

Last night I had a dream. (But not a visionary one like Dr. King's!) I was in seminary, and one of the students had been murdered. Many of us were involved in trying to dispose of the body quietly. As the dream progressed I became more and more worried about this and aware that I and others might go to prison. By the end of the dream I had decided that I needed to tell the authorities even though it would probably end my career and that of several other people. You can imagine my relief when I woke up.

Over the Season of Creation, we have been talking about the planet which necessarily leads us to consider global warming. For many of us it is like an unpleasant dream which we wish we could wake up from. But in a way it's a good thing it isn't a dream because in a dream we have little ability to influence anything; it's like acting in a story someone else wrote. In the waking world we do have power to do something different. We have the power to bring healing to the earth.

It looks like a lost cause, which is why many of us would prefer to behave like it's just a bad dream. But it isn't. Our hope is expressed in the first reading this morning, the reading from St John's great vision in which he sees the City of God, lit not by the sun but by the light of God. Coming from the throne of God is a great river of life which waters the tree of life that provides a different fruit each month and whose leaves are for the healing of the nations.

In Christ there is healing.

Healing does not necessarily mean going back to the way things were. Healing the earth does not mean that trees which have fallen will one day rise again, but it does mean that as they become nursery beds for new seedlings, those seedlings will have a better chance of growing up into mature trees.

Like the earth, our bodies are self-regulating systems. We cannot heal ourselves but we can provide the best possible environment for our body to heal, whether that's through diet, rest, exercise, medication or surgery. We cannot heal the planet directly but we can do everything possible to provide her with the best circumstances in which she can find healing for herself, and come to a new stability.

Last week, I talked about the sky and the atmosphere and the moral and faith imperative to stop putting carbon into the atmosphere. That's a bit like saying we need to stop smoking. Of course we do. If you smoke, the one most important thing you can do for your health is to stop. It's also the most difficult. In the same way, the most important thing we can do for the health of the planet is to stop putting carbon into the atmosphere. It's also difficult because it requires a change of heart and a radical change of lifestyle.

But stopping smoking doesn't solve every health challenge, and reducing carbon emissions isn't the only thing we can do to create a healthy environment which will foster healing for the planet.

We are part of creation, not separate from it. Everything we do affects everything else. We are participants in the vast web of life. We are inter-related with one another and with the other creatures who live here in intricate and inexplicable ways. Each one of us every day impacts our environment in subtle and not so subtle ways and that makes a difference. The question is, what sort of a difference are you making?

Are you creating a healthy environment? For most of us there will be places where we are and places where we are not. Which leaves room for improvement. The Holy Spirit works in our hearts and minds to show us those places that are unhealthy. In fact, I suspect that each one of us

already knows a change we could make to create a healthier environment for ourselves, our families or our communities.

It might be to take more rest, to buy local food or to start a meditation practice; or it might be to forgive a sibling; or to develop a better relationship with a neighbor.

All of this looks like small potatoes when we look at the national news. But a recent study shows that what is happening in politics is not a good picture of what is happening in the country as a whole. In many, many places, people are working together to bring health and healing to their communities. I think Los Osos is one of those. After the long years of anger and dissension over the sewer project we are now learning to cooperate together in new ways. And St Benedict's is an important part of that new life.

For those of us enrolled in the reign of God, healing comes directly from the throne – directly from the Center which is the heart of God. It is from this source that healing flows to individuals, to communities, to the planet. Love is not just what makes a Subaru, love is what brings healing.

It is because we love that we hurt when we hear of the pain and suffering brought on by the earthquake and tsunami in Indonesia; it is because we love that we hurt when we hear that the orcas are failing to thrive. Paradoxically love brings pain but love also brings healing. It is the river of love that is the river of life on whose banks stand the trees that bring healing.

We participate in the healing flow whenever we choose to tell our truth. We are in an extraordinary time when women are telling publicly the stories that have been hidden or only whispered in therapist's offices. This is an enormous threat to the patriarchal system – there is a reason

that we have kept quiet. As these stories get heard, and also those of the victims of clergy abuse, it brings into the open something which has been kept in the dark and that provides the opportunity for healing.

We participate in the healing flow when we tell our truth, when we forgive those who have hurt us, when we choose to participate and cooperate with others just as when we consciously live lightly on the planet.

Each one of us brings healing as we offer to God the longings of our hearts for healing and as we tend with love and care the little part of the planet we have been given. The small plot of land where we live, our workplace, our family, our relationships, our ministry and the public square –these are all places that we bring healing as we allow that great river of life, of love and of hope to flow through us. From the heart of God to the people, plants and creatures of the planet.