East Coast – to achieve net-zero Greenhouse Gases by the year 2050. And our state and neighboring states (along with California) will be the exemplars for the rest of our nation.

Let me describe – to you - these bold, foundational-steps.

* Back in 1992, at a much-hyped *Rio Earth Summit*, the United Nations propounded and tendered (*inter alia*) the **UNFCCC** Treaty (*United Nations 1992 Framework Conference on Climate Change*) – with all nations included; and their delegates commenced meeting (annually) as **COPs** (*Conference of Parties*) with the ultimate goal of negotiating and fashioning a binding international agreement and/or treaty whereby Climate Change and Global Warming would be brought to heel.
* But these COPs kept *struggling* for two decades, without progress; and, after the 2010 COP Conference, President Obama made entrée and pushed our EPA to develop a US *Clean Energy Plan;* and, in turn, Presidents Obama and Xi fashioned a bilateral posture in 2015, and thereby added both US and Chinese leadership to 2015 COP. And, with such added leadership, a rare unanimous international agreement was formed and subscribed: namely, the *2015* *Paris Climate Agreement.*
* Such *Paris Climate Agreement* is now governing International LAW FOR ALL LANDS – as it sets a **limit** for Global Warming at 2⁰ C (with a best-efforts at 1.5⁰ C) above ambient pre-industrial temperature. And all nations agree to cooperate together, to counter GW, by voluntarily declaring to reduce GHGs to self-set limits and to be fully transparent as to such *NATIONALLY DECALRED REDUCTIONS.* Such performance sets five-year review protocols – with the initial voluntary reductions to begin in this year of 2020.
  + While the obligation to so declare and to report is *mandatory*; all other aspects of the *Paris Agreement* can be termed as being only *Soft International Law.*
  + Nevertheless, the international community considers the *Paris Agreement* as constituting a major milestone and breakthrough.
  + But, now in 2020, some ‘flags are on the field.’
    - – as Covid 19 has put nations into a ‘pause mode;’
    - – our current President Trump will withdraw the US from the *Paris Agreement* next month(unless defeated by Joseph Biden).
* Also, much new attention must be brought to shore up the *Paris Agreement.*
* Notably, there are salutary responses to the *Paris Agreement --* arising-up *as the first groundswell –* about the Globe*.*
* Here in the US -- there is much good news, as a major cadre of progressive states are ramping up major new modes of decarbonization.
* States, such as CA and NY, have adopted very bold and aggressive legislation; and CA is already implementing its decarbonization; and here in MA, it is (already) corralling 10+ NE and East Coast states to fashion and implement a multi-state team-up to *decarbonize via electrification* — starting with transforming all Transportation Vehicles from *internal-combustion engines* (using Fossil Fuel)to become *battery-powered* electric vehicles (over the next two decades). Such is to be followed by electrification of Building Heating (utilizing new high-tech Heat).

These several *progressive* states will serve as exemplars.

All of this is GOOD NEWS – yet, far more Leadership is needed to undergird the entrée of the Code of Human Rights –

* Domestic Laws already contain many aspects and basic principles of human rights.
* But the entire family of nations must *hasten to* bring the most salient features of the Code of Human Rights on a sustainable basis – such as *RIGHT TO LIFE* and *RIGHT TO A HEALTHY HABITAT –* to the fore.

BEFORE NOW: When the Legal Process **had been (perpetually)** localized (and corralled within national boundaries) – the Legal Process never sought to cast and fashion the Rule of Law for governance of **all Humanity.** But now, abruptly, such conventions have changed. Law must not only address harmony amongst Humanity; but, going forward, the Legal Process must look forward (with sound moral purpose) to (presciently) rescue all Humanity and enable it to sustain itself permanently (generation after generation).

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**ADDENDUM:** The Code of Human Rights has been curated (during our lifetime) by the United Nations to make such Code of Human Rights an ideal consummation within the Rule of Law; and, at his point in history of Civilization, such curation has (presciently) anticipated the need for a code of human rights - in empowering the Legal Process - to better empower Humanity and its Civilization to cope with and remediate-through the severe trials and injustices of CC & GW. Most notably, the UN *Human Rights Commission* has been plumbing and probing as to the Manifest Destiny of mobilizing its Code of Human Rights toward remediating the (mounting) gross and rank injustice befalling Humanity (especially the most innocent who never spewed out any problematic GHGs) – and has made (as one of its clear findings) that Human Rights and Climate Change *are inextricably intertwined and interconnected*. Simply put: the UN has brought forth a form of Code of Human Rights that will well-serve Civilization in this clear and present moment of forced-change (and existential threat); and much more: such mobilizing of human rights and the Legal Process will serve civilization *onward -* generation by generation – as new challenges unfold.

And there is much more than a ‘mere here and now’ remediation of CC & GW. Over the centuries, major features of *enlightenment* have elevated the Legal Process as the entire scope of the Legal Process and Rule of law (throughout history) has been replete with a *naturalized sense of default* toward the protection of property and limiting the power of government over the propertied classes.

Yet there has been a moral undercurrent that ememrge from past (and cherished) history-making banner-movements of Human Rights (as ,e.g., *Magna Carta* and *Bill of Rights*) has brought-about a humanizing and most salient achievements of Civilization toward curating the Legal Process -- to serve both the propertied classes – and go onward to embrace all Humanity (namely, -- the working classes (right to unionize), -- all sexes; -- due process of law; -- equal protection of the law; -- transparency; -- freedom of press and speech; -- *habeus corpus; --* non-self-incrimination; -- *et al.* Human Rights insinuate *enlightenment* throughoutthe Legal Process and the Rule of law. And ‘here and now’ there is a clear-and present danger to all Humanity; and such unjust injuries from CC & GW reveal (starkly) that (although there will always be inequality – as prosperity spreads about) the Legal Process can and should provide succor and relief to those suffering unduly.

**Rev. Jim Antal:**

**Rev. Jim Antal**: So as Rodney suggested in his introductions. I'm going to begin by responding to these

Five questions that Rodney suggested we respond to. But then I'll probably wander away from them. So please forgive me. Rodney. I asked her that.

So I'll begin with **God's role in the current pandemic and climate crisis** God meant it. When God gave us freedom humanity has used our freedom for good and for ill. I imagine God cheering the work of Rachel Carson Aldo Leopold Bob Bullard and James Hansen all early environmentalists and climate scientists, but in the late 1970s and early 1980s when Exxon and other fossil fuel companies launched their science denial campaigns investing hundreds of millions of dollars to intentionally undermine the public's trust in climate scientists God's heart began to break.

God has been cheering the scientists and the engineers who have persistent grounded in the truth of science and driven by the reality of the climate emergency. They have now provided all the solutions humanity needs to return to a sustainable way of living. But God's heart breaks when government and corporate leaders joined forces to assure huge ongoing profits for fossil fuel stock shareholder. If humanity is to address the climate emergency we have created religious leaders and congregations will need to embrace what for many will be a new understanding of and practice of hope, we must embrace hope as engagement and exercise hope as if it were a muscle.

If you want to reference on that it's young credit tune verb talks about hope as a muscle hope is a discipline. It has nothing to do with optimism. Hope is a commitment to the future manifest as action. A centerpiece of every religious practice and perspective is gratitude. Once we imagine a higher power we realize that life itself is a blessing. A gift.

We realized that the had nothing to do with creating life, nor did we play a role in bringing ourselves into existence and so gratitude is born.

Well, it's time to connect gratitude to action. It's time for religious leaders and people of faith, the world over for recognize that whatever you may be grateful for that blessing is now threatened. Since the degradation of life on Earth is now pronounced and accelerating a grateful heart is not enough. Because soon that blessing that aspect of nature, for which you are grateful soon it will vanish and so faith leaders and communities need to express gratitude by taking action by engaging with Jewish leaders call for tikkun olam which means repair of the world.

Here are a few of the actions we can take actions I believe every congregation can and must take need to make our houses of worship safe enough and relevant enough so that we can do or things quite explicitly first Virgie need to preach about the climate emergency and on the intersectionality of racial economic and climate justice, we need to preach, as if life depended on it because it does

**Second, we need to hear each other's testimony.** Everywhere I speak and every congregation, I urge them to set aside one or two minutes in every worship service to have a member of the church bear witness as to how they have changed their life or their life direction in order to respond to the climate emergency

**Third, we need to process our grief.** Only then can we recognize that the existential dread we experience can serve as a precondition of hope.

**And fourth congregation by congregation, we need to become more resilient.** Now another action people of faith is to roll up our sleeves and resist the building of new fossil fuel infrastructure. This was one of the points of 2017 resolution passed by the National Senate of the United Church of Christ, which I drafted and championed and 96% of our national representatives voted in favor of resisting all new fossil fuel infrastructure.

Most of you are in Massachusetts, and I'm sure you're aware that your attorney general. About five years ago released the report that no new fossil fuel infrastructure is needed for Massachusetts for the next 20 years. So, why are we building the Weymouth compressor. Okay. I could go on and on, on that one. But I'll leave it at that.

Maybe we can **engage in conversation on that a third action for people of faith** is to join as we stop the money pipeline, as Bill McKibben says money is the oxygen on which the fire of the climate crisis burns. In the eight years since the movement to divest from fossil fuel companies was launched portfolios worth over $14 trillion that's trillion with a tea. They have heard of fossil fuel stocks any congregation with an endowment to divest of their fossil fuel stock holdings and any individuals and congregations who do so should share that information with

Others in their congregation and all of us can join the movement to make JPMorgan Chase Wells Fargo and other major banks stop lending money to fossil fuel companies so that they can wreck our common home to learn more about this initiative, visit the website (www.stopthemoneypipeline.org

**And here's a final action**. We are four weeks from what many consider to be the most important election in American history. There can be no doubt that this election involves fundamental moral choice faith leaders cannot remain silent congregations must not stand idly by. The stakes for all of God's creation are huge. Each of us must answer the call together congregation by congregation and as people of faith United across denominational and across interfaith boundaries, we must lift our voices. If we join with others so that our lives and our life together is marked by these actions, our children.

And, our grandchildren will know us not only by our love. As the song goes. But by our commitment to repair the world and our witness to the new story. God is calling us to live out. Thank you.

**Fr. Tom Ryan, C.S.P.**

**Fratelli Tutti – Fraternity and Social Friendship**

Exerpts from Pope Francis’ New Encyclical

As you may have seen in the newspaper last weekend, Pope Francis released a rich reflection on our solidarity with one another, titled in Italian *Fratelli Tutti* –brothers and sisters all. I would like to share with you some excerpts from it that respond to several of the questions that have been at the heart of Co-operative Metropolitan Ministry’s 6 week series.

*Question 1. How can we connect more with our spirituality to overcome this growing crisis of the current pandemic and climate change?*

6. Pope Francis writes: I offer this social Encyclical in the hope that in the face of present-day attempts to eliminate or ignore others, we may prove capable of responding with a new vision of fraternity, sorority, and social friendship that will not remain at the level of words. Although I have written it from the Christian convictions that inspire and sustain me, I have sought to make this reflection an invitation to dialogue among all people of faith and good will.(6)

8. It is my desire that, in this our time, by acknowledging the dignity of each human person, we can contribute to the rebirth of a universal aspiration to solidarity with one another. Fraternity and sorority between all men and women. “We need a community that supports and helps us, in which we can help one another to keep looking ahead. . . . Let us dream, then, as a single human family, as fellow travelers sharing the same flesh, as children of the same earth which is our common home, each of us bringing the richness of his or her beliefs and convictions, each of us with his or her own voice, brothers and sisters all. (8)

16. Amid the fray of conflicting interests, where victory consists in eliminating one’s opponents, how is it possible to raise our sights to recognize our neighbours or to help those who have fallen along the way? A plan that would set great goals for the development of our entire human family nowadays sounds like madness. We are growing ever more distant from one another, while the slow and demanding march towards an increasingly united and just world is suffering a new and dramatic setback.

17. To care for the world in which we live means to care for ourselves. Yet we need to think of ourselves more and more as a single family dwelling in a common home. Such care does not interest those economic powers that demand quick profits. Often the voices raised in defence of the environment are silenced or ridiculed, using apparently reasonable arguments that are merely a screen for special interests. In this shallow, short-sighted culture that we have created, bereft of a shared vision, “it is foreseeable that, once certain resources have been depleted, the scene will be set for new wars, albeit under the guise of noble claim.

22. In today’s world, many forms of injustice persist, fed by reductive anthropological visions and by a profit-based economic model that does not hesitate to exploit, discard and even kill human beings. While one part of humanity lives in opulence, another part sees its own dignity denied, scorned or trampled upon, and its fundamental rights discarded or violated”. What does this tell us about the equality of rights grounded in innate human dignity?

As a result, new walls are erected for self-preservation, the outside world ceases to exist and leaves only “my” world, to the point that others, no longer considered human beings possessed of an inalienable dignity, become only “them”. Once more, we encounter “the temptation to build a culture of walls, to raise walls, walls in the heart, walls on the land, in order to prevent this encounter with other cultures, with other people. And those who raise walls will end up as slaves within the very walls they have built. They are left without horizons, for they lack this interchange with others”[27]

*Question 2- What Is The Role of Spirituality and Religion with respect to Sustainability?*

33. A worldwide tragedy like the Covid-19 pandemic momentarily revived the sense that we are a global community, all in the same boat, where one person’s problems are the problems of all. Once more we realized that no one is saved alone; we can only be saved together. the brutal and unforeseen blow of this uncontrolled pandemic forced us to recover our concern for human beings, for everyone, rather than for the benefit of a few.

Today we can recognize that . . . The pain, uncertainty and fear, and the realization of our own limitations, brought on by the pandemic have only made it all the more urgent that we rethink our styles of life, our relationships, the organization of our societies and, above all, the meaning of our existence.

Once this health crisis passes, our worst response would be to plunge even more deeply into feverish consumerism and new forms of egotistic self-preservation. God willing, after all this, we will think no longer in terms of “them” and “those”, but only “us”. If only this may prove not to be just another tragedy of history from which we learned nothing. If only we might keep in mind all those elderly persons who died for lack of respirators, partly as a result of the dismantling, year after year, of healthcare systems. If only this immense sorrow may not prove useless, but enable us to take a step forward towards a new style of life. If only we might rediscover once for all that we need one another, and that in this way our human family can experience a rebirth, with all its faces, all its hands and all its voices, beyond the walls that we have erected.

39. Then too, “in some host countries, migration causes fear and alarm, often fomented and exploited for political purposes. This can lead to a xenophobic mentality, as people close in on themselves, and it needs to be addressed decisively”. Migrants are not seen as entitled like others to participate in the life of society, and it is forgotten that they possess the inalienable dignity of each human person regardless of origin, race or religion, and the supreme law of fraternal love.

Question 3- *What is the Role of People of Faith?*

54. The recent pandemic enabled us to recognize and appreciate once more all those around us who, in the midst of fear, responded by putting their lives on the line. We began to realize that our lives are interwoven with and sustained by ordinary people valiantly shaping the decisive events of our shared history: doctors, nurses, pharmacists, storekeepers and supermarket workers, cleaning personnel, caretakers, transport workers, men and women working to provide essential services and public safety, volunteers, priests and religious… they understood that no one is saved alone.

118. The world exists for everyone, because all of us were born with the same dignity. Differences of colour, religion, talent, place of birth or residence, and so many others, cannot be used to justify the privileges of some over the rights of all. As a community, we have an obligation to ensure that every person lives with dignity and has sufficient opportunities for his or her integral development.

125. . . . If every human being possesses an inalienable dignity, if all people are my brothers and sisters, and if the world truly belongs to everyone, then it matters little whether my neighbour was born in my country or elsewhere. My own country also shares responsibility for his or her development, although it can fulfill that responsibility in a variety of ways. It can offer a generous welcome to those in urgent need, or work to improve living conditions in their native lands by refusing to exploit those countries or to drain them of natural resources, backing corrupt systems that hinder the dignified development of their peoples.

127. if we accept the great principle that there are rights born of our inalienable human dignity, we can rise to the challenge of envisaging a new humanity. We can aspire to a world that provides land, housing and work for all. For a real and lasting peace will only be possible “on the basis of a global ethic of solidarity and cooperation in the service of a future shaped by interdependence and shared responsibility in the whole human family”

*Again: What is the Role of People of Faith?*

271. The different religions, based on their respect for each human person as a creature called to be a child of God, contribute significantly to building fraternity and defending justice in society. Dialogue between the followers of different religions does not take place simply for the sake of diplomacy, consideration or tolerance. In the words of the Bishops of India, “the goal of dialogue is to establish friendship, peace and harmony, and to share spiritual and moral values and experiences in a spirit of truth and love”

274. From our faith experience and from the wisdom accumulated over centuries, but also from lessons learned from our many weaknesses and failures, we, the believers of the different religions, know that our witness to God benefits our societies. The effort to seek God with a sincere heart, provided it is never sullied by ideological or self-serving aims, helps us recognize one another as travelling companions, truly brothers and sisters.