

THE FEAST OF CREATION: AN ECUMENICAL DREAM TO MARK THE 1700 YEARS OF NICAEA¹

"In the beginning was the Word... All things came to be through him."

Gospel of John

"Within the cycle of a year, [the Church] unfolds the whole mystery of Christ."

Sacrosanctum Concilium²

I. INTRODUCTION – THE GIFT OF SEPTEMBER 1

In recent decades, driven by the Holy Spirit, September 1 has emerged as an important Christian celebration of Creation. It goes by various names, such as "World Day of Prayer for Creation" or the shorter versions "Feast of Creation" or "Creation Day", as frequently called in popular piety. The Orthodox Church's historical observance of September 1 (see section IV) inspired other churches to follow suit, starting with European ecumenical bodies in the 1990s and eventually embraced by the World Council of Churches in 2008 and the Roman Catholic Church in 2015.³ It became increasingly popular via the larger Season of Creation it inspired, from September 1 to October 4, now marked by most major denominations.⁴

Motivated by those ecumenical efforts and aided by prolific annual statements from high-level Christian leaders for September 1,⁵ more and more Christian communities join the celebration annually (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 prophetic response to the "signs of the times". Yet, despite its growing popularity in both popular piety and ecumenical collaboration, the liturgical calendars and lectionaries of most Western Churches make no reference to this important celebration.⁶ Despite the profound theological underpinnings of the Feast of Creation, there is a gap between the liturgical life of our respective churches and the rich ecumenical celebration that brings us together annually on that occasion.

II. PROPOSAL FOR DISCERNMENT – INSTITUTING THE FEAST IN WESTERN CALENDARS?

Building on the rich history of September 1 in the calendar of Eastern Churches, it is proposed that Western Churches discern a joint institution of the Feast of Creation in their respective

¹ Draft by the Laudato Si' Research Institute at Oxford University, in dialogue with the ecumenical conveners of the [seminar](#) "Feast of Creation and Mystery of Creation" and scholars from across denominations.

² SC 102, which shaped the Roman Catholic calendar, and in turn inspired the Protestant one (RCL).

³ WCC Central Committee, "[Be stewards of God's creation](#)", 20 February 2008; and Pope Francis, "[Letter for the Establishment of the World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation](#)", 6 August 2015.

⁴ See list of denominations endorsing this non-liturgical observance at: seasonofcreation.org/about.

⁵ Both the Ecumenical Patriarch and the Pope issue annual statements to animate the celebration of September 1 (since 1989 and 2015 respectively), as well as many other leaders. On several occasions, joint statements have been made – e.g. [statement](#) of 1 September 2021.

⁶ Research is needed to understand possible Lectionary national adaptations in some denominations.

liturgical calendars and lectionaries. Namely, the question is if this observance – with the theological mystery it represents – merits being elevated from its current ranking as “World Day of Prayer” to become a liturgical feast,⁷ enriching the lectionary in light of “this historical moment” in an ecumenical fashion (as the 2008 Synod on the Bible proposed⁸).

Such a step could be ideal in 2025 given Nicaea’s 1700 years, shedding light on the Creed’s proclamation “I believe in one Lord Jesus Christ... through him all things were made.” In fact, this feast could enrich the Christological nature of the liturgical year, commemorating Christ’s role “in the beginning”, when “all things were created through Him” (Col 1:16, cf. Jn 1:3).

III. CLARIFICATION – FEAST OF “*LA CREAZIONE*”, NOT “*IL CREATO*”

In various languages (English, Spanish, etc) the word “Creation” has a few meanings, but in Italian a helpful distinction is made by coining specific words for two distinct meanings of “Creation”:

- ***la Creazione*** primarily stands for God’s *act* of creation of the cosmos – i.e. Creation as theological mystery (*creatio* in Latin).
- ***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 (*cuncta creata* in Latin).

Naturally, both meanings are intimately connected (with *il Creato* also serving as our main door to meditate on the mystery of *la Creazione*). Yet, the Feast of Creation is sometimes misinterpreted as a mere celebration of *il Creato* that misses the significance of *la Creazione*. This is partly due to the frequent framing of September 1 as a “World Day of Prayer for Creation”, implying *il Creato* rather than *la Creazione*.⁹ Instead, it is the notion of *la Creazione* that we should be celebrating and commemorating more intentionally on September 1, as the source of *il Creato*’s sacredness and sacramentality. This notion actually lies at the core of the feast, as this is the very symbolism of the ancient tradition of September 1 as the day commemorating the creation of the world (see section IV). By the way, a slightly more comprehensive title could be assigned to the feast, to explicitly ground it in the concept of *la Creazione* (see Annex 4).

In other words, this is not a random thematic observance related to a specific object of concern (i.e. creation as *il Creato*) or an accessory devotional observance.¹⁰ Rather, it is an opportunity to celebrate the Triune God as Creator, pondering the mystery of *la Creazione* as a:

⁷ E.g. on par with the over 40 feasts ranked as Solemnity or Feast in the Roman Catholic case, in the footsteps of “new feasts” instituted in the past century, such as the Feast of the Holy Family (1921), the Feast of Christ the King (1925), and the Feast of the Baptism of the Lord (1955).

⁸ The Catholic Church’s 2008 Synod on the Bible recommended adjusting the lectionary to better support “the mission of the Church in this historical moment” and “in dialogue with those ecumenical partners who use this common lectionary” ([Synod Final Propositions](#), 25 October 2008, proposition 16).

⁹ Moreover, for example in the case of the Catholic Church, the observance currently has the same rank as dozens of other “World Days of Prayer”, seemingly implying that Creation is just another thematic concern with equal importance to the many other themes of such days of prayer – as Grandparents, Human Trafficking, Vocations, the Church in China, Sanctification of Priests, and more. Clearly, the great theological mystery of Creation (*Creazione*) belongs in a different category.

¹⁰ For instance, in the Roman Catholic case it would be vastly insufficient for this to be an optional Votive Mass, as nearly all Votive Masses in the Missal (21 out of 22) have a corresponding feast in the calendar.

1. **foundational theological mystery**, broadly speaking (i.e. the ontological foundation of the mystery of salvation),
2. **foundational Christological mystery**, more specifically, and
3. **foundational event** of salvation history (i.e. God's very first act among the *magnalia Dei*).

Each of these three points deserves in-depth exploration in the March 2024 seminar, to discern and validate if the Feast of Creation indeed deserves being elevated to become a liturgical feast, as a moment to ponder that mystery and commemorate that event "in the beginning". See *Annex 1 for preliminary observations about each point*.

Moreover, in light of the *Creazione-Creato* distinction, it is worth distinguishing what is their current role in our liturgical life:

- ***Creato* is a cornerstone of all liturgy**, particularly through the sacramentality of all creation shaping our prayer and finding expression in word, symbol, and act in the sacraments (although, *per se*, this is insufficient to evoke in the faithful an appreciation of *Creato*'s sacramentality and its connection to the deeper mystery of *Creazione*).
- ***Creazione* is absent from the lectionary**, with the faithful unable to ponder Christ's role in the creative act – fully meditating "the whole mystery of Christ" (SC 102) throughout the year – and the mystery of *Creazione* as the foundation of salvation in Christ.

See Annex 2 for preliminary observations about this, to be explored on March 15-16.

IV. THE RICH HISTORY OF "CREATION DAY"

While the expressions "Creation Day" and "Feast of Creation" emerged organically in recent decades,¹¹ its seeds are very ancient. In Eastern Christianity, there is an age-old practice of commemorating September 1 as the day of Creation, marking the day on which God began the creation of the universe as described in the first chapter of Genesis. September 1 is the very day that symbolizes the expression "In the beginning", the very day on which God said "Let there be light." Defined as "the beginning of time" by ancient Orthodox sources as the Basilian Minology,¹² it marked the first day of the calendar year.

In fact, the Byzantine "Creation Era" calendar – officially used by the Ecumenical Patriarchate from the 7th to the 18th century – stipulated that the cosmos was created on September 1 of the year 5509 BC, using chronological calculations from the Septuagint Bible.¹³ There is a parallel with the Jewish calendar, which also follows – still today – an *Anno Mundi* system based on biblical chronology, while celebrating its New Year – the feast of *Rosh Hashanah* – in September

¹¹ "Feast of Creation" was coined by CCEE and KEK in [1997](#), while "Creation Day" was used by WCC in [2008](#).

¹² For example, the 10th-century Basilian Minology (liturgical calendar) explains: "Indikton is celebrated by the Church of God, from the ancients, because it is thought to be *the beginning of time* from this day... Therefore, the first day of September is also a defining month and the beginning of the whole year." As cited in Panayiotis Skaltsis, *At times and annual remembrances: The Indiction as the beginning of the year and the feast of Ecology*, Kyriakidis (2014).

¹³ "Byzantine Creation Era Calendar", [Orthodox Christianity](#), 14 September 2016.

(also gravitating around the Autumn Equinox, but as a movable date). In ancient rabbinical debates about the Jewish calendar, the view that ended up being adopted argued: “In [the month of] Tishri the world was created.”¹⁴ On that feast of *Rosh Hashanah*, on Tishri 1, some Jewish liturgies proclaim: “*Ha-yom harat olam*” – “Today is the day of the world's creation”.¹⁵

When the Orthodox Church transitioned from that *Anno Mundi* system to the Western *Anno Domini* system in the 18th century, it still kept the tradition alive by maintaining September 1 as the first day of its liturgical year, also known as the Feast of the Indiction.¹⁶ The strong symbolism signals that Creation was the very first step of salvation history. Building on that rich tradition and reading the “signs of the times” of the ecological crisis, in 1989 the Ecumenical Patriarch Demetrios expanded the day's symbolism to also be a day of prayer for creation in the Orthodox Church, a day to offer “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.”¹⁷ Moreover, as described above, many Western churches later joined the celebration, popularly known as “Creation Day” or “Feast of Creation”, yet usually as an optional observance absent from the liturgical calendar.¹⁸

V. POTENTIAL FRUITS OF A JOINT INSTITUTION OF THE FEAST

(1) Strengthen even further the path of Christian unity, as a fraternal gesture from the Western Churches recognizing the historical leadership of the Eastern Churches in regards to creation. This would also build on the historical appreciation of the East's rich liturgical heritage (as acknowledged for example by the Second Vatican Council¹⁹). It would be a tangible expression of our heartfelt intention to respond to Christ's command, “may all be one” (Jn 17:21). By planting a seed that will live way beyond the celebrations of the 1700th anniversary of Nicaea, this would be an unprecedented act of ecumenical communion.

(2) Enrich the liturgical calendars of Western Churches, which currently have no dedicated feast to celebrate the theological mystery of Creation (*Creazione*) as the foundation of salvation, and God as Creator. The liturgical year of Western denominations is supposed to cover “the whole mystery of Christ” (SC 102), yet the very first step in Christ's mystery, the fact that “all things were created through Him”, is absent. We have many liturgical feasts celebrating the various aspects of Christ, but none of those feasts invites us (yet) to intentionally commemorate

¹⁴ Tishri is the lunar month corresponding to the beginning of the Northern autumn, in September-October. The understanding of Tishri at the moment of God's creation of the cosmos led to the establishment of the New Year on Tishri 1 – the feast of *Rosh Hashanah*. See Thomas J. Talley, *The Origins of the Liturgical Year*, 2nd ed (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1991), 81-83, citing the Talmud, tractate *Rosh Hashanah* 10b-11a.

¹⁵ Rabbi Eliyahu Kitov, *The Book of Our Heritage* (1979), as cited in [Chabad](#).

¹⁶ In Orthodox tradition, besides marking the Day of Creation, September 1 also marks the beginning of Christ's public ministry (which the West commemorates after the Feast of the Baptism of the Lord). In the East it is popularly known as the Feast of the Indiction, as September 1 also marked the beginning of the agricultural year (anticipating the solstice) and the civil and fiscal calendar of the ancient Byzantine Empire.

¹⁷ Ecumenical Patriarch Demetrios, [Message on the Day of Prayer for Creation](#), 1 September 1989.

¹⁸ For example, in 2015 Pope Francis followed suit and established the World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation on September 1 as a non-liturgical optional observance for the Catholic Church.

¹⁹ *Unitatis Redintegratio* stated: “From the beginning the Churches of the East have had a treasury from which the Western Church has drawn extensively... The very rich liturgical and spiritual heritage of the Eastern Churches should be known, venerated, preserved and cherished by all.” (14-15)

Christ's role "in the beginning" (Gen 1:1, Jn 1:1), that foundational event in salvation history.

(3) Nourish the spiritual life of the faithful (*lex orandi, lex credendi*), motivating more attention to God as Creator and to the great mystery of Creation, historically so neglected in the West. Despite the fact that the liturgical year is key in forming the faithful about the mysteries of the Christian faith, when our liturgical feasts are put side by side with the Creed, the mystery of Creation stands out as a foundational Nicene truth with no dedicated feast.²⁰ This lack of a liturgical feast, to which various historical drivers could be attributed,²¹ helps explain why Western Churches have given so little attention to Creation in recent centuries. Shaping our liturgical consciousness in a new way, the Feast of Creation would revitalize Christianity's understanding of God's loving creativity, of our creaturehood, and of Creation (*Creato*) as sacramental and as a sacred gift. As a side effect, this would be particularly attractive to young people, supporting a key evangelization priority of all churches.

(4) Respond prophetically to the "signs of the times" (*lex vivendi*), which remind us – in the most literal of ways – of the sinful devastation of Creation and our neglect of this mystery. Grounded in the renewed understanding of God as Creator, instituting the Feast of Creation would deepen our collective commitment to the fate of God's beloved Creation, while also uplifting Christianity's relevance in addressing the challenges of this "Anthropocene Era". In short, by enhancing our awareness of Creation's sacredness, the feast would have the indirect effect of motivating Christians to respond more decisively to the sacrilege of the ecological crisis.

VI. NEXT STEPS

If the ecumenical discernment of this proposal affirmed the intention to jointly institute the liturgical feast, the year 2025 would be particularly fitting given the ecumenical symbolism of the 1700th anniversary of the Nicene Creed. Moreover, 2025 has the additional significance for Western Churches of the 800th anniversary of the "Canticle of the Creatures" of St. Francis of Assisi.

²⁰ For a denomination-specific example, see Annex 3.

²¹ One historical driver of this might be the notion of Creation being "the Hidden Element" in Christian thought, not named explicitly because it is obvious (see Josef Pieper, *On the 'Negative' Element in the Philosophy of Thomas Aquinas*, CrossCurrents Vol. 4, 1953). Being so obvious, throughout history the Western Churches have not felt the need to intentionally ponder this doctrine in the liturgical year. Yet, there arguably are other drivers, such as past Western emphasis on competing doctrines of salvation, which sidelined theological interest in the doctrine of creation.

ANNEX 1 – SOME THEOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS TO INFORM THE POTENTIAL LITURGICAL FEAST

As mentioned in [section III](#), when distinguishing *la Creazione* and *il Creato*, the mystery of Creation (*Creazione*) is (1) a foundational theological mystery (broadly speaking), (2) a foundational Christological mystery (more specifically), and (3) a foundational event of salvation history. Given the interplay of *lex credendi* and *lex orandi*, these three theological theses deserve in-depth exploration (with corresponding panels in the Assisi seminar) to discern and validate if the Feast of Creation indeed deserves becoming a liturgical feast. Some initial reflections follow.

1. Creation as a foundational theological mystery

The interconnectedness of Creation and Redemption is a longstanding Christian teaching, summarized for example by St. John Damascene: “I worship the Creator of matter who became matter for my sake.”²² But it has been forgotten. For example, Benedict XVI stated: “In recent decades the doctrine of Creation had almost disappeared from theology, it was almost imperceptible. We are now aware of the damage that this has caused. The Redeemer is the Creator and if we do not proclaim God in his full grandeur – as Creator and as Redeemer – we also diminish the value of the Redemption... The renewal of the doctrine of Creation and a new understanding of the inseparability of Creation and Redemption are of supreme importance.”²³

Given “the didactic and pastoral nature of the Liturgy”,²⁴ the liturgical year plays a preeminent role in forming the faithful into a greater awareness of the mysteries of our faith. Yet, when putting side by side the Creed and the Western liturgical calendar, the mystery of Creation stands out as the only Nicene proposition with no dedicated liturgical feast (see Annex 3 for the Roman Catholic example). While the development of the liturgical year was not based on the Creed, its feasts indeed are a key channel to catechize the faithful about the mysteries of our faith, as the axiom *lex orandi, lex credendi* reminds us. So the Feast of Creation could arguably help fill this gap in our collective liturgical consciousness. As a side note, this lack of a liturgical feast, to which various historical factors could be attributed,²⁵ partially helps understand why Western Churches have given so little attention to Creation in recent centuries.

2. Creation as a foundational Christological mystery

The Western liturgical year, as expressed in both the Roman General Calendar and the corresponding Revised Common Lectionary of other denominations, is supposed to unfold “the

²² John of Damascus, *Apologia*, Part I, 16.

²³ Benedict XVI, [Remarks at the Cathedral of Bressanone](#), 6 August 2008.

²⁴ *Sacrosanctum Concilium* 33.

²⁵ One historical driver of this might be the notion of Creation being “the Hidden Element” in Christian thought, not named explicitly because it is obvious (see Josef Pieper, *On the 'Negative' Element in the Philosophy of Thomas Aquinas*, CrossCurrents Vol. 4, 1953). Being so obvious, throughout history the Western Churches have not felt the need to intentionally ponder this doctrine in the liturgical year. Yet, there arguably are other drivers, such as past Western emphasis on competing doctrines of salvation in post-Reformation debates, which sidelined theological interest in the doctrine of creation.

whole mystery of Christ".²⁶ Yet a foundational step in Christ's mystery, the fact that "all things were created through Him" (Colossians 1:16, John 1:3), is absent. We have many liturgical feasts celebrating the various aspects and key events of Christ. Yet none of those feasts invites the faithful to intentionally ponder Christ's role in the creation of the cosmos, the very foundation of the paschal mystery.

The Feast of Creation could play a key role in catechizing about the Christological nature of the mystery of Creation and the relationship of Christ with the created cosmos. In light of the point above about the inseparability of Creation and Redemption, there is much for Christian churches to more deeply reflect upon how Christ brings together those two mysteries, as through Christ, the Triune God creates in order to save – as Irenaeus once put it, "By the Word, through whom God made the creation, He also bestowed salvation on the men included in the creation."²⁷ Likewise, this relates to the significance of Jesus Christ being both Creator and creature, as well as the connection between Christ's role in the creative act and the cosmic significance of the paschal mystery.

3. Creation as the foundational event of salvation history

The glorious event "in the beginning", that crucial event memorably recorded in the opening line of both the Book of Genesis and the Gospel of John (not to mention the many other Scriptural references to Christ's role in the creative event²⁸), is an event that arguably deserves to be commemorated in our liturgical year. In fact, September 1 has historically been a commemoration of this creative event "in the beginning", as explained in Section IV. This ancient tradition of Eastern Christianity marking the event of creation *ex nihilo, ex amore* is one that merits further unpacking to explore the role of the Feast of Creation in the Western liturgical calendar. Given this is the foundational event in salvation history from which everything else flowed, the very first act among the *magnalia Dei*,²⁹ a question to explore is if it would deserve liturgical remembrance (*zakar* in Hebrew, *anamnesis* in Greek) similar to that of other feasts.³⁰

Relatedly, from the perspective of systematic theology, there is a case to be explored about Creation, Incarnation, and Redemption being an inseparable triad of theological mysteries, grounded in the interrelatedness of (1) the event of Creation "in the beginning", (2) the event of the Incarnation, and (3) the event of the Passion-Resurrection as the three "grand events" of

²⁶ Sacrosanctum Concilium 102 (this conciliar document decisively shaped the Roman General Calendar, which in turn inspired the structure of the Revised Common Lectionary of other Western denominations).

²⁷ Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, Book 3, XI.1.

²⁸ Wis 9:1, Sir 42:15, Ps 33:9, 1 Cor 8:6, Rom 11:36, Col 1:16, Heb 1:2, Rev 3:14, Rev 22:13, among others, and on top of the aforementioned Gen 1 and Jn 1:3.

²⁹ For example, the Catechism of the Catholic Church explains that "Creation is the foundation of all God's saving plans, the beginning of the history of salvation" (280).

³⁰ While the word remembrance, or *anamnesis*, has been used most frequently in reference to the Eucharist, it arguably has a broader meaning in liturgy. In terms of history (e.g. how the Jewish feasts were acts of remembrance – *zakar* – of God's *magnalia Dei*), in terms of how it could apply to other Christian feasts (e.g. the Book of Common Prayer used by various denominations has a Christmas collect about "the yearly remembrance of the birth of thy only Son Jesus Christ"), and in terms of liturgy more broadly (a recent *Societas Liturgica* [congress](#), for example, unpacked the anamnestic aspect of various liturgical applications).

God's relationship with the cosmos.³¹ Likewise, there are questions to be explored about the roles of the Feast of Creation, Christmas and the Paschal Triduum as parallel feasts pondering those three mysteries and commemorating Christ's role in those three grand events of salvation history.

CONCLUSION

If the exploration of these questions formulated a strong theological case for the Feast of Creation to be instituted as a liturgical feast, its annual celebration would undoubtedly help uplift the doctrine of creation in the life of the Christian community. Once again, *lex orandi, lex credendi*. As Pope Pius XI wrote one century ago, when instituting the Feast of Christ the King:

*"People are instructed in the truths of faith... far more effectually by the annual celebration of our sacred mysteries than by any official pronouncement of the teaching of the Church. Such pronouncements usually reach only a few and the more learned among the faithful; feasts reach them all; the former speak but once, the latter speak every year – in fact, forever. The Church's teaching affects the mind primarily; her feasts affect both mind and heart... History, in fact, tells us that in the course of ages these festivals have been instituted one after another according as the needs or the advantage of the people of Christ seemed to demand."*³²

We look forward to exploring together if our current "signs of the times" prove to be one of those special moments in history when the conditions are ripe for a new liturgical feast to be added to the calendar.

³¹ It is worth noting that the creative event is different from the other two in that it is an event outside time (i.e. creating the very nature of time). In other words, is it an event "in the beginning before time".

³² Pius XI, [*Quas Primas*](#) Encyclical on the Feast of Christ the King, 21-22.

ANNEX 2 – THE ROLE OF CREATION IN LITURGY: *CREATO* PRESENT, *CREAZIONE* (MOSTLY) ABSENT

Creation is an underlying premise of liturgy overall, particularly through the sacramentality of all creation shaping our prayer and finding expression in word, symbol, and act in the sacraments.³³ Indeed, the doctrine of sacramentality is at the very core of liturgy and the created world is inherently sacramental and revelatory of God.³⁴ Yet, besides the fact that this sacramentality principle often goes unnoticed by most faithful, it is usually related to Creation as *Creato* rather than *Creazione* – which is the core contribution of the Feast of Creation to the liturgical year.

Building on [section III](#)'s *Creazione-Creato* distinction, it is also useful to distinguish their role in the two main pillars³⁵ of the eucharistic celebration (the preeminent liturgical experience of most Christians³⁶):

- The ***Liturgy of the Eucharist*** has *il Creato* as its cornerstone, as seen most notably in the role of bread and wine, symbols of the sacramentality of all creation. Indeed, the Eucharist has a “cosmic character” as “it embraces and permeates all creation” (*Creato*), in that “the world which came forth from the hands of God the Creator returns to him redeemed by Christ.”³⁷ Yet, *per se*, that is insufficient to evoke in the worshipping assembly an appreciation of *Creato*'s sacramentality, let alone its connection with Christ's role in the creative act and the deeper mystery of *Creazione* as the foundation of salvation in Christ. Moreover, the accompanying liturgical prayers of most denominations make only light references to Creation³⁸ and frequently miss to name God's role as Creator (for example, the *Missale Romanum* uses the title “Creator” only 5 times, whereas the title “Almighty” is used 277 times³⁹).

³³ For the overall theme of liturgy and creation, see Teresa Berger's pioneering ecumenical volume *Full of Your Glory: Liturgy, Cosmos, Creation* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2019). More specifically about Roman Catholic perspectives on sacramentality, see for example Pope Francis' letters *Laudato Si'* (235-236) and *Desiderio Desideravi* (42, 46), and Kevin Irwin's *Context and Text: A Method for Liturgical Theology*, rev. ed. (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2018), 123-186.

³⁴ Regarding the notion of creation as sacrament, see for example the work of Orthodox theologian John Chryssavgis, *Creation as Sacrament: Reflections on Ecology and Spirituality* (London: T&T Clark, 2019).

³⁵ Commonly known as Liturgy of the Word and Liturgy of the Eucharist, with varying names and adaptations by denomination.

³⁶ The Liturgy of the Hours (which has some strong references to creation) is mostly absent from the spiritual life of the faithful and other sacraments are arguably infrequent in everyday life.

³⁷ Pope John Paul II, *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*, 8, paraphrasing and expanding Teilhard de Chardin's insights.

³⁸ In the Roman Catholic case, Eucharistic Prayer IV is the most notable example (although rarely used), and the overall *Ordo Missae* has some additional references to *Creato* as well, but clearly without a central role, as examined in-depth by Joris Geldhof in “Fruit of the Earth, Work of Human Hands, Bread of Life: The *Ordo Missae* on Creation and the World”, in Teresa Berger (ed.), *Full of Your Glory: Liturgy, Cosmos, Creation* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2019), 245-266. Yet, some denominations are starting to publish new Creation-attuned liturgical resources; see for example the Lutheran liturgical supplement *All Creation Sings* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2020) or the Anglican resource *A Time for Creation* (London: Church House Publishing, 2020).

³⁹ Kevin W. Irwin, *Ecology, Liturgy, and the Sacraments* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 2020), 185, footnote 33.

- The ***Liturgy of the Word***, through the Scriptural choices made in Western lectionaries:
 - makes nearly no references to ***Creazione***⁴⁰ and certainly does not connect it to Christ's role in such creative event, as it is never intentionally pondered through the juxtaposition of Creation-related readings on a given day of the calendar. With countless texts pondered throughout the lectionary's 3-year cycle, it is fair to say that the mystery of *Creazione* is mostly absent in the Liturgy of the Word.
 - includes only weak references to ***Creato***⁴¹ – in fact, even when featuring the most iconic Creation-related psalm, Psalm 148, the Roman Catholic lectionary omits verses about non-human creatures.⁴²

Given that a "lectionary is a canon within a canon",⁴³ decisively shaping the ethos of Christian communities and their familiarity with God's Word and the mysteries of our faith, the absence of Creation from the Liturgy of the Word is a significant issue.⁴⁴ Arguably, this was one factor – among many others – boosting the unbalanced attention of Western Christians to God as Redeemer at the expense of God as Creator.

Bottom line, the average Western Christian attending Sunday services rarely – if ever – ponders intentionally the mystery of Creation as *Creazione*, given its absence from the rich set of feasts making up the liturgical calendar. Which is precisely the rich contribution the Feast of Creation can make. Moreover, since both Word and sacrament are essential pillars of the Eucharistic liturgy,⁴⁵ the celebration of the Feast of Creation could enhance attention to the interplay between *Creato*'s sacramentality and the great mystery of *Creazione* as its source⁴⁶ – two essential components of our Christian faith.

⁴⁰ Within the lectionary, the notable exception is Genesis 1 in the Easter Vigil (plus a random weekday of Ordinary Time). Yet, even when read, the valuable spotlight on Creation happens in the larger context of the whole story of salvation, rather than with dedicated attention (i.e. Genesis 1 being just one out of seven Old Testament readings, not to mention subsequent New Testament readings). While this is extremely positive to connect Creation and Redemption (in line with the role that the Feast of Creation could have in the overall liturgical year), the fact that it is only one out of many other readings means that most faithful do not perceive its importance during the vigil. Moreover, and perhaps most importantly, Christ's role in the creative act is not pondered in the vigil, given Genesis 1 is not juxtaposed with Christological Creation-related texts. Outside the lectionary, it is worth mentioning that the Creed does refer to *Creazione*, yet from the faithful's perspective it has only a marginal role in the overall Liturgy of the Word.

⁴¹ For a detailed analysis of the presence of Creation as *Creato*, see Lisa E. Dahill, "New Creation: The Revised Common Lectionary and the Earth's Paschal Life," *Liturgy* 27:2 (2012), 3-16.

⁴² Psalm 148, read in weekdays of Ordinary Time and Easter Time, dishearteningly omits verses 3-10 about non-human creatures, jumping straight from angels in verse 2 to humans in verse 11.

⁴³ Gail Ramshaw, *Treasures Old and New: Images in the Lectionary* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2002), 17.

⁴⁴ Arguably explained by the fact that in the 1960s, when the Western lectionary's foundations were laid, attention to creation was very low in ecclesial circles.

⁴⁵ As stated by *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, "the liturgy of the word and the eucharistic liturgy are so closely connected with each other that they form but one single act of worship" (56).

⁴⁶ It is worth noting how other premises of liturgy also have their respective annual feasts (e.g. the Paschal Mystery as the most obvious case, but also others as the Incarnation and the Trinity).

ANNEX 3 – THE CREED AND THE FEASTS

ROMAN CATHOLIC CASE STUDY

While mindful of the oversimplification of the “*Lex Orandi, Lex Credendi*” axiom, this table (using the Roman Catholic calendar as a case study) is a helpful way of visualizing their interplay, as the Creed is the most iconic expression of the *Lex Credendi* and liturgical feasts are an important expression of the *Lex Orandi*. In fact, liturgical feasts are a key way for the faithful to learn about and ponder the mysteries of our Nicene faith annually.

THE CREED <i>Lex Credendi</i>	RELEVANT LITURGICAL FEASTS <i>Lex Orandi</i>
I believe in one God,	- Solemnity of the Holy Trinity
the Father almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all things visible and invisible.	- <i>[missing]</i> Feast of Creation in Christ
I believe in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Only Begotten Son of God, born of the Father before all ages. God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, consubstantial with the Father;	- Solemnity of Christ, King of the Universe - Feast of the Transfiguration - Memorial of the Holy Name of Jesus
through him all things were made.	- <i>[missing]</i> Feast of Creation in Christ
For us men and for our salvation he came down from heaven, and by the Holy Spirit was incarnate of the Virgin Mary,	- Solemnity of the Annunciation - Various solemnities and feasts of Mary (Mother of God, Assumption, Immaculate Conception, Visitation, Nativity of Mary) - Various memorials of Mary (Presentation of Mary, Immaculate Heart of Mary, Queenship of Mary, Holy Name of Mary, Our Lady of Sorrows, St Joachim and St Anne, Mother of the Church, Our Lady of Fatima, Our Lady of Mt. Carmel, Our Lady of the Rosary, Our Lady of Loreto, Our Lady of Guadalupe, Our Lady of Lourdes) - Optional memorials of Mary on all Saturdays of Ordinary Time
and became man.	- Solemnity of the Nativity - Solemnity of the Epiphany - Feasts of the Octave of Christmas - Feast of the Holy Family - Feast of the Presentation of the Lord - Memorial of the Holy Name of Jesus - Sundays of the Advent season

For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate, he suffered death and was buried, and rose again on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures.	- Major feasts of Holy Week (Palm Sunday, Paschal Triduum) and Ash Wednesday - Solemnities of the Octave of Easter - Sundays of Lent and Easter seasons - Solemnity of Corpus Christi - Solemnity of the Sacred Heart of Jesus - Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross - Feast of Christ the Eternal High Priest - Memorial of Our Lady of Sorrows (Besides all Eucharistic celebrations of the year)
He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father.	- Solemnity of the Ascension
He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead and his kingdom will have no end.	- Solemnity of Christ, King of the Universe
I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life*, who proceeds from the Father and the Son, who with the Father and the Son is adored and glorified, who has spoken through the prophets.	- Solemnity of Pentecost <i>* Note: While partially covered by Pentecost, the formulation "Giver of Life" also is a part of the mystery of the Triune God as a Creator, to be uplifted by the new Feast of Creation.</i>
I believe in one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church.	- Solemnity of Pentecost - Feast of the Chair of Saint Peter - Feast of the Dedication of the Lateran Basilica - Memorial of Mary, Mother of the Church - Optional memorials of the Dedication of the Basilica of St Mary Major, and of Dedication of the Basilicas of St Peter and St Paul
I confess one Baptism for the forgiveness of sins	- Feast of the Baptism of the Lord
and I look forward to the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come. <i>[Note: Apostles' Creed explicitly adds "the communion of saints".]</i>	- Solemnity of All Saints - Various solemnities (St. Joseph, Sts. Peter and Paul, St. John the Baptist) - All Souls' Day - Various feasts (Apostles, Evangelists, etc) - Various memorials of saints

* The Easter Vigil sometimes includes some partial attention to Creation, since Genesis 1 is one of the nine optional readings; and even if it was read it still gets lost and – most importantly – it brings no attention to Christ's role in the creative act given the absence of complementary New Testament readings about Creation.

** It is notable that some saints – such as St. Paul, St. Peter, St. Joseph, and St. John the Baptist – have two liturgical feasts each (including a solemnity each), while the foundational mystery of Creation in Christ does not even have one.

ANNEX 4 – SOME PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS

1. POTENTIAL TITLE

Mindful that liturgical feasts usually have a formal “full name” that is longer than the “popular name” (e.g. “Feast of the Nativity of the Lord” or “Feast of the Ascension of the Lord”, popularly known as “Christmas Day” or “Ascension Day”), below are some options for the formal title:

- **Option A: Feast of Creation**

Pros: 1) Simplest option and closest to current usage in popular piety; 2) focused on the overall mystery and the doctrine of Creation.

Cons: It would likely be misunderstood and considered to be a feast about “Nature” or “Cosmos”, as that is what “Creation” means in popular usage for many among the faithful (e.g. “care for creation”), rather than about the mystery of our faith and God as Creator. See section III above about the *Creazione-Creato* distinction that does not exist in many languages.

- **Option B: Feast of the Creation of Heaven and Earth**

Pros: 1) It commemorates the *event* in salvation history (mirroring the “event logic” of other great solemnities catechizing about other theological mysteries (e.g. Easter about Redemption, Christmas about Incarnation, Pentecost about the Holy Spirit) and the mystery of the universe’s creation *ex nihilo, ex amore*; 2) “Heaven and Earth” is the traditional language used in Scripture (e.g. Genesis 1:1) and the Creed.

- **Option C: Feast of God’s Creation of Heaven and Earth**

Pros: On top of the points about Option B, it explicitly brings the attention to the Creator, to avoid misperceptions that it would be about celebrating “Creation as created creatures”.

Cons: Perhaps too long in translated versions (e.g. in Italian, “Festa della Creazione del Cielo e della Terra da parte di Dio”).

Postscript note: subsequent academic explorations shifted to discern instead if the title should have a Christological or Trinitarian emphasis. See latest [report](#), p. 60.

2. POTENTIAL FEAST CATEGORY

Each denomination, when relevant, would have to discern what category to assign to the feast. E.g. “Solemnity” or “Feast” in Roman Catholic case, “Principal Feast” or “Festival” in Anglican case, “Principal festival” or “Lesser festival” in Lutheran case, etc. The theological panels of the Assisi seminar will help unpack and discern if the importance of the mystery of Creation in our faith and in salvation history is so great that the feast should be granted the highest rank possible (i.e. Roman Catholic “Solemnity”, Anglican “Principal Feast”, etc) or not.

3. POTENTIAL DATE

- **Option A: Fixed on September 1** (i.e. weekday)
This is the traditional date associated with the feast, given its ancient history and symbolism (see Section IV).
- **Option B: Movable, the first Sunday of September.** Some considerations:
 - **Sunday's symbolism as both "the day of creation" and "the day of redemption":** This is a well established – yet currently neglected – understanding, as stated for example by St. Justin Martyr ("Sunday is the day on which we all hold our common assembly, because it is the first day on which God made the world; and Jesus Christ our Saviour on the same day rose from the dead"⁴⁷) or St. Gregory the Great ("the first day, on which the Blessed Trinity created the world, and on which the Creator rising, after vanquishing death, liberated us"⁴⁸). In recent decades there have been attempts to revive this understanding, such as those of Anglican scholar H. Boone Porter ("In the full observance of the First Day of the week, we are not only taught the doctrines of creation, redemption, and sanctification, we not only remember them, but we enter into them"⁴⁹) and Pope Benedict XVI (in Sunday "two meanings are inextricably intertwined, and we must once more learn to recognize their unity... the day of the resurrection [and] the day of the dawning of creation"⁵⁰). Yet, Sunday is clearly not experienced as a "weekly feast of creation" by most Christians; so the celebration of this annual feast on a Sunday could help assimilate this key insight.
 - **Pastoral practicality:** Needless to say, Sunday is much more convenient for pastoral reasons. Precisely for that reason, many Orthodox congregations mark the day on the first Sunday of September, rather than on September 1 itself.⁵¹ Likewise, some Orthodox churches officially mark the day that first Sunday, rather than making it optional.⁵²
 - **Precedent of other feasts:** For pastoral practicality, some feasts with their own symbolic "fixed dates" (such as Epiphany, Ascension, Corpus Christi, Sts. Peter and Paul, and All Saints in various traditions) have also been moved to the subsequent Sunday (in the majority of countries where the fixed date is not a civil holiday).
 - **Practical note:** September 1 would continue to be popularly observed as the beginning of the ecumenical celebrations of the annual Season of Creation, so it should not necessarily be an "either/or" choice.

⁴⁷ Justin Martyr, *First Apology*, 67.

⁴⁸ Gregory the Great, *Primo die, quo Trinitas*, 1.

⁴⁹ H. Boone Porter, *The Day of Light: The Biblical and Liturgical Meaning of Sunday*, The Pastoral Press (Washington, DC), 1987, X.

⁵⁰ Benedict XVI, [Homily in Saint Stephen's Cathedral](#), 9 September 2007. This was echoed in other papal statements, such as [Sacramentum Caritatis](#) (#37) and [Speech to the clergy of Rome](#) (14 February 2013), and in the Catechism of the Catholic Church (#1784).

⁵¹ For example, see: Chrysavgis, John and Bruce Foltz, *Toward an Ecology of Transfiguration: Orthodox Christian Perspectives on Environment, Nature, and Creation* (New York, USA: Fordham University Press, 2013), 379 (Appendix A).

⁵² For example, see: "Holy Synod of the Russian Church establishes a day of special prayer for God's creation", [Orthodox Christianity](#), 14 July 2015.

4. POTENTIAL READINGS

For illustrative purposes, some creation-themed readings are listed, but there are countless other texts that could form a rich 3-year cycle.

- **Genesis 1:1 - 2:3**, currently⁵³ under random weekday of Ordinary Time; plus Easter Vigil.
- **Psalms 148**, currently under random weekdays of Ordinary Time and Easter Time, and – dishearteningly in the Catholic case – omitting verses 3-10 about non-human creatures.
- **Colossians 1:15-20**, currently under random weekday of Ordinary Time.
- **John 1:1-5**, currently in both Christmas Day and Seventh Day in the Christmas Octave, but in longer version (Jn 1:1-18, given that the most important line for Christmas is verse 14).

Notes:

- In most lectionaries, Genesis 1 and John 1 (the two “*In the beginning*” chapters) are never read together; it would be a huge blessing for the Christian family to ponder them jointly.
- It would be fine for these two readings to be repeated (in Easter Vigil and Christmas Day, respectively), as there are other important readings that are also repeated in multiple feasts.⁵⁴
- If there was a major need to rearrange any readings (e.g. John 1:1-18 in the Seventh Day in the Christmas Octave) to avoid repetition, it is worth remembering that the 2008 Synod on the Bible of the Catholic Church recommended adjusting the lectionary in light of “this historical moment” and “in dialogue with ecumenical partners”.⁵⁵

⁵³ These are observations about the Roman Catholic lectionary specifically.

⁵⁴ For example, in the Roman Catholic case, Gospel readings are repeated in: Solemnities of the Annunciation and of the Immaculate Conception (Lk 1:26-38), Feast of the Visitation and Solemnity of the Assumption (Lk 1:39-56), Feasts of the Holy Family and of the Presentation of the Lord (Lk 2:22-40), Feast of the Transfiguration and Second Sunday of Lent (Transfiguration account from each year's gospel), Palm Sunday and Corpus Christi (Last Supper account from each year's gospel).

⁵⁵ “Proposition 16 – Lectionary: It is recommended that an examination be carried out of the Roman Lectionary to see if the current selection and ordering of the readings is truly adequate to the mission of the church in this historical moment... The revision of the lectionary could be carried out in dialogue with those ecumenical partners who use this common lectionary.” ([Final Propositions](#) of the Synod of Bishops on the Bible, 25 October 2008)