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Vespers on the World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation

Yesterday afternoon, in St. Peter's Basilica, Pope Francis presided at the celebration of vespers on the occasion of the World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation.

The homily was pronounced by the Preacher to the Papal Household, Fr. Raniero Cantalamessa, O.F.M. Cap., who emphasised that the sovereignty of human beings over the cosmos is not a triumphalism of the species but rather the assumption of responsibility for the weak, the poor and the helpless. "The God of the Bible, but also of other religions, is a God Who hears the cry of the poor ... who disdains nothing He created".

"The Incarnation of the Word brought another reason to take care of the weak and the poor, whatever race or religion he may belong to. Indeed, this does not say merely that "God was made man", but also that man was made God: that is, what type of man He chose to be: not rich or powerful, but poor, weak and helpless. ... The form of the incarnation is no less important than the fact".

"This was the step further that Francis of Assisi, with his experience of life, was able to give to theology. ... The Saint was moved to tears by the Nativity by ... the humility and the poverty of the Son of God Who, 'though He was rich, yet for your sake He became poor'. In him, love for poverty and love for creation went hand in hand, and had a common root in his radical renouncement of the will to possess", explained Fr. Cantalamessa.

"The Holy Father grasps this message when he makes the intimate relationship between the poor and the fragility of the planet one of the pillars of his encyclical on the environment", he remarked. "Indeed, what is it that produces, at the same time, the worst damage to the environment and the poverty of immense masses of humanity, if not the insatiable desire of some to increase their own possessions and profits disproportionately? On earth, one must apply what the ancients said of life: 'mancipio nulli datur, omnibus usu'; it is given to none to possess fully, but to all to use".