Care for Creation

Dear friends,

On the 1st of September, the Church holds a World Day of Prayer for the care of creation. In his encyclical letter *Laudato Sí*, Pope Francis has asked the world for urgent attention to be given to creation, the environment and the climate. Together with the Patriarch of Constantinople, the Holy Father calls us to deepen that theme in particular from September 1st until October 4th (Feast of St Francis of Assisi).

For our faith communities this is an excellent opportunity to think more intently about the role that we all play in creation, and in particular to fight the causes of the ecological crisis we face. The Biblical narrative of creation is our foundation and our guideline. How can we do that today?

It is God Himself who created heaven and earth: "In the beginning God created heaven and earth", we read in the opening sentence of the Bible (book of Genesis). But how should we understand that? John begins his gospel with the same words: "in the beginning." But he concentrates everything on "the Word that is with God and from which everything originated" (John 1, 1-3). "The word is God," he says, and "man is born out of God" (John 1:13). It seems to me that we can look into the very existence of the Trinity of God, since on Pentecost the Word is given to the apostles by the Holy Spirit, which allows them to boldly proclaim the Word themselves. John and Paul make clear that everything must be recapitulated in Christ. So Christ is in the centre of creation precisely because "through Him and with Him and in Him everything is created" (cf. Eucharistic prayer).

This sheds new light on creation, and on humankind in particular. As brothers and sisters of Christ, we all take part in creation. As the custodian of creation, humanity only recently came into existence. This is very understandable: what would humanity mean in the whole of creation if the earth had not been created first? What is humankind without water, without plants and animals, without the light of the sun and the moon? Because God spoke and created the elements of His creation before He brought his "Image and Parable" to life, it is possible for us to take care of creation. We get a view of the whole and see that everything is connected to each other, everything is created in relation to each other and to God. Christ, as the living Word of God, therefore unites everything within himself as He has connected the disciples among themselves and with the Father in the last supper.

This also makes it clear that "the Eucharist is an act of cosmic love ... the centre of the universe ... that joins heaven and earth; it embraces and penetrates all creation" (*Laudato Sí*, 236). In the Eucharist, human nature becomes - connected with everything and all - the guardian of all creation.

I wish all believers a particularly intense period of prayer, reflection and deepening of the mystery of creation in the period from 1 September to 4 October. Conversations and meetings can be an opportunity to clarify the content of our faith as inspiration for our commitment and to make the "Care for our Common Home" concrete.

Msgr. Luc van Looy
Caritas Europa President