**Launch of the GCBC Laudato Si Action Plan**

**Reflection**

***“One of the first conditions of happiness is that the link between man and nature shall not be broken,”*** said Leo Tolstoy. This assertion describes and reinforces the relationship between human beings and the environment as important and necessary. It is an invitation to us as we are gathered here to reflect, understand and work to keep our mother earth strong.

As we know it, the World Environment Day is celebrated on the 5th of June every year. It is celebrated to raise awareness and to take actions to conserve the environment. It was initiated in 1972 by the UN Assembly and has come a long way since. The concern for preserving the environment did not just start then. People have been taking initiatives to do whatever is possible on their own, to make life better for everyone by creating awareness about preserving nature. Margaret Mead said, ***“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it is the only thing that ever has*”** and that is exactly what all of us are here to do today. Let us join together and do our part in making our environment and our life on this planet as wondrous as it should be.

For us Catholics in Ghana and we, your leaders, the Ghana Catholic Bishops’ Conference, following a universal call of Pope Francis to care for the environment, have outlined our concrete steps in addressing the environment and poverty and marginalization into a 5-year framework of social action called “the *GCBC Laudato Si Action Programme*.” In this framework, which you have already on your laps, we have been growing one million trees across our twenty dioceses which is coterminous with the landmass of Ghana. This unique and initial action was followed up by support to youth skills development which enables some out-of-school youth to have employable skills for their own self-employment and employment opportunities elsewhere. Relevant to our framework is a hub of indicators that would enable the governing structure established at the National Catholic Secretariat to coordinate the activities all over the twenty dioceses, in order to track progress and also chart a pathway for our social interventions that relate also to the environment.

The goal six (*page. 11 of the five-year Laudato Si Action programme*) reflects ecological spirituality. In this goal all duty bearers and all collaborators and you, participants, are invited to have a conversation and take action on how to recover our vision being political, religious or social on God’s gratuitous creation in a bid to encourage a worthy contact with our natural world as responsible stewards. In the first of the two creation stories in Genesis (Genesis. 1: 1-2:3), God gives man dominion over his creation (Genesis 1: 26-28). For many people of faith, these verses have justified a mastery-over-nature orientation: dominion is seen as the right to dominate and to possess absolute control over the entire earth. This is a false and irresponsible claim to God’s creation. We are called by God to be responsible stewards or co-creators with God. This philosophy or orientation which I consider right, evokes modesty and moderation in using the environment. I thank the *Laudato Si* Committee for a good work being done. I thank you all for your audience. Let our reflection today tease out a conviction and right action for and with the environment. This particular launch is our spiritual response to God’s call to protect and preserve the environment. I thank you.