SEASON OF CREATION 2022
Reflection by Archbishop Charles C. Thompson
Archbishop of Indianapolis

Green Mass – Tuesday of 24ᵗʰ Week (II) 1 Corinthians 12:12-14, 27-31
St. John Chrysostom, Bishop & Doctor (M) Psalm 100
13 September 2022 Luke 7:11-17

While not intentionally chosen for today's particular memorial, it seems rather fitting to celebrate our first so-called "Green Mass" on the Memorial of St. John Chrysostom, Bishop and Doctor of the Church. St. John Chrysostom, the late 4th century Bishop of Constantinople, is remembered as an outstanding preacher who defended the poor and sought reform of the clergy. His surname, "Chrysostom," meaning "golden mouthed," he spoke with profound eloquence and charism. Such profound eloquence and charism are found in Pope Francis' 2015 Encyclical Letter, *Laudato Si'*, "On Care for Our Common Home." I am particularly touched by the following line: "Rather than a problem to be solved, the world is a joyous mystery to be contemplated with gladness and praise." [n. 12]

Just as St. John Chrysostom's preaching was rooted in the Word of God, so Pope Francis' Encyclical is rooted in Catholic Social Teaching. One of the key principles, of course, is care for creation. Throughout the encyclical, our Holy Father reminds us that all is connected—our relationship with God, with one another and with creation itself. He especially reminds us of the necessary connectedness that we must have with the marginalized; namely, the unborn, the poor, the sick, the elderly, the immigrant, the refugee, the incarcerated, the lonely and the dying along with all of creation. Everything is interrelated.

Our scripture readings speak to this interrelatedness. In his letter to the Corinthians, St. Paul describes how we are members or parts of the one Body of Christ. Regardless of any other similarities or differences, each with particular gifts for the common good of the Church, all the baptized are bound together in the one Spirit. In the gospel, Jesus resuscitates the only son of a widow which resonates throughout the whole of Judea and the surrounding region. Even our words, deeds

and failings are interconnected, as we acknowledge and confess at in the penitential act of the Mass.

In his message for the 2022 World Day of Prayer for Creation, celebrated each year on September 1, Pope Francis speaks of the need for us to be good stewards of creation, to live in gratitude for God's wonderful handiwork entrusted to our care and to implore divine help for the protection of all creation. Encouraging us to pray, reflect, dialogue and work together for the good of our common home, the Holy Father reminds us that we are beloved creatures of God who calls us to love life in communion with the rest of creation. We are to cultivate an "ecological conversion" through listening, a simpler lifestyle and practicing a spirituality of loving awareness of communion with God who permeates all creation in beauty, truth, and goodness.

While we often feel overwhelmed at times by the state of the environment, a seeming pervasion of indifference and a sense of helplessness, there is much that we can do. As St. Thomas Aquinas points out, *grace builds on nature.* It is for this very reason that we gather to celebrate within the context of the Eucharistic Banquet, the source and summit of our identity and mission as Catholics. Ultimately, we must be rooted in prayer, trusting in divine grace. We must also use our particular gifts and talents as instruments of the Holy Spirit in the call to action; involving conversion, spirituality and advocacy all dedicated to enhancing sustainability of an integral ecology in contrast to a "throwaway" mentality. With God—especially through the passion, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ—all things are possible. Everything is interrelated in and through Word, Sacrament and Service. It all hinges on living out a personal encounter with the person of Jesus Christ as celebrated in the Eucharist. All creation, every aspect of our common home, is holy ground…an encounter with the sacred.