Special Circular  AUGUST, 2020 /No. 095.2

TO ALL PRIESTS AND RELIGIOUS WORKING IN THE ARCHDIOCESE OF LAGOS, AND THE LAY FAITHFUL

Dear Msgri./Frs., Brothers and Sisters in the Lord,

YEAR 2020 SEASON OF CREATION
THEME: JUBILEE FOR THE EARTH

The global Christian family celebrates the good gift of creation every year from September 1st to October 4th (feast day of St Francis of Assisi), by uniting in prayer and actions to protect the earth which Pope Francis aptly describes as “Our Common Home” in his encyclical “Laudato Si”.

God created the earth and everything therein and saw it was “good” (Gen. 1:31). He created Man as steward or caretaker of his creation. So as good stewards, we have a duty and common responsibility to take care of our common home. This teaching of our shared responsibility is an integral part of the church’s social teaching that is highlighted in the Pope’s encyclical: Laudato Si: that we share the earth with other living creatures created by God. (Gen. 9: 10); Indeed, our well-being is inter-woven with the earth’s well-being. We have a duty not only to ourselves but also to all creation to protect and nurture the goodness of creation (Gen. 2:15; Jer. 29: 5-7) because what affects one negatively, also affects or impacts the other.

The reality of the Covid -19 pandemic, has forced humanity into deep reflection on our shared nature as living beings as we watched a tiny, invisible virus put lives on hold, bringing human activities to a standstill. What this has taught us is to have a rethink on our lifestyle and activities, a reevaluation on how we use earth’s resources for our selfish gains. We cannot continue to live as though we are the only ones existing on this planet. We therefore, must seek new ways, to maintain a balance in our life systems, for the good of the earth and the good of all creatures - a clear response to what the Holy Father Pope Francis aptly terms “The Cry of the Earth” which can no longer be ignored, since the earth’s capacity to sustain our economic and ecological demands is now truly limited. Human activities have become causes of climate change and the advent of deadly zoonotic diseases. To put an end to this, we must
engage in new, just and more sustainable ways of living that allows for restoration of habitats and ensure the provision of fundamental human needs such as healthy food, clean water, shelter, energy, good affordable health care, and a clean environment.

It is important to note that this year 2020 is the 5th anniversary of Laudato Si as well as the 50th anniversary of the Earth’s Day hence, we are in a Jubilee Year of Environment Movement, a year of rest and renewal for the earth and this accounts for why this year's Season of Creation has the theme: "Jubilee for the Earth" (Leviticus 25:10), calling us to a time of prayer and action to save Mother Earth, our common home.

In this Season of Creation therefore we call on all the Clergy, the Religious and Lay faithful of our Archdiocese to celebrate our interconnectedness as living beings who share a bond with each other and with the whole of creation. We are called to spend time in prayer, to consider ways of making our common home better sustained and to advocate for ecological conversion and change of lifestyles.

On the 1st of September therefore we shall begin the Season by celebrating a votive Mass of Thanksgiving for God’s gift of Creation. Care of our common home, ecological conversion and prayer for the Earth should feature in our homilies and Masses. We shall share a reflection on the day in a manner similar to our Lenten reflections. Every Tuesday thereafter, a themed audio reflection will be broadcast by the Lagos Archdiocese Laudato Si circle/NYCCEN, for four consecutive weeks leading up to the 4th of October. Other events that may follow will be announced as the season progresses.

In the spirit of the season, we are called to action individually, as families and as a community. We urge you to practice an Action of Conservation: conserve water, use energy saving bulbs, re-use and recycle products, use home waste to create compost, say No to plastics, stop unnecessary accumulation, live a simpler life, curb the “throw away” culture, clean up your environment, plant a herb or vegetable garden in troughs or a tree in pots and watch them grow. Admire the beauty around you even as you stroll and pray your rosary.

We urge our schools to create students' clubs on the conservation of the environment at least virtually before resumption. We also encourage them to explore creative ideas on how to conserve our environment and return to nature. We recommend also the Ignatian Ecological Examen, as a great resource for reflection on care for our common home, www.ecologicalexamen.org.

Let us continue to pray that God, the Creator of the universe would bless our efforts as we celebrate this special Season of Creation through prayers, reflections and bold actions until
we realize our common responsibility as caretakers of the earth and stewards of creation, leading us to new just and sustainable ways of inhabiting the earth, our common home.

(Signed)

+ Alfred Adewale Martins
Archbishop, Metropolitan See of Lagos
29th August, 2020