

# A PRAYER FOR HELP

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I send this as a prayer for help -- to all the people of the world whose lives, whose culture, and whose dreams have not yet been poisoned with the plague of greed, growth, and violence which underlies today's global culture.

We need fundamental change - *now* - in our values, in our actions, and in our dreams. We need your help and everyone's help achieving that change. We need the strength and rightness of nurturing values underlying our lives to strengthen us against the diseases of the spirit that lead us to drug and alcohol abuse, rape, child abuse, torture, obesity, and impotence in our lives. We need the power and beauty of open community to restore reward, joy, and intimate interaction to our lives. We need the wholeness of being an integral and contributing part of Creation to restore meaning and purpose to our lives. We need a future worth living for.

We need this now, because the values of greed, growth and violence are destroying us - as individuals and as a community, and both from the inside and from without. Those values are giving our children a world without a future - a world of hopelessness and ever-diminishing prospects. Poverty-level jobs with no meaningful rewards. Economic and political powerlessness. Media that bombard them with messages of inadequacy. Ineffective school systems that are being economically strip-mined. Non-functional families. Minds ravaged by fetal alcohol and drug damage. Declining incomes, exhausted resources, environmental damage. Lives void of myths, world-views, dreams, ritual, and roles that nurture and focus our lives.

Our lives and fates are today more than ever intertwined - with each other and with all Creation. The fate of growth societies and stable societies hang together now in the same balance. There is no longer a separation between those with and without material wealth; those with and without spiritual power, those with and those lacking wisdom. The magnitude and rate of growth of humanity's existence on this planet overwhelms all else.

Together, we now consume more than half of all net photosynthesis - of all life created on our planet. And

this consumption has been doubling every twenty-five years.

This is no longer possible. Another doubling cannot occur. Only twenty-five years from now humanity would thus be consuming more life than exists. And simultaneously, we face the exhaustion of the petroleum and other fossil fuels which have massively subsidized our consumption - and whose limits will be heavily felt in the next decade.

Disproportionate consumption by a portion of our population is an important element in reaching where we are today. Disproportionate population growth by a portion of our population is an equally important element.

Underlying all, however, is a manic disregard for the realities of natural law and the constraints on life in a material world; and a belief somehow that we are exempt from taking responsibility for our numbers, our appetites, and our values. The roles of each of us in this evolution are of interest now only to historians. Of concern now is only our actions together to change.

When we were far from the limits of growth in human population and material consumption, the underlying values of growth, greed, and violence that have driven our society may not have been entirely inappropriate. And millions have given their lives to prevent worse societies than our own from becoming dominant during this period of growth. As we now reach these limits to growth, those values of growth and the societies that emerge from them become suicidal.

We are this very day standing at a hinge-point in the history of life - a hinge-point which occurs only a few times in the evolution of a planet. If we together - and it will take the concerted action of *all* humanity - achieve a total transformation of our beliefs and actions in the next few years, we *can* yet ease our transition to patterns that can endure. We can achieve a world which nurtures and sustains all life. Such profound change may appear impossible, yet it lays stirring just below the surface of all of our lives.

Belief in the fruits and possibilities of continued growth has died, even within the hearts of those who still hollowly proclaim it in the absence of truer vision. The poisons in our hearts and lives bred by those values are being acknowledged, felt, and rejected. Prototypes of sustainable patterns exist. The right questions are now being asked, the wrongness in overall patterns seen, and the truer patterns that nurture and sustain all life discovered. We know *how* to limit our numbers and appetites, and *how* to achieve sustainable levels of resource use.

The change awaits only the spark of its public acknowledgment, and its implementation can occur with amazing swiftness.

Growth, greed, and inequity now consume more than three-quarters of our work and resources. Letting go of them releases those resources. The institutions of industrialized countries can lower their resource demands *by an order of magnitude*, while improving their effectiveness. We are slowly learning what from this vast bacchanal has enduring value, and how to share and combine that seed of wisdom with the wisdom of the long-enduring societies on our planet. Individual elements of a sustainable transition are being implemented around the world.

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What remains are our fears.

They lie within each of us, and are all that remains between us and a shift to sustainability. And it is here that we need, and I pray for, your help. For it is only together, with our hearts open to each other, that we can dissolve this barrier between us and survival, between us and of a future of on-evolving creation.

The affluent fear anger and retribution from those who have suffered from their excesses. They fear the increasing numbers of the poor, and their own inability to compete and survive without the assistance of the wealth they have had.

The poor fear continued exploitation in new forms. They fear the increasing power of the rich, and the difficulties of survival without the security of many children. They fear that as there is less for each of us, there will be none for them.

Many fear change. We all fear the festering effects of the *diseases of the spirit* that have spread throughout our communities fed by the baseness of the values upon which our modern culture has been created. We all fear what life will be like without the support of energy-slaves. Yet we all know that people have lived wonderful and joyful lives in all sorts of societies and conditions throughout history. And we know that the longer we wait, the more cataclysmic the changes.

The voices of the "third world" are needed now - as a conscience, as an affirmation of rewarding ways of life beyond the conventions of our global growth society, and as an assurance and demonstration of the compassion and spiritual strength which must underlie our moving out of our present impasse. "Third world" voices are needed to insist on new values, to insist on equity - *now*; to insist on positive and prompt action from those with power.

To part with the unjustifiable advantages they have had, the wealthy may require a compassionate yet firm nudge by the rest of the world. To succeed with their own efforts, the poor unquestioningly need action - from the heart - by the rich to remove their pressures on the poor and to share and assist with their problems. Many deep, sometimes difficult, yet in the end rewarding changes are required of all of us. None of this will happen until we speak out and begin.

We know, through the recent example of apartheid in South Africa, that these tangles of fears *can* be threaded successfully, though never easily. It requires a fine combination of right goals, compassion, forgiveness, spiritual strength, willingness to give to each other, and determination that equitable and fair solutions be reached for *all* with their consensus.

We need to dissolve the walls we have erected around our hearts to shield us from the effects of our greeds, and face our vulnerability before the judgment of others. We need to share our fears and hopes, observe together the failures that we can learn from and the successes that can be replicated. We need to learn new strengths, and discover the unfamiliar yet wonderful rewards of true community.

We need to acknowledge the "chi" that connects and sustains all life, and the wisdom gained through endless generations of life in the long-enduring cultures of our planet. We need the experience of those still living from values that nurture and sustain life, and those who have experienced the true rewards of sustainable community. We need to synthesize the best wisdom from all, and for all. We need to attain equity - globally and within cultures, and with other forms of life.

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Stay silent no longer.

Stand up, and let your presence be a rallying point for the upwelling consensus that is emerging. Speak out. Share your own truths and your own experience; your needs and your gifts. Speak from your heart, and with compassion and forgiveness. Listen to and draw out the truths, fears, and wisdom of others. The world is ready to listen, to hear, to acknowledge, and to heal.

Permit the wrongness of old beliefs to go unchallenged no longer. Bring them, without blame, into the light of day, that they must stand up beside what is right, and be found wanting. The issues are not just of right and wrong, but the enlargement of our wisdom and deepening of the inner and outer sources upon which we draw. Affirm in your life and your actions the values of honoring, giving, nurturing and valuing of life. Insist, and initiate, action upon the roots of our problems - to achieve equity, security, responsibility, sacredness, giving, and sustainability - *for all Creation*. Act yourself, where you have domain.

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Without question, it will require a miracle for our world not to come apart in a frenzy of fear, violence, and anger as we impact the unforgiving limits of growth and our own hubris. The Earth will survive us, do what we will. Yet we have seen that miracles *are* possible. Our job is now, together, to create one, and to create a future of hope for our planet, ourselves, and our children!

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