



Seek the Lord

ARCHBISHOP DENNIS M. SCHNURR

God created the heavens and the earth, establishing an ordered universe from what had been chaos. Among all that exists – the land and sea, the trees and flowers, the birds, fish and animals – man and woman stand out as those creatures created in God’s own image and likeness. He has gifted us with intellect and free will and has given us dominion over all creation. Moreover, from the beginning, God entrusted human beings with the task of cultivating and caring for His handiwork. We, then, are stewards of the whole of creation, and we each share in the responsibility to ensure that the goodness which God saw at the beginning continues to radiate testimony to His glory.

From Leo XIII’s promulgation of *Rerum Novarum* in 1891 to Pope Francis’ 2015 encyclical *Laudato Si’*, the popes have consistently reminded Christians and all people of good will of this responsibility. However, we are successful only to the degree that we consistently remember that we too are creatures, not the Creator. Since the Fall, our tendency is to determine for ourselves what is best for us, often to the detriment of our neighbors and the world around us.

Pope Benedict XVI reflected on this reality in his 2010 message for the World Day of Peace, saying, “The harmony between the Creator, mankind and the created world, as described by Sacred Scripture, was disrupted by the sin of Adam and Eve, by man and woman, who wanted to take the place of God and refused to acknowledge that they were his creatures. As a result, the work of ‘exercising dominion’ over the earth, ‘tilling it and keeping it,’ was also disrupted, and conflict arose within and between mankind and the rest of creation (cf. Gen. 3:17-19). Human beings let themselves be mastered

by selfishness; they misunderstood the meaning of God’s command and exploited creation out of a desire to exercise absolute domination over it” (n. 6). How sadly evident is the destruction caused by this attitude of domination in our world today!

As Christians we have a great opportunity to foster a proper understanding of humanity’s dominion over creation. We are not lords over the world in which we live, but rather its servants. God asks us to watch over, protect and nurture creation, not as an end in itself, but as the means by which life is sustained and flourishes.

Pope Francis reminds us, “This responsibility for God’s earth means that human beings, endowed with intelligence, must respect the laws of nature and the delicate equilibria existing between the creatures of this world, for ‘he commanded and they were created; and he established them for ever and ever; he fixed their bounds and he set a law which cannot pass away’ (Ps. 148:5b-6)” (*Laudato Si’*, n. 68). Therefore, we must strive to the best of our ability to observe, safeguard and promote awareness of the natural order which God has woven throughout creation.

As God created, He paused and looked at what He had done, recognizing that it was very good. It was *good* because God had put order into the chaos. It was *very good* because God made man and woman in His own image and likeness. The order with which God endowed creation unravels with human sin but is restored by divine grace. Care for creation, then, begins with care for our own souls, always seeking to live according to the purpose for which God has made us.