



*To All Assembled in Thessaloniki
for the International Conference on
"Integral Ecology as the New Road to Reconciliation"
2-3 September 2016*

In sending cordial greetings to all associated with this significant ecumenical Conference devoted to the care and protection of God's gift of creation, I express my gratitude to the organizers, and in union with my brothers Patriarch Bartholomew and Archbishop Justin Welby, I willingly offer good wishes for the fruitfulness of these days of reflection, study and prayer.

I am particularly grateful that the present Conference brings together scholars from different Christian traditions in a common effort to draw upon the riches of our shared theological and spiritual heritage and thus to contribute to dialogue and action in confronting the global crisis of environmental decay. As the theme of your meeting suggests, there is a profound link between the grave environmental and social crises facing our world. In effect, "there can be no renewal of our relationship with nature without a renewal of humanity itself" (*Laudato Si'*, 118). What is demanded of us at this hour is a globalization of solidarity that finds concrete expression in efforts to combat poverty and to restore dignity to the excluded, while at the same time protecting the earth entrusted to our stewardship.

It is my hope that your reflections will inspire a greater awareness of the moral duty incumbent on all Christ's followers to foster the right relationship between nature and humanity originally willed by the Creator, and to work together in seeking effective means of caring for our common home. The ecological conversion to which we are called also involves taking a prophetic stance against the spread of a culture of waste that increasingly discards both human beings and the good things of the earth.

I trust that the Conference will indeed open new roads to reconciled, just and fraternal relationships between all who take this summons to heart, and in this way "help nurture that sublime fraternity with all creation which Saint Francis of Assisi so radiantly embodied" (cf. *Laudato Si'*, 221). With affection in the Lord, I send my blessing to all taking part, together with the assurance of my closeness in prayer.

From the Vatican, 11 August 2016

Franciscus