JOINT MESSAGE
of Pope Francis and Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew
on the World Day of Prayer for Creation

The story of creation presents us with a panoramic view of the world. Scripture reveals that, "in the beginning", ***God intended humanity to cooperate in the preservation and protection of the natural environment.*** At first, as we read in Genesis, "no plant of the field was yet in the earth and no herb of the field had yet sprung up – for the Lord God had not caused it to rain upon the earth, and there was no one to till the ground" (2:5). ***The earth was entrusted to us as a sublime gift*** and legacy, for which all of us share responsibility until, "in the end", all things in heaven and on earth will be restored in Christ (cf. Eph 1:10). Our human dignity and welfare are deeply connected to our care for the whole of creation.

However, "in the meantime", the history of the world presents a very different context. It reveals a morally decaying scenario where ***our attitude and behaviour towards creation obscures our calling as God's co-operators.*** Our propensity to interrupt the world's delicate and balanced ecosystems, our insatiable desire to manipulate and control the planet's limited resources, and our greed for limitless profit in markets – all these have alienated us from the original purpose of creation. We no longer respect nature as a shared gift; instead, we regard it as a private possession. ***We no longer associate with nature in order to sustain it; instead, we lord over it to support our own constructs.***

The consequences of this alternative worldview are tragic and lasting. The human environment and the natural environment are deteriorating together, and this deterioration of the planet weighs upon the most vulnerable of its people. ***The impact of climate change affects, first and foremost, those who live in*** poverty in every corner of the globe. Our obligation to use the earth's goods responsibly implies the recognition of and respect for all people and all living creatures. The urgent call and challenge to care for creation are an invitation for all of humanity to work towards sustainable and integral development.

Therefore, united by the same concern for God's creation and acknowledging the earth as a shared good, we fervently invite all people of goodwill to dedicate a time of ***prayer for the environment*** on 1 September. On this occasion, we wish to ***offer thanks*** to the loving

Creator for the noble gift of creation and to pledge commitment to its care and preservation for the sake of future generations. After all, we know that ***we labour in vain if the Lord is not by our side (cf. Ps 126-127), if prayer is not at the centre of our reflection and celebration***. Indeed, an objective of our prayer is to ***change the way we perceive the world in order to change the way we relate to the world***. The goal of our promise is to be courageous in embracing greater simplicity and solidarity in our lives.

We urgently appeal to those in positions of social and economic, as well as political and cultural, responsibility to hear the cry of the earth and to attend to the needs of the marginalized, but above all to respond to the plea of millions and support the consensus of the world for the healing of our wounded creation. We are convinced that there can be no sincere and enduring resolution to the challenge of the ecological crisis and climate change unless the ***response is concerted and collective,*** unless the responsibility is ***shared and accountable,*** unless we give ***priority to solidarity and service.***

From the Vatican and from the Phanar, 1 September 2017

Pope Francis and Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew