



The Holy See

**LETTER OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS
FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE
"WORLD DAY OF PRAYER FOR THE CARE OF CREATION"
[1st SEPTEMBER]**

To my Venerable Brothers

Cardinal Peter Kodwo Appiah TURKSON,
President of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace

Cardinal Kurt KOCH,
President of the Pontifical Council for the Promotion of Christian Unity

Sharing the concern of my beloved brother, Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, for the future of creation (cf. *Laudato Si'*, 7-9), and at the suggestion of his representative, Metropolitan Ioannis of Pergamum, who took part in the presentation of the Encyclical *Laudato Si'* on care for our common home, I wish to inform you that I have decided to institute in the Catholic Church the "World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation" which, beginning this year, is to be celebrated on 1 September, as has been the custom in the Orthodox Church for some time.

As Christians we wish to contribute to resolving the ecological crisis which humanity is presently experiencing. In doing so, we must first rediscover in our own rich spiritual patrimony the deepest motivations for our concern for the care of creation. We need always to keep in mind that, for believers in Jesus Christ, the Word of God who became man for our sake, "the life of the spirit is not dissociated from the body or from nature or from worldly realities, but lived in and with them, in communion with all that surrounds us" (*Laudato Si'*, 216). The ecological crisis thus summons us to a profound spiritual conversion: Christians are called to "an ecological conversion whereby the effects of their encounter with Jesus Christ become evident in their relationship with the world around them" (ibid., 217). For "living our vocation to be protectors of God's handiwork is essential to a life of virtue; it is not an optional or a secondary aspect of our Christian experience" (ibid.).

The annual World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation will offer individual believers and communities a fitting opportunity to reaffirm their personal vocation to be stewards of creation, to thank God for the wonderful handiwork which he has entrusted to our care, and to implore his help for the protection of creation as well as his pardon for the sins committed against the world in which we live. The celebration of this Day, on the same date as the Orthodox Church, will be a valuable opportunity to bear witness to our growing communion with our Orthodox brothers and sisters. We live at a time when all Christians are faced with the same decisive challenges, to which we must respond together, in order to be more credible and effective. It is my hope that this Day will in some way also involve other Churches and ecclesial Communities, and be celebrated in union with similar initiatives of the World Council of Churches.

I ask you, Cardinal Turkson, as President of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, to inform the Justice and Peace Commissions of the Bishops' Conferences, as well as the national and international organizations involved in environmental issues, of the establishment of the World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation, so that, with due regard for local needs and situations, it can be properly celebrated with the participation of the entire People of God: priests, men and women religious and the lay faithful. For this reason, it will be the task of your Council, in cooperation with the various Episcopal Conferences, to arrange suitable ways of publicizing and celebrating the Day, so that this annual event will become a significant occasion for prayer, reflection, conversion and the adoption of appropriate lifestyles.

I ask you, Cardinal Koch, as President of the Pontifical Council for the Promotion of Christian Unity, to make the necessary contacts with the Ecumenical Patriarchate and with other ecumenical organizations so that this World Day can serve as a sign of a common journey in which all believers in Christ take part. It will also be your Council's responsibility to ensure that it is coordinated with similar initiatives undertaken by the World Council of Churches.

In expressing my hope that, as a result of wide cooperation, the World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation will be inaugurated and develop in the best way possible, I invoke upon this initiative the intercession of Mary, Mother of God, and of Saint Francis of Assisi, whose *Canticle of the Creatures* inspires so many men and women of goodwill to live in praise of the Creator and with respect for creation. As a pledge of spiritual fruitfulness, I impart my Apostolic Blessing to you, Eminent Brothers, and to all those who share in your ministry.

*From the Vatican, 6 August 2015
Feast of the Transfiguration of the Lord.*

FRANCISCUS

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