

# A Call for Ecological Metanoia

## Prayer, Action, and an Ecological Way of Life

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We are called to reflect with urgency on the state of our planet. The cry of the earth and the cry of the poor are intertwined in a symphony of suffering, amplified by the escalating climate change crisis. This is not merely a political or economic issue; it is a deeply spiritual one, demanding nothing less than a universal ecological metanoia — a fundamental change of heart and mind away from our ecological sins.

### **The Biblical Mandate: Stewards of the Garden**

From the first pages of Holy Scripture, we are given a sacred vocation. The Lord God placed humanity in the Garden of Eden *"to work it and keep it"* (Genesis 2:15). We are not owners to plunder, but stewards — *oikonomoi* — entrusted with the care of a creation that declares the glory of God (Psalm 19:1).

The Psalmist reminds us that *"The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof"* (Psalm 24:1). Our ecological sins of pollution, unsustainable consumption, and indifference violate this sacred trust and fracture our relationship with the Creator and His creation.

### **A Unified Cry from Global and Christian Leaders**

This call for action is echoed by voices across the globe. The United Nations Secretary General has repeatedly warned that we are on a "highway to climate hell," urging immediate and transformative action to meet the goals of the Paris Climate Agreement. The Executive of the UN Framework on Climate Change (UNFCCC) continues to facilitate the COP process, reminding nations of their commitments to reduce emissions and support the most vulnerable. The recent IPCC reports are a stark, scientific confirmation of what we see with our own eyes: a world in distress.

Within the Body of Christ, this mission is central. Our spiritual leaders have been prophetic voices:

His Holiness Pope Francis, in his encyclical *Laudato Si'*, calls us to an "ecological conversion," to hear both the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor, recognizing that everything is connected. His successor Pope Leo XIV carries on, asking us, to respect and protect the Holy Creation of God for the survival of our Planet and for the protection of future generations.

His All-Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, the "Green Patriarch," has tirelessly taught that to commit a crime against the natural world is a sin. He emphasizes that the Eucharist itself is an act of cosmic communion, drawing the entire creation into the transformative presence of Christ.

The Archbishop of Canterbury and global Christian bodies, including the World Council of Churches, the Lutheran World Federation, the World Communion of Reformed Churches, and the Baptist World Alliance have all mobilized their communities, declaring climate action a core gospel issue of justice and stewardship. The All Africa Conference of Churches (AACC) powerfully underscores that Africa, while contributing least to emissions, suffers most from their consequences, making this a paramount issue of faith and equity.

### **Theological Foundations: From Sin to Communion**

Esteemed theologians like the late Metropolitan Kallistos Ware of blessed memory and Metropolitan John Zizioulas have provided a profound theological basis for this work. They teach that the root of the ecological crisis is a spiritual failure: a forgetfulness of the world as sacrament, a means of communion with God. Our individualism and consumerism rupture this communion.

As Metropolitan John Zizioulas asserts, the human person is fundamentally a "priest of creation," called to offer the world back to God in thanksgiving (*eucharistia*). This is the true meaning of our existence. Our Professor the late Archbishop Anastasios of Tirana, exemplifies this, having integrated environmental restoration with spiritual mission, demonstrating that ecological action is evangelism in practice.

This leads us to the concept of ecological metanoia. We must repent of our ecological sins— of greed that leads to deforestation, of sloth that refuses to change our habits, of pride that places human desire above the balance of nature. We are called to a new asceticism: not one of rejection of the world, but one of freeing ourselves from addiction to consumption to embrace a simpler, more sustainable life.

### **Practical Proposals: A New Style of Daily Life**

This metanoia must be embodied in concrete action. Let us commit, as families and parishes, to the following:

\* Embrace Energy Conversion: Audit our church and home energy use. Invest in renewables where possible. Reduce, reuse, recycle.

\* Alter Our Consumption: Choose local, seasonal, and sustainably produced food. Drastically reduce single-use plastics and meat consumption. Support ethical businesses.

\* Cultivate Gardens of Eden: Create parish and community gardens. Plant trees as acts of faith and hope. Protect local biodiversity.

\* Advocate and Educate: Use our voices to advocate for bold climate policies from our leaders. Write to elected officials. Support the work of organizations aligned with our values.

### **Structures for Participation and Education**

To sustain this effort, we must build sustainable structures for the long term:

\* In Our Parishes: Establish a "Green Team" or "Creation Care Committee" to implement practical projects and educate the congregation.

\* In Our Schools and Universities: Integrate ecological theology and ethics into every level of curriculum.

\* Science must be taught alongside ethics. Schools should become living laboratories of sustainability, with gardens, recycling programs, and energy-saving initiatives. Universities must lead in research for sustainable technologies and ecological philosophy, as advocated by leading economists like Professor Jeffrey Sachs, who calls for a holistic approach to sustainable development.

### **Global Partnerships:**

\* Encourage our institutions to divest from fossil fuels and reinvest in a green economy.

\* Partner with international Christian networks to share best practices and support communities on the frontlines of the climate crisis.

### **The Full Meaning of Ecological Metanoia: Justice, Restoration, and Reparation**

When we speak of ecological metanoia—a profound spiritual transformation away from our ecological sins—we must understand its full, demanding scope. True repentance is not merely about changing our personal habits; it is about actively working to restore justice where we have caused brokenness. This means our response to the ecological crisis must be inextricably linked to a response of social, economic, and historical justice.

A true ecological metanoia therefore compels us to:

### **1. Restore Justice to Achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs):**

The UN's Sustainable Development Goals are not a secular agenda but a modern blueprint for biblical justice. They seek to eradicate poverty, hunger, and inequality—conditions that are both causes and consequences of environmental degradation. Our Christian mission to love our neighbor is fulfilled by championing these goals, ensuring that all of humanity can flourish in dignity and health.

### **2. Right the Historical Wrongs of Colonialism:**

A fundamental aspect of our ecological sin is the theft and exploitation of land belonging to Indigenous peoples during colonial rule. This was not only a social injustice but an ecological one, severing the sacred bond between communities and their ancestral territories, a bond that often served as the most effective guardian of biodiversity. Ecological metanoia demands that we support the return of stolen land, honor Indigenous land rights, and learn from their ancient wisdom as stewards of creation. We must repent for the times Christianity was misused to justify this plunder and stand in solidarity with Indigenous communities in their struggles.

### **3. Fulfill Our Moral Responsibility to Former Colonies:**

Many nations now suffering severe effects of climate change and deep poverty are nations that were once colonized by Christian nations. This places a unique historical and moral responsibility upon Christians and the governments of wealthy nations. Ecological metanoia requires tangible acts of repair:

**Debt Justice:** We must advocate for the cancellation of the crippling debts that shackle developing nations, preventing them from investing in sustainable infrastructure, healthcare, and education.

**Climate Finance:** Wealthy nations, whose industrialization caused the climate crisis, must provide adequate financial and technological support to help vulnerable nations adapt and develop cleanly.

**Educational Reparation:** We must champion the right for the youth of these nations to receive free, high-quality education in the universities of wealthy countries. This is not aid; it is an investment in justice. These educated young people will return home as doctors, engineers, agronomists, and theologians—equipped to lead their communities toward a sustainable and prosperous future, breaking the cycles of poverty and dependence.

This is the challenging, full meaning of the conversion to which we are called. It is a metanoia that calls us to examine our history, our economies, and our privileges, and to work

tirelessly for a world where justice—social, economic, and environmental—rolls on like a river, and righteousness like a never-failing stream (Amos 5:24).

Let our prayers on September 1st be coupled with a firm commitment to this deep and restorative justice.

The challenge is great, but our hope is greater. Our hope is in the Risen Christ, through whom all things were made and in whom all things hold together (Colossians 1:17). Let us approach this day of prayer not with despair, but with determination. Let our prayers, our activities, and our changed lives be a testament to the world that the Christian faith offers not only a diagnosis of the crisis but the path to healing—a path of repentance, communion, and love for all God's creation.

Let us work together, pray together, and strive together for the renewal of the whole creation.

In Christ's love and service,

Metropolitan Serafim Kykotis