How to Save a Climate? Just Die!

by Dawn M. Nothwehr, O.S.F.

On September 27, 2013 the IPCC\(^1\) released its 5\(^{th}\) Assessment Report (AR5). At the risk of grossly under representing the precision and urgent moral implications of this study that has been 6 years in the making, here are six key points that best highlight the contents of the report:\(^2\)

- Scientists are more certain than ever that humanity is to blame for rising temperatures.
- Concentrations of CO\(_2\) and other greenhouse gases in the atmosphere have increased to levels that are unprecedented in at least 800,000 years.
- We are likely to surpass rises of 2°C by 2100, the threshold of warming that governments have pledged to hold temperatures to, and beyond which dangerous consequences, including drought, floods, and storms, are expected.
- Sea level rises are coming.
- Scientists said claims that the rate of temperature rises in the last 15 years has slowed did not affect the big picture and that temperatures are going up in the long-term.
- The amount of carbon the world can burn without heading for dangerous levels of warming is far less than the amount of fossil fuels left in the ground.

This report largely confirms what major climate change activists have been forewarning. For example, in his 2012 article in *Rolling Stone* magazine, Bill McKibben stated that the fossil fuel industry lists over 2700 GtC as current

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1 The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) was established by the United Nations in 1988 to help the world understand what is happening to the Earth’s climate. It has published four multivolume assessment reports, each composed by three working groups, updating scientific, technical, and socio-economic aspects of climate change. The *Fourth Assessment Report* (2007) was the one that primarily alerted the Church and the world to the serious nature of global warming. The publication schedule for the Fifth Assessment Report (AR5) is: *The Physical Science Basis*, 23-26 September 2013; *Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability*, 25-29 March 2014; *Mitigation of Climate Change*, 7-11 April 2014; and a *Synthesis Report* (SYR), 13 April 2014. The September 2013 volume showed more graphically than ever the need for immediate and drastic changes in CO\(_2\) levels; indeed, the very existence of human beings is at stake. See [http://www.ipcc.ch/](http://www.ipcc.ch/). The Conference of the Parties (COP 19) from November 11-22, 2013, in Warsaw, Poland continued negotiations toward global cooperation in dealing with climate change impacts and containing human contributions to global warming.

assets. This is approximately five times the amount of carbon we can safely burn if we are not to exceed the carbon budget noted in the IPCC report!

The tragic irony is that the IPCC’s report has received little media attention, in large part because it was released in late September, when the US Congress languished in dysfunctional dealing with budgetary matters, forcing a government shutdown. I suggest that there is a moral malaise common to the inability of Congress to communicate and human inaction to control global warming; both crises involve the inability to delay gratification and care for the common good.

Last October, Fareed Zakaria reported the following during his Global Public Square program on CNN:

> China has brought us a new English word: “Airpocalypse.”

The northeastern city of Harbin was paralyzed last week by terrible smog and air pollution. Visibility was down to just a few meters. Highways and schools were closed, the airport was shut down. Pedestrians could barely get around. The images are a vivid reminder of the impacts of industrial growth, especially when powered by dirty fuels like coal, which accelerates not only pollution but also climate change.

The latest report from the United Nation’s scientific panel says it is “extremely likely”—more than a 95 percent probability—that human activity was the dominant cause of the temperature increases of the last few decades.

So, if the science is not really in dispute, why is it so difficult for us to actually do something about it? We need to tell you about one more study. This one is a game ... played with real money.

Six participants get 40 Euros each to invest in a “climate account.” Every round, these players get to pick one of three options—either they put 4 Euros, 2 Euros, or zero money, into the account. The investments are anonymous, but the participants can see the total amount going into the pot.

Here’s the objective. If, at the end of ten rounds, the pot of money grows to 120 Euros—which is about 20 Euros a person—then the team has successfully averted “dangerous climate change”—in other words, it wins the game. Each participant gets a 45 euro prize in addition to the money they each have leftover. But if the pot does NOT grow big enough, the team loses the game, and they don’t get the prize—and remember, this is real money, so the players have a real incentive to win.

The game was played with three different sets of rules. In the first scenario, the 45 euro award would be handed to the participants the next day. Seven out of 10 groups won the game. In Scenario 2, the cash would be paid out seven weeks later. This time, only four of the 11 groups succeeded. In the third, the prize money would go toward planting oak trees, which would sequester carbon, and thus provide the greatest benefit to future generations.

What happened? Zero of 11 groups reached the target.

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3 GtC = gigatons of carbon and giga = $10^9$


The study was published in *Nature Climate Change* this week. The report’s lead author, Jennifer Jacquet of New York University, expanded on the findings when we spoke with her.

First, people instinctively seek instant benefits. They don’t want them later and certainly not when the rewards would be reaped by future generations. Second, it was important that the participants were anonymous. If their contributions were known, they’d likely be shamed into contributing more.

It’s a simple idea, but it highlights why dealing with climate change is hard, and also why many economic reforms are hard. People are very reluctant to accept short term pain for long term gain. To apply that to climate change: what immediate incentive do nations have to say, tax carbon or invest in infrastructure that would make cities more resilient to storms and floods?

No matter what the strategy—adaptation, clean energy, carbon taxes—someone has problems with them and few actually get done. Similarly, look at entitlement or pension reform. These involve specific costs today for broad benefits in the out years. And they’re all very hard.

It wasn’t always thus. The great sociologist Daniel Bell once wrote that the best way to describe the Protestant ethic that produced capitalism and the industrial revolution and the Rise of the West was one phrase, two words—delayed gratification. But there are few Calvinists left today, and the spirit of our age might be better described with one word change—instant gratification.⁶

Zakaria’s report points to something that every Catholic and all people of good will need to take seriously.

A Story

Susan Strauss tells of Gerry, who was walking with a Native American friend during the ruckus of a busy lunch hour in Washington, DC. The traffic—engines roaring, horns honking, and the bustling crowds—made it difficult to hear anything else. In the middle of the traffic, Gerry’s friend stopped and said, ‘Hey, a cricket!’

‘What?’ said Gerry.

‘Yeah, a cricket,’ said his friend. ‘Here, look,’ and he pulled aside some bushes that separated the sidewalk from the government buildings. There in the shade was a cricket chirping away.

‘Wow,’ said Gerry, ‘How did you hear that with all this noise and traffic?’

‘Oh,’ said the Native man. ‘It was the way I was raised . . . what I was taught to listen for. Here, I’ll show you something.’ The Native man reached into his pocket and pulled out a handful of coins—nickels, quarters, dimes—and dropped them on the sidewalk. Everyone who was rushing by stopped—to “listen.”⁷

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Our listening to the drone of the dominant, economistic, Western culture has deafened us to cricket chirps—to say nothing of the cries of our human sisters and brothers across the globe! Continuing to attend to the same old things, in the same old ways will not enable us to adequately and ethically halt global warming! We must learn to value and attend to things differently.  

Lessons from the Leper: Embracing True Sustainability

From Intoxication to Sustainability

In 1987, the U.N.-sponsored Brundtland Commission published *Our Common Future*, in which sustainable development was defined as “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs.” The Commission presumed that “sustainable development” meant raising productivity, accumulation of goods, and technological innovations. But such thinking caused them to fail to address key sources of poverty—the exploitation of workers and the pillaging of nature. Brundtland’s notion of sustainable development is an oxymoron because its real focus was economic growth for its own sake, and its primary goal was profit-making. This thinking has permeated the globalization of world markets through to the present day.

By contrast, sustainability as it is defined in biology and ecology is “the trend of ecosystems toward equilibrium, sustained in the web of interdependencies and complementarities flourishing in ecosystems.” Genuine sustainability requires social and economic structures that support *social justice*—the right relationship between persons, roles, and institutions—and *ecological justice*, which is the right relationship with nature, sufficient access to resources, and the assurance of quality of life.

A renewed vision of community is essential for interdependent sustainability. Such a vision is found in Early Christian sources, utilizing the rich meanings gleaned from the Greek root *oikos*. The habitability of the Earth is the central reality that links “economy, ecology, and ecumenicity.” “Economy, in its Greek root meaning, is the ordering of the household for the sustenance of its members.” The contrast between this Christian understanding of sustainability and that of the Brundtland Commission is remarkable. This contrast is but one indication of how deeply a consumer mentality has permeated all of life in the highly industrialized world.

Sue McGregor explained this reality well: “People behave as they do in a consumer society because they are so indoctrinated into the logic of the market that they cannot ‘see’ anything wrong with what they are doing. Because they do not challenge the market ideology, and what it means to live in a consumer society, they actually contribute to their own oppression….Consumerism is a way to self-development, self-realization, and self-fulfillment. In a consumer society, identity is tied to what she or he consumes.”

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13 Boff, *Cry of the Earth*, 105.
Quantum physicist David Bohm added his voice to those challenging consumerism. He compared our uncritical adherence to growth and treatment of everything other-than-human as mere “natural resources” or “natural capital” to a man in a Sufi story who lost the key to his house: “He was found to be looking under the light. He looked and looked, and he couldn’t find it. Finally, someone asked where he had lost the key. Pointing to another area of his yard, he said, ‘Over there.’ And when asked why he had not looked ‘over there,’ the man responded, ‘Well, it’s dark over there, but there’s light here for me to look.’”¹⁷

Quantum theologian Diarmuid O’Murchu speaks of “cultural intoxication,” or the addiction of the Western World to material acquisition that drowns out an alienation from the life and death realities of the world and thus maintains for it the illusion of power and control.¹⁸ But the raw truth is that this addiction simply signals a desperation and deep denial of its opposite.

Toward Christian Simplicity: Insights from Environmental Educators

Environmental educator, David Selby suggests that we look to “education for contraction” as a systematic and organic way of transforming human living to less exploitative and more harmonious ways of being.¹⁹ He believes that the key to such a shift is ecological awareness, frugal consumption, and personal spiritual growth. As early as 1981, Duane Elgin submitted that, rather than material progress, our goal in life needs to focus on achieving a balance of the material with the spiritual.²⁰ We must stress conservation, need-limit frugality, and living life in cooperation with others. Our personal identity needs to flow from our interpersonal relationships and from living with all other-than-human creatures and earth elements. While each person is uniquely an individual, she or he is ultimately inseparable from the whole of humanity. Rather than viewing the cosmos as a storehouse awaiting looting and exploitation, we must see it as a precious living organism with its own integrity. Our personal behavior needs to include only a sufficient amount of self-sustaining activity to remain healthy, not excessive self-serving activity exclusively focused on maximum material acquisition. We thrive better living in connected communities than as highly mobile autonomous individuals.

I submit that these studies only confirm what St. Francis, Patron of Ecology, knew in his own time, namely, that we live in an interdependent, connected world and that we humans need to care for it in ways that respect the interrelationship of everything. St. Francis’ entire life and ministry stands as the supreme example of Christian simplicity. In light of all of this, we need to shift our course—and act now!

Francis of Assisi—Patron of Ecology and Exemplar of Ecoconversion

In a manner of speaking, lepers and leprosy presented a problem as complex and daunting for public health in the thirteenth century as climate change presents to us today. But lepers and leprosy were not properly understood—even by experts. Therefore, lepers and their illness were feared, outcast, and denied their full dignity as human persons. Anxiety-based hostile behavior was the common practice of “Christians” who effectively denied the existence of lepers as human persons (like themselves). It was through St. Francis’ actual encounter and embrace of a leper that he found his salvation and his true Christian identity. I believe that we are being called to make a similar embrace today. Just as through embracing the leper Francis learned the truth about that person, which enabled

him to reverence the dignity of lepers and love them into life, so too do we need to embrace the truth concerning our suffering planet Earth so that we can radically change our treatment of God’s creation. We must stop abusing the delicate atmosphere and all the complex earth systems that are damaged when we continue to pour greenhouse gasses (GHGs) into them with impunity. Just as Francis’ entire life was changed by his embrace of the leper, so too must our lives be converted. Our conversion needs to be internal and spiritual, shifting our dispositions and attitudes, as well as external and moral, changing our behaviors and practices in daily life. We already know what needs to change. The question is: When will you and I make this embrace?

Embracing the leper was a life-changing move for St. Francis. In the moment of that embrace, many things shifted in his life and person. In a small but vitally healthy way, at that moment a part of him died. It was that part that clung to the status quo of his former life as a rather spoiled, upwardly mobile son of one of the newly wealthy mercantile class of his day. There in his embrace of the leper, he began to see what the source of wealth in life is truly, namely, the mercy of God and the healing such love of God and neighbor can bring into the world. St. Francis was able to care deeply for creation because he saw through each creature the one common Source of Life. His care for the poor was motivated by his deep desire to “follow in the footsteps of the Poor Christ,” who had lived and died for the love of the poor—those overcome by sin, personal weaknesses, or economic destitution.

Today we are called to a similar kind of dying and conversion. We in the “rich minority world” must admit to the devastation that results from our drive to material wealth and that continues to inflict disproportionate suffering on the poor. Particularly, the “American Dream” has become the “Global Nightmare,” in that the toxins spewed from our cars, homes, and industries and our raping of ecosystems, destroying their capacity to function to absorb and filter greenhouse gasses, have caused atmospheric changes that bring destruction and death far from our shores. We must acknowledge that the denial of our complicity often drives us into even deeper delusional negation of our responsibility and to inflicting even more destruction. Now is the time to let go of our false securities and allow God’s mercy to touch and heal us! Quantum theologian O’Murchu says it well: “We are compelled to assert what seems initially to be an outrageous claim: a radically new future demands the destruction and death of the old reality. It is from dying seeds that new life sprouts forth. Destruction becomes a precondition for resurrection: denigration undergirds regeneration.”

Confronting Spiritual Malaise

Many experts in science and religion have long held that the environmental crisis that now imminently threatens human extinction is the result of the unfettered materialism and consumerism that has plagued the industrialized world, both of which have roots in a deep spiritual malaise. Conveniences, unspeakable variety, and abundance overshadow, blind, satiate, and pacify us against the deeper longings of the human spirit. Then, in our self-inflicted ignorance, we nonsensically send ourselves into yet one more cycle of denial and consumption that not only aggravates our threatened condition but also that of the poor. What is needed is a renewed moral and spiritual formation concerning limits, the acceptance of death as part of life, and a vision of the common good.

Moral Formation and Death Acceptance: Francis of Assisi as Model

One model of conversion worthy of our attention is St. Francis of Assisi, the Patron Saint of Ecology. To know the life of St. Francis is to see that he, like us, often wrestled with his inner angels and demons. He had his moments of doubt, of being overwhelmed and discouraged (Pathos). Yet, Francis modeled what Freud called the true dynamic

of life—“desire” or Eros (love). Eros is the dynamic force of life within us that calls out to life and invites us to live forever. This is the drive to love’s totality. Brazilian theologian Leonardo Boff tells us, “By their very nature, Eros and Pathos—because they constitute the basic energy of human life—expand in all directions. Because of this, we must always recognize that, as a force, they lend themselves as much to constructive, as well as to destructive purposes.”

We can see this reality in the current threat of global warming. We have known for over thirty years that consumerism drives massive uncontrolled pollution of GHGs into the atmosphere, which exacerbates climate change. Yet most have done precious little to change our ways!

Fortunately, the human capacity for reasoning and meaning-making (Logos) allows us to direct our God-given energies toward the good. In St. Francis’ case, we see this (Logos) in action in his gentleness, compassion, and care for all of creation, all of which characterized his holiness. Notably, Francis did not deny or ignore his demons; he embraced them. As Boff puts it, “The accepted negativity loses its virulence and behaves like a house pet.”

Francis’ capacity to embrace the negativity in his life was also his source of great joy.

Deep Joy and the Mercy of God

Today what our Western industrialized culture has lost track of is that genuine quality of joy. In our misguided spiritual striving, we try to create our security, happiness, and pleasure by buying and consuming ever more stuff or material things, which in turn drives more pollution. Yet just as the black text on a white page would be impossible to read without the black/white contrast, so too would genuine joy be unknowable without the contrast of its opposite—disciplined striving, sadness, grief, sorrow, and gloom. We see that St. Francis allowed himself to know and experience such things. Francis chose to confront, embrace, and integrate negative experiences as part of life. Like Jesus before him, Francis took his hard, overwhelming, or painful experiences to God in prayer and to his brothers in community. He spent time reflecting on what he might learn from the limits he faced. Indeed, the key to St. Francis’ joy was his profound experience of the mercy of God—acceptance, support, and enrichment.

And as we see in the accounts of the suffering and death of St. Francis, when his ultimate limits were reached, he surrounded himself with the love and care of brothers and sisters who accompanied him with compassionate care.

If we are to reach human maturity, each of us needs to accept the reality that there is a certain amount of complexity, suffering, misunderstanding, and absurdity that is inherent in human life, and we will never have control over it. In our human reality there are definite limits to our drive to totality (Eros). In daily activity we are also frequently confronted with “small deaths”—frustrated desire, the need to deny ourselves something, the obligation to accept something else, or facing a situation we must overcome. “A sign of human and religious maturity is to integrate the trauma of death in the context of life. Then death is dethroned from its status as lord of life and ultimate reality. Eros triumphs over Thanatos and desire wins the game. But there is a price to pay for this immortality: the acceptance of death, the frustrating of empirical and superficial desire that demands eternal life, is the condition by which desire achieves its truth of living forever, in absolute triumph. We find this process of acceptance of death, in a marvelous manner, in the life of St. Francis.”

Two dimensions illuminate St. Francis’ reconciliation with death: (1) acceptance of death as part of life and (2) his identification with the Source of Life.

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24 Boff, St. Francis: A Model for Human Liberation, 133.
27 Boff, St. Francis: A Model for Human Liberation, 146.
Acceptance of Death as Part of Life

When we look at creation from an evolutionary point of view, we readily see that the structure of creation includes (and indeed requires) death and mortality because God made it so. Though we rarely allow ourselves to think this thought, from the moment we are born, we begin to die! Contrary to popular understanding, mortality did not arise with sin. As Boff rightly points out, from a Christian viewpoint, within the mortality of life, humans walk toward eternal life. What sin introduced to humankind was “the closing off of understanding, shuttering off a vision of mortal life, making life and death enemies.” Now, death became the negation of life. Humanity clung to “life” so it could escape death. Frequently, fear of death blossoms and desperation rises at the first hint of death’s proximity. Key to accepting death is how we deal with its signs—e.g. limitations, illness, ignorance, corporal or spiritual weakness, or loss of power, prestige, and status.

Identification with the Source of Life

Francis’ genuine joy developed over the course of his lifetime. His joy had a deep source. His link with life, nature, and all people was so radical that it reached the root of what gives life to all, extending to the Source from which comes all that exists and all that moves, God who is loving, just, and merciful. Gabriel Marcel characterized such a relationship thusly: “If you love me, I know it, I will never die.” Can we Christians come to such a place on our spiritual journey that we can genuinely entrust our lives to our loving, merciful God in this way? Did Christ not promise us the constant sustaining presence of the Life-giving and Communion-building Holy Spirit? How much more simple could life be if our focus moved from our own self-preservation to the common good of the planet and care for our sisters and brothers—human and other-kind? Those who come to integrate death with life in this way certainly achieve their fulfillment in the Reign of God. Nothing can threaten them anymore because they have no enemies. Our true joy is in sustaining loving relationships with God, our neighbors—human and other-kind—ourselves, and the cosmos.

As we see in his Canticle of the Creatures, for Francis, death became a sister—a fellow creature, named in the life-giving female gender. She is the necessary transitus toward a new and definitive birth. A shift to this stance of accepting death as part of life was a profound conversion for Francis, and indeed that stance can be ours, as well. In our time, we are being called to a similar kind of conversion. Such change can be painful—as is all birth—but it makes possible a new advent with life-now with God, in a different way.

Called to Be and to Do New Things

Based on solid scientific evidence, many national and regional conferences of Catholic bishops, including the US council, have promoted prudent action to halt global warming that places the needs of the poor and vulnerable at the center of climate legislation. Such action is to be guided by their 2001 statement, Global Climate Change: A Plea for Dialogue, Prudence, and the Common Good, and other principles of Catholic Social Teaching. In a February 2013 letter to Congress, the USCCB asked the US Congress and the federal government to consider the following principles when shaping policies and measures to address climate change:

- Prudence requires us to act to protect the common good by addressing climate change at home and abroad.

28 Evolutionary science shows us that some species reach their limits and then simply become extinct, while others adapt and exist for many more generations.
29 Boff, St. Francis: A Model for Human Liberation, 151.
• The consequences of climate change will be borne by the world’s most vulnerable people and inaction will worsen their suffering.

• Policies addressing global climate change should enhance rather than diminish the economic situation of people in poverty.

• Policies should create new resources to assist poor and adversely affected communities to adapt and respond to the effects of global climate change in the U.S. and in vulnerable developing countries.

• Policies to address climate change should include measures to protect poor and vulnerable communities from the health impacts of climate change, including increased exposure to climate-sensitive diseases, heat waves and diminished air quality.

• Participation by local affected communities in shaping policy responses to address climate change and programs for adapting to climate change is essential.

• Technology should be made available to people in the most vulnerable developing countries to help them adapt to the effects of climate change (adaptation) and reduce their greenhouse gas emissions (mitigation).31

The USCCB as a key sponsor of the Catholic Climate Covenant organization stresses actions we can take to support making their position concrete in public policies.32 A priority for Catholics and people of good will must be to press members of Congress to exert greater US leadership to address climate change. The strong Catholic intellectual tradition enables us to see that the science is clear and the hard evidence is true. Human-caused global warming is threatening life on our planet—even to the point of the demise of its major life-giving systems. We dare not take a business as usual attitude to our bishop’s call for action.

We are blessed to live in a nation where the public has an enormous amount of power when it makes its voice heard en masse. For example, in 2009, on Saturday, March 14, it was reported that AIG awarded $165 million in bonuses to its employees—including those who had caused the near collapse of the finance system.33 Outraged citizens flooded Congress with phone calls, e-mails, faxes, and Tweets demanding action against that injustice. By March 17th Congressional leaders had a plan to get the bonus money returned to the US Treasury, and on March 19th the House overwhelmingly voted a 90 percent tax on AIG’s bonuses and any others like them. Dear brothers and sisters—the damage of global warming is irreversible! Should we not be at least equally outraged? Should we not be demanding an equally rapid and thorough response from ourselves, our industries, our institutions, and our governments?


Significantly, since Vatican II every pope—Paul VI, John Paul I, John Paul II, Benedict XVI, and now Francis—has been consistent in their call to Catholics and to all people of good will to protect the environment and act to halt human-induced global warming. In his inaugural homily on March 19, 2013, Pope Francis declared, “Let us be ‘protectors’ of creation, protectors of God’s plan inscribed in nature, protectors of one another and of the environment. Let us not allow omens of destruction and death to accompany the advance of this world!”

In a most encouraging development, while visiting Australia in fall 2013, Cardinal Oscar Rodriguez de Maradiaga confirmed that Pope Francis is planning a document on the environment. The Cardinal is chair of the group of eight cardinals chosen by Francis to advise him and is a strong proponent of action on climate change. As we have seen, the Pope has proven himself an able and direct communicator. A strong and clear statement from Francis on climate change will be heard all around the world and will be difficult for political leaders to ignore. Pope Francis has asked Leonardo Boff to send him his writings on eco-theology as part of his preparation. This is surely a hopeful sign of new life coming from one who, like his namesake, has embraced the leper among us.

When summarizing complex matters, poetry often captures the point best. Thus, in conclusion:

SEARCH. . . By Eileen Haugh, O.S.F.

Many Frail people we are,
vulnerable,
needing to reinvent the bluegreen relationship,
the human/earth, we've desecrated.

All of us are stricken
with a sickness incurable,
We raise up walls, hire dogs
to keep us safe (or am I the enemy)?

All of me is stricken
with a sickness incurable
because I refuse to divide what I have.

The rims of my house are broken,
the ground of my farm infected;
I can't make space by stretching a boundary.

There's forgiveness needed--
not sure where it begins--
but one of us has to start.

Maybe we'll know it when water is gone,
our planet a quilt of dry patches--
and anyone who still remembers wet
is pretty old. Tie that all into peace:
the need for us to talk, to listen, to accept,
to understand. That's it. That's the word.

Take this mosaic of broken peace,
give it burial in a green shroud,
under a mountaintop removed to a valley.

As icebergs turn to water, raw hunger begins,
people who know how to starve
will have it easier; for us, it will be hard

because we've never missed a meal
and don't think we'll have the courage to start now.
Our stash of snacks will be long gone.

I'm afraid of this global climate change.
A coward, I want to hide in yesterday.
Let's have things the way they used to be,
Enemies over there somewhere,
beyond enough so I'll never see them;
yes, let's go back to then.
I know about beauty: about northern lights,
babies, ancient wrinkles, soulmates,
English apple orchards in the spring, in the spring

And snow, whitely untouched, untracked,
music to fill the night's vast cavern
and silence to swallow up the soul.
children singing bright colors,
faithfulness, and rain. I can't name them all--
but living them is throwing off cowardice.

Peace is a mirage some say;
that's because it has to start with us.
We make the first move.
If the world is a vast pothole
that swallows the good, is it my fault?
As earth-voice says,