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*Laudato Si' as a call to a
universal sanctification of the
world and living out easter in all
dimensions of life*



Laudato si'
REVOLUTION

The second chapter of *Laudato Si* quotes three times the text of Genesis: "The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to till it and keep it". The Bible, before being the book of the Christians, is at first the book of the Jews. It may be interesting to check the Jewish interpretation of this verse. Since the two verbs "to till and to keep" have a feminine suffix, Jewish tradition has proposed a reading according to which brambles had not yet grown on the earth and that there were no thieves. Adam's work consisted of studying the Torah (feminine) and keeping it. In other words, mankind's task is to serve God and his word. Adam was created as a priest of creation. The Revelation of John 5:9-10 acknowledges this: "For you were slaughtered and by your blood you ransomed for God saints from every tribe and language and people and nation; you have made them to be a kingdom and priests serving our God, and they will reign on earth". It is through Christ's Passion that Adam's priesthood became a reality. Indeed, all creation receives new meaning through the Incarnation and Passion of Christ. To be a priest of creation is not simply to understand that creation is good ('and God saw that it was good—Gen1) but rather to draw all the practical consequences of this goodness of creation in daily life.

The tradition of Adam as a priest of creation is well developed in the Orthodox Church. In Jerusalem, at the Holy Sepulcher, on the right-hand side, Adam's chapel reminds all pilgrims that salvation has a universal dimension. Christ is the new Adam who has come to redeem all humanity. From His cross, His blood drips on Adam's skull. The whole universe is invited to celebrate the great nuptial feast. The cross planted in the garden has flourished into Paradise. Therefore, the vocation of humankind is to transcend the universe, to speak forth unto it its true meaning, to allow it to

correspond to its true dimension, to 'till' it, that is to say, to transfigure it and not to disfigure it.

Many Jewish texts speak of Adam's glory in Paradise. Created in the image of God, Adam is the manifestation of God's image in the world, God's collaborator. For the cosmos, Adam represents the hope of being united with God. Paul in his letter to the Romans put it this way: "For the creation waits in eager expectation for the children of God to be revealed. For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the freedom and glory of the children of God" (Romans 8:19-21). Hence, the destiny of humankind determines the destiny of the cosmos. In the mystery of the Incarnation, God took on humanity to unite oneself with the cosmos, placing the humankind at the center of creation. Maximus the confessor in his Two Hundred Chapters on Theology writes: "The mystery of the Incarnation of the Word contains in itself all the meaning of sentient and intelligible creatures"(1:66). Further, Gregory of Nyssa, in his *In Inscriptiões Psalmorum*, PG 44, 441B describes creation as a musical symphony. Following ancient Jewish tradition, he speaks of Adam's body as a synthesis of the six days creation and of his mandate to generously give back to the Creator a free response of love, thereby allowing himself to be taken over by the uncreated light of God.

The Cross and the Resurrection of Christ respond differently to all the patterns of evolution proposed by the modern sciences of nature and humankind. Two processes intertwine: that of the fall of Adam and that of redemption. It is the latter alone that makes man—and woman—a priest of creation. Because humankind has opposed God, the world has become alien



and hostile to humanity; but this hostility means that humanity itself is thrown out of itself.

In the risen Christ, the fallen matter becomes again a means of communion and a hope for reconciliation. In Him, the world regains its original dynamism in the fire of the Spirit. The Pentecost of the Upper Room takes up again the primordial harmony of creation.

Through the liturgy humankind discovers the world transfigured in Christ and henceforth collaborates in this work of transfiguration, making the light of Tabor shine in the heart of the creation. The divinization of the world through the priestly activity is humanity's primary mission: through it, the human race discovers the true meaning of the world. Indeed, the Logos was incarnated to fulfill humanity's vocation to divinize the cosmos.

Therefore, the most fundamental and pressing problem the world faces now, is not one of social justice. Rather, what it confronts is a profound challenge, an urgent, unrealized call to universal sanctification. Hence, the reason for celebrating the Eucharist and for living out Easter in all dimensions of life. This is what Adam's priestly vocation consists of. Pope Francis' encyclical *Laudato Si'* expresses this ancient vocational calling to the entire human race in a powerful, new way. It does it in a clearly interreligious and ecumenical way while deepening the theology of Vatican II on the common priesthood of the faithful.



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