

Pope appeals for the renewal of our relationship with Creation

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Image: ICN/JS

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Pope Francis' Message for the 2023 World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation was released on Thursday, 25 May.

This year's theme is: 'Let Justice and Peace Flow', inspired by the words of the prophet Amos: 'Let justice flow on like a river, righteousness like a never-failing stream.'

The Pope begins by noting that: "God wants justice to reign; it is as essential to our life as God's children made in his likeness as water is essential for our physical survival."

Pope Francis first instituted the 1 September World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation in 2015, serving as a way to encourage the faithful around the world to pray for our

common home. The annual day also marks the beginning of an ecumenical outreach bringing Christians to pray and work together in what is called the Season of Creation which lasts till 4 October, the feast of St Francis of Assisi. The origins of the day also go back to Ecumenical Patriarch Dimitrios who proclaimed 1 September as Creation Day for the Orthodox in 1989, followed by other Christian European Churches in 2001, and by Pope Francis in 2015.

Recalling his apostolic journey to Canada in July 2022, and in particular his visit to the Indigenous People on the shores of Lac Ste Anne in Alberta, the Pope reflected on how so many of the people down through the ages have found "consolation and strength" from these waters, likening the natural beauty there to the "maternal heartbeat of the earth." And just as the heart of a baby in the womb beats in harmony with the mother, so also "we need to harmonize our own rhythms of life with those of creation, which gives us life."

"During this Season of Creation, let us dwell on those heartbeats: our own and those of our mothers and grandmothers, the heartbeat of creation and the heartbeat of God. Today they do not beat in harmony; they are not harmonized in justice and peace," he writes.

Decrying the fact that too many of our brothers and sisters are prevented from drinking from that mighty river, the Pope says "Let us heed our call to stand with the victims of environmental and climate injustice, and to put an end to the senseless war against creation."

Recalling Pope Benedict XVI who once observed how external deserts are growing due to internal deserts that have become so vast, Pope Francis decried the greed and selfishness today that disrupts the planet's water cycle. The threats to our planet and water sources are many, he notes: fossil fuels and the destruction of forests that contribute to climate change; the depletion and pollution of freshwater sources through extreme practices such as fracking or uncontrolled mega-mining projects and intense animal farming.

We need to act urgently, to create a more sustainable and just world, the Pope notes also referring to grave warnings from the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. And he stresses it is possible to prevent the worst from happening if we all unite to come up with more

sustainable ways to live now and for the future., and he reiterated that much can be done if we come together.

"Truly, much can be done, provided we come together like so many streams, brooks and rivulets, merging finally in a mighty river to irrigate the life of our marvellous planet and our human family for generations to come. So let us join hands and take bold steps to "Let Justice and Peace Flow" throughout our world."

Looking especially at Christian communities, the Pope writes, we can all contribute to change for good by "resolving to transform our hearts, our lifestyles, and the public policies ruling our societies."

Transforming our hearts is a key starting point and this "ecological conversion" that Saint John Paul II encouraged us to embrace, the Pope writes, involves "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."

Next, we need to change the way we live, he notes, and "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."

"With the help of God's grace," he adds, "Let us adopt lifestyles marked by less waste and unnecessary consumption, especially where the processes of production are toxic and unsustainable."

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"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," he says.

The things we can all do are many, the Pope continues, such as using resources with moderation, recycling waste, using available products and services that are environmentally and socially responsible.

Finally, we, need to look at our public policies, especially "economic policies that promote scandalous wealth for a privileged few and degrading conditions for many others," as they mean they gravely threaten peace and justice.

Issuing an appeal to make our voices heard to halt this injustice towards the poor and the future generations who will bear the worst effects of climate change, the Holy Father asked for action in conformity of these perspectives on society and nature.

"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 goodwill to act in conformity with these perspectives on society and nature."

Recalling the Synod on Synodality that will open its first session in October, just after the closing of the Season of Creation on 4 October, the Pope writes that similarly "the entire People of God is being invited to an immersive journey of synodal dialogue and conversion."

He upholds the strength of communion of countless local Churches, each of whom has a unique and irreplaceable contribution to make, and he prays that the Holy Spirit may guide our efforts to "renew the face of the earth."

"Like a river basin with its many tiny and larger tributaries, the Church is a communion of countless local Churches, religious communities and associations that draw from the same shared waters. Each source adds its unique and irreplaceable contribution, until all flow together into the vast ocean of God's loving mercy."

He concludes that "our synodal Church must be a source of life for our common home and all its inhabitants... sowing justice and peace in every place it reaches."

"In this Season of Creation, as followers of Christ on our shared synodal journey, let us live, work and pray that our common home will teem with life once again. May the Holy Spirit once more hover over the waters and guide our efforts to 'renew the face of the earth.'"

LINK

Message for the 2023 World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation: **www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/messages/pont-messages/2023/documents/20230513-messaggio-giornata-curacreato.html**