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ASSISI ECUMENICAL PRAYER FOR CREATION WALKING TOGETHER TO COP24

Season of Creation

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John 13, 3-5.12-15

Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he had come from God and was going to God, 4 got up from the table, took off his outer robe, and tied a towel around himself. 5 Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel that was tied around him. [...] 12 After he had washed their feet, had put on his robe, and had returned to the table, he said to them, "Do you know what I have done to you? 13 You call me Teacher and Lord—and you are right, for that is what I am. 14 So if I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. 15 For I have set you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you.

In these first steps of our ecumenical pilgrimage through the Season of Creation, we have borne witness to the tears of creation that fall across space and time. Habitats are disintegrating, biodiversity is lost, changing nutrient and climate cycles threaten the most vulnerable among us. Our injustices will be inherited by youth and generations yet born. There can't be any dispute anymore: Our consumption overtakes the earth's capacity to produce. Our production of waste overruns the planet's capacity to cleanse, heal, and renew itself.

We have confessed that these ecological, economic and social injustices result from our sins of our individual and collective self-centeredness. Martin Luther, recalling St. Augustine before him, recognized that when the human heart turns in on itself (*cor incurvatus in se*), the life giving ties of community and communion are destroyed. Human beings are created for communion with all creatures. Human beings, when truly human, are relational.

And so, the declaration that we issue today calls for something more profound than a technological and economic adaptation to mitigate the loss and damage of climate change. What is needed is a *metanoia*; a faithful return to our deepest human identity in order to restore the right relationships for which we were created.

It is significant that we are meeting here in this Renunciation Room where St. Francis renounced all that covered his human identity. Before God and creation, he stripped himself of all that sought to hide the truth of his vulnerable human nature and draw him away from his true, created glory. Francis knew that being free began by embracing that which God created him to be. His prophetic act points us to Christ who, on the night he was handed over as the 13th chapter of John recounts, got up from the meal and stripped off his garment. He knelt to serve his disciples. Such was the faith of Christ. He renounced the temptation to save his own life. He emptied himself of the desire to exploit the likeness of God. He redeemed right relationships through the ultimate act of service. The Apostle Paul writes in the 2nd chapter of Philippians that such is the renunciation, the emptying (*kenosis*) to which we are called as we live out our Baptism.

Renouncing the desire to exploit our power frees us to nurture life giving relationships with other creatures. Emptying ourselves of this preoccupation makes room to reveal to the image of God, and the holy vocation that humans bear. The Biblical narrative of our Genesis reminds us that our calling is to till and keep the garden – literally in Hebrew to serve (*abad*) as caretakers of the creation's life giving communion.

This is the true liberty of our ecological *metanoia*. Our faithful conversion is not only about the climate, but in a deeper sense, a re-turning to right relationships within creation. This conversion roots us in the deepest dimensions of what it means to be human, and allows the space for life to grow in its fullness.

So, together with the whole Church on earth, we call for this re-turning. We renounce all that would hide our true humanity. We kneel to confess our sins to God. Forgiven in Christ, we rise to stand in solidarity with all creatures on our planet. And we pray that the Holy Spirit will empower us to embrace our vocation to till and keep this garden.