



Time for Creation – let's Pray Together to Appreciate and Care for the Gift of Creation

A common statement of Council of European Bishops' Conferences (CCEE), Conference of European Churches (CEC) and European Christian Environmental Network (ECEN)

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Respect, appreciation and contemplation of Creation are the common concern of Christian Churches. The Council of European Bishops' Conferences (CCEE) and the Conference of European Churches (CEC), on the occasion of the Day for Creation, call for common prayers and to strengthen ecumenical work to care for Creation.

According to the Gospel, responsibility for the environment can never be detached from responsibility for other human beings: for our neighbour, for the poor, or the forgotten, all in a true spirit of solidarity and love. Respecting Creation means not only protecting and safeguarding the earth, water and other parts of the natural world. It is at the same time expressing respect for human beings who share those gifts and bear responsibility for them. Therefore, together with all Christians, we endeavour joyfully to witness Jesus Christ, «*for in Him were created all things in heaven and on earth*» (Col. 1, 16).

We remember Dietrich Bonhoeffer's thought that the most urgent problem besetting our Churches is the way in which we live our Christian life in the face of contemporary cultural and social challenges. This means we must relate to each other within the context of the world we all live in. This is an original definition of "oikos", meaning "the house". The "common house" we care for, is made up of both the natural world and of human relationships.

Time for Creation from 1st September - 4th October (the feast day of St. Francis of Assisi in the Western tradition) is a special period in the liturgical calendars in a growing number of Churches in Europe. In this period we remember the gift of Creation and our relation to it. Celebration of this Time and its place in the cycle of Christian prayers and worships was commended by the 3rd European Ecumenical Assembly in Sibiu 2007. The European Christian Environmental Network (ECEN) has been instrumental in promoting and encouraging Christians to pray together in spirit of ecumenical cooperation and to promoting action to care for Creation. The initiative to celebrate a day of prayer for God's Creation on 1st September which, in the Byzantine tradition is the beginning of the Church Year, started in 1989 by Ecumenical Patriarch Dimitrios. Similarly, in 2015 Pope Francis decided that 1st September be the World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation in the Catholic Church.

We face urgently challenges of environmental degradation and climate change, and encouraged by the words of Pope Francis' Encyclical letter *Laudato si'* acknowledge our shared responsibility. We warmly invite all European Christians, member churches of CEC and bishops' conferences of CCEE, parishes and Church communities and every person of good will to join in *Time for Creation*, to celebrate *Time for Creation* together, within your own liturgical traditions and to uphold the common Christian faith in God the Creator. We urge you, in your respective settings, to offer, prayers for gift of Creation, and join us in praying together:

O Lord, teach us to care for the whole Creation,
to protect all life and to share the fruits of the earth.
Teach us to share our human work with our brothers and sisters,
especially with the poor and those in need.

Grant us to remain faithful to your Gospel
as to joyfully offer to our society in different countries across the continent
the horizon of a better future
filled with justice, peace, love and beauty.
Amen.

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