**CONCERN FOR CREATION**

***A New Work of Mercy***

In the Encyclical *Laudato si’*, Pope Francis, at the time of his election as Bishop of Rome, pointed out that he took Saint Francis as a guide and inspiration. […] “I believe that Saint Francis is the example par excellence of care for the vulnerable and of an integral ecology lived out joyfully and authentically. He is the patron saint of all who study and work in the area of ecology, and he is also much loved by non-Christians. He was particularly concerned for God’s creation and for the poor and outcast”.

Then the Pope refers to the illustration of God’s creation as a universal unity in Saint Francis’ Canticle of the Sun. “All creatures are connected and are dependent on one another. They all have their own dignity, and they need to be attended with care.”

Precisely one year later, Pope Francis took up this topic again in an elaborate message on the occasion of the “World Day of Prayer for Creation” on 1 September 2023, which have been taking place for ten years in the Orthodox Church and for two years in the Catholic Church. The title, “Show Mercy to our Common Home” emphasized what is important to him.

The Pope connects his encyclical, “Laudato si”, with Mercy - the theme of the Holy Year. “The earth cries out. […] The worry about our common home of creation - the ‘New Work of Mercy’ - is a complement to the traditional mention of the works of mercy. […] God gave us the earth to treat it in a balanced and respectful way; exploiting the earth is to sin”, the Pope states.

The Pope hoped that the Holy Year and the issue of Mercy in the light of what is happening to our common home would lead to profound interior conversion. Let us commit ourselves to take concrete steps away from environmental degradation towards ecological conversion.

An excerpt from the “World Day of Prayer for Creation” illustrates the Pope’s mind:

“How can we contribute to the mighty river of justice and peace in this Season of Creation? What can we, particularly as Christian communities, do to heal our common home so that it can once again teem with life? We must do this by resolving to transform our *hearts*, our *lifestyles*, and the *public policies* ruling our societies.

“First, let us join the mighty river by transforming our *hearts*. This is essential for any other transformation to occur; it is that “ecological conversion” which Saint John Paul II encouraged us to embrace: the renewal of our relationship with creation so that we no longer see it as an object to be exploited but cherish it instead as a sacred gift from our Creator. Furthermore, we should realize that an integral approach to respect for the environment involves four relationships: with God, with our brothers and sisters of today and tomorrow, with all of nature, and with ourselves.

“As to transforming our *hearts*, Pope Benedict XVI spoke of the urgent need to recognize that creation and redemption are inseparably linked: “The Redeemer is the Creator and if we do not proclaim God in his full grandeur – as Creator and as Redeemer – we also diminish the value of the redemption”.  Creation refers both to God’s mysterious, magnificent *act* of creating this majestic, beautiful planet and universe out of nothing and to the continuing result of that act, which we experience as an inexhaustible *gift*. During the liturgy and personal prayer in “the great cathedral of creation”,  let us recall the great Artist who creates such beauty and reflect on the mystery of that loving decision to create the cosmos.

“Second, let us add to the flow of this mighty river by transforming our *lifestyles*. Starting from grateful wonder at the Creator and his creation, let us repent of our “ecological sins”, as my brother, Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, has urged. These sins harm the world of nature and our fellow men and women. With the help of God’s grace, let us adopt lifestyles marked by less waste and unnecessary consumption, especially where the processes of production are toxic and unsustainable. Let us be as mindful as we can about our habits and economic decisions so that all can thrive – our fellow men and women wherever they may be, and future generations as well. Let us cooperate in God’s ongoing creation through positive choices: using resources with moderation and a joyful sobriety, disposing and recycling waste, and making greater use of available products and services that are environmentally and socially responsible.

“Lastly, for the mighty river to continue flowing, we must transform the *public policies* that govern our societies and shape the lives of young people today and tomorrow. Economic policies that promote scandalous wealth for a privileged few and degrading conditions for many others, spell the end of peace and justice. It is clear that the richer nations have contracted an “ecological debt” that must be paid (cf. [*Laudato si’*](https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si.html#51), 51).  ….

“Let us raise our voices to halt this injustice towards the poor and towards our children, who will bear the worst effects of climate change. I appeal to all people of good will to act in conformity with these perspectives on society and nature.”