
V. TRANSFIGURATION OF THE UNIVERSE

*Grant us temperate and fruitful weather;
bestow on the earth moderate rains to bring forth fruit.
Bless the crown of the year with your goodness...
Deliver, O Lord... from famine, plague, earthquake, flood, fire.
(Anaphora of the Liturgy of Saint Basil the Great)*

A. Responsibility for God's Creation

- 991 Humankind carries responsibility for all creation. This responsibility manifests itself on different levels: in daily personal life, in the use of technical means and various technologies, in the use of natural resources and sources of energy. The environment cannot be reduced to an object of manipulation and exploitation, nor can it be made absolute and placed above the dignity of the human person.⁵⁸⁸
- 992 Every person is called to responsible behaviour in all spheres of life. Ecological responsibility refers to all actions that have an impact on the quality of a person's natural environment. The Christian, as a believer in God, the Creator of the universe, is bound to fulfil responsibly his or her role as steward of the created world, a task delegated by God.

B. The Christian and the Natural Environment

- 993 Belief in God the Creator also entails an understanding of the world as God's creation. The word "creation" means that, like humankind, all other living beings as well as inanimate matter have their source, foundation, substance, and perfection in God.
- 994 Our vocation to have dominion in the world does not entail our reckless subjugation of the environment nor its exploitation. Humanity's vocation is to be the crown of creation and to represent creation before the Creator. Humankind can have dominion over the earth responsibly only when it is obedient to God, and maintains the order and aims established by him. When we, through the work of our hands and our talents, uncover the secrets of nature and the proper order to things in this world, we come to recognize the greatness and presence of God the Creator.
- 995 When we harm the environment through our actions, we ruin God's creation, of which we ourselves are an integral part. We sin not only

⁵⁸⁸ See *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, 463.

as regards creation, but also in relation to our own selves and God. It is in this sense that we speak of *ecological sin*,⁵⁸⁹ which consists of our irresponsible behaviour towards God's creation. This sin is a grave crime against contemporary civilization and the life of future generations.

C. A Christian Ethic of the Environment

- 996 Our love for the invisible and omnipresent God is manifested and confirmed by our attitude toward God's visible creatures. We cannot fully realize our love for God if we ignore the value of the world as God's creation.
- 997 As those who love God the Creator, we also respect his creation, treating the environment responsibly. Creation, on the one hand, serves humanity, but on the other, has a value in and of itself. Respect for creation manifests itself in a protective attitude toward nature, in the preservation of natural resources and in other forms of interaction between creation and ourselves. By respecting God's creation, we give glory to God.
- 998 An important precondition for human development is the conservation of natural resources and the diversity of plant and animal life. The future of our civilization is impossible without an awareness of the limits of nature's ability to renew its resources and to neutralize the harmful substances and by-products of manufacturing that pollute it. Vital human activity that adheres to all of the moral demands stemming from the interconnectedness of all creatures is the sole condition for the sustainable development of human civilization.

⁵⁸⁹ JOHN PAUL II, Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in America* [The Church in America], 25.

D. The New Heaven and the New Earth: The Human Person as Priest of the Universe

*Receive us all into your kingdom,
declaring us to be children of the light and children of the day.
Grant us your peace and your love, O Lord, our God;
for you have given us everything.
And grant that with one voice and one heart
we may glorify and sing the praises of your most honoured and magnificent name,
Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, now and for ever and ever. Amen.
(Anaphora of the Liturgy of Saint Basil the Great)*

- 999 The Risen Christ, our Pascha, is the New Man, for by his Resurrection, death is overcome. In his glorified body, his Divine Person is the bearer of the new creation—of the new *heaven and earth* that God created *in the beginning*, but which humanity—through sin—subjected to transitory fading and vanity. The renewal of creation—“Behold, I make all things new” (*Rev* 21:5)—begins with the Resurrection of Christ and passes through the spiritual rebirth and renewal of each of us: “If anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation” (*2 Cor* 5:17).
- 1000 The world can be renewed by every person that has “put on” Christ—the new Adam—who therefore experiences the “new creation” spiritually. The apostle Paul teaches: “The creation was subjected to futility, not of its own will but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and will obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God” (*Rom* 8:20-21).
- 1001 Hope for the successful completion of the world’s transfiguration comes from the prophetic words of Christ: “Be of good cheer, I have overcome the world” (*Jn* 16:33). Christ speaks of things that are to come as being already completed, seeing them as such in his Divine Providence. It has been entrusted to us to bring this victory of Christ to completion: “Do this in remembrance of me” (*Lk* 22:19).