

#### 4. Celebrating Creation. Liturgical expressions of care for Creation

With the Tree of Life, we have crossed the threshold from word to image, from text to symbol. And it may have already been felt that symbols are often more powerful than language. Symbols and, in an analogous way, rituals are denser than words, both cognitively and emotionally—even if they are "wordy". A single symbol can say much more than an elaborate treatise of language, and it can move people much more intensely. However, symbols and rituals are more ambiguous and in need of interpretation than words. They often need the explanatory word in order not to be misunderstood.

In Christianity, we call the complex structural whole of symbols, rituals and interpretive words liturgy. This is not only an expression of the Christian faith, but also one of its sources of knowledge—in technical language a "theological place" (*locus theologicus*). However, the *locus theologicus* liturgy differs in some respects from the *locus theologicus* Bible. Whereas the Bible was completed at the end of the founding phase of Christianity and has been handed down unchanged ever since, the liturgy we know today was largely formed after the founding phase and—despite all its persistent forces—has been constantly developed over the centuries. The Bible thus ensures Christianity's fidelity to its origins—hence, liturgy must be constantly measured against the Bible (Tabita Landová 2019, 29–30). At the same time, liturgy can make much more direct references to the challenges of the present, the "signs of the times" (GS 4) than the Bible alone, and ideally embodies a symbolic ritual transposition of biblical texts into people's present lives.

This bridging function that the liturgy assumes between the Bible and contemporary society is highly demanding and does not always succeed. Refractions in the course of Church history must be reckoned with. One such break was the penetration of Greek philosophy into early Christian theology. The first traces of this process can already be seen in biblical writings, for example in the (late) wisdom writings of the Old Testament, in the wisdom echoes of Jesus' teachings and in Paul's adoption of Stoic ideas. But Greek philosophy only developed its full force in its reception by the Church Fathers of the 3rd to 5th centuries. This force is so strong that it erases biblical basic options where they oppose the basic options

of Greek philosophy. With regard to the ethics of Creation, this concerns, above all, the replacement of biblical biocentrism with Greco-Roman anthropocentrism. In the liturgy of the Church, this paradigm shift is still reflected today, but, as we will see, it has gradually been relativised again in recent decades.

In addition, there is a second refraction of the locus theologicus of liturgy: even if liturgy in principle has the potential and the task of taking up the "signs of the times" and interpreting them symbolically and ritually in the light of the Gospel, as a ritual it has an enormous capacity to persist (Tabita Landová 2019, 27–28). Rituals that have been practised for centuries are difficult to change over long periods of time. On the one hand, this is good because rituals ensure diachronic continuity. They are tradition in the best sense of the word. On the other hand, rituals thus run the risk of missing the connection to the present. And we will also see this in the following: While the environmental movement as well as the environmental sciences have vehemently rejected anthropocentrism since the middle of the 20th century and regard it as one of the greatest stumbling blocks on the path to ecological responsibility, the liturgy of the Church partly continues to persist with this unbiblical paradigm adopted from Greek philosophy.

The following reflections will therefore have to make the limits and possibilities of Christian liturgy equally clear. For, on the one hand, "Lex orandi est lex bene operandi" (Tabita Landová 2019, 16; quoted by Paul Ramsey 1979) is true—the law of prayer (and celebration) is the law of good action. But this equation is not a one-way street. It also means that the morality of Christians and even of all people of good will (!) is a locus theologicus for liturgy (and liturgical science) (Ralph N. McMichael 1993, 146; Tabita Landová 2019, 17).

Rituals manifest and construct a particular world view (Tabita Landová 2019, 21). The world view or perspective of Christian liturgy is that of the dawning kingdom of God (Tabita Landová 2019, 20). However, due to historical refractions, liturgy can sometimes lose sight of this perspective and construct a false world view, for example "when we acclaim the human being as the crown of creation and knowingly ignore the human destruction of the environment and its cruelty to animals" (Tabita Landová 2019, 24). Liturgy (and liturgical science) must therefore always strive for openness to other world views and allow itself to be critically questioned by them (Tabita Landová 2019, 23).

Against the background of the doctrine of the *sensus fidei* or *sensus fidelium*, the sense of faith of all the baptised (cf. LG 12), a broadening

of the concept of liturgy is necessary. Liturgy in the broad sense means not only the officially performed rituals and celebrations of the Church, i.e. liturgy in the narrower sense, but also includes the symbolic ritual practices of "popular piety" (cf. International Commission of Theologians 2014, nos. 82–83; 87; 106–112). These also provide information about the Christian perception of care for Creation. And as will be seen, popular piety has remained closer to biblical biocentrism for long stretches than official liturgy. It is not surprising that Pope Francis, who is as deeply rooted in popular piety as John XXIII and who refers to a saint who was not a theologian but also a person of popular piety, namely Francis of Assisi, should write the first encyclical on the Christian contribution to environmental responsibility.

So, what are the already realised and still possible impulses from the Christian liturgy for contemporary ethics of Creation? What can the Christian liturgy tell us about the perception of Creation, and where does it reach its limits in its present form, with the result that it would have to turn to the school of thought of the environmental movement itself?

#### 4.1 "All like the altar vessels". Creation spirituality in the liturgical stance

Before looking at individual liturgical processes in the following sections, we should first address a central attitude of the liturgy itself: reverence (cf. in detail chapter 9.3). Liturgical action or speech will only be coherent and credible if it expresses the attitude of stepping back in front of the ever-greater God and his astonishing Creation. In the secular language of modernity, we speak less of reverence than of respect or esteem. What is meant, however, is ultimately the same thing: reverence or respect recognises the other as independent and ultimately unavailable. It gives the other person space and does not appropriate him or her for its own purposes. The English word "worship" is etymologically derived from the Middle English "worth-ship", appreciation (Benjamin M. Stewart 2011, 9–10; Barendt J. de Klerk 2014, 2). What one does not value, one has no respect for.

Reverence is manifested and concretised in the liturgy in the posture of the body, in someone's way of speaking and the manner of their silence, in the handling of liturgical devices and signs, in the forms of expression in approaching fellow celebrators. In the best case, reverence is permanently perceptible during liturgical celebration. In advance of the concrete

#### 4.2 "Embracing the world". Creation spirituality in sacraments and sacramentals

content of a celebration, a sign or a prayer, liturgy is the expression and performance of reverence.

This is, at the same time, the fundamental attitude of Creation spirituality. Whoever recognises God as the Creator and the world as his Creation will immediately step back in mute amazement, take himself back. In an unsurpassable way, the Rule of Benedict formulates the instruction to the cellarer, that is, the monastery's economist: "All the utensils and all the possessions of the monastery he shall regard like the sacred vessels of the altar." (RB 31,10) With these words Benedict brings an ancient monastic tradition into a tremendously dense formula: Reverence is the central attitude not only of the liturgy but also towards all created things. Creation is not a mass at man's disposal, it is not absorbed in its usefulness for him, but is good and valuable independently of him and ultimately always holds a mystery. This is why the spiritual person will adopt an attitude of reverence towards all created things (cf. Michael Rosenberger 2001a, 26–28). Christian liturgy and ecology are "natural partners" (Benjamin M. Stewart 2011, 11).

#### 4.2 "Embracing the world". Creation spirituality in sacraments and sacramentals

Most post-conciliar treatises on sacramental theology derive the sacraments primarily from the sacramentality of the Church. In this way, they follow the Second Vatican Council, which stated: "The Church in Christ is, as it were, the sacrament, that is, the sign and instrument of the most intimate union with God as well as of the unity of the whole human race." (LG 1) Theologically, this statement was a great step forward—and yet it does not go far enough, for the primordial sacrament in which God communicates himself to the world is this created world itself (Kevin W. Irwin 2019, 267–284). It is therefore logical that Pope Francis, in his encyclical *Laudato si'*, already focuses on the sacramentality of Creation in the prologue. He draws on a statement by Patriarch Bartholomew I of Constantinople when he writes: "As Christians, we are also called 'to accept the world as a sacrament of communion, as a way of sharing with God and our neighbours on a global scale. It is our humble conviction that the divine and the human meet in the slightest detail in the seamless garment of God's creation, in the last speck of dust of our planet.'" (LS 9; quoted from Patriarch Bartholomew I, Address at Halki Summit I, Global Responsibility and Ecological Sustainability: Closing Remarks, Istanbul, 20 June 2012).

The "seamless garment" of the earth alludes to the Passion of John, which, unlike the other Gospels, emphasises that Jesus' undergarment was seamless (Jn. 19:23). When Bartholomew and Francis speak of the "seamless garment of the earth", they connect the garment of Creation with the garment of Jesus and the destruction of Creation with his crucifixion<sup>8</sup>. At the same time, they postulate that nothing can be taken away or cut off from this garment—it is an indissoluble unity in which even "the tiniest speck of dust" has an irreplaceable significance. Those who advocate the anthropocentric thesis that only humanity is destined for redemption and perfection tear apart the "seamless garment of God's Creation".

Francis interprets the sacraments in cosmic breadth. Nothing in Creation is excluded from it: "The Sacraments are a privileged way in which nature is taken up by God to become a means of mediating supernatural life. Through our worship of God, we are invited to embrace the world on a different plane." (LS 235). With this expansion of the classical doctrine of the sacraments, Francis takes up an ancient tradition anew: "ancient sacramental cosmology [...] perceived the entire cosmic community of living beings as grounded in divine life, guided by divine wisdom, redeemed by Christ, and intrinsically related by design." (Mary E. McGann 2012, 57)

In this way, the sacraments not only say something about the spiritual dimension, but also about the material dimension of our relationship with God. Those who use water for baptism also take into account the preciousness of water and its endangerment through pollution or overuse. Those who use bread and wine for the Eucharist must inevitably also ask how these gifts were produced and what ecological effects their cultivation had. Those who have understood Creation as a primordial sacrament must pay the utmost attention to the materiality of the gifts. The rubrics of liturgical books have always done this. But they would need updating in times of a largely industrialised, environmentally destructive (land) economy. And they would have to be heeded better by liturgists, for: "How [...] can we presume to immerse the elect in the baptismal bath, anoint them with consecrated oil, or invite them to the table of the Eucharist, without recognising that the natural signs we use can also speak of the poisoning of the natural world?" (Peter McGrail 2016, 56)

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8 This idea is already represented artistically in the X. Station of the Way of the Cross by the Argentinean artist Adolfo Perez Esquivel (Nobel Peace Prize winner 1980) from 1992. Jesus is robbed of his clothes in the middle of a deforested rainforest—the parallel to the Earth, which is robbed of its clothes, is obvious.

### 4.2.1 Baptism as a sign of the great flood

Baptism brings man's creatureliness into play in several ways. In the immersion of the baptised—the original baptismal ritual, which has largely withered away in the Western Church—the death of the human being is also thematised. At the beginning of his life of faith, man remembers his mortality and transience, which is not abolished by baptism. However, it is given a new interpretation: by dying with Christ (Rom. 6:3–11), Christians have the hope of rising with him. Because the "sting" of death thus loses its power, believers can be "dead to sin", as Paul puts it, and live from the loving care of their Creator. This is why the first form of baptismal water consecration says: "In the waters of the flood you modelled our baptism, as it destroys the old man to awaken new life". This alludes to the destructive power of the great flood at the time of Noah. Unfortunately, however, there is no mention of the fact that this destructive energy of water threatened the very existence of all creatures. Here, one could easily build a bridge to the responsibility of the baptised for all living creatures on earth. This is exactly what happens in a liturgical book for the Evangelical Lutheran Churches in Germany, which was published for trial in 2018 (UEK/ VELKD 2018). There, for the time during which water is poured into the baptismal font, a form of "contemplation" is provided which interprets Martin Luther's famous "Flood Prayer" in a contemporary and true-to-life way. This reflection says: "The water with which we baptise is reminiscent of the floods of water that the Bible tells us about—waters of death and of life: of the Flood in which the world perished—but God preserved Noah and his own together with the animals in the ark." (UEK/ VELKD 2018, 49.63.76)

The water of baptism is a metaphor "of our indissoluble marriage to the Earth, our original existential condition of being-in-the-world". (Mary E. McGann 2012, 356, citing Louis-Marie Chauvet 1995). Every human being is part of this earth and indissolubly woven into its seamless mantle. This profoundly earthly existence is deepened and strengthened in baptism because Christ himself has become part of Creation (Mary E. McGann 2012, 342). The human being is woven even more firmly into this web of Creation through baptism into Christ (Mary E. McGann 2012, 343). Unfortunately, this third aspect (alongside that of sonship to God and church membership) is usually forgotten. It is also absent from official texts, except for the reference to the Flood.

As already mentioned in the introduction, the materiality of the sacraments is of great importance. The instructions for the baptismal rite take

this into account in a differentiated way. There it says in No. 48: "The baptismal water should be ordinary and pure water". So simply water should be used, without any additives, but water of good quality that does not contain any harmful substances. In No. 50 it is added: "The baptismal fountain can be set up in such a way that the water can flow into the basin and out of it. Such an arrangement is recommended because flowing water is a clearer sign of life" (The Celebration of Infant Baptism, 1971). This recommendation, which unfortunately is only realised in a few Churches, can only be underlined from the point of view of Creation spirituality. Baptism in fresh, running water would be highly appropriate and much closer to Creation (Mary E. McGann 2012, 344; cf. Lisa E. Dahill 2016, 182–185). Preferably even in the "wilderness", as with John the Baptist (Benjamin M. Stewart 2011, 27).

#### 4.2.2 The Eucharist as the thanksgiving of all creatures

"It is in the Eucharist that all that has been created finds its greatest exaltation. Grace, which tends to manifest itself tangibly, found unsurpassable expression when God himself became man and gave himself as food for his creatures. The Lord, in the culmination of the mystery of the Incarnation, chose to reach our intimate depths through a fragment of matter. He comes not from above, but from within, he comes that we might find him in this world of ours. In the Eucharist, fullness is already achieved; it is the living centre of the universe, the overflowing core of love and of inexhaustible life. Joined to the incarnate Son, present in the Eucharist, the whole cosmos gives thanks to God. Indeed, the Eucharist is itself an act of cosmic love: 'Yes, cosmic! Because even when it is celebrated on the humble altar of a country church, the Eucharist is always in some way celebrated on the altar of the world.' (John Paul II., Encyclical *Ecclesia de Eucharistia* No. 8). The Eucharist joins heaven and earth; it embraces and penetrates all Creation. The world which came forth from God's hands returns to him in blessed and undivided adoration: in the bread of the Eucharist, 'creation is projected towards divinization, towards the holy wedding feast, towards unification with the Creator himself.' (Benedict XVI, Homily at the Eucharistic Celebration of the Solemnity of the Body and Blood of Christ, 15 June 2006). Thus, the Eucharist is also a source of light and motivation for our concerns for the environment, directing us to be stewards of all creation" (LS 236).

I have deliberately quoted this passage from *Laudato si'* unabridged because it contains dense Creation spirituality of the Eucharist. In bread and wine, the gifts of Creation of this celebration, the celebrants symbolically bring the whole of Creation, especially their own lives, before God. This offering is first and foremost an expression of gratitude to the Creator. Together with all creatures, man praises his God and Lord, for those who celebrate the Eucharist know how much has been given to them undeservedly. At the same time, the offering of gifts is connected with the hope of receiving an even greater gift in return from God: the Eucharist has the structure of sacrifice, of renunciation in the hope of greater gain. This gain is also hoped for not only for the small, narrowly limited community of those celebrating, but for the whole of Creation: the Eucharist is the celebratory anticipation of the end-time, all-encompassing peace of Creation. This anticipation takes place in the inclusion of all Creation in the mystery of Jesus' death and resurrection. The mortality of creatures is not eliminated, but preserved and surpassed. Finally, it should not be overlooked that the Eucharist is a meal. The meal as a culturally designed form of human nourishment is, however, one of the basic processes of creatureliness. It is precisely in their dependence on food that creatures experience their dependence on their Creator and Sustainer. At the same time, the meal creates community and moves those celebrating to share fairly the limited gifts of Creation entrusted to them.

To what extent is such Creation spirituality of the Eucharist visible in the *liturgical texts*? What does the Roman Rite Mass currently say about the transformation of Creation (Joris Geldhof 2019)? The *offertory prayer* over bread and wine, inspired by Jewish prayers of blessing (*berachot*), was reformulated in the 1970 missal: "Blessed are you, Lord our God, creator of the world. You give us bread, the fruit of the earth and of human labour. We bring this bread before your face that it may become for us the bread of life." Moreover, "Blessed are you, Lord our God, Creator of the world. You give us wine, the fruit of the vine and of human labour. We bring this cup before your face, that it may become for us the cup of salvation." This prayer expresses that the gifts are received from the Creator and only then offered by believers. Creaturely nature and human culture are unseparated and unmixed in them—bread and wine are fruits of the earth and human labour. These material foods become spiritual food and drink.

A few *prefaces* address the theme of Creation: The "Preface for Sundays V: Creation" first mentions that God called Creation into existence and subjected it to the change of time ("Qui omnia mundi elementa fecisti, et vices disposuisti temporum variari"). Then it addresses the image of God



in the human being, to whom God "handed over" Creation in order to "rule" over it (in Latin, this is supplemented by "vicario munere"—i.e. "in the office of the representative"). Strictly speaking, the text thus "only" addresses formal anthropocentrism, but not material anthropocentrism. Moreover, praise for God is mentioned as the goal of human dominion over Creation, praise that is carried out "with the whole Creation" (a remark that is missing in the Latin version), which removes the ground for any arbitrariness. By its nature, the text remains relatively short, and the abstractum "whole Creation" is not very descriptive. Nevertheless, its openness to creation-ethical impulses cannot be overlooked, and above all as early as in 1970, even before the Club of Rome report! A second preface that is relevant to Creation is the "Preface for Weekdays I: The Renewal of the World through Christ", which unequivocally testifies to Christ's redemptive action for the whole of Creation. There, it says: "You have made him the head of the new creation... Therefore you have exalted him above all creatures...". Here, inspired by the hymn to the Colossians, a double relationship of Christ to his creation and all creatures is thematised, while humanity as a separate, exclusive group is not mentioned at all.

As far as the *Eucharistic Prayers* are concerned, "it is nevertheless noticeable that the significance of creation-theological motifs and implications in the Eucharistic Prayer... is only little reflected" (Jörg Müller 2017, 91). In fact, only the two new High Prayers III and IV, formulated after Vatican II, contain references to the theme of Creation. All the older Eucharistic Prayers from the early Church onwards surprisingly had no reference to Creation at all (Thomas J. Talley 1993, 13–27). In the transition from the Sanctus to the words of institution, High Prayer III contains two formulations: "all your works declare your praise"—"merito te laudat omnis a te condita creatura" and "you fill all Creation with life and grace"—"vivificas et sanctificas universa". While the first addresses the action of all creatures before God, the second names God's actions towards all creatures. In both respects, human beings do not have an explicitly special role.

Even more so, however, High Prayer IV conveys a "cosmic sense" (Joseph Gelineau 1968, 35–53). Already in its own preface, assigned to this High Prayer, it says: "You have created everything, for you are love and the source of life. You fill your creatures with blessings and gladden them with the splendour of your light."—"qui unus bonus atque fons vitae cuncta fecisti, ut creaturas tuas benedictionibus adimpleres." These allusions to Gen. 1 lean heavily towards biocentrism, for the blessing and joy of creatures signal their intrinsic worth. After the Sanctus, there is again direct recourse to the first Creation narrative and the specific role of

man: "Man you created in your image and entrusted to him the care of the whole world. Over all creatures he should rule and serve you alone, his Creator."—"Hominem ad tuam imaginem condidisti, eique commisisti mundi curam universi, ut, tibi soli Creatori serviens, creaturis omnibus imperaret"<sup>9</sup>. In this sentence, caring (*cura universi*) and ruling (*imperare*—a very steep term) are two mutually interpreting terms that sum up the image of God well in the sense of formal anthropocentrism. That the ductus of the IV High Prayer is materially biocentric is clearly underlined in its final sentences, when it says: "And when the whole Creation is freed from the corruption of sin and death, let us together with it glorify you in your kingdom"—"in regno tuo, ubi cum universa creatura, a corruptione peccati et mortis liberata, te glorificemus." Thus Enrico Mazza (2004, 189) can summarise: "the human person is priest for creation [...] the aspiration of every creature is satisfied."

After analysing the texts, we turn again to the instructions for the *Eucharistic matter*. Theologically, there is little reflection on this. "In much current eucharistic theology, there is curiously little concern for the created, material elements of bread and wine" (David Grumett 2019, 233). This lack of theological reflection is matched by practical neglect. The Eucharist is "celebrated" as fast food. "Although churches and theologians congratulate themselves, and rightly so, for promoting wide Eucharist participation, they have become unwitting promoters of a secular model of mass consumption and exchange..." (David Grumett 2019, 234).

In the first centuries, Christians brought bread and wine for the Eucharist themselves. The bread could have three different forms (cf. Max Währen 2004, 11–21; Michael Rosenberger 2014, 116–119):

- Usually it was a *round loaf of everyday leavened bread* decorated with a cross notch, as can be seen in numerous early Christian images. The 16th Synod of Toledo in 693 admonished that only a whole loaf, not yet cut, should be used. In most Eastern churches, the leavened loaf is still the Eucharistic species today.
- The form of a "*corona consecrata*" was also widespread. This ring-shaped pastry, which looks like half a pretzel, is mentioned in the *Liber pontificalis* I,339 (6<sup>th</sup>–9<sup>th</sup> century) and Gregory the Great (*Dialogi* IV, 55). It is also depicted on several early Christian sarcophagi and in the floor

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9 One might ask why man should serve God alone. The Latin text could also be understood differently: "to serve you, his only Creator...". Theologically, man is supposed to serve God in creatures—and so the "alone" is contradictory when it is related to the verb "to serve".

mosaic in the 4th century basilica of Aquileia. Until the late Middle Ages there are many other depictions, especially depictions of the Last Supper from the 15th century.

- The *host* in the form of a coin ("in the manner of a denarius", according to Honorius of Autun between 1110 and 1130, because Christ was "the true denarius", cf. Eucharistion, PL 172, 1256C-D) made of unleavened dough only appeared towards the end of the first millennium with the invention of the baking iron. It has above all the very practical advantage that it does not have to be broken and thus no crumbs can fall to the ground.

For the communion of the sick, a few pieces of bread from the Eucharist have been kept since the 3rd century. From the 6th century onwards, a closable tabernacle was set up for this purpose in the "sacristy", literally the place of the saint, which was gradually moved into the church interior from around 800. The storage of hosts for distribution at the next Eucharistic celebration has only been attested to since the 11th century and has been common since the 17th century. In other words, in the Western Church, value was still placed on fresh bread until the Baroque period—the use of old, preserved varieties is a relatively recent bad habit. And it only concerns the Western Church—in the Eastern Church, fresh bread is still used at every Eucharistic celebration.

Until the 13th century, communion using both species bread and wine was customary. Only since that time has it been the norm in the West for only the priest to receive communion in the chalice, while in Eastern rites both species are served to this day. The reformers of the 16th century reintroduced the original practice of communion using both species. The wine was exclusively red wine until the middle of the 15th century. In 1478, white wine was permitted by Pope Sixtus IV. Since wine adulterations have been numerous, the Church issues regulations on its purity and controls its production. The wine must be made from grapes, while sugar or other additives are forbidden. Today, these requirements are met by all quality wines in the European Union. Table wine, on the other hand, is not permitted as mass wine because it is diluted with water. Since 1994 it has been permissible to use grape must in exceptional cases with the explicit permission of the bishop. The prerequisite is that the priest is demonstrably not allowed to drink wine for health reasons. In addition, the nature of the must may not have been altered. Therefore, only freezing can be used for preservation, because sterilisation turns must into grape juice (Letter of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith of 22.8.1994 and 24.7.2003).

The following regulations are currently in force (IG = *Introductio generalis* of the *Missale Romanum* 2002<sup>3</sup> (1970<sup>1</sup>), RS = *Instruction Redemptionis Sacramentum* 2004; in the sections referred to here, the IG is essentially still identical with the first edition of the post-conciliar *Missale Romanum* of 1970):

- The bread must be unleavened, made of pure wheat flour and fresh, so that there is no danger of spoilage (IG 320; RS 48).
- The logic of the signs demands that they be perceptible as food and drink (IG 321).
- Therefore, the bread must be broken into different parts to be distributed to believers (IG 321; RS 49).
- If the large number of faithful requires it, small, non-divisible hosts may also be used, but the gesture of breaking bread will be more clearly recognisable as a sign of unity if a single loaf of bread is broken and distributed (IG 321).
- The wine should be natural and pure (IG 322; RS 50).
- It is important to ensure that the bread and wine are well preserved. Under no circumstances should the wine be sour (IG 323; RS 50) or the bread spoiled or so hard that it can hardly be broken (IG 323).

As can quickly be seen, the 2004 *Instruction of the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments* considerably weakens the provisions of the immediate post-conciliar period, which are excellent in themselves, by its very omissions: there is no longer any mention of recognisability as food and drink. The value and significance of the gesture of breaking bread are no longer mentioned. Indeed, a formulation is even inserted which directly undermines it: "Usually small hosts are to be used to a large extent, which do not need any further breaking." (RS 49). With this the Congregation approves of what is *de facto* practised in most of the Churches in the world according to Vatican Council II, just as before. The departure towards a renewed Eucharistic meal culture, which can be sensed in the *Introductio generalis*, has been stopped.

In themselves, the provisions are very clear in their values: the best material species are only good enough for the Eucharist. They should be recognisable as food—and I add: to be tasted—and shared with each other. What is missing is a clearer option in favour of the communion of the chalice by all present. And finally, of course, it would be desirable to return from the wafer host to proper bread or pastry. One of the reasons for the change to the wafer was, above all, the fear that breadcrumbs might fall. For the same reason, the lay goblet was abolished, because drops of wine could fall to the ground. This fear goes back to the first Christian cen-

turies. Thus, even Tertullian (*De corona militis* 3,4) writes: "We also suffer fearfully lest any of our cup and bread fall to the ground." The *Traditio apostolica* writes (TA 37–38), "Let all take care that no non-believers taste of the Eucharist, no mouse or other animal, and that nothing of it falls and is lost. For it is the body of Christ that is to be eaten by believers and not despised. After the cup is blessed in the name of God, you have received it as the antitype of the blood of Christ. Therefore do not spill any of it for a foreign spirit to lick it up, because you have spurned it. You will be one who despises the blood, the price with which you were bought." Good as it is to be careful and cautious with the Eucharistic species, the two texts testify a fear that borders on superstition. This fear is still the greatest obstacle to the introduction of real bread and the cup for all.

#### 4.2.3 The other sacraments

The other sacraments also show references to Creation, even if not all have the same intensity. *Confirmation*, as the affirmation and completion of baptism, signifies the mission of the confirmed in the Church and the world, including the mission of environmental and co-environmental responsibility. However, this mission is not named in the liturgical prayers, and anointing with oil, the material sign of Confirmation, is only formally interpreted as being similar to Christ, but is not explained in material terms. Both in terms of the rite and the texts, the Sacrament of Confirmation remains pale and reflects the theological perplexity about its meaning.

Actually, the acceptance of physical suffering and infirmity is a constitutive part of the affirmation of creatureliness. In the celebration of the *anointing of the sick*, however, no reference is made to this. In part, this may be due to the justified desire to keep the celebration short in view of the physical condition of the seriously ill. However, a reference to the theological dimension of the anointing of the sick would have been possible. There is a lack of existential depth here.

The reference to Creation becomes clearer in the *sacrament of marriage*. Scripture readings from the Creation narratives Gen. 1–2 are suggested as an option. The prayer of blessing over the bride and groom, the high prayer of the sacrament of marriage, refers in all four forms to the Creation of human beings as man and woman. In addition, the procreation and upbringing of children is interpreted as special participation in the creative work of God. Finally, the bride and groom promise each other their fidelity in health and sickness until death—again addressing human mor-

tality. Appropriate to the occasion, the focus of the celebration remains anthropocentric (not anthropocentrist!). The non-human Creation does not come into view; only the optional reading of Gen. 2:18–24 includes animals and suggests that the "universal family" of which LS 89 speaks includes more than just humans. Yet one could have placed precisely the fertility blessing for man and woman in the context of the fertility blessing for animals, for in Gen. 1 and Gen. 9 this blessing is given to all living creatures. Procreation of offspring and family formation is not a specifically human process—humans share it with many creatures.

In the celebration of the *ordination* (of deacons, priests and bishops), the references to Creation are certainly not very immediate. It is about the ministry of the Church. Nevertheless, service to the world is a declared part of this task. That is why the ordaining bishop asks the candidates before the actual act of ordination, among other things: "Are you ready to assist the poor and the sick, to help the homeless and the needy?" Here, on the basis of the encyclical *Laudato si'*, it would be necessary to add: "... and to take care of the earth, which is 'among the most neglected and mistreated poor!'" (cf. LS 2). An analogous addition in the prayer of consecration itself would strengthen this idea and take account of the high rank of this mission.

The last remaining sacrament, the *sacrament of penance*, needs the reference to Creation less in its ritual than in the personal confession of guilt. And this is where there is probably the greatest need to catch up. For the common confessional mirrors of the old as well as the new hymnal and prayer book "Gotteslob" are structured according to the Ten Commandments—a structure that corresponds to the Catechism of the Catholic Church, but not to post-conciliar considerations of moral theology. No. 600 of the 2013 German-language hymnal and prayer book "Gotteslob" asks under "Respect property": "Have I contributed to environmental pollution or destruction? How do I behave towards animals?" As meaningful as these questions are, they are robbed of their Creation-theological point by subsuming them under property relations. Compared to this, No. 601 takes the Third Commandment on the day of rest a step further when it asks: "What does the beauty of Creation mean to me? Can I encounter it with awe and wonder and experience God in it?" Subsumption under the Sabbath commandment places Creation in direct reference to God and points to its own being independent of human beings. Under the VII. and X. Commandments on property, on the other hand, No. 601 falls back to the previous level: "Am I willing to reconsider my consumer behaviour and strive for a moderate and Creation-friendly lifestyle?... Do I respect the

earth as a home of life for all people?" This is strictly anthropocentric thinking: the earth is only worth preserving for the sake of humans. Better is the Confessional Mirror for Children No. 598, which is structured according to areas of life and classifies animals in the category of family life: "Have I taken care of our pet? Have I hurt animals?" These formulations already suggest a proximity to the "universal family" of LS 89. All in all, the confessional mirrors in the "Gotteslob" could still be improved.

#### 4.2.4 The earth rite of burial as a return to the earth

From a pastoral point of view, the ecclesiastical funeral celebration occupies a prominent place in people's lives, far beyond their perception of most sacraments. Within this celebration, in turn, the most meaningful moments are the lowering of the coffin and the heaping of earth onto it.

The earth rite is a clear reminder of one's own creatureliness. The liturgist says: "From the earth you were taken and to the earth you will return. But the Lord will raise you up." Benjamin M. Stewart (2019, 363–366) rightly points out, I think, that the second phrase annihilates the first. Nothing against the resurrection message, but it does not belong to the earth rite, but to the sprinkling of the coffin with holy water, that is, to the remembrance of the baptism of the deceased. Stewart points to the much wiser formulation of the earth rite in the Greek Orthodox funeral service: "The earth is the Lord's, and the fullness thereof; the world, and all that dwell therein (Ps. 24:1). You are dust, and to dust you will return (Gen. 3:19)." (Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America 2017, Funeral Service, in: <https://www.goarch.org/-/funeral-service>, retrieved 31.10.20). Here another scriptural quotation precedes the sentence from Gen. 3:19 and cannot trump the drama of being earth. Rather, it is embedded in a confession that everything is in God's hands. Thus, creatureliness receives its own dignity and appreciation.

The sinking of the body into the earth is at the same time a return of the body to the earth—like "giving something back" (Benjamin M. Stewart 2019, 371). The body returns to the cycle of nature and can nourish flowers, worms and other living things. This is a theologically and spiritually significant fact. As the Australian theologian Val Plumwood, who was nearly eaten by a crocodile in 1985, writes: "It is not a minor or inessential feature of our human existence that we are food: juicy, nourishing bodies." (Val Plumwood 2012, 10).

In Anglo-Saxon countries, the "natural burial movement" is currently spreading: The basic pillars include the renunciation of embalming the corpse with formaldehyde or other environmentally harmful chemicals, the renunciation of cremation for reasons of climate protection, an ecologically easily degradable coffin and the sinking of the coffin into the earth in such a way that at least no negative, but if possible a positive ecological effect emanates from it (Benjamin M. Stewart 2011, 77–86; 2012, 62–72). While the real ecological impact of the sacraments is extraordinarily small and Creation comes into play mainly on the symbolic level, the ecological consequences of a funeral are considerable—and are still little considered. Greater coincidence between faith in Creation and environmental action is urgently needed here.

#### 4.3 Tuning in with Creation. Creation spirituality in (liturgical) prayer

Also, (liturgical) prayer expresses the spirituality of Creation. This applies first of all to the prayer of Christians par excellence, Our Father. Another rich source is the Church's Liturgy of the Hours, which will be examined in the second section. Finally, a painful gap should be pointed out: the prayer of lamentation, which has hardly been cultivated in recent centuries and yet is so necessary in the environmental debate.

##### 4.3.1 The Lord's Prayer

The way the Lord's Prayer has been handed down in biblical texts, it is unlikely to have come from Jesus word for word. Exegetically, it is easy to see that evangelists have developed and shaped it further. Nevertheless, the original voice of Jesus is perceptible. After the salutation, the prayer has three "You-petitions", which in the original Greek end with σοῦ (your) and direct the gaze towards God, and three "We-petitions", in which ἡμεῖς/ ἡμῶν/ ἡμῖν/ ἡμᾶς (we/ our/ us/ us) occurs seven times and directs God's gaze towards the intentions of those praying. Two of the six petitions have a special reference to Creation, one for you and one for us.

The second You-petition "*thy kingdom come*" may, indeed must, be read in the light of Creation spirituality beyond pure anthropocentrism. If in Christ the final peace of Creation is initially realised (Mk. 1:13), then the reign of God encompasses the whole of Creation, not only humanity. The dawning of this reign brings justice for all creatures.



The first We-petition, "*Give us today our daily bread*", is about the necessary, abundant basis of human life. In a time when the bread of the coming day was not certain, this petition undoubtedly had a haunting ring. But even in an industrial society that offers a maximum of food security, it can remind us that this is not a matter of course, but a gift of the Creator God. In Matthew, the bread petition of the Lord's Prayer is closely related to another text that follows only a few sentences later (Mt. 6:25–34): Jesus' exhortation to carelessness. This exhortation applies equally to men's care for food and women's care for clothing. Using the example of the birds, which are fed by God, and the flowers, which are clothed by God, men and women are to learn what carelessness is in the context of the distribution of tasks at that time: trust in the Creator, who means well with his creatures and gives them enough to live on. The last sentences of this passage are particularly urgent: "So do not worry and ask: What shall we eat? What shall we drink? What shall we put on? For all these things are the concern of the heathen. Your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But you must first be concerned about his kingdom and his justice; then everything else will be given to you in addition." (Mt. 6:31–33) In these tremendously dense sentences, the Jesuan ethic and spirituality are brought to the fore: maximum human commitment to justice—and maximum trust in the nurturing care of the Creator (cf. chapter 10.1). These two aspects are not contradictory, but rather condition each other: Only those who commit themselves with all their might to justice leave God free and do not degrade him to a fulfiller of wishes. And only those who trust completely in God do not become dogged and morally sour in their commitment, like a doer who constantly puts himself under pressure. The combination of trust in God and commitment breathes boundless freedom—for people and for God.

The Lord's Prayer thus contains two petitions that closely connect human beings and non-human creatures. The broad horizon of Jesus' spirituality of Creation becomes palpable.

#### 4.3.2 The Liturgy of the Hours

The Liturgy of the Hours of the Church is not only a textual witness to the spirituality of Creation but is itself, already in its form, spirituality of Creation, since it is integrated into the rhythm of Creation (cf. on the following Michael Rosenberger 2012, 109–112). This becomes clear in its central form for Western Christianity in the Rule of Benedict. Seven times

a day the community gathers for prayer (RB 16). Every seven days the entire Psalter is prayed through, beginning on the first day of the week, Sunday, with the night hour (RB 18). In this way, Benedict consciously builds a bridge to the seven-day work of the first Creation narrative: the rhythm of prayer is aligned with the rhythm that the Creator has placed in his Creation from the beginning. The praying person is in harmony with the whole of God's Creation, he joins in the great symphony of God's praise through his Creation and thus places himself with it in the hidden presence of the Creator.

In this context, it also becomes understandable why the ancient hymns of the Liturgy of the Hours very often recall the creation of the world in Gen. 1 (Peter Jeffery 2019, 137–164; likewise, Enzo Lodi 1998, 111–129). This is already true for three of the five genuine hymns of Ambrose of Milan (339 Trier–397 Milan):

- Aeterne rerum conditor/ Maker of all, eternal King (according to RB 9:4, the hymn of the nocturn, in the four-week Psalter the hymn of Lauds on Sunday of the 1st week).
- Iam surgit hora tertia (according to RB 17:5, the hymn of the third, not included in the Four Weeks Psalter).
- Deus creator omnium/ God That All Things Didst Create (according to RB 17:8, the hymn of Vespers, in the Four Weeks Psalter the hymn of First Vespers on the Sunday of the 1st week).

In the current Book of Hours, the hymns of Vespers address the seven-day work of Genesis 1 and explicitly tell of the respective day of Creation. They probably originated in the 7<sup>th</sup>–9<sup>th</sup> centuries in an Irish monastery in France. Only on Saturday evening is the older Ambrosian hymn used, which the poet of the younger hymns most likely knows and reverently wishes to preserve.

It can thus be said that the hymns of the late antique and early medieval Liturgy of the Hours are closely interwoven with the Creation narrative. Only the Ambrosian hymns for Lauds and for Advent turn to Christ. Otherwise, the Creation theme dominates. The praying person places himself in the great work of God's Creation—he prays in harmony with the whole of Creation. This also corresponds to the basic idea of many Psalms. Psalm 148 in particular is an eloquent example of the invitation to the whole of Creation to join in the praise of God. Yes, the last sentence of the book of Psalms, which can be interpreted as a summary of all 150 Psalms, reads: "Let everything that breathes praise the Lord. Hallelujah!" (Ps. 150:6)

However, the Liturgy of the Hours not only has strong references to the biblical texts of Creation, but also to the rhythms of real Creation, i.e.

to the rhythm of day and night and the rhythm of the seasons. The two defining hours are Lauds and Vespers. One is prayed at sunrise, the other at sunset. Vigil is prayed at the first light of dawn, Compline at the last light of dusk. The other three Hours, Terce, Sext, Non, divide the sunlit day into four sections of equal length. So that this order can be realised equally in view of the different work requirements in summer and winter, Benedict gives a different measure of prayers for the seasons (RB 8–18). In summer, there is less prayer and more work, and vice versa in winter. This may have been an economic necessity in pre-modern times, but for Benedict it becomes a theological and spiritual programme: the praying person fits into the natural rhythms. At sunrise, he hears the birds and sees the day becoming brighter, and at sunset he feels the coming of silence and the envelopment of darkness.

With the invention of the mechanical clock and even more so with the invention of electric lighting, the Benedictine monastic world also broke away from the rhythms of Creation—from the daily rhythm as well as the annual rhythm. This step, which is unilaterally interpreted as emancipation in the modernist narrative of progress, was momentous. It may have favoured the misinterpretation of the mission of dominion in Genesis 1 more than we have been aware of so far. In any case, it must also be read as a step towards the alienation of humans from nature.

#### 4.3.3 The missing lament prayer

When Creation is taken into prayer, it is often in the form of praise, thanksgiving and wonder. Supplication (like that for daily bread) is also a common form of prayer in this context, sometimes as a request for forgiveness for our "environmental sins", as they say. One form, on the other hand, which is abundantly attested to biblically, is hardly ever found in our Creation spirituality at present: lament.

How can we adequately bring non-man-made natural disasters into prayer? The same applies to anthropogenic natural destruction when the culprits are not so easily identified. The Catholic missal of 1970 has some such situations in mind under the "Masses for various needs and occasions", e.g. earthquakes (no. 34) and storms and storms (no. 37). In the Greek Eastern Church there is even a liturgical commemoration of the great earthquake of Constantinople on 26.10.740 (André Lossky 1998, 131–151). But there the prayer is always immediately for salvation from distress. At the same time, in the Gospel of the day about the calming

of the sea storm, Jesus sadly asks his disciples at the end why they have no faith. It seems as if the Church is just as incapable of speaking as the disciples in the swaying boat.

In view of the gigantic ecological threats, catastrophes and destruction, Timothy Hessel-Robinson (2012, 41) therefore suggests that the Church should develop prayers of lament. For its current lack of speech leads to deafness and paralysis, and precisely these two attitudes can be observed in abundance. Lament, says Hessel-Robinson, is an authentic expression of one's feelings and testifies to a proactive attitude, not fatalism. Lament is a companion of hope, not its opposite. Only by lamenting can one avoid slipping into cheap consolation (Timothy Hessel-Robinson 2012, 41). Lament makes the unspeakable speakable and makes those lamenting feel solidarity and compassion with those who suffer.

Given the abundant biblical examples of lament prayer, it must be surprising that it is so little practised in the praying of the Church. Five elements of biblical lamentation could be helpful if we are to be able to speak in the environmental catastrophes of the present:

- The unsparing and empathetic description of misery (e.g. in Lam. 1). It seems grotesque that such a description does not occur at all in the "Masses for special intentions".
- The description of one's own feelings in the face of this misery. In the Book of Lamentations, for example, it sounds like this: "At this I must weep, mine eye, yea, mine eye runneth down with tears." (Lam. 1:16) "My inward parts burn; my heart is turned within me." (Lam. 1:20) "I groan without ceasing, and my heart is sick." (Lam. 1:22)
- The crying out of one's own pain, e.g. in cries of woe (Lam. 1:1; 2:1; 4:1 a.o.).
- The questioning, even if it remains without an answer: "How much longer?" (Ps. 6:3; 13:1-2) "Why?" (Lam. 5:20; Ps. 10:1; 22:1; 43:2) "Where?" (Ps. 42:3; 79:10) (Timothy Hessel-Robinson 2012, 43). Again, it is paradoxical that, unlike the Bible, official liturgical prayers do not include such questions.
- And finally, the humble request that God sees the misery, but without making a demand that and how he should act: "Behold my misery, O Lord!" (Lam. 1:9) "Lord, look and see how I am despised." (Lam. 1:11) "Lord, behold how I am afraid!" (Lam. 1:20) "Lord, remember what has happened to us; look here and see our shame!" (Lam. 5:1).

Lament is a form of prayer that endures pain by expressing it. It does not put it off, it does not ask for an end, it simply looks the pain in the face and seeks only one thing: compassion. This is often more honest than any-

thing else and at the same time an enormous psychological relief. Because what we express, we can also let go of and surrender, at least in part. For people in the environmental movement, who often wear themselves out for decades in their commitment to the environment and hardly achieve any success, the prayer of lament is an important spiritual source.

#### 4.4 Sharing the Easter Bread. Creation spirituality in the church year

Over the course of several centuries, Christian liturgy has developed a "church year" that complements the weekly cycle, which has been dominant from the beginning and is centred on Sunday as the day of Christ's resurrection, with an annual cycle centred on a number of important high feasts. This includes not only the high feasts themselves, but also times of preparation and follow-up. The question is what role the faith in Creation plays in this cycle.

Originally, the major church festivals go back, at least in terms of their dates, to events in nature: Easter, like the Jewish Pesach, to the first harvest of barley, Christmas as the "successor" to the festival of the Roman sol invictus to the day of the winter solstice. However, this external reference only applies to the northern hemisphere of the earth. If one does not want to introduce a two-part liturgical calendar on the globe, seasonal references may only be used indirectly for the theological interpretation of the festivals. This will therefore be dispensed with in the following, for in the marked times of the church year, the basic tension of Creation and redemption is made clear in its own way, even without reference to their seasonal locations.

In *Advent*, it is the groaning of Creation, which "lies in birth pangs" (Rom. 8:22) and longs for its redemption, that is expressed liturgically. Programmatically, the Old Testament readings of the Sundays of Advent in reading year A make this clear: On the first Sunday, the great vision of the pilgrimage of the nations to Zion (Is. 2:1–5) is presented. On the second Sunday of Advent, it is the second great vision of the Old Testament, the vision of the messianic peace of Creation (Is. 11:1–10). From the global view of humanity on the first Sunday, the view widens on the second Sunday to the whole of Creation. The reading on the third Sunday of Advent remains faithful to this broadened perspective, telling how the desert of Israel begins to blossom anew with the return of the people from Babylonian captivity (Is. 35:1–6a.10). Finally, on the Fourth Advent, the announcement of the birth of a royal child is read (Is. 7:10–11). This

sequence of four Isaiah texts makes it unmistakably clear that the Messiah will transform and enliven the whole of Creation.

On *Christmas Day*, the dichotomy of Creation and redemption in the Gospel of John's prologue (Jn. 1:1–18) is interpreted in terms of the mystery of the Incarnation as Christ becoming a creature. However, while the preface for Christmas II ("He heals the wounds of all Creation"—"in integrum restitueret universa") and the benediction ("In Christ God has joined heaven and earth"—"qui per eius incarnationem terrena caelestibus sociavit") must be read biocentrically or even ecocentrically, the collect prayer narrows the Christmas message anthropocentrically: "O God, who wonderfully created the dignity of human nature and still more wonderfully restored it, grant, we pray, that we may share in the divinity of Christ, who humbled himself to share in our humanity"—"Deus, qui humanae substantiae dignitatem mirabiliter condidisti, et mirabilius reformasti: Da nobis eius divinitatis esse consortes, qui humanitatis nostrae fieri dignatus est particeps." As wonderful as the idea is to relate human dignity to Creation by God and redemption in Christ, and as wonderful as the Latin formulation of the last half-sentence is, which unlike the English translation contains the "dignatus est"—"he found it worthy", a reference back to human dignity in the first half-sentence—it could just as well have been formulated non-anthropocentrically, especially on such important solemnity: "O God, who wonderfully created all creatures in their dignity and still more wonderfully restored them, grant, we pray, that we may share in the divinity of your Son, who found our creaturely nature worthy and accepted it."

Such a biocentric formulation would have been more in keeping with the *sensus fidelium*. For since as early as the 4th century, believers have placed the *ox and donkey at the manger* in which the divine child lies: "Since the earliest times, the two animals [...] have always belonged to the manger. St. Joseph can be missing, even the mother can be missing, but never the child with ox and donkey." (Joseph Ziegler 1952, 402). The Church Fathers often interpreted the scene allegorically, sometimes also naturalistically. In both interpretations, however, the animals are portrayed in a very appreciative way. Thus Jerome (347 Stridon/Dalmatia–420 Bethlehem) writes: "'And she laid him in the manger.' Why in the manger? So that the prophecy of the prophet Isaiah would be fulfilled: 'The ox knows its owner and the donkey the manger of its master' (Is. 1:3). In another place it is written: 'You will protect people and animals, O Lord' (Ps. 35:7). If you are a man, eat bread; if you are an animal, come to the manger." While Jerome emphasises the equal protection of the divine

child for humans and animals, Peter Chrysologus (c. 380 Classis near Ravenna–451 Ravenna) emphasises the greater openness of animals to the incarnate Son of God: "The animals received him in the manger, whom you would not receive into your house." (Peter Chrysologus, *Sermo* 156). And the apocryphal Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew (earliest between 600 and 625 AD) concludes in chapter 14: "So even the animals, ox and ass, worshipped him continually while they had him between them." At the latest with Francis of Assisi in 1223, but probably a little earlier, the ox and donkey are then also found in the liturgical celebration in the Church (cf. Thomas of Celano, *Vita prima S. Francisci* XXX, 84–87). They thus belong to the Holy Family, are, as it were, Jesus' older siblings and have "received a little brother" in him. Yes, they are even closer to the divine child than Mary and Joseph—the spatial arrangement is an image of the spiritual connection. Thus, the two animals testify: "The event of Bethlehem... has consequences for the whole of creation, not just for us humans" (Theodor Maas-Ewerd 2000, 195). For this reason, the ox and the donkey found their way into the official liturgy of the Hours of Christmas as late as the 1st millennium. Until the liturgical reform after the Second Vatican Council, the following responsory was found there: "O magnum mysterium et admirabile sacramentum, ut animalia viderent Dominum natum, iacentem in praesepio. Beata Virgo, cuius viscera meruerunt portare Dominum Christum. Alleluia."—"O great mystery and wonderful sacrament, that animals saw the Lord born, lying in the manger. Blessed is the Virgin whose womb was worthy to bear Christ the Lord. Alleluia."

Another popular church tradition in many European countries says that Christmas Eve is the night "when the animals talk". They talk about the treatment they have received from humans during the past year, accuse or praise their keepers, and not only those still living, but also deceased animal owners. It is a kind of divine day of judgement because the child in the manger is listening to them. Even if it is "only" a beautiful legend, it still reminds people to treat animals well and with respect. And the fact that it is timed precisely at Christmas establishes the connection to God's becoming a creature: "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto the least of these my sisters and brethren, the creatures, ye have done it unto me."

The Easter cycle begins with *Ash Wednesday*, the day of "contemplation of the dust of mortality" (Benjamin M. Stewart 2019, 362). The "sacramentum" of this day is that the worshippers have "ashes sprinkled on their heads". The remembrance of one's own mortality as the most impressive feature of creatureliness is thus placed before the reflection on one's own sin. It is only in the view of death that the deepest threat and the utmost



radicality of sin are illuminated. However, apart from the blessing of ashes, the liturgical texts are more introductory texts for the Easter penitential season than for the *memento mori* of Ash Wednesday. This is understandable, but a pity. A reading from Gen. 2–3 about the commissioning of man, formed from dust, to cultivate and care for the earth would undoubtedly have a special Creation-theological power in this celebration.

The *renunciation of food*, which is supposed to characterise Lent, can reinforce the *memento mori* of the ash rite: Food, as the most necessary creaturely act for survival, recalls one's own mortality more than any other human act, and fasting intensifies this reference. The Church's practice of fasting involves both quantitative aspects of fasting (e.g. only eating once a day) and qualitative aspects (so-called abstinence, e.g. from meat and alcohol). Traditionally, the forty days before Easter were very strict in both respects, and in the Eastern Churches they still are today. On the Catholic side, fasting has been reduced and "liberalised" so much since Vatican II that it is almost imperceptible. Instead of parishes and monasteries, it now takes place in adult education centres and health centres. Yet fasting is an expression of the spirituality of Creation and a strong symbol of the peace of Creation (Ioan Moga 2017, 109–112), for the temporary renunciation of eating other living beings makes us newly and more intensely aware of being woven into the "seamless garment of God's Creation". It nourishes the attitudes of humility and gratitude, justice and reverence.

With the celebration of Jesus' death on *Good Friday*, this dynamic of Lent finds its ultimate vanishing point. The prostratio, the laying on the ground of the liturgical services, is a strong symbol of death and takes up the Ash Rite of Ash Wednesday in a second image. The St. John Passion, which is the focus of the liturgy, admittedly has no explicit references to Creation. For the other three Passions, however, this is the case in two places: Mk. 15:33 parr tells us that from the sixth to the ninth hour an eclipse came over the whole land. This is not an astronomical fact, but a theological interpretation: If it becomes dark at the sixth hour, i.e. at noon, when the sun normally shines brightest, then with the crucifixion of Christ the order of Creation from Gen. 1 is turned upside down. It is a cosmic catastrophe, as announced by Am. 8:9 (Joachim Gnilka 1979, 321). The whole of Creation is drawn into the disaster that Jesus' crucifixion causes. Mk. 15:38 parr in turn tells us that at the moment of Jesus' death the curtain of the temple is torn. According to Flavius Josephus, this curtain, which separates the Holy of Holies of the Temple, consists of a fabric woven from four coloured yarns and symbolises the four elements of fire (scarlet), earth (byssus brown), water (hyacinth blue) and air (purple). The



vault of heaven is woven into the curtain. The curtain "was thus to offer, as it were, a picture of the universe" (Flavius Josephus, *De Bello Iudaico* V, 112–114). With the tearing of the curtain "from top to bottom", the whole of Creation opens radically to God (Joachim Gnilka 1979, 324; Karl Löning/ Erich Zenger 1997, 76–77).

Nowhere is the cosmic meaning of Jesus' death on the cross better expressed than in the symbol of the cross as a tree of life. The hymn of the Lauds of Good Friday sings of this idea, and many crucifixes are designed as tree of life crosses (cf. chapter 3.8). Finally, modern art in particular takes up this idea and establishes a connection to the agonising death of many creatures.

The round of readings for the *Easter Vigil* begins with the first Creation narrative from Gen. 1. This places the Paschal Mystery from the beginning in the context of the creation of the world: "The resurrection means... the re-creation and completion of creation." (Diana Güntner 2009, 196). This is also emphasised in the oration to the first reading: "may those you have redeemed understand that there exists nothing more marvelous than the world's creation in the beginning except that, at the end of the ages, Christ our Passover has been sacrificed." If one places this first reading in its larger liturgical context, further Creation-theological impulses emerge: on Good Friday the whole world was darkened—in the *Easter Vigil* the whole world is illuminated. First the light of the Easter candle, the "light of Christ" is sung about, then the first speech of God in the first reading is: "Let there be light." The light of the resurrection thus shines into the last corner of Creation—this is the impulse of this choreography. All creatures are to share in the paschal light and life. This is also the theme of the Preface for Eastertide IV: "with the old order destroyed, a universe cast down is renewed, and the integrity of life is restored to us in Christ.."—"vetustate destructa, renovantur universa deiecta, et vitae nobis in Christo reparatur integritas."

In some rural areas of the German-speaking world, there was or is a ritual at Easter for the faithful to share their Easter bread, blessed in the liturgy, with the animals. Those who share the bread with each other are literally "companions" (from the Latin *panis*, bread), equal table companions who meet each other at eye level. In the light of the Easter message, animals and humans become equal before God: as equally beloved creatures of the same God and inhabitants of the same great house of life, as equally called to resurrection and chosen by the risen Christ. Easter is the feast where something of the great peace between man and animals can already be experienced. Of course, this ritual can be interpreted as

magic and superstition, and at times it may have been understood as automatically protecting animals from danger. But even then, one can read a value of the animal from it. In purely economic terms, a cow is worth a lot. Remembering this could be an impetus and help to discover and appreciate its unaccountable inherent worth as well. The ritual of shared Easter bread has a dynamic that goes beyond economics—whether one likes it or not. In it, human beings and animals can be experienced in their unique dignity.

In summary, it can be seen that many Creation-theological expansions of the Gospel are offered precisely at the key moments of the church year. They are not always fully developed and savoured in the orations, but they can hardly be overlooked. Birth and death are the two strongest features of creatureliness. Thus, it seems almost imperative that the birth and death of Jesus show intense references to Creation. To address them appropriately is a great liturgical and pastoral task.

#### 4.5 Promising goodness. Creation spirituality in the blessings

In the course of the year, the Church offers a wealth of blessings. Some of these fall within the realm of Creation spirituality. Such blessings of the reality of Creation are deeply related to the "calling good" of created realities by God in Gen. 1. Blessings mean "recognition and assurance of being good" in the name of God (Peter Ebenbauer 2017, 136). Thus, "blessing and being blessed is that religious act... in which a creature makes explicit its unique and original relationship to the Creator of all beings, and... therein also articulates his/her creaturely connectedness with all other creatures..." (Peter Ebenbauer 2017, 137).

Blessings are always counterfactual: because de facto not everything is good, the hope is witnessed and its fulfilment requested that everything will be good (Peter Ebenbauer 2017, 137). Judaism therefore praises and blesses even the negative weather phenomena in relation to the hymn of praise of the three young men in the furnace of fire (Dan. 3:51–90) (Peter Ebenbauer 2017, 143–144). This testifies to a great trust in the Creator, who can change everything for the better, and avoids superstition in a magician or fulfiller of wishes.

Blessings relativise the "technocratic paradigm" of modernity, which the encyclical *Laudato si'* comprehensively criticises: Not everything is possible for man—some things, often the decisive things, must be given to him (Peter Ebenbauer 2017, 144–145). This primal experience of being

thanked and given, which determines creaturely existence, is represented and made fruitful in blessing. Therefore, in the following we will examine how the blessings of the Church bring Creation to the fore.

#### 4.5.1 Blessings around nutrition

As in the Our Father prayer, the concern for sufficient food is one of the most important concerns of humanity. Food is not produced (contrary to the economic diction of "food production") but must grow. It is, with all human labour, first of all a gift. The corresponding blessings are therefore connected equally with petition and thanksgiving.

Under the *request for sufficient food*, the 1981 Benedictional for the German-speaking world has two blessings: One is the weather blessing under No. 8. Three forms are offered for it, the first and the third of which make explicit reference to Creation: "You have entrusted man with your creation" and "You have entrusted the world to us humans" respectively. The other, under No. 80, is the blessing of the fields, pastures and vineyards and exhorts above all to gratitude. In both blessings, one could expand the aspect of ecological responsibility, which has only been present in traces so far.

In the Roman Missal of 1970, the request for food is found in several "Masses for various needs and occasions": Under "No. 33 In time of famine or for those suffering hunger", Form A says "who provide for all creatures" and Form B says "who provide food for all living things". Thus, both prayers are biocentric in nature, without the idea being developed further. No. 35 "For rain", on the other hand, formulates "what sustains us in this present life" in a manner reminiscent of the Lord's Prayer, and No. 36 "For fine weather", in its formulation "what in your goodness you bestow", also shows no reference to non-human creatures. The ecological responsibility of human beings is not addressed at any point.

As far as *thanksgiving* is concerned, we can first note that after Easter and Christmas, Thanksgiving is one of the most attended services of the year—and not only in the countryside. Of course, on Thanksgiving, we do not celebrate a salvation event from the life of Jesus. And undoubtedly the fact that a separate Mass form was only introduced after Vatican Council II proves the pre-conciliar "reserve vis-à-vis Thanksgiving" (Winfried Haunerland 2000, 255). But is Thanksgiving therefore already "not a liturgical feast in the narrow sense" (Winfried Haunerland 2000, 255)? And is it really an exclusively peasant feast that is "decontextualised" outside this

context (Winfried Haunerland 2000, 256)? Does it really need elaborate catechesis and must be "catechetically overformed" (Winfried Haunerland 2000, 257)?

Even in the cities, where farming is not a part of everyday experience and therefore processions of petition or in the fields have no place, the harvest festival enjoys great popularity. This is because the consumption of food is also a basic everyday activity for the urban population. Thanksgiving is first of all the thanksgiving of all those who know what hunger is and that food is not produced but has to grow. There is no need for "catechetising over-forming" to make this clear because all people eat and drink every day. Everyone has felt hungry or thirsty at one time or another. The question of where food comes from is therefore elementary. In the perception of average believers, Thanksgiving is often the only liturgical place where faith in Creation becomes manifest.

In the Eastern Church, the feast of Thanksgiving has a fixed date, the feast of the Transfiguration of Christ (Nicholas Denysenko 2019, 285–306). In the Western Church, on the other hand, we leave the date open—so the feast can be scheduled according to local circumstances, especially in the southern hemisphere. This is a pastoral opportunity, because it opens up the possibility of basing the date on the locally grown food and the local climate. If a lot of grain is grown in a region, the feast can take place earlier than in a wine-growing region. In southern countries it can take place earlier than in northern countries. In this respect, I interpret it as listening to the *sensus fidelium* that the post-conciliar missal contains a form for Thanksgiving (Masses for special intentions no. 27 Thanksgiving).

Textually, the Mass prayers for Thanksgiving contain ethical impulses for the realisation of justice (for sharing the harvest gifts with fellow human beings) and for orientation towards the heavenly gifts. The blessing of the harvest gifts provided for in No. 10 of the 1981 Benedictional for the German-speaking world has the same anthropocentric orientation. Thus, the preface says: "The blessing of the harvest gifts means... the call to think of hungry people and to help care for them...". The prayer of blessing over the gifts says: "You have destined man to subdue the earth, to cultivate it and to make good use of its riches... Let the poor and hungry also experience the riches of your goodness..." Such formulations are negligently blind to the ecological challenges in the year 2020. They urgently need a broadening of horizons.

That nutrition is not one topic among many, but a key theme of Christian spirituality, becomes clear from the fact that the 1981 Benedictional for the German-speaking world also offers nutrition-related blessings in

the family: in No. 57 the blessing of the table and under No. 58 the blessing of bread. In both, as in the blessing of the harvest offerings, only social responsibility for the hungry is addressed. A broadening of the view beyond a human context does not take place.

#### 4.5.2 Blessing of herbs

The blessing of herbs on the feast of the Assumption of Mary has a solitary position among the blessings. It focuses on the experience that man is given healing plants in Creation, which he can and may use for himself as well as for animals. In this he experiences the healing care of the Creator Himself. Of course, magical misinterpretations or irrational exaggerations of old home recipes must be avoided. Not all healing effects attributed to certain herbs in earlier times can be confirmed by today's scientific methods. Also, the separation of "good natural", because they are herbal, and "bad artificial", because they are chemical, remedies or active substances does not do justice to reality. Nevertheless, the actual spiritual message of the blessing of herbs remains valid, that the Creator gives healing remedies to man in many ways. Particularly in the context of modern biotechnologies and their pharmaceutical use of genetic and species diversity, the blessing of herbs could sensitise people anew to the value of this diversity. This is not yet mentioned in the 1981 *Benedictionale* for the German-speaking world under No. 9. At the time it was written, the problem of biodiversity was not yet on the environmental agenda. However, it is prayed for that people "will one day join in the praise of all Creation"—a biocentric thought.

#### 4.5.3 Blessing of the waters

A very special blessing is firmly anchored in the Eastern Churches, which the Western Churches do not know: The Great Consecration of Water on the Feast of Epiphany, which has occasionally even been counted among the sacraments (on the following, cf. Nicholas Denysenko 2019, 285–306; Basil J. Groen 2019, 73–78; Grigorios Larentzakis 2011, 357–358). Unlike the Western Churches, the Eastern Churches celebrate the feasts of the Epiphany and the Baptism of the Lord in a single feast. The Great Consecration of Water, which refers to the second feast idea of the Baptism of Jesus, consists of two parts: On the eve of the feast, i.e. 5 January, the

baptismal and holy water is blessed. After the scripture readings and the prayer of blessing, a cross is immersed three times in the water basin. Afterwards, the faithful drink from the blessed water and take it home to bless their houses and flats. On the feast day itself, i.e. on 6 January, the waters are blessed. Wherever possible, the congregation organises a procession to the nearby river, lake or sea. Following the scripture readings and the prayer of blessing, a cross is thrown into the water and retrieved by swimmers. Fishermen are present with their boats and accompany the ceremony.

Both celebrations of blessing have the same five readings: Is. 35 (springs break forth in the wilderness); Is. 55:1–5 (Come, all you who thirst, come to the water!); Is. 12:1–6 (we will draw water from the springs of salvation); 1 Cor. 10:1–4 (all drank the same spirit-given drink); Mk. 1:9–11 (Jesus' baptism). The three Isaiah texts in particular offer rich impulses from Creation theology that can be well related to questions of environmental responsibility.

The prayer of blessing over water begins with a long anamnesis of the creation of the world. This makes it clear: it is Creation that praises God, not humanity alone. It is this Creation that God takes into service to heal humanity (Nicholas Denysenko 2019, 285). However, it is time for the prayer of blessing to also remind people of their responsibility to be stewards of Creation. This would require an appropriate addition (Nicholas Denysenko 2019, 302–303).

After his election as abbot of the Benedictine Abbey of Niederaltaich in 1989, Emmanuel Jungclaussen (1927 Frankfurt/ Oder–2018 Niederaltaich) made a lasting commitment to the free-flowing Danube between Straubing and Vilshofen. Inspired by the Eastern Church tradition, he went down to the Danube every year on 6 January and blessed the last piece of untouched river landscape between Ulm and the Danube delta. Thousands of people took part in these celebrations. In 2008, he received the Bavarian Nature Conservation Award for this from the Bund Naturschutz in Bavaria. Five years later, his commitment was successful: the Bavarian state government withdrew the project to expand the Danube near Niederaltaich.

#### 4.5.4 Blessing of the animals

The *Benedictionale* for the German-speaking world from 1981 offers a blessing of animals under No. 78. Such animal blessings have been attested

to since the 4th century but were only included in the *Rituale Romanum* in 1874 (Florian Kluger 2011, 259–260). Even there, animal blessings "are to be counted among the category of invocative material benedictions." (Florian Kluger 2011, Appendix on CD-ROM, 67). This is not about animals as fellow creatures and living beings, but about animals as (material) possessions of humans. This is also reflected in the structure of the German *Benedictionale* of 1981, where the blessing of animals has its place under the chapter "Work and Occupation" and is placed between the blessing of restaurants and the blessing of machines.

Nevertheless, the 1981 *Benedictional* for the German-speaking world, in marked contrast to the current *Rituale Romanum*, emphasises human responsibility for animals with great clarity (Florian Kluger 2011, 274). Thus, as early as in the introduction it says: "Man has responsibility towards all living beings, especially towards the domestic animals that live with him and help him earn a living." Biocentric texts from the Old Testament—there would hardly have been any others—are offered as readings throughout: The creation and naming of animals (Gen. 2:19–20a), the rescue of animals by Noah (Gen. 8:15–19), the creation and blessing of animals (Gen. 1:24–25, 30–31) or the diversity of animals (Ps. 104:20–22, 24–30). And the prayer of blessing formulates: "You have entrusted your creation to man... You have given it into man's hand that he may use it and thank you for it... protect these animals... So they may help man and be a joy to him." Finally, the litany, with its invocation of the holy animal patrons, contains the petitions, "Help us to respect animals as fellow creatures" and "Create for us joy in the animals you have created." The German-language *Benedictional* is thus much more moderate in its anthropocentrism. It also consciously addresses human responsibility for and joy in animals (Florian Kluger 2011, 277–278). Finally, at least in the readings, it opens the view to a biocentric expansion of perspective.

In recent years, animal blessings have experienced a rebirth: in St. Peter's Square in Rome on the feast of St. Anthony, the father of monks, who is venerated as the patron saint of animals in the Romance-speaking countries; in St. Stephen's Square in Vienna on the feast of St. Francis of Assisi; and at many pilgrimage churches of St. Leonhard on his name day. Whether horses or cattle, budgies or dogs: people seek blessings for their animals.

#### 4.5.5 Blessing in the killing of animals. A missing person report

An agricultural sociological study shows how farmers in small family farms perceived the mass culling of their cattle during the BSE crisis in 2001 (Karin Jürgens 2008, 41–56). They experienced the culling, which took place directly on their farms, completely differently from the normal slaughter of their animals. Even their choice of words shows a completely different ethical assessment: instead of "slaughtering" they speak of "killing", "making dead", "beating to death", "slaying", "butchering", "murdering". It is clear from their descriptions that they have internalised the classical Christian ethos that permits the killing of animals only for food. What they also experience as painful is that due to the rapid mass culling, the usual farewell rituals were hardly possible, such as an extra dose of food, a last grooming, the last body care and the verbal farewell to the animal to be culled. Not infrequently, they would have wished for the support of a priest.

Karin Jürgens' research clearly shows how ritualised the slaughtering process was in small-scale farming and still is in some cases on small family farms. Hunting also has a rich repertoire of rituals surrounding the killing of animals (Michael Rosenberger 2008 and 2015, 214–216). Rituals signal precarious life situations. They help to cope with and process them in a responsible way. That the killing of an animal is an extremely precarious situation has been known to humans from the beginning.

For this reason, *Judaism* has developed a ritual for the process of killing animals that is still sacred today: the ritual slaughter (cf. on the following Michael Rosenberger 2019). The blood, the lifeblood of the animal, may not be consumed (Gen. 9:4) and must flow out completely during slaughter. It belongs to the animal alone—not even to God may the blood be offered. In this respect, the ritual of slaughter signals that the animal must not be exploited to the last drop of blood. It has a dignity that must not be taken away from it despite the killing. The ritual of slaughter is thus an expression of respect for the animal as a creature loved by God and, at the same time, admonishes us to deal with it in an ethically responsible manner.

Today's practice of Jewish slaughter, which is mainly based on the tractate Chullin 1–2 of the Talmud, reflects this well: The butcher must be qualified and ethically blameless like a rabbi; he must slaughter consciously and attentively. The preparatory fixing of the animal is important. This was originally done with ropes, but is done today with different, often very elaborate and (at least seen from the outside perspective) special sophisticated



apparatuses, since the animal must be positioned in such a way to allow it to bleed out completely. A prayer of blessing is said over the animal. No automated apparatus may be used for the actual slaughter. The slaughterer must make a single, uninterrupted, rapid cut through all the soft tissues of the neck with an absolutely sharp blade. Only the spinal column remains unsevered. The sharpness of the blade must be checked beforehand for each individual slaughter.

*Islam* has adopted the Jewish practice as far as possible. "Halal", i.e. permitted, is the consumption of meat under two conditions: when the complete bleeding out of the animal is ensured (Sura 5:3) and when the name of God has been proclaimed over the animal (Sura 5:3; 22:28, 34–37). As in the Torah, there is no information on the technique of slaughter in the Koran, but there is in the Hadith, the traditional Islamic literature. For German Muslims, an authorised working group of all Muslim organisations laid down the following as a binding rule in 1988 (Axel Ayyub Köhler 1996, 145): An animal may not watch another being slaughtered; the animal may not be completely tied up when slaughtered; it must be watered, fed and calmed down beforehand; the slaughterer says a prayer over the animal facing in the direction of Mecca; the cut with a very sharp knife, freshly sharpened immediately beforehand, must sever the carotid artery and windpipe immediately so that death occurs as quickly as possible and the animal's suffering is kept to a minimum.

The detachment of *Christianity* from the prohibition of slaughter in the (early) Jewish mother religion was very laborious, but radical. In the New Testament we still find evidence that the Old Testament prohibition of the consumption of blood is one of those directives that do not seem to be applicable to Jewish Christians and must therefore also be imposed on Gentile Christians (Acts 15:20). Paul, however, does not agree with this. The Letter to the Romans testifies that for him eating unkosher meat is not a reprehensible act but is possible in the freedom of the gospel (Rom. 14:14). The young church's option for the mission to the Gentiles therefore leads to the abolition of Jewish slaughter regulations within a few generations. Christian slaughter is thus at least formally profaned—an understandable step in view of the historical situation, but one with serious consequences. Even today, its negative consequences for the Christian attitude towards animals can only be guessed at in outline. The Church unwittingly relinquished its influence on the slaughter of animals. The survival of slaughter rituals on family farms and in hunting proves that people have come of age here and are able to bring about meaningful rituals without the support of theology and the official Church. It is time

to reflect on these from a liturgical and scientific point of view and to recognise them in the official Church.

4.6 *As the church "do not remain silent". Creation Day and Creation Time*

In 1988, the participants in an ecological congress of Greek Orthodoxy on Patmos asked their patriarch to establish a liturgical day to commemorate the care of Creation (cf. on the following Bert Groen 2019, 307–332). The Synod of the Greek Orthodox Church in Istanbul in 1989 affirmed this concern and established the beginning of the Orthodox Church year, 1 September, as "Creation Day". To announce it, Patriarch Dimitrios I. Papadopoulos (1972–1991) addresses a message to the faithful, saying: "The abuse by contemporary man of his privileged position in creation and of the Creator's mandate 'to have dominion over the earth' (Gen. 1:28) has already led the world to the edge of apocalyptic self-destruction, either in the form of natural pollution which is dangerous for all living beings, or in the form of the extinction of many species of the animal and plant world, or in various other forms. Scientists and others learned individuals are now warning us of the danger and speak of phenomena which are threatening the life of our planet, such as the so called 'phenomenon of the greenhouse' whose first indications have already been noted. In view of this situation the Church of Christ cannot remain unmoved." (Ecumenical Patriarchate 1989).

In 1989, even before the UN Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) in Rio in 1992, these are words that made people sit up and take notice. And so the "Day of Creation" gradually spread further and further. In Greek Orthodoxy, Patriarch Bartholomew I Archontonis (1991 to the present) is continuing his predecessor's initiative with great commitment. At his suggestion, the Second European Ecumenical Assembly in Graz in 1997 proposed that this festival be adopted in all Christian churches. Ecumenical groups in particular did so shortly afterwards. But the large churches and their leaders still need almost twenty years before they follow suit: Since 2015, the Russian Orthodox Church has celebrated Creation Day on the first Sunday in September. And also in 2015, Pope Francis adopted 1 September for the Roman Catholic Church.

In contrast, the Third European Ecumenical Assembly in Sibiu in 2007 pleaded for a longer Creation Time from 1 September to the feast of Francis of Assisi on 4 October. Within this time, the churches should place an emphasis on both liturgy and educational work. The liturgical Day of

#### *4. Celebrating Creation. Liturgical expressions of care for Creation*

Creation can then be determined according to local circumstances. The period was deliberately defined in such a way that in most Central European countries the harvest thanksgiving festival is included in it. This makes it possible to combine Creation Day with the traditionally important harvest thanksgiving festival on the one hand and to celebrate it on a Sunday on the other. However, a Creation Time that is over a month long naturally runs the risk of no Creation Day being celebrated, neither on 1 September nor on Thanksgiving Day nor on St. Francis Day.

Is such a Creation Sunday to be rejected as a "Sunday of purpose", as Winfried Haunerland (2000, 257) does? It is certainly true that a purpose, however good, must not be the primary, dominant motive of a liturgical celebration. Liturgy is first and foremost not a "moral institution". So, Creation Day should not be established so that the Church has something to show for environmental protection. But as an expression of its faith in God the Creator, which does not take centre stage on any of the classical feast days of the church year, a Day of Creation is urgently called for. And of course, responsibility for Creation will then have to be addressed on this day, as Patriarch Dimitrios already demanded in 1989.

Basically, a creation time or day is about perceiving and interpreting a sign of the times (GS 4). If, on the one hand, the liturgy is to be the "culmination and source" of church life (SC 10) and, on the other hand, responsibility for Creation is not a secondary aspect of the Gospel (LS 217), then the theme needs at least one day in the church year on which it is the focus of celebration, prayer and proclamation. In this respect, I interpret Haunerland's reserve rather as a warning not to "make" such a day at a desk and then stamp it out of the ground by force, but to broaden and deepen an accepted and evolved festival in the church year in terms of Creation theology. In the Eastern Churches, this can be the beginning of the church year, and in the West it can be Thanksgiving or the Feast of St. Francis. None of these festivals is done violence to by focussing on the endangered creation and our responsibility for it. On the contrary, ancient church festivals need to be linked to the great social challenges of the present in order to remain alive and young. Patriarch Dimitrios' initiative in 1989 hits the mark here.

#### *4.7 Celebrating outdoors. Creation as a space and time-giver for the liturgy*

Wherever services are currently offered in the great outdoors, they experience high numbers of participants. This is true for outdoor services such

as May devotions in one's own meadow and mountain masses in the mountains, which are held in one location, but also for processions and pilgrimages that are mobile and cover a shorter or longer distance through nature. Many dioceses in the Alpine region have set up their own websites where you can find information about all the mountain masses in the diocese. And the number of pilgrimage routes has been increasing steadily for thirty years—a boom whose end is not yet in sight. The desire for masses in the countryside is also growing, even if the motives are not always spiritual. Nevertheless, it is probably a genuine need of the people. In times when almost all of their everyday life is far from nature, they are looking for closeness to nature in the spiritual realm and want to experience God there.

In principle, this is not a new option. For centuries, wayside shrines and crosses, small chapels by the wayside and on mountain tops have been evidence that the whole of Creation was understood as a place of encounter with God and of worship. But the industrialisation and mechanisation of the modern age has considerably intensified this trend. In this respect, in conversations with believers, the burden of proof is increasingly reversed: it is not the question of why we should go out of the church into nature for a service of worship that is considered to require justification, but why we should normally go inside the church for worship and withdraw from God's creation, as it were: "Why do we generally retreat indoors for worship?" (Scott M. Kershner 2017, 42). In winter and bad weather, this question is unnecessary. But in beautiful, warm summer weather, the answer is not so evident.

In itself, the question is ancient—in Israel it has long been felt that man must justify himself if he wants to build God a solid, closed house: "Thus says the LORD: Heaven is my throne, and the earth is the footstool for my feet. What kind of house would you build for me? What place is this that is my rest? All these things have my hand made, and so all these things have become, saith the LORD." (Is. 66:1–2). So, for theological reasons, the great outdoors should become a place of worship much more often. On the one hand, where Creation can be experienced in all its splendour: "in various natural environments where bestowal of beauty and resources are evident" (Mary E. McGann 2012, 53). But also where it is threatened or destroyed: "in natural settings where degradation is evident" (Mary E. McGann 2012, 55). Think of petition services in front of nuclear power plants or along new motorway routes, lignite mining or a threatened watercourse like the Danube near Niederaltaich (see above chapter 4.5.3).

Where possible, church buildings should also connect with the Creation around them: Be it through large windows looking out into a beautiful landscape, be it through open windows and doors so that the singing of the birds and the blowing of the wind can be heard and felt inside the church. "The architecture of our worship spaces, rather than contain us within a space apart, must invite us to a sense of living, active communion with the natural world." (Mary E. McGann 2012, 57)

Creation is not only the largest and most beautiful church space built for us by the divine architect seen in medieval depictions of Creation, but also the best *zeitgeber*. Until the invention of mechanical clockwork, the main prayer times of the Liturgy of the Hours were determined by the rising or setting of the sun (cf. chapter 4.3.2). This enabled those praying to have a holistic experience at the transition from day to night and from night to day. The Easter Gospels stress with great emphasis that the women "went to the tomb early in the morning, just as the sun was rising" (Mk. 16:2)—"at the dawn of the first day of the week" (Mt. 28:1), "early in the morning" (Lk. 24:1) or "early in the morning, while it was still dark" (Jn. 20:1). This strong emphasis on the time of dawn reflects the custom at that time of celebrating a short service early on Sunday morning, which was then a working day, while the Sunday Eucharist took place after work (Lk. 24:36–49; Jn. 20:19–29).

In contrast to Judaism and Islam, which to this day set their times of worship according to the sun and thus differ from place to place and from day to day, Christianity allowed itself to be overwhelmed by the introduction of the mechanical clock in the 14th century—indeed, it even pushed it forward, for the first clock machines were largely located in churches and on church towers. The only sun-dependent times of worship that remain official are the Christmas Mass and Easter Vigil, for which a beginning in complete darkness is prescribed. It should not be surprising that such a rule seems strange and is disregarded in a religion that otherwise does not care about the position of the sun all year round.

What on the one hand can be seen as emancipation from the constraints of nature is on the other hand a form of alienation. For the biorhythm of animals and humans is based on the sun and daylight—the inner clock is reset every morning with the first daylight, and physical and mental performance go through several cycles in the course of the solar day. It corresponds to the creatures to live with the course of the light and to act accordingly—even if one does not demonise artificial light like some theologians of the 18th and 19th centuries. It is not for nothing that the old Christian churches were all oriented towards the east. During the morning

service, people wanted to look in the direction of the rising sun because in it they recognised Christ, the Sun of Righteousness. Romanesque churches were often even built in such a way that on a certain day, usually Easter Day, the light fell exactly on the altar through the eastern apse window during the mass. In other words, church architecture was also sun-related.

The fact that the biblical Creation mandate from Gen. 1–2 could be misunderstood in modern times in the way that Lynn White notes and associates with Western Christianity may have much more to do with this decoupling of worship times (and thus, of course, working times) from the natural rhythms of the sun than he thinks. Whoever wants to master Creation must master time. In Eastern Europe, the mechanical clock spread much later than in the West.

#### *4.8 Still room for improvement. A conclusion*

At the Franciscan School of Theology in Berkeley, California, there has been a dedicated course on "Ecology and Liturgy" for over a decade (Mary E. McGann 2012). According to the encyclical *Laudato si'*, such a course should become a compulsory part of every theology course. Especially when revising and updating liturgical books, care should be taken to ensure that those entrusted with this important task are trained in this area and have a good sense of Creation spirituality. For ecology and liturgy, creation ethics and liturgical science are still largely two separate worlds. This corresponds neither to their origin nor to their potential. We should use this room for improvement!