
Papa at audience: “We have sinned against the earth. The earth never forgives”

“This is an occasion for renewing our commitment to love and care for our common home” said the Pope, dedicating the catechesis of today’s general audience – livestreamed from the Library of the Apostolic Palace – to this theme, on the occasion of the 50th Anniversary of Earth Day and the fifth anniversary of the Pope’s Encyclical Letter *Laudato si’*. “*As the tragic coronavirus pandemic has taught us, we can overcome global challenges*”, is Francis’ appeal. “We have sinned against the earth”, the Pope said voicing a collective mea culpa and quoting from a Spanish saying: “God always forgives; we humans sometimes forgive, and sometimes not; the earth never forgives.

The earth does not forgive: if we have despoiled the earth, its response will be very ugly.”

“When we see these natural tragedies – Francis said referring to the present circumstances - that are the earth’s response to our mistreatment, I think: ‘If I ask the Lord now what he thinks about it, I do not believe he is saying it is a very good thing.’ It is we who have ruined the Lord’s work!” Hence “the importance of cooperation as an international community for the protection of our common home”, starting from two “international Conferences: COP15 on Biodiversity in Kunming, China, and COP26 on Climate Change in Glasgow, United Kingdom”, of “great importance.” **“Because of our selfishness we have failed in our responsibility to be guardians and stewards of the earth”**, Francis denounced quoting from Genesis. “We need only take a frank look at the facts to see that our common home is falling into serious disrepair”, he said drawing from *Laudato si’*: “We have polluted it, we have despoiled it, endangering our very lives.” “For this reason, various international and local movements have sprung up in order to appeal to our consciences”, the Pope’s commendation: “I deeply appreciate these initiatives; *still it will be necessary for our children to take to the streets to teach us the obvious: we have no future if we destroy the very environment that sustains us*. We have failed to care for the earth, our garden-home; we have failed to care for our brothers and sisters.” “It will help if people at all levels of society come together to create a popular movement ‘from below,’”. “The Earth Day we are celebrating today was itself born in precisely this way. We can each contribute in our own small way”, Francis said. **“We so often lose sight of harmony**: harmony is a work of the Holy Spirit. In our common home too, on the earth, and in our relationships with people, with our neighbour, with the poorest”, the Pope cautioned: “We need a new way of looking at our common home.

For this is not a storehouse of resources for us to exploit.”

“For us believers, the natural world is the “Gospel of Creation”- Francis reminded the faithful - it expresses God’s creative power in fashioning human life and bringing the world and all it contains into existence, in order to sustain humanity. As the biblical account of Creation concludes: “God saw all that he had made, and it was very good.” “In today’s celebration of Earth Day, we are called to renew our sense of sacred respect for the earth, for it is not just our home but also God’s home. This should make us all the more aware that we stand on holy ground!” “Let us awaken our God-given aesthetic and contemplative sense”, is the Pope’s second appeal inviting to rediscover, on the wake of the Synod for the Pan-Amazon region, **“the prophetic gift of contemplation”**, that can be learnt from indigenous peoples who “teach us that we cannot heal the earth unless we love and respect it. They have the wisdom of living well, not in the sense of having a good time, no, but of living in harmony with the earth.” At the same time, for Francis, “*we need an ecological conversion that can find expression in concrete actions*”: “*As a single and interdependent family, we require a common*

plan in order to avert the threats to our common home.”

M.Michela Nicolais