

Opinion

Judy Fitzgerald: We should heed counsel of the pope

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A little over 30 years ago, I received one of the greatest gifts life has to offer; I became a mother of a beautiful baby girl, and 2½ years later we were given a beautiful baby boy.

One evening, in a rare moment of relaxation, I picked up a National Geographic that had an article about climate change. I had never heard of it and was in disbelief of what I read, but I couldn't put it down because the horror that was being presented was coming from a reliable source. But, no, they must have it wrong; why hadn't I heard about this before, surely it would be in every headline if it were true.

It haunted me for weeks, looking into my babies' bright faces,, not allowing it to fully penetrate my psyche. As time went by, I began to see articles by scientists that said the theories about climate change had been mistaken. I was only too happy to believe them and not look any further. I think we all know by now, National Geographic was right – climate change is happening, but the hopeful part is that the causes are manmade. It has become clear the rise in the earth's temperature is primarily due to the use of fossil fuels and there are clean alternatives.

Over the years, I have cycled in and out of denial, sometimes telling myself that surely, people, our governments, our leaders will do something to stop this rise in the earth's temperature.

The effects are already causing catastrophic events for many people all over the world, but things don't seem too bad here. Yes, there is the drought in California, floods and tornadoes in the south, the storm that wiped out part of New York, etc., but they tell us the economy is getting better, at least for a small percentage of us, and the stock market is reaping benefits for the corporations.

However, the insatiable lust for fossil fuels has increased at an unbelievable pace and piles of toxic waste are building everywhere, above and below ground. Now 99 percent of the scientists are saying that climate change is underway at a much more rapid pace than predicted. It is hard to keep telling myself that it will all be OK.

And once again I am blessed, with a beautiful baby grandson with all the hope and joy that brings. It just can't be true, there is too much at stake. It's too big for me to handle.

But now comes a clarion call from Pope Francis in a letter written to "every person on the planet." He calls for "a bold cultural revolution."

He shows how inseparable the bond is between concern for nature, justice for the poor, commitment to society and interior peace. He calls for "a new dialogue and honest debate about our common home."

And he is not alone. The leader of the Eastern Orthodox Church as well as a group of Dharma teachers from Africa, Europe, Asia, Canada and the United States have issued a statement describing core Buddhist insights into the root causes of the climate crisis. Many, many others all over the world are sounding the alarm. It is time to face reality we would all rather deny.

Recently I was pondering what to give my beautiful grandson for an important occasion in his young life and I found the Lorax. Wise Dr. Seuss gives us words to live by:

"Unless someone like you cares a whole awful lot, Nothing is going to get better. It's not."

