

## **Pope: peace with Creator, harmony with creation**

As the September 1 World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation kicks off the month-long Season of Creation, Pope Francis offers a profound reflection on respect for the earth, its resources, the evils caused by man's greed and the need for "restorative justice" such as debt cancellation for poor countries.

### **This decisive moment**

In his message, the Pope notes that "the pandemic has brought us to a crossroads". "We must use this decisive moment," he says, "to end our superfluous and destructive goals and activities, and to cultivate values, connections and activities that are life-giving." "We must examine our habits of energy usage, consumption, transportation, and diet. We must eliminate the superfluous and destructive aspects of our economies, and nurture life-giving ways to trade, produce, and transport goods."

### **Listen to the land and creation**

The Pope reminds us that "we cannot live in harmony with creation if we are not at peace with the Creator who is the source and origin of all things". The Jubilee is a time for thinking once again of our fellow human beings, especially the poor and the most vulnerable, to share the common heritage of creation in a "spirit of conviviality, not in competitive scramble but in joyful fellowship, supporting and protecting one another".

The Jubilee is also a time to listen to the land, to hear the voice of creation and return to our rightful place in the natural created order, remembering that we are part of this interconnected web of life, not its masters.

“The disintegration of biodiversity, spiraling climate disasters, and unjust impact of the current pandemic on the poor and vulnerable,” the Pope says, are a “wakeup call in the face of our rampant greed and consumption”.

A jubilee, the Pope says, is a time to set free the oppressed such as the indigenous people who face injustice and others who are subjected to various forms of modern slavery, such as trafficking in persons and child labour.

### **Debt cancellation**

Stressing that the Jubilee is a time for “restorative justice”, the Pope renews his “call for the cancellation of the debt of the most vulnerable countries, in recognition of the severe impacts of the medical, social and economic crises they face as a result of Covid-19”.

This also calls for ensuring that the recovery packages being developed and deployed at global, regional and national levels be regeneration packages. Policy, legislation and investment must be focused on the common good and guarantee that global social and environmental goals are met.

### **Restoring the Earth**

Alarmed by the climate emergency, the Pontiff warns that “we are running out of time”, and unless we take action it “will prove catastrophic, especially for poor communities around the world”. He thus invites all nations to adopt more ambitious national targets to reduce emissions.

Lamenting the unprecedented loss of species and degradation of ecosystems, he urges for “restoring the earth to be a home of life in abundance, as willed by the Creator”.

### **Indigenous rights**

The principle of “restorative justice”, the Holy Father continues, calls for restoring the right of indigenous communities to regain control of the usage of the land on which they have lived for generations.

“Indigenous communities,” he says, “must be protected from companies, particularly multinational companies, that ‘operate in less developed countries in ways they could never do at home’, through the destructive extraction of fossil fuels, minerals, timber and agro-industrial products.”

He denounces as a “new version of colonialism” the corporate misconduct of shamefully exploiting poorer countries and communities that are desperately seeking economic development.

### **Joining hands**

The Pope admits, “We are aware that the cries of the earth and of the poor have become even louder and more painful in recent years.” Yet it is a reason for joy to witness how the Holy Spirit is bringing individuals and communities around the world together to rebuild our common home and defend the most vulnerable.

Young people, communities and indigenous communities are on the frontlines in responding to the ecological crisis. They are calling for a Jubilee for the earth and a new beginning, aware that “things can change”.

The way the “**Laudato Si’ Special Anniversary Year**” is unfolding is another reason to rejoice. The numerous initiatives at local and global levels for the care of our common home and the poor during the year, the Pope says, should lead to long-term action plans to practice integral ecology in our families, parishes and dioceses, religious orders, our schools and universities, our healthcare, business and agricultural institutions, and many others as well.

Faith communities are coming together to create a more just, peaceful, and sustainable world, and the Season of Creation is becoming a truly ecumenical initiative.