

A LITURGICAL OPPORTUNITY; AN ECUMENICAL KAIROS

AN EMERGING CONSENSUS TO ENHANCE THE
"FEAST OF CREATION" AND HONOUR THE CREATOR

The story so far



Report of an ecumenical seminar held in Assisi, 14-17 March 2024

For use by denominations seeking to take forward the conversation



**World Council
of Churches**



**World Communion
of Reformed Churches**



**THE
LUTHERAN
WORLD
FEDERATION**



Laudato Si'
RESEARCH INSTITUTE
CAMPION HALL, UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD

Executive Summary

In March 2024, over a hundred delegates from all continents gathered in Assisi – with many more connecting remotely – to consider the idea of elevating the “Feast of Creation” from its current “world day of prayer” status to become a liturgical feast.

This report tells the “story” of that remarkable gathering, describing the origin of the observance, the theological and liturgical dialogues carried out in Assisi, and the extraordinary consensus that emerged. It also provides some framing of the theological and liturgical questions that remain open, and proposes next steps and directions for ongoing discernment during 2024-2025. Our hope is that this story will be a useful resource as our conversation is taken forward in different denominational contexts.

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Introduction

After decades of ecumenical celebrations of the annual “Feast of Creation” of September 1, also known as “Creation Day” or “World Day of Prayer for Creation”, a historic gathering took place in Assisi, bringing together church leaders and theological and liturgical scholars from various denominations. Its purpose? To explore a **proposal** to elevate such an observance to the status of liturgical feast in the calendar of Western Churches, as a way of marking the Nicæa centenary (2025).

The seminar was convened by the World Council of Churches, the Anglican Communion, the World Communion of Reformed Churches, the Lutheran World Federation, the World Methodist Council, and was organised by the Laudato Si’ Research Institute (based at Campion Hall, University of Oxford), in collaboration with Pro Civitate Christiana and Centro Laudato Si’ as the local Assisi co-hosts.

In the footsteps of Saint Francis, over a hundred delegates from all continents gathered in the Cittadella Laudato Si’ conference centre, with a sizable group of online participants connecting remotely. As delegates arrived in Assisi, they were offered a memorable gift: a glorious rainbow, a reminder of Noah’s Covenant: “when the bow appears in the clouds, I will see it and remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature” (Genesis 9:16).



View of Assisi the afternoon before the event started.

As explained by host Rev. Tonio Dell’Olio in his welcoming remarks, the Cittadella also was the venue of the historic 1956 International Congress of the liturgical movement in the lead up to the Second Vatican Council. He quoted the closing remarks of Pope Pius XII to that congress - “the liturgical movement is a sign of the providential dispositions of God for the present time” - and then added: “the present congress is a continuation of that inspiration of 1956, but it is version 2.0, because it is being done in an ecumenical way.” Moreover, as Archbishop Domenico Sorrentino of Assisi then added, the Canticle of the Creatures is an inspiration for this initiative: “two things characterize the Canticle – looking to the Creator and contemplating the things made by God.”

What is Creation Day?

In recent decades, September 1 has emerged as an important Christian celebration of Creation. It goes by various names, such as the “Feast of Creation”, “Creation Day”, or the “World Day of Prayer for Creation”. The Orthodox Church’s historical observance of September 1 (see below: The Rich History of the Feast) inspired other churches to follow suit, starting with European ecumenical bodies in the 1990s, eventually being embraced by the World Council of Churches in 2008 and the Roman Catholic Church in 2015. Creation Day honours God as Creator and commemorates the great mystery of creation. In other words, the feast is not just about celebrating “Creation as the created world”, as gifted by God to us, but more importantly it is about celebrating “Creation as foundational mystery” of our Christian faith. In a nutshell, it is a moment to thank and praise the Creator.

Countless Christian communities join the celebration annually, which is frequently moved to the first Sunday of September for pastoral practicalities. It has become one of the most encouraging signs of ecumenical unity and a life-giving response to the “signs of the times” that we can all discern. Yet, despite its growing popularity in popular piety and ecumenical collaboration, the liturgical calendars and lectionaries of Western Churches make no reference to this important celebration (by contrast, it stands as the first day of the Orthodox liturgical year). Grounded in the rich theological underpinnings of the Feast of Creation, a **proposal** has now emerged to “upgrade” the observance from its current “world day of prayer” status to become a formal liturgical feast.

Who attended the Assisi gathering?

Church leaders from the World Council of Churches and several Western worldwide communions who share a common liturgical year and lectionary (with some adaptations and exceptions). In other words, many of the so-called “Western liturgical churches” and those with comparable worship traditions. Besides the official conveners (WCC, WCRC, LWF, ACO, and WMC), the Roman Catholic Church was also present via Vatican delegates and a sizable group of Catholic participants (including several continental bishops’ conferences and the local Bishop of Assisi as host). The Orthodox Church accompanied the discernment of the Western Churches, given the feast’s historical roots in the Orthodox liturgical calendar. Other denominational families, such as Evangelicals, Baptists, and Anabaptists, also attended as observers.

Scholars from across denominations and disciplines, especially in liturgical and systematic theology, to assist the exploration of the theological underpinnings of the Feast (with the Laudato Si’ Research Institute at Campion Hall, University of Oxford, affiliated with the Society of Jesus, serving as academic facilitator).

Ecumenists leading efforts towards Christian unity, ministers and leaders engaged in creation-related ministries (particularly Feast and Season of Creation celebrations), and members of ecumenical liturgical bodies, among others.

1. An Invitation from the East

Our gathering in Assisi was inspired by the Orthodox Church (see below: “The Rich History of the Feast”). It was in 1989 that the Ecumenical Patriarchate invited all Christian Churches to join them in prayer on September 1, initiating a vibrant chapter of ecumenical collaboration on creation.



“ 1989: First Invitation

*“We invite through this our Patriarchal Message the **entire Christian world**, to offer... **every year on this day** prayers and supplications to the Maker of all, both as **thanksgiving for the great gift of Creation** and as **petitions for its protection and salvation.**”*

Ecumenical Patriarch Demetrios, 1 September 1989

After decades of ongoing Orthodox leadership and growing ecumenical celebrations of Creation Day, it was highly significant to kick off the Assisi event with a strong message from the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew encouraging this liturgical exploration by Western Churches.

“ 2024: Invitation to go deeper



*“This entire effort gives us great cause for joy, because it was thirty-five years ago that our venerable predecessor, the late Ecumenical Patriarch Demetrios, issued the very first encyclical inviting all people of good will to dedicate September 1st—the opening of the ecclesiastical year, known in our Church as the Indiction—as a special day of prayer for the preservation of the natural environment... Today, across the planet, numerous Christian churches and faithful recognize this celebration as the World Day of Prayer for Creation or the Feast of Creation... As you gather in the historic town of Assisi to explore **how this day of prayer can be embraced more deeply and more meaningfully** in Christian Churches, **particularly in liturgy and spirituality**, our sincere wish and fervent prayer is that you may experience a **moment of inspiration and kairos**. Creation care is a matter of urgency. However, above all, it is a matter of faith for us as Christians... May God abundantly bless your deliberations and decisions.”*

Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, 15 March 2024 ([see full statement](#))



The Patriarch’s special message was read by Archbishop Nikitas of Thyateira and Great Britain. Nikitas then added his own **remarks**, also as president of the Council of European Churches, sharing how CEC first celebrated Creation Day in 1992.

Other Orthodox leaders also contributed as speakers in Assisi, such as Dr. Andrej Jeftić and Dr. Louk Adrianos from WCC.

2. Enthusiastic Responses

Encouraged by the inspiring invitation of the Orthodox Church and the rich ecumenical journey so far, initial enthusiasm from other high-level leaders for the **proposed** liturgical feast was evident in statements prepared for and sent to the event in Assisi.



“*The Feast of Creation is an opportunity to celebrate the Triune God as Creator, reflecting on the mystery of Creation as the foundational event of salvation history... Creation Day has inspired us to come together in prayer and action – to safeguard, sustain and renew the life of the Earth. That is why, inspired by the Orthodox Church’s leadership, **the Anglican Communion enthusiastically supports** this ecumenical process to explore **adding the Feast of Creation to our liturgical calendars.***”

Archbishop Justin Welby of Canterbury
Primate of the Anglican Communion ([see statement](#))



“*I am so happy about this conference [which] will reflect upon **honoring the 1700th anniversary year of the Nicene creed** in the strongest possible way by not only exchanging words about the importance of this common creed as the basis for our unity, but by actually initiating something that will remain after the end of this jubilee year... Envisioning **an ecumenical creation liturgy** each year on the Sunday after September 1 would be **an excellent idea.***”

Bishop Heinrich Bedford-Strohm
Chair, World Council of Churches ([see remarks](#))



“*We give **thanks to God for this initiative** and how different church families and ecumenical bodies have coalesced around it... Proclaiming a Day of Creation, a Feast of Creation is only one small step. We in the World Communion of Reformed Churches see this as a step in deepening the calling of our Lord Jesus Christ to be one (John 17:21), that **the Western Church and the Eastern Church could unite in having this common Feast of Creation.***”

Rev. Setri Nyomi
General Secretary, World Communion of Reformed Churches ([see remarks](#))

2. ENTHUSIASTIC RESPONSES



“The **Lutheran World Federation** rejoices in this initiative and in the many intriguing and important questions being raised concerning the mystery of creation and is grateful to engage in this ecumenical effort to discern not only how best to **integrate this Feast of “la Creazione” into the life of our churches** but also how the Feast may mold our communities and individual lives more deeply in this trinitarian reality.”

Rev. Dirk Lange

Assist. General Secretary for Ecumenical Relations, Lutheran World Federation
(***see remarks***)



“The celebration of the **Season of Creation and Creation Day** has been a **source of motivation** for churches across the globe to give more **attention to creation as both theological mystery and as gift** that must be protected... It is important to deepen this ecumenical celebration and further mainstream it in the spiritual life of our respective communities.”

Rev. Tony Franklin-Ross

Chair of Ecumenical Relations, World Methodist Council (***see remarks***)



2. ENTHUSIASTIC RESPONSES



“It has been fascinating to see how **the Feast of Creation has grown organically with little shoots coming up in different ways** in different places!... We took a Resolution to the Anglican Consultative Council in New Zealand in 2012... There are many many shoots that we are not even aware of, where God is touching hearts and lives and liturgists! And now **we stand at a Kairos moment.**”

Rev. Rachel Mash

Co-lead of Anglican Communion delegation (**see remarks**)



“**Since Pope Francis instituted the day of prayer** globally, also animating it with strong annual messages, **momentum has accelerated** in our communities. Just last year, two thirds of all Catholic dioceses of the Philippines participated in the annual observance. The Spirit is moving. Even as an optional celebration, absent from our lectionary and formal liturgical life, there is a **deep thirst to celebrate God as Creator...** We are very enthusiastic about this ecumenical exploration of the future of Creation Day.”

Bishop Gerardo Alminaza

Chair of NLSP, Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines* (**see remarks**)

* While the Catholic Church did not officially co-sponsor the event, it **participated** through various Vatican observers (Dicastery for Divine Worship, but also other dicasteries) and with contributors to the systematic theology panels (Dicastery for Doctrine of the Faith and International Theological Commission), as well as various continental bishops' conferences. In this opening panel it was Bp. Alminaza to represent the Catholic perspective, given CBCP's role as the first episcopal conference to embrace Creation Day in 2003.

3. An “Ecumenical Kairos”: Fertile soil for Creation Day

In the first part of the seminar, leading ecumenists helped contextualize the emergence of the Feast of Creation and its resonance for our present time.



Ecumenists discuss the feast's ecumenical significance.



“**Eastern Churches have kept the Jewish tradition, which begins the year with the Creation of the world:** it therefore has a more pronounced cosmic dimension... The East, following the Gospel of John and the Apocalypse, links the Cross to Creation... **In the West, we need to rediscover this cosmic dimension of redemption.**”

Brother Matthew, Prior of Taizé Community ([see remarks](#))



“Today we are faced with the great **opportunity of this extraordinary ecological and ecumenical kairos**... The invitation made by Patriarch Demetrius in 1989, to establish a day of prayer for Creation, had repercussions also in the various Churches of the West... Pope Benedict [called] everyone’s attention to the urgent need to understand that **Creation and Redemption cannot be separated**, [which is] in tune with the desire of our Symposium: that the various Churches may soon **include in their liturgical calendar the Feast of Creation.**”

Margaret Karram, President of Focolare Movement ([see remarks](#))

3. AN "ECUMENICAL KAIROS": FERTILE SOIL FOR CREATION DAY



“**The WCC, back in 2008, officially endorsed Creation Day** and communicated in a way that made it more appealing to the churches to endorse it themselves... Back already in the New Delhi assembly in 1961... **creation was interpreted in a redemption and cosmic key** – initial connections being established between Christological thinking and the doctrines of redemption and creation.”

Andrej Jeftić, Director of WCC Faith and Order Commission ([see remarks](#))



“In 1963, Vatican II called for the Catholic Church to promote a “warm and living love of Scripture”... From here the **revision of the lectionary** began... It was soon recognized that they needed to involve also Protestants, for as Godfrey Diekmann said: ‘we must engage the Protestants in this enterprise of a lectionary, because they do know something about the use of Sacred Scripture!... **Liturgical renewal as a way to Christian unity opens many possibilities.**”

James Puglisi, SA, former Director of Centro Pro Unione ([see remarks](#))

4. The Rich History of The Feast

As part of this ecumenical contextualisation, Orthodox scholar Louk Adrianos of the World Council of Churches reminded us of the feast's rich historical roots in his presentation.

» In ancient Orthodox tradition, **September 1 represents “the day of Creation”** (among other things), when God began the creation of the universe. It symbolizes the expression “In the beginning” (Gn 1:1, Jn 1:1), when God said “Let there be light”. The Byzantine “Creation Era” calendar (Anno Mundi system), used by the Ecumenical Patriarchate from the 7th to the 18th century, stipulated that the cosmos was created on September 1 of 5509 BC.

» **There is a parallel here with the Jewish calendar**, which also follows (still today) an Anno Mundi system based on biblical chronology and also celebrates its New Year – the feast of Rosh Hashanah – in September (or early Oct, movable). On that feast, Jewish liturgies proclaim: “Today is the day of the world’s creation”.



» When the Orthodox Church transitioned from that Anno Mundi system to the Western Anno Domini system in the 18th century, it kept the tradition alive by maintaining September 1 as “**the beginning**” of the liturgical year (which remains the case today).

» In 1989, its Creation symbolism was expanded: by combining this ancient tradition with the “**signs of the times**” of the ecological crisis, the Ecumenical Patriarchate invited all Christians to join the **World Day of Prayer for Creation**.

» This Orthodox invitation was subsequently **endorsed and promoted by various bodies**: the Council of European Churches and CCEE / the Council of Catholic Episcopal Conferences of Europe (Ecumenical Assembly, 1997), the World Council of Churches (2008), the Catholic Church (Pope Francis, 2015). At this time, “**popular names**” **emerged**, such as the “Feast of Creation” (CEC-CCEE, 1997) or “Creation Day” (Philippine Catholic Bishops, 2003).

» Driven by the Holy Spirit and the “signs of the times”, **grassroots momentum accelerated** from 2015: thousands and thousands of local churches now celebrate the feast annually.

Dr. Adrianos concluded the presentation by suggesting the greeting “**Happy Creation-mas**” for the Feast of Creation, mirroring the “Happy Christ-mas” of the Feast of the Nativity of Christ.

Note: As stated in the feast proposal, this process focuses on Western communions given that September 1 is absent from their liturgical calendars, unlike the Orthodox. Moreover, given that this day has broader significance in the Orthodox tradition (that is, not just the Feast of Creation, but also the larger Feast of the Indiction with its added symbolism of the beginning of Jesus’ public ministry, which Western Churches commemorate in early January), the potential September 1 liturgies by the new adopters would necessarily be different from Orthodox ones. Which is why the Ecumenical Patriarchate accompanies the Western communions as they discern this new initiative (as Patriarch Bartholomew said in his opening statement), without envisioning any new steps for them.

5. The Rich Present of The Feast

As the conference proceeded, delegates met in small groups both in Assisi and online to further unpack the significance of the emergence of Creation Day in recent decades.



Some takeaways:

- » **Grassroots momentum is accelerating** with **thousands of communities** participating annually, usually as part of the larger Season of Creation celebrations. Assisi participants included the full spectrum of past involvement: ranging from “veterans” who have been promoting this for decades to scholars exploring this for the first time.
- » The **axiom “Lex Orandi, Lex Credendi, Lex Vivendi”** helped surface how the lack of attention to Creation in our Lex Vivendi (ethics) was influenced by the lack of historical attention to Creation in our Lex Orandi (liturgy) and Lex Credendi (theology). Curiously, the ecological crisis reversed this interplay in recent decades, with churches starting by addressing ethics, then theology, and then – later on – liturgy.

To summarize the group discussions, participants offered a **word** to describe the present and future of Creation Day. “Hope” stood out as the one most mentioned.

PRESENT of Creation Day



FUTURE of Creation Day



5. THE RICH PRESENT OF THE FEAST



WCC assembly with Patriarch Bartholomew



Statements by Pope, Patriarch, Archbishop of Canterbury



Anglican Church of Southern Africa



Taiwanese youth group



Catholic Bishops' Conference Philippines



Church of England



Vatican City



Catholic Bishops' Conference of Brazil



Middle East Council of Churches



Anglican Church of Canada

5. THE RICH PRESENT OF THE FEAST



Orthodox and Catholic dioceses of Chicago, USA



Catholic Archdiocese of Lima, Peru



Sisters of St. Francis, Tanzania



Uniting Church in Australia



Global ecumenical prayer in Assisi



Anglican Diocese of Polynesia



Church of Ireland and Irish Bishops' Conference



Church of Denmark

More photos submitted by seminar participants are available [here](#).

6. Theological Explorations of The Feast

During the event, a rich series of panels helped delegates unpack different aspects of the mystery of Creation to inform its potential place in the liturgical calendar. The dialogues were inspired by the axiom *Lex Orandi, Lex Credendi* about how liturgy and theology influence each other, and explored the proposal's focus on the feast being focused on the idea *la Creazione*, rather than *il Creato*.

In Italian, specific words identify two distinct meanings of the word "Creation":

la Creazione primarily stands for God's act of creation of the cosmos – i.e. Creation as theological mystery.

il Creato stands for the result of the act of creation, the fruit of *la Creazione* – i.e. Creation as the created universe, or everything created.

Lex Credendi - Selected inputs from Systematic Theology

Note: citations below are not a summary of each presentation; please read the papers for full context.

Creation and Sacramentality



“**Every eucharistic assembly is thus in some sense a ‘feast of creation’.** It sets forth the restored relation between finite and infinite achieved through the entire event of Christ's earthly life, death, and resurrection, and displays the content of the eschatological hope that characterises Christian life. **The idea of creating a distinctive liturgical feast may, in the light of this, sound superfluous. But the analogy is perhaps with the feast of Corpus Christi:** every Eucharist is self-evidently the celebration of Christ's sacramental and corporate Body, but there is a **moment for a specific act of acknowledging the fact** that sacrament is given to us. So in this instance: there is a **good argument for acknowledging with particular scriptural resources** in mind the way in which the restoration of the divine image through Christ is the focus of eucharistic worship, and the way in which a Christian mode of life grounded in the eucharistic mystery becomes an effective witness to God's fidelity to what has been made.”

Rowan Williams, former Archbishop of Canterbury ([see paper](#))

6. THEOLOGICAL EXPLORATIONS OF THE FEAST



Creation as Trinitarian and Christological Mystery

“Creation is a Mystery, a theological reality and is part of theological life. Creation is part of the Covenant (Gen 9)... **The world was created by the three Persons as a single divine principle...** So, since nature is one in God, the origin of his action is not the Persons, but the only nature... It is undeniable that “in every action ad extra everything is common” and that the being of the created effects has as its principle the divine Being, absolutely common to the three Persons. But it is also true that the divine Being is not a fourth reality truly distinct from the Persons, nor is it prior to the Persons, so that while the three Persons work together inseparably, each divine Person acts according to its personal property... **We can say of Jesus Christ that “all things were created through him”,** and this is not appropriated to the Son by our mind, but proper of the Son, **who in the Trinity is the “intermediate cause”...** Creation is the work of the Trinity, where the three Persons act simultaneously with the common divine power, but each Person does so according to their own personal identity... **This is enriched if we move from the immanent Trinity to the Trinity that manifests itself in history,** and in this history there is the incarnation of the Son... Creation and Redemption, therefore, are inseparable.”

Cardinal Víctor Fernández, Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith ([see paper](#))



“What could be the **theological sources grounding** our efforts to initiate this **common ecumenical feast of creation**? As we will see there is a great potential for mutual enrichment in ecumenical cooperation on confessing God as the creator... The central theological starting point for [the] definition of the position of the **Orthodox tradition** was the **Trinitarian grounding of creation theology**... The three persons thus created the world together. The world is the fruit of the joint action of the Holy Trinity, which flows out of the one essence... Orthodox contributions to creation theology repeatedly refer to texts from the Orthodox liturgy in order to demonstrate what creation means for Orthodox Christianity... In the **Protestant tradition**, based on Luther’s theology, **Christology has always played a central role**... Creation emerged more and more as a relational concept with its origin in God... Moltmann understands **creatio ex nihilo as creatio ex amore**... The central place that love takes in **this new interpretation of creation reflects its crucial christological dimension**. If what the Colossians hymn so impressively describes is really true... then the consequences are immeasurable... Then, the whole cosmos must also be included in this force field of love.”

Bishop Heinrich Bedford-Strohm, World Council of Churches ([see paper](#))

6. THEOLOGICAL EXPLORATIONS OF THE FEAST



Creation as Foundational Mystery

“We would like to recover a **typically Franciscan intuition** – **“Creation as a Trinitarian event”** – which was explored above all by two great medieval authors: Bonaventure and Scotus. Establishing an **intimate connection between the Holy Trinity and creation**, Bonaventure conceives creatures as a production in space and time of the Mystery of the Triune God, capturing an intimate correspondence between the “Trinitas fabricatrix” and its “manufactured traces or produced”... In the wake of Augustine, the Franciscan theologians of the Middle Ages, starting with Anthony of Padua, thoroughly explored the “Liber Naturae”, recognizing it as one of the sources of sacred theology. Having said this, Creation in its constitutive relationship with the Trinity could be conceived as: gift of the Father, body of Christ and abode of the Holy Spirit.”

Sinivaldo Tavares, OFM, Faculdade Jesuíta de Filosofia e Teologia ([see paper](#))

Creation and Salvation History



“**God’s work of creation needs to be held together with all God’s other work (the economic Trinity)**, including providence, salvation, election, covenant, church, ministry, mission and consummation. **The one should not be subsumed under the other**. Put differently, creation is not only the “foundational event in salvation history” (seeing creation as part of salvation history); **the purpose of salvation is to bring God’s work of creation to fruition**. Accordingly, salvation is not an aim in itself; it is there for the sake of creation... God’s work of creation (creatio) has **past, present and future dimensions**. Creation does include the aspects of origination and dependence, but also of ongoing creation through secondary causes (evolution) and eschatological re-creation... Accordingly, a “Feast of Creation” should not be reduced to God’s work of creation in the beginning although that is certainly included. It cannot be reduced to the beauty of God’s creation, nature conservation or references to plants and animals either... In fact, a focus on destructive forces is appropriate so that a dialectic between cross and resurrection can be maintained.”

Ernst Conradie, University of the Western Cape ([see paper](#))

Creation in Scripture as a Whole



“Today biblical scholars point to **parallel and sometimes even contradictory models of creation theology in the Bible**... Ignoring the diversity of models or privileging one to the detriment of others leads to erroneous theological conclusions. **To understand the biblical conception of creation we must take them all into consideration**... The oldest texts present creation as God’s victory and control over chaos (Ex 1–15, Jdc 4–5, Hab 1–3 and Ps 89). Genesis 1 testifies that creation is the result of the Word of God... while the whole of creation is the book to be read, meditated on, interpreted. Creation can speak, tell, proclaim the glory of God (Ps 19, Job 12,7-8, Ps 145). This model is particularly present in the New Testament which highlights the mediating role of Christ in both creation and redemption (Col 1,15-17; John 1) and where Jesus instructs his disciples to look at creation to understand the mystery of kingdom (Lk 12,54-56). Wisdom books have a special place in the biblical theology of creation: creation reveals the order and wisdom of God (Job 38–39; Ps 33.6-7; Wis 11.20).”

Alenka Arko, International Theological Commission, Vatican ([see paper](#))

Creation, Christology and Sophiology



“Although there is a **modern tendency to keep the mystery of creation separated from that of Christ**, that the former does not make sense without the latter is grounded in centuries of Christian discourse. Indeed, finding that connectivity is embedded in the mystery of the incarnation as having theological significance for the whole of the created world, including its origin. Once the incarnation is understood in relation to the creation, the work of the Trinity in both creation and redemption comes into focus... Colossians 1:15-20, that majestic hymn to wisdom, is particularly significant, [and] provides a concise and compressed summary of **Christ’s role in the creative act as well as the cosmic dimension of the Paschal mystery**... For Irenaeus the becoming flesh of God in the incarnation means that the “redemption and resurrection of the entire earthly world is not just a possibility but a reality”... **Creation and its beginning (including humanity as part of creation) only makes sense and finds its theological meaning through the lens of Christology.**”

Celia Deane-Drummond, Laudato Si’ Research Institute, Oxford University ([see paper](#))



Creation and Redemption

“I recall two figures who are central in the search for the **theological integration between redemption and creation**. I am referring to Doctor of the Church Hildegard of Bingen, considered the last representative of sophiological thought in the 12th century, and Louis Bouyer who, in the 20th century and in contact with Sergei Bulgakov, devoted his entire theological work to the restoration of the unity of creation/redemption, also drawing on the sophiological approach... It may seem paradoxical, but **for Hildegard the centre of theology is not redemption**. Redemption is a function of the greater lake: the **restoration of all creation in Christ**... **As for Louis Bouyer's theology**, all his treatises are a search for the **integration of the mystery of redemption with the life of the cosmos**... And what De Lubac points out in his book “The Supernatural” is the rupture that occurs in theology from the 13th century onwards between the so-called “natural” and the so-called “supernatural”. This rupture starts from a rupture with Scripture and Liturgy.”

Fernando Rivas, OSB, Pontifical Athenaeum of St. Anselm ([see paper](#))

Creatio ex nihilo as Foundation of Salvation History



“Creatio ex nihilo affirms that God, from no compulsion or necessity, created out of nothing – really nothing, no pre-existent matter, space, or time. God freely creates ‘all that is’ and holds it in being at every moment (creatio continua)... Creation is not something that happened in the past, not an ‘event’ in this sense, but the continuous gift of the reality of the created world... **Creatio ex nihilo is not just a teaching about the created order but about God**... This teaching undergirds the whole of patristic and medieval theology and mystical writings... Yet, since the late middle ages, Western churches have put theological emphasis on redemption rather than creation... **The doctrine of Creation (creatio ex nihilo / la Creazione) has not been discarded but neglected and, as Pope Benedict XVI suggests, with damaging effect**... The Christian God is ‘eternal’ in being the Creator of time, and thus wholly present to temporal reality but at the same time not as creatures are... We should equally be cautious when speaking of creation as an ‘event’ lest we relegate it to one event, even if the first event, amongst many creaturely events. Better to speak of it as **‘the foundation of all God’s saving plan**... **The institution of a Feast** in the Western Churches celebrating the ‘maker of heaven and earth’ is, to my mind, **not only to be welcomed but seems an urgent corrective**.”

Janet Soskice, Cambridge University & Duke University ([see paper](#))

Creatio ex nihilo as Foundation of Salvation History



“Augustine pointed out that the “Beginning” in which God said “Come into being” can’t be understood as a temporal event, since time only came into being with creation. Rather, the act of creation begins in God himself, in eternity, so the beginning of creation can’t be identified with temporal sequences... **A distinction must be made between a cosmological-temporal understanding of ex nihilo and an ontological-theological one.** The cosmological issue has once again become topical in connection with the Big Bang theory... The theory is a hypothesis that attributes current states of the universe to states around 10-10 seconds after a primordial explosion. What precedes this (nothingness? chaos? pulsating universes?) cannot be determined from the Big Bang theory... The question of the beginning of the world is a topic that is undecidable within the limits of human cognition and probably will be forever... **Ontologically understood, the doctrine of a creatio ex nihilo, on the other hand, means that everything that exists and has the possibility of coming into being has its origin in God’s creative act.** In this ontological sense, the idea of creation ex nihilo is the very nerve of creation theological realism: nothing comes into being out of metaphysical necessity, but everything is restlessly dependent on God’s life-giving power.”

Niels Henrik Gregersen, University of Copenhagen ([see paper and presentation](#))

Extending the Theological Contours



“[Some] entry points that could **extend the contours of the theological framing** and range of interlocutors, **if the theology that undergirds the feast is to be truly ecumenical...** 1) Ecofeminism’s analysis and critique of culture and worldviews, its reflections on systematic theology themes, biblical motifs and liberative theology and praxis, interdisciplinary and interfaith discourses, ecofeminist spiritualities, 2) Movements in Christian theology such as Latin America liberation theology, Minjung theology, Majurista and the varied indigenous Pasifika and North and South American theologies. The theological rationale and vision that spurs each of these impulses are part of the Christian story and can contribute to moving the urgent work of creation care and **deepen liturgical expressions of the mystery of creation...** Eco-theology is arguably the most contextual of theologies... The emphasis on ‘goodness’ begs the question of how we account for the god-forsakenness in tension with the goodness in creation. **How do doxology and lament co-exist in our reckoning with creation and therefore within an adequate liturgy that seeks to invoke the mystery of creation.**”

Kuzipa Nalwamba, World Council of Churches ([see paper](#))

Lex Orandi - Selected inputs from Liturgical Theology

Note: citations below are not a summary of each presentation; please read the papers for full context.

A Feast of Creation in the Liturgical Year



“If the 20th century was the century of active participation, then **the 21st century may become the century of the saving mysteries** and the heavenly liturgy. The feast of creation has a promising potential to play a decisive role in this context... When thinking about the establishment of a feast of creation, it is of paramount importance not to consider the **Eucharist and the liturgy of the hours** as separate regimes of worship... the composition of the hours provides opportunities for a very neat selection of Biblical readings and prayers... If its rank is high enough, there will even be two vespers, with further options for shaping a fantastic feast... **The thread of a feast of creation can be safely woven into the tapestry of the liturgical year.** Given the time in which we live and the unique ecumenical opportunities in the symbolic year 2025, it would constitute a meaningful addition to the liturgy. More than that, however, **the feast would help understand other aspects and dimensions of liturgical feasts and seasons...** and thereby create ample chances for deepening the sensitivity for the saving presence of God’s mystery in world and history. Liturgical piety will be enhanced by the insertion of a feast of creation, not least because **sacramentality** as expressive of being’s porosity **will be ‘naturally’ fostered.**”

Joris Geldhof, Liturgical Institute, Katholieke Universiteit Leuven ([see paper](#))

6. THEOLOGICAL EXPLORATIONS OF THE FEAST



“Designating liturgical time and space to focus on creation is a good move...

Ritual focus changes lives. Christians are called to face the truth that Earth’s own life as we have known it is close to an end... Ecumenical agreement among churches to attend to the mystery of God’s creation signals a commitment to changing our ways...

While it is possible intellectually to distinguish between Creazione and Creato

*— God’s generative act of creation and creation itself — **liturgically they cannot be separated...** The theological principle of God’s creating is intrinsically enmeshed in what God created... Secondly, ecumenical agreement requires the creation of breathing space for differing polities. For Lutherans, and likely other Protestants, **unity does not require uniformity...** The great range of authoritative structures in Protestant churches would need to honor local determinations... Offering a Season of Creation from the last Sunday in August to October 4 might make it possible for churches to choose a Sunday to celebrate in that season. Thirdly, consideration ought to be given to making **every Sunday a time to invoke God’s creation.** One Sunday of celebration each year may not offer enough sustained attention.”*

Melinda Quivik, The Liturgical Conference ([see paper](#))



“Just as Easter celebrates the Paschal Mystery in a way that does not deny that

each and every Mass celebrate this mystery (and indeed so does the celebration of each or any sacrament), so too, a **Feast of Creation should not be understood to**

deny or replace the ways in which typical Sunday celebrations also and already presuppose the gift of creation... A Feast of Creation should not leave any Christian

with the sense that “Oh, now we are doing this feast and when it is over, we can forget about this idea until next year.” As we all know, *Laudato Si’* reminds us repeatedly

that “everything is connected.” A Feast of Creation cannot be a disjointed accretion to the liturgical year but must rather flow from and into that larger context of Christian

celebration... In other words, **a Feast of Creation can invite us to ponder anew how “everything is connected” in the liturgical year,** even if some themes and mysteries are proclaimed more loudly and clearly at some times than they are at other times.

Returning to the Easter analogy, every Sunday celebrates the Easter mysteries without being Easter Sunday writ large.”

Timothy Brunk, Villanova University ([see paper](#))

6. THEOLOGICAL EXPLORATIONS OF THE FEAST

Creation and Anamnesis



“The notion of anamnesis could be thought of as an essential feature of all Christian liturgy... liturgical anamnesis is a medium of remembering as presencing... **In such a liturgical commemoration**, i.e., “anamnesis,” **an encounter is opened up with the uncreated God as Creator of all that is**, a God who is always also the Sustainer, Redeemer, and ultimate fulfillment of all things at the end of time. In and for our own times, encountering ever more deeply the Creator may just be one of the crucial tasks for liturgy today... Equally important in such an envisioned Feast of Creation is a second element. **Such a Feast may just allow human beings to experience ourselves above all as created**, and in that, crucially, as creaturely kin with everything created... Rowan Williams’s suggestion of understanding such a feast’s emergence in the 21st century as **analogous to the emergence of the feast of Corpus Christi in the 13th century** is astute. In both cases, the theme that is celebrated – the Eucharist, or Creation – has never not been a part of the liturgical tradition; yet at a certain point in time, emphasizing such a theme via a dedicated liturgical feast emerged as a felt necessity... Seeking to insert a Feast of Creation into the calendar is only one, and only a small step in a much larger calling to deepen creation-attuned practices of prayer, worship, and liturgical life.”

Teresa Berger, Yale University ([see paper](#))



“Grounding the feast in the logic of **anamnesis** requires us to “remember” something **that began before any human could witness it**. This is both **challenging and helpful**. Reverent memory of a pre-human era can be a “dangerous memory” (Metz) – threatening the “tyrannical anthropocentrism” critiqued in *Laudato Si’*... [S]ome of the most striking scriptural memory of this pre-human era is itself liturgical. The divine speech in Job 38 begins by taking attendance at a sort of cosmic office of Lauds [which] helps humans find our place. It is not only that humans are recent arrivals to creation, but that we are latecomers to a sort of cosmic choir rehearsal... How many accounts of creation are there in scripture? Many of our people would answer “one” or maybe “two.” **This feast can introduce them to “richer fare”** (Sacrosanctum Concilium 51) especially with a three-year cycle of readings... The multivocality of creation texts breaks us out of single-narrative literalisms and heightens our wonder at the complexity and mystery of creation... Christmas and Easter both attend to cardinal moments on the earth and in the sky to help us remember God’s mighty acts. In establishing a creation observance on a date significant to every place on earth – the **September equinox** – the church would practice **remembering how to join the hymn of the more-than-human creation.**”

Benjamin Stewart, Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago ([see paper](#))

6. THEOLOGICAL EXPLORATIONS OF THE FEAST

Creation and Anamnesis



“Such a feast, by focusing on and making explicit the theme of creation, could raise awareness of the theme of creation across the whole range of liturgical provision. Indeed, I would argue that this theme is deeply embedded in the liturgy of time (Daily Prayer and the Christian Year), Initiation, and Eucharist; the problem is that **we are unaware of these motifs or have subordinated the theme of creation to other theological themes, priorities and frames of reference**... What needs further elucidation in our discussion is the issue of how we ‘commemorate’ creation (la creazione)... what is necessary here is to avoid speaking of an ‘event’ (as a past happening in time) and speak more deliberately of God’s creative activity; that is, God’s making in both bringing and holding in being, moment by moment, all that exists. And in relation to this we probably need to recall here that the primary sense of ‘remembering’ in Hebrew is God’s remembering.”

Christopher Irvine, Alcuin Club and Mirfield Liturgical Institute ([see paper](#))



7. The Emerging Consensus on Upgrading to a Liturgical Feast

The final three sessions of the seminar allowed us to explore the basic yet important question:

“Should Creation Day remain a World Day of Prayer or should it be upgraded to become a liturgical feast in Western calendars?”

After in-depth discussions in a plenary setting (between liturgical scholars of each tradition, see highlights below), in small groups (with participants grouped by denomination), and then together again, a strong consensus emerged. In simple terms, this was illustrated by responses posted to a board by participants (with online participants echoing the consensus even more strongly, with 100% of them calling for an upgrade to liturgical feast):



The “Assisi Consensus” board; in the back, Rev. Einar Tjelle (Church of Norway) speaks on behalf of the Lutheran delegation, expressing their support for the new liturgical feast.

Several participants emphasized that more work is needed to address some open questions and to refine the feast’s theological definition (see next section), as illustrated as well by the yellow notes in the photo above.

But a clear direction of travel was set: there is a **strong desire for Western Churches to jointly embrace Creation Day as an official liturgical feast.**

In a Nutshell

SPONSORING COMMUNIONS ARE VERY ENTHUSIASTIC – Namely, the delegations of the worldwide communions officially co-sponsoring the process – Anglican Communion, Lutheran World Federation, World Communion of Reformed Churches, and World Methodist Council – expressed strong support and a desire to move ahead. The strong statements of endorsement from their leaders in the opening session were reaffirmed by the subsequent theological and liturgical conversations, cementing the shared understanding that adding this feast to Western calendars is a worthwhile endeavor.

Yet, some caveats are: (1) conversations still need to happen at various levels of each communion, (2) most communions clarified that global bodies can only propose rather than institute the new feast – unlike the Catholic Church – as their member churches have liturgical autonomy (so the goal would be a “joint statement of intent” to be signed), (3) some communions requested to address some open questions and refine the theological case (see next section).

Lastly, regarding how to update the **Revised Common Lectionary** that most of those denominations use, options are to be explored with the ecumenical liturgical body Consultation on Common Texts (who participated in the seminar).

CATHOLIC CHURCH NEEDS MORE DISCERNMENT – The Vatican **participated** as an observer through various representatives (particularly Mons. Marcjanowicz, Undersecretary of the Dicastery for Divine Worship, but also officials from the dicasteries of Human Development and Christian Unity, historically **tasked** to animate Creation Day), as well as with contributors to the systematic theology panels (from the Dicastery for Doctrine of the Faith and the International Theological Commission). Various continental bishops’ conferences (CELAM, FABC, CCEE, CEAMA), Catholic institutions and networks, and Catholic scholars also attended the Assisi dialogue. It is yet to be clarified how intra-Catholic conversations will continue in dialogue with the Dicastery for Divine Worship. While most delegates expressed support for the liturgical feast in the Catholic small groups, some asked for more discernment and wider consultations (some identified ideas are listed in the “Next Steps” section).

Note: as stated in the footnote of page 11, this process focuses on Western communions as September 1 is absent from their calendars, unlike the Orthodox. Which is why the Ecumenical Patriarchate accompanies the discernment of Western Churches, without envisioning any new steps for them.

7. THE EMERGING CONSENSUS ON UPGRADING TO A LITURGICAL FEAST

What would the Feast look like?

There is a **strong desire for common elements** across denominations, such as a shared feast name and date (which require more discernment, as explained in “Open Questions” section), as well as shared lectionary readings.

Naturally, **each denomination would then appropriate it** and craft its own liturgical prayers (for both Eucharist and Liturgy of the Hours), in line with their liturgical practices; still, space for sharing and learning across denominations would be desirable.

Feast vis-a-vis Season

There was a strong call from participants for a “Both-And” approach, holding together two modalities:

1. The **Feast of Creation**, enhanced as a new liturgical feast, co-existing with...
2. The **Season of Creation** (Sept 1 - Oct 4), continuing to serve as the larger-yet-looser ecumenical observance even if not in the liturgical calendar (as the Week for Christian Unity), adding a strong component of ecumenical action in parallel to the feast.



7. THE EMERGING CONSENSUS ON UPGRADING TO A LITURGICAL FEAST

Some takeaways illustrating the consensus

Below are some takeaways from liturgical scholars who commented on the feast proposal from various denominational perspectives in the final panel (see also their full papers).

Note: citations below are not a summary of each presentation; please read the papers for full context.

Anglican



“This is a **great opportunity to create a set of liturgical resources fit for annual celebration**, with a focus on Creation – **la Creazione rather than il Creato**... It really is the theology of the moment. But it is also a significant theology for all the time, not just for this crisis... I'd like to see a **solid theological moment integrated into the Calendar**... needs to be robustly Trinitarian, pointing to God-the-Creator... It could have the added dignity of a First Evensong, as some other Festivals have. It would be good to have substantial readings provided for both Eucharistic and non-Eucharistic services such as Evensong, with space for some serious theological preaching... To include a new Feast or Festival in the Calendar is a big ask! Whatever is proposed needs to have a solid, ecumenically agreed, theologically substantial basis.”

Elizabeth Smith, International Anglican Liturgical Consultation ([see remarks](#))

Lutheran



“**Our theologies and our liturgies have neglected** to develop some aspects of trinitarian truth surrounding the **deep connection between creation and redemption** as we confess in the Nicene Creed... A unique framework is given in the Creed for a Feast of Creation... The Feast of Creation could offer us the possibility to expand and embody liturgically a Trinitarian theology and spirituality that takes into account a great diversity of approaches... Such a **Feast of Creation could be spiritually formative**, opening up possibilities for deepening the connection between faith communities and creation, of deepening the faith in God's continual action in the cosmos, reclaiming it and reconciling it... May such a Feast not only inspire us but bring us ever deeper in communion in the one, holy, catholic and apostolic church.”

Dirk Lange, Lutheran World Federation ([see remarks](#))

7. THE EMERGING CONSENSUS ON UPGRADING TO A LITURGICAL FEAST



Methodist



*“The World Methodist Council has theological statements that could assist in the interpretation and reception of a Feast of the Mystery of Creation... The **existing commitments of the WMC resonate well with the ‘potential fruits of a joint institution of the feast’** stated in the proposal, and it is good for us to see such fruits identified... Appropriation of a new feast by WMC related congregations doubtlessly would be varied. Decisions taken by the WMC are not binding upon member denominations, and the Council’s programmatic structures will be critical for creating and disseminating **resources to aid reception.**”*

Karen Westerfield Tucker, World Methodist Council & Boston University
([see remarks](#))

Reformed



*“Adding the Feast of Creation to the major Western Liturgical calendars speaks to the **heart of our reformed tradition**: *Ecclesia reformata, semper reformanda secundum verbi dei*, ‘Church reformed and always being reformed, according to the Word of God.’ This motto points toward innovation and a return to the root of the church: fidelity to the word of God... What is already happening at the liturgical celebrations of creation around the world is indeed the work of the Holy Spirit. Adding the **Feast of Creation reclaims the earth and the act of creation to a central position**... Thus, to reform our celebrations and add the Feast of Creation to all our official liturgical calendars will reveal the Holy Spirit’s healing of the earth... The Feast of Creation Sunday will gather us all together and will **honor God and God’s love for the earth.**”*

Cláudio Carvalhaes, Union Theological Seminary ([see remarks](#))

7. THE EMERGING CONSENSUS ON UPGRADING TO A LITURGICAL FEAST



Roman Catholic

“Establishing Creazione and Creatio, as the theological basis places this **celebration in the scope of mystery, Christological and Trinitarian**; and I might emphasize the latter with a robust pneumatology. This foundational theological argument would, I do therefore think, prove **consistent with the criteria with which the Roman Catholic Church has established the solemnities and certain feasts** of the liturgical year... Further precision would need to be made as to whether the Feast of Creation would be a solemnity and, if so, whether a solemnity of precept, or a solemnity at the rank of a feast... The key questions for the Roman Catholic liturgy concerning an ecumenically embraced Feast of Creation would be **whether it would be theologically grounded in the person and mission of Christ Jesus** and how (such as the relationship of Trinity Sunday to the paschal mystery).”

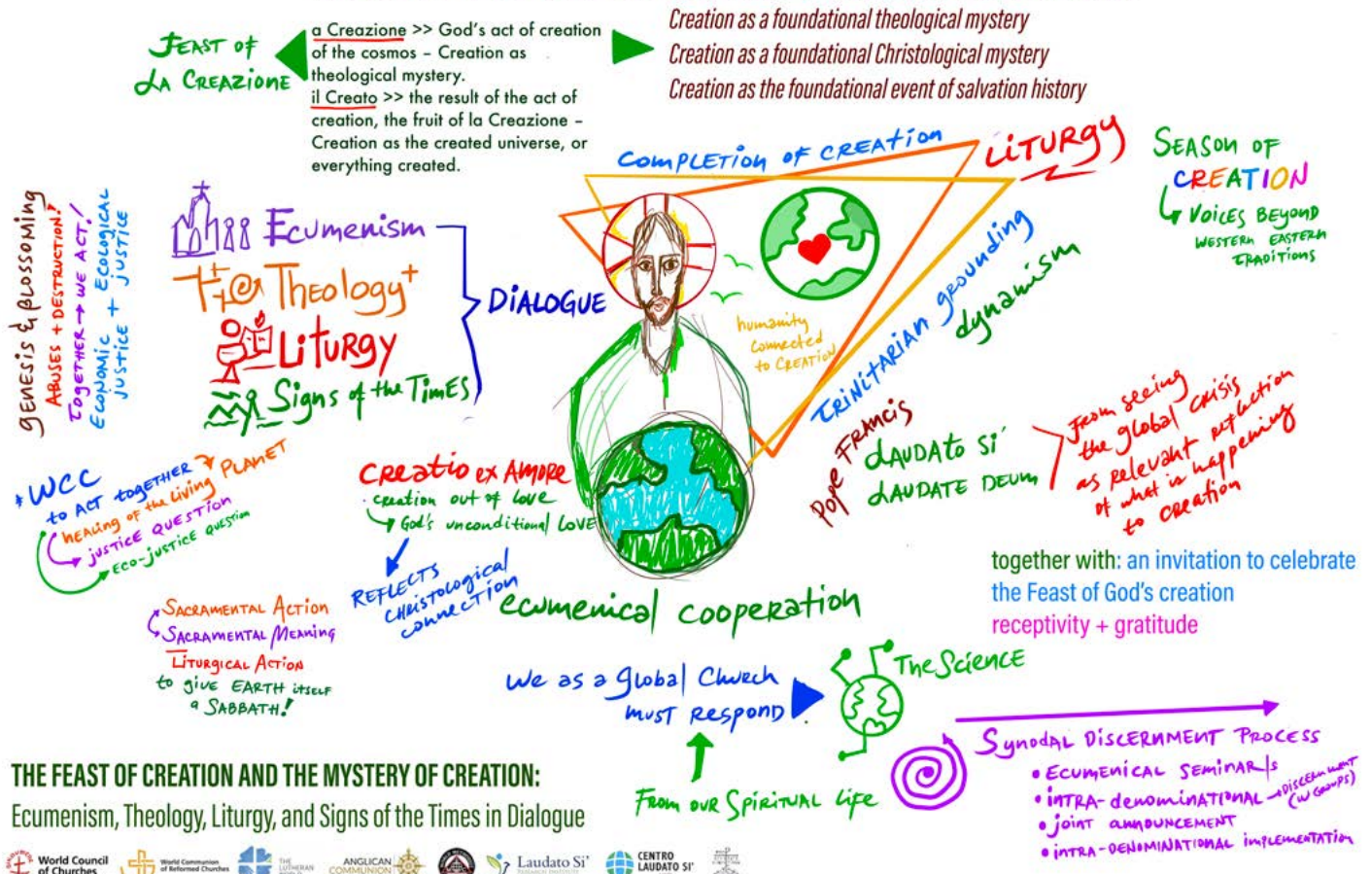
Bruce Morrill, SJ, Vanderbilt University ([see remarks](#))

See Also:

[Highlights from Small Groups discussions by denomination](#)
[Testimonies of participants](#)

7. THE EMERGING CONSENSUS ON UPGRADING TO A LITURGICAL FEAST

THE FEAST OF CREATION: AN ECUMENICAL DREAM



Visual summary of the Assisi dialogues, by Br Jakosalem (Order of Augustinian Recollects, Philippines)

8. Open Questions for Further Reflection

What follows is a summary; see also: "[Expanded version: Open Questions](#)".

A. Theological Definition

While there was appreciation for the overarching theological case made in the **discussion paper**, a takeaway was the need to fine-tune further a shared theological definition of the Feast (perhaps to be expressed in a joint statement). Some points that likely require further refinement are:

- I. Balancing the idea of '**la Creazione**' (primary focus of the discussion paper) with a stronger acknowledgement of '**il Creato**'.
- II. Balancing the **Christological** case made in the discussion paper with a robust **Trinitarian** theology.
- III. Shifting the emphasis from Creation as "**foundational event**" to Creation as ontological "**foundation**" of salvation history.

B. The Title of The Feast

While already popularly known as Feast of Creation or Creation Day, there is a common desire for an official name that signals the feast's theological depth (i.e. *Creazione*, rather than *Creato*). For starters, two frontrunners emerged:

- » "**Feast of the Mystery of Creation**" – The word "Creation" stood out as a key concept emerging organically in recent decades. Strong desire from some to retain the richness of that word, while being open to alternative words instead of "Mystery".
- » "**Feast of God the Creator**" – A spotlight on the "Creator" would unequivocally signal the theological depth and avoid potential misperceptions vis-a-vis *il Creato*.

In parallel, without much time for discussion, several **hybrid options** were floated, such as "Feast of the Creator and the Mystery of Creation" (see more in "[Expanded version: Open Questions](#)").

C. The Date of The Feast

- I. **Fixed date or Sunday?** There was a nascent convergence about celebrating the feast on a Sunday, rather than a fixed date, because of (I) Sunday's pastoral practicality, (II) Sunday's symbolism as both "the day of creation" and "the day of redemption", and (III) the precedent of other "fixed date feasts" often moved to Sundays (e.g. Epiphany, Ascension, Corpus Christi). But requires more discernment, given some calls for a fixed date and given the dating conversation instead revolved mostly around the question below.
- II. **Anchored on September 1 or on the September equinox?** A proposal was made to anchor the feast on the September equinox, rather than the traditional September 1 date. The reception was mixed, deserving deeper exploration. On one hand, the arguments presented were compelling to many and were complemented by a call for a diversity of adaptations ("unity does not require uniformity"), offering churches the chance to pick a Sunday throughout September. On the other hand, others stressed the importance of a shared date as a non-trivial issue given that (1) so much energy has been invested in a shared East-West date for Easter, and (2) Creation Day was inspired by the Orthodox.

D. Calibrating The Ambition of The Theological Dialogue

A tradeoff emerged, which process co-sponsors will need to discuss how to handle. Namely:

- » On one hand, calls were made to "widen the circle" of the theological dialogue to **include voices that were not heard** (or not heard loudly enough) in Assisi, expanding the ecumenical scope. For instance, from (A) the so-called "non-Liturgical churches", and (B) additional non-Western theological perspectives, most especially from indigenous traditions.
- » On the other hand, there were calls to **moderate the ambition of the theological dialogue**, encouraging the process to avoid getting bogged down in theological nuances given the clear overall convergences, while suggesting that theological reflection is to be deepened *in parallel* to and *informed by* liturgical celebration of the feast.

E. Initial Considerations about Scriptural Readings

Some hermeneutical insights were proposed to be considered in the choice of Lectionary readings, with no time to discuss this in depth. For instance:

- I. *Creation and Redemption:*** How (and how much) to uplift the connection of God's creative work with God's redemptive work in Scriptural choices?
- II. *Glory and groaning:*** How should Creation's glory, goodness, and praise-filled essence be held in tension with Creation's "groaning" (Rom 8:18-25) embedded in the creative act?
- III. *Ecological crisis and lament:*** How should this feast be in dialogue with the signs of the times and what is the role of lament? In a nutshell, how is this informed by the answer to question 1.A. regarding how to balance 'la Creazione' and 'il Creato'?

F. Timeframe and Other Practicalities of This Process

Many stressed that a joint institution of the feast in time to be actually celebrated in September 2025 (i.e. marking the Nicaea centenary) is too ambitious, so the possibility of a longer timeframe was floated, aiming for a "joint statement of intent" to be signed and announced in September 2025 with actual implementation beginning in September 2026. Moreover, given this is such an unprecedented process, there are several questions to be discerned about how the various churches and bodies should work together to move this forward (see "Next Steps" section).

See also: "**Expanded version: Open Questions**"

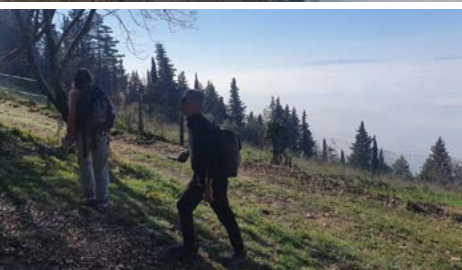
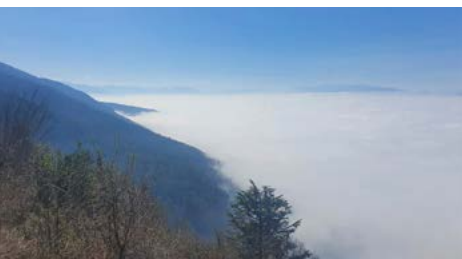
9. Grounded in Prayer

The gathering was nourished by Franciscan spirituality, most especially in the opening pilgrimage to San Damiano (the garden where St. Francis composed the Canticle) and the closing pilgrimage to Eremo delle Carceri (the forest where St. Francis used to pray). Highlights included a prayerful “Brother Sun” sunset contemplation, with the unexpected appearance of “Sister Moon” as well, and hymns animated by the Taizé brothers. Among other fruits shared by participants, a new Laudato Si’ **song** was composed by Claudio Carvalhaes from Union Theological Seminary.



“ I am pleased that you teach sacred theology to our brothers, provided that while you dedicate yourself to this study the spirit of prayer does not disappear within you.”

St. Francis of Assisi
Letter to St. Anthony of Padua



10. Next Steps

New Territory for All Churches

This would be **the first “new feast”** to be embraced by the largest Western Churches at the global level **after contemporary lectionaries** were crafted in the 1960s and 1970s. So this would be an unprecedented ecumenical step, with no benchmark available in terms of process.

The latest “new feasts” were not instituted ecumenically, with the Vatican taking the lead in the decades before the Second Vatican Council: the Feast of the Holy Family* (1921), Feast of Christ the King (1925), and Feast of the Baptism of the Lord (1955).

** Note: the Feast of the Holy Family is not present in the Revised Common Lectionary (it is celebrated in the Catholic lectionary and some Anglican and Lutheran lectionaries, but it is not as widespread as the other two).*

A. Ecumenical Coordination

- » **Process co-sponsors** will meet again to outline the next steps of the process, both to address some of the open questions and to discern how to structure a “Joint statement of intent” to be potentially signed in September 2025 marking the Nicaea anniversary.
- » **Revised Common Lectionary** conversations are being pursued with the Consultation on Common Texts, to see how to connect with this process by the worldwide communions.



B. Intra-Denominational Conversations

- » **Anglican Communion** – A **report** was sent to all provinces worldwide and to the Anglican Primates' Meeting that will take place in April 2024; seminar participants will give feedback to their own Primates and bishops; conversations will continue through IALC (International Anglican Liturgical Consultation). Anglican representatives will also participate in discussions regarding the RCL (at CCT and ELLC).
- » **Catholic Church** – Besides needing to clarify engagement preferences by the Dicastery of Divine Worship, ideas identified in Catholic small group discussions included: (1) scholars might organize an academic seminar in Rome to deepen the exploration, and (2) more consultations might be organized by seminar participants to widen the conversation.
- » **Lutheran World Federation** – The LWF is creating a task force on climate care (climate crisis) that will not only look into advocacy but also the theological rationale for engaging this action through a trinitarian lens. We will consult with our member churches and pull together stories of struggle and hope. The slow process of establishing the Feast and Season of Creation in our various lectionaries will be part of this journey.
- » **World Methodist Council** – An international workgroup will embark on a process of conversation and discernment of Wesleyan/Methodist responses to this project and initiative. A report will be presented to the World Methodist Council global meeting in Gothenburg, Sweden in August 2024.

C. Expanding to Other Denominations

Mindful that the event was prepared with very short notice driven by the Nicaea timeline, an interest was expressed in expanding the conversation to more denominations, both those using the shared lectionary and those who do not but celebrate key feasts (e.g. Christmas, Easter, Pentecost). Even if worship traditions are very different, it merits exploration given the interest already expressed by other traditions present in Assisi (Baptists, Anabaptists, etc).

For starters, the World Evangelical Alliance already expressed interest via its delegate in Assisi, who will explore its inclusion in their next global congress (Oct 2024, S.Korea).

D. Widening The Academic Conversation

Several scholars participating in the process will explore opportunities to widen the conversation, for example within ecumenical societies such as Societas Liturgica, the North American Academy of Liturgy, or the European Academy of Religion.

E. Celebrating “Creation Day” in 2024

September 1 is a Sunday this year, so everyone is encouraged to celebrate the day in their respective churches and communities, as a way to inform the discernment. There are some useful ideas [here](#).

F. Entrusting This Process to God

Last but certainly not least, everyone is encouraged to pray for this process. In particular, the following prayer is available, which was composed for our ecumenical process by one of the scholars participating in Assisi.

Prayer to The Creator to Guide Our Patterns of Prayer

O loving God, who spoke
and all things were created –
O eternal Word made flesh,
who became one with your creation –
O creator Spirit, who breathes in us,
who renews the face of the earth –
O holy and glorious Trinity,
we praise you and we pray to you
with all our heart!
Inspire us with love and wisdom
for the work that we will do together.

Bless us with clarity and courage
for our mission to cherish and tend
earth and air, seas and rivers,
peoples and communities.
Guide your Church
to the patterns of prayer that will form us
to be good stewards
of all that you have entrusted to us.
O holy and glorious Trinity, Creator God,
we praise you and we pray to you
with all our heart. Amen.

Conclusion

The seminar began with this prayer by Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew in his special greeting: “As you gather in the historic town of Assisi... our sincere wish and fervent prayer is that you may experience a moment of inspiration and kairos.” Indeed, it became a reality.

“*What a harvest! ... I have felt the ecumenism of the heart [and] a common feeling that we are initiating something that might turn out to be quite big in the end. We all don't know how this will turn out, but I'm hopeful that the energy – the 'energeia', that's what they call the Holy Spirit – that we have felt will carry us forward. There is a kairos in this room and in this moment.*”

Bp. Bedford-Strohm, chair of World Council of Churches ([watch closing remarks](#))



Oak acorns germinating along Assisi's mountain trail, during the seminar's closing pilgrimage.

Additional Materials

News Articles:

[WCC](#), [Vatican](#), [Anglican Communion](#), [Lutheran World Federation](#),
[WCRC](#), [WMC](#), [PrayTellBlog](#).

Speaker Inputs:

[Papers and presentations](#), Recordings in [English](#) and [Italian](#), [Bios](#).

Other:

[Discussion paper](#), [Seminar program](#), [Testimonies](#), [Photos](#).