



## Pastoral Letter about the Creation Day General Instruction

*"In Christ were created all things in heaven and on earth"*

(Colossians 1:16)

Dear brother priests and all God's people,

Creation Day, also known as the Feast of Creation in Christ, is celebrated annually on the first Sunday of September. Following CBCP's first pastoral letter about this observance in 2003, over twenty years ago, we would like to reiterate its enormous importance and outline how we are to celebrate it liturgically in the Philippines.

Last year, we had our first edition of the official liturgical celebrations of this day, pursuant to CBCP's general instruction for all parishes and communities to celebrate Creation Day with the new Mass promulgated by Pope Leo XIV. Through this pastoral letter, we wish to remind everyone of that important liturgical mandate, introduce the translations of the liturgical texts, and recall the compelling motivations to celebrate this wonderful feast.

Grounded in the liturgical norms in force, our [CBCP Instruction](#) (which we recommend reading in full) states the following:

*"By virtue of the authority granted to bishops and episcopal conferences by the General Instruction of the Roman Missal (GIRM #373-374), we hereby mandate:*

- **All parishes** and ecclesial communities in the Philippines shall celebrate "Creation Day" (also called the "World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation") on the **first Sunday of September** each year.
- The formulary and biblical readings of the newly approved **Missa pro custodia creationis** shall be used instead of the usual Sunday in Ordinary Time."

To support the Eucharistic celebrations, here are the updated resources to be used on that first Sunday of September (which this year is September 6):

- **Liturgical texts:** while last year we used temporary translations of the new Mass, we would like to now introduce the updated translations of the formulary and lectionary texts, which are to be printed given that Missals and Lectionaries in parishes are outdated. The texts are available in this [folder](#) with the languages available so far (all language versions are authorized for temporary use until the final procedural step of the *confirmatio* is completed).
- **Pastoral resources:** [here](#) are some practical suggestions and materials to support the Eucharistic celebrations.

Moreover, we would like to review some of the motivations for this national celebration, which we hope are useful to stimulate further reflection on the occasion of Creation Day. Why is this observance so important?

**1. The ever-deepening pastoral urgency of the ecological crisis:**

The main criteria listed by the liturgical norms for a general instruction of this nature is that of a “case of a graver need or of pastoral advantage” (*GIRM* 374), to be discerned by the Bishops. Following CBCP’s decades-long deep concern about the “signs of the times” of the ecological crisis, we are gravely distressed about the ever-deepening urgency of this issue and the deadly impacts it has on the most vulnerable people of our communities. As our pastoral letter of 2003 stressed, the desecration of God’s creation “is a matter of life and death”. We are greatly alarmed about both the destruction of our local ecosystems and the global climate emergency that keeps ravaging our islands through ever-intensifying typhoons. How is it possible that the appeals of *Laudato Si’* and *Laudate Deum* continue to be ignored? The liturgical celebration of Creation Day is a precious opportunity and space for repentance, lamentation, thanksgiving, and renewed “ecological conversion”, to be carried forth also throughout the extended Season of Creation.

**2. Creation Day’s profound theological symbolism:**

This observance has ancient roots in the liturgical calendar of the Eastern Church: since the 7th century, September 1 has symbolized God’s act of creation of heaven and earth. As such, Creation Day invites us to contemplate a central mystery of our faith that has often received insufficient attention. In particular, a central aspect of this mystery of Creation that stands out as largely overlooked is its Christological dimension: “In the beginning was the Word... All things came to be through him” (John 1:1,3). This foundational truth has, until now, been absent from the liturgical year and deserves to be rediscovered. The new Mass fills that gap since its lectionary readings feature the beautiful hymn of Saint Paul proclaiming that “in Christ were created all things in heaven and on earth... all things were created through him and for him” (Colossians 1:16). For this reason, the observance is also known as the “Feast of Creation in Christ”. In short, the new liturgy is a way of fulfilling Vatican II’s call for “the treasures of the bible... to be opened up more lavishly” (*Sacrosanctum Concilium*, # 51).

**3. Celebrating Sunday as the primordial feast:**

Sunday, the primordial Christian feast, holds the rich dual symbolism as the primordial “day of creation” (the first day of the creation story, Genesis 1:3-5) and also the “day of the new creation” (the “first day of the week”, Luke 24:1). This dual character is a well established, yet often neglected, understanding. For example, building on teachings of the Church Fathers, Benedict XVI stated: “In the word *dominicum/dominico* two meanings are inextricably intertwined, and we must once more learn to recognize their unity... The early Christians celebrated the first day of the week as the Lord’s day, because it was the day of the resurrection. Yet very soon, the Church also came to realize that the first day of the week is the day of the dawning of creation, the day on which God said: ‘Let there be light’ (Gen 1:3).” The celebration of a Creation-themed liturgy on this day will help us rediscover Sunday’s deep biblical symbolism.

**4. Ecumenical closeness with other churches:**

When we gather around the altar on the first Sunday of September, we will do it in solidarity with countless other Christians around the world marking this special day. In fact, following decades of grassroots celebrations, many Christian churches are

formally instituting the “Feast of Creation in Christ” in their liturgical calendars. This ecumenical development, a beautiful expression of the Lord’s desire that “that they may all be one” (John 17:21), is a direct fruit of the recent commemoration of the 1700th anniversary of the Council of Nicaea. This feast enables Christians to jointly proclaim our Nicene faith in Christ as “true God from true God... through [whom] all things were made”. Confessing Christ’s divinity in this way, as the eternal Logos through whom all was created, helps fulfill Pope Leo’s appeal: “The Creed deserves to be professed and understood in ever new and relevant ways” (*In Unitate Fidei*, # 1).

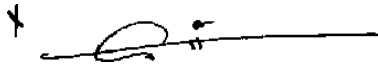
Dear brothers and sisters, let us close by praying that the Holy Spirit assists our local churches as we implement this Creation Day general instruction.

May our liturgical celebrations of this holy day bear abundant fruit in all parishes across the Philippines, praising God as Creator and embodying the prophetic vision of *Laudato Si’*. May this Feast of Creation in Christ, as well as the larger Season of Creation, help us rediscover the centrality of Creation in our Christian faith and everyday life. We ask this through the intercession of Our Lady, the Queen of all Creation, and of Saint Francis of Assisi, whose centenary we celebrate this year.

Sincerely and fraternally in Christ, through whom all things were created,



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