News
EarthBeat



Screengrab from July 9 NCR Summer Series session with staff writer Brian Roewe



by Bill Mitchell

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Ask a journalist for some words to live by, and you'll often hear: "If your mother says she loves you, check it out."

It's a good reminder of the importance of assuming nothing, and one that our mothers would surely understand.

But my favorite mini guide to journalism comes from Dan Gillmor, a reporter I worked with years ago at the Detroit Free Press: "My readers know more than I do."

It's an observation that Gillmor embedded in his 2006 book assessing the state of journalism in the digital era, "We the Media," about midway through his introduction:

> We will learn we are part of something new, that our readers/listeners/viewers are becoming part of the process. I take it for granted, for example, that my readers know more than I do—and this is a liberating, not threatening, fact of journalistic life. Every reporter on every beat should embrace this. We will use the tools of grassroots journalism or be consigned to history. Our core values, including accuracy and fairness, will remain important, and we'll still be gatekeepers in some ways, but our ability to shape larger conversations—and to provide context—will be at least as important as our ability to gather facts and report them.

I thought of Gillmor's insight Thursday afternoon while participating in the latest of NCR's Summer Series of member discussions on Zoom. Staff writer Brian Roewe, who has been covering environmental issues for NCR since 2011, provided an update on the fifth anniversary of *Laudato Si*' and responded to questions from some of the 100 or so members of NCR Forward assembled for the event. The group

included people from 38 states as well as Canada, Haiti, Ireland and England.



Staff writer Brian Roewe was the featured speaker for a discussion Laudato Si', part of NCR Forward's Summer Series.

Those of you who have been using various video conferencing apps for work or family gatherings are familiar with the dual-track set-up. A click of the mouse brings you back and forth between watching and listening to the speaker and glancing at comments in the chat room. Unless, on the chance you've mastered multi-tasking, you choose to do both at the same time!

Since you can watch a recording of what Brian had to say, I'll focus here on some of what went on in the chatroom. Along with questions for Brian, many of the participants chimed in with their own observations, sometimes combining an observation with a question.

From Dr. Sylvia Hood Washington: "Environmental racism and climate change are inextricably tied."

Dr. Jerlyn Felton: "The pandemic has demonstrated that a change in our 'normal activities' has a tremendous effect positive or negative on the global environment.

What can the U.S. church do to ensure that we move forward to develop a new normal that is more environmentally responsible?"

Richard Sloan: "...Laudato Si' isn't a document -- It's a program!"

Tommy Sullivan: "Do you get the sense that the clergy are more inclined to make folks feel uncomfortable on the issues of abortion/birth control/gay marriage? But then on the issues of environmental/racial justice (they) prefer to dance around the issue, be less confrontational, or release a weak statement?"

Katie Hirschboeck offered an idea for NCR reporting: "A central message in Laudato Si' is that 'everything is connected.' The church's powerful teaching on the consistent ethic of life is an ideal way to illustrate this interconnectedness – including connecting to climate change and ecology. How about NCR doing a series that ties all this together?"

Near the end of the session, Kevin Cawley typed in a quote from the introduction of Thomas Berry's "The Dream of the Earth":

> The time has come to lower our voices, to cease imposing our mechanistic patterns on the biological processes of the earth, to resist the impulse to control, to command, to force, to oppress, and to begin quite humbly to follow the guidance of the larger community on which all life depends.

We know you know more than we do about all kinds of things. To share some of that knowledge with us, we hope you'll join us for some upcoming gatherings like yesterday's:

- July 23: The Inspiration I've Found When On the Road with Global Sisters Report (Staff Writer Soli Salgado)
- August 13: Pope Francis after Seven Years (Vatican Correspondent/International News Editor Joshua McElwee)
- August 27: The Catholic Vote: Is it Still Decisive? (Political Columnist Michael Sean Winters)

To take part in these events, please consider becoming a member of NCR Forward for as little as $5 per month.

Here's what's new on EarthBeat this week:

- In a new Burning Question, staff writer Jesse Remedios examines the implications for environmental justice in the climate package advanced by Congressional Democrats.
- Through our partnership with the Covering Climate Now coalition, we're able to bring you this interview with a Ugandan activist who declares: "We are a climate generation and this is our fight."
- Looking ahead to November, Jeremy Deaton reports: "Latino voters are worred about climate change. They could swing the election."
- Marian Ronan reviews a new book that interweaves eucharistic practice with social, economic and ecological realities.
- Emily McFarlan Miller of Religion News Service provides an update on a court ruling that has, at least temporarily, shut down the Dakota Access pipeline.

Here's some of what else is new this week in climate news:

- Bishop John Arnold, the lead bishop on environmental issues for the Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales, kicked off the second annual London Climate Action Week with a call to make climate change a focus of economic recovery from the pandemic.
- Yale Climate Connections reports on "7 climate-conscious citizen science projects to participate in this summer and fall."
- Grist digs into the climate plan assembled by backers of former presidential candidate Bernie Sanders and the campaign of former Vice President Joe Biden.
- The New York Times examines the impact of climate change on Japan's aging populace.

Upcoming Event:

A series of webinars beginning Monday July 13 focused on "Keeping Faith in Climate" by the Common Home, Common Ground Webinar series. Includes presentations by representatives of the Christian environmental organization, A Rocha UK, The Bhumi Project, which relies on Hindu wisdom to address climate issues, and Green Muslims, a U.S.-based group working to connect the American Muslim community with climate action.

Why not expand your audience for your next climate-related event? You can post your event – no charge – here.

Closing beat:

A nice feature of our Summer Series events is an invitation to the speaker to select an opening and closing prayer for the event. Engagement editor Brittany Wilmes, who moderated yesterday's session, read the following prayer from *Laudato Si*' suggested by Brian Roewe:

A Prayer for Our Earth

All-powerful God, you are present in the whole universe

and in the smallest of your creatures.

You embrace with your tenderness all that exists.

Pour out upon us the power of your love,

that we may protect life and beauty.

Fill us with peace,

that we may live as brothers and sisters, harming no one.

O God of the poor, help us to rescue the abandoned and forgotten of this earth,

so precious in your eyes.

Bring healing to our lives,

that we may protect the world and not prey on it,

that we may sow beauty, not pollution and destruction.

Touch the hearts of those who look only for gain at the expense of the poor and the

earth.

Teach us to discover the worth of each thing,

to be filled with awe and contemplation,

to recognize that we are profoundly united with every creature

as we journey towards your infinite light.

We thank you for being with us each day.

Encourage us, we pray, in our struggle for justice, love and peace.

Amen.

Thanks for reading.

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