

## World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation 2022

*We can hear the planet's "cries of anguish", Pope Francis said in his message for the celebration of World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation, set to take place on 1 September. Mother earth, he said, "implores us to put an end to our abuses and to her destruction".*

"Listen to the voice of creation" is the theme and invitation of this year's Season of Creation. The ecumenical phase begins on 1 September with the World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation, and concludes on 4 October with the feast of Saint Francis. It is a special time for all Christians to pray and work together to care for our common home. Originally inspired by the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople, this Season is an opportunity to cultivate our "ecological conversion", a conversion encouraged by Saint John Paul II as a response to the "ecological catastrophe" predicted by Saint Paul VI back in 1970. [1]

If we learn how to listen, we can hear in the voice of creation a kind of dissonance. On the one hand, we can hear a sweet song in praise of our beloved Creator; on the other, an anguished plea, lamenting our mistreatment of this our common home.

The sweet song of creation invites us to practice an "ecological spirituality" (Laudato Si', 216), attentive to God's presence in the natural world. It is a summons to base our spirituality on the "loving awareness that we are not disconnected from the rest of creatures, but joined in a splendid universal communion" (ibid., 220). For the followers of Christ in particular, this luminous experience reinforces our awareness that "all things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being" (Jn 1:3). In this Season of Creation, we pray once more in the great cathedral of creation, and revel in the "grandiose cosmic choir" [2] made up of countless creatures, all singing the praises of God. Let us join Saint Francis of Assisi in singing: "Praise be to you, my Lord, for all your creatures" (cf. Canticle of Brother Sun). Let us join the psalmist in singing, "Let everything that breathes praise the Lord!" (Ps 150:6).

Tragically, that sweet song is accompanied by a cry of anguish. Or even better: a chorus of cries of anguish. In the first place, it is our sister, mother earth, who cries out. Prey to our consumerist excesses, she weeps and implores us to put an end to our abuses and to her destruction. Then too, there are all those different creatures who cry out. At the mercy of a "tyrannical anthropocentrism" (Laudato Si', 68), completely at odds with Christ's centrality in the work of creation, countless species are dying out and their hymns of praise silenced. There are also the poorest among us who are crying out. Exposed to the climate crisis, the poor feel even more gravely the impact of the drought, flooding, hurricanes and heat waves that are becoming ever more intense and frequent. Likewise, our brothers and sisters of the native peoples are crying out. As a result of predatory economic interests, their ancestral lands are being invaded and devastated on all sides, "provoking a cry that rises up to heaven" (Querida Amazonia, 9). Finally, there is the plea of our children. Feeling menaced by shortsighted and selfish actions, today's young people are crying out, anxiously asking us adults to do everything possible to prevent, or at least limit, the collapse of our planet's ecosystems.

***Father of creation: You made all things through love You spoke with authority and life sprang into being You made us in your wonderful image to be stewards of your world. Forgive us, Lord: When we have failed to reflect you When we have lived with selfish intention, placing our own needs above those of others When we have misused or polluted creation When we have acted in a way that has caused disadvantage and hurt. Help us, Lord, to reflect you: By being faithful stewards of your creation. By showing love and concern for the world. May our actions produce lasting fruit, for the sake of your Kingdom Amen***