



Season of Creation 2023: "Let justice and peace flow"

Joint statement from the presidents of the Council of European Bishops' Conferences (CCEE) and the Conference of European Churches (CEC)

Before becoming a prophet, Amos had a piece of land, a family, and work. Suddenly, he knew poverty by confronting exile and becoming a refugee, feeling the pain of remembering the past and living the uncertainty of his own future.

Amos saw the injustice that hurt his own people, the painful contrast between the rich and the poor. He endured drought and the loss of the fruits of the earth. From this experience he learnt what poverty and uncertainty meant. Unexpectedly, he heard the voice of God and found within his own heart the strength to preach with grace to the poor, speaking words of hope with untiring readiness.

In this compelling spiritual experience of the prophet Amos, whose name means "burden-bearer", we have found the inspiration for the oecumenical celebration of this year's Season of Creation, "*Let justice and peace flow*", that echoes the words from the Book of Amos: "*let justice surge like water, and goodness like an unfailing stream*" (cf. Amos 5:24).

The spiritual symbol for this year is a mighty river; it is water, a simple and essential element present in our lives, a sign of life and purification in our religious traditions. Water reminds us of our Baptism and our commitment for conversion and new life. Water, however, is not safely accessible to everybody even though it is so essential for human survival. So many people still lack access to drinking water; others have recently had to flee their villages because of drought. So many of our brothers around the world are constrained to repeat the words of Jesus: "*I thirst*" (cf. John 19:28). Still others have had to flee because of flooding, be that for natural or human causes.

In this time of prayer and conversion, we heed the plea of our brothers and sisters, that are victims of different forms of environmental injustice. Therefore, we turn to God with a humble heart to make our prayer: "*Lord, let justice and peace flow in our world, in our common home*".

Every time we sadly see people thirsting or battling against drought, we pray: "*Let justice and peace flow*". Every time we see the inhuman destruction of war, such as in Ukraine, Somalia, Yemen, Eritrea, Myanmar, and many other places around the world, where essential needs are hindered or where water is used as a weapon against innocent civilians, we repeat the same words: "*Let justice and peace flow*".

In this time of prayer and conversion, we remind ourselves that God wants that each and every one of us behaves fairly and peacefully in every situation of life. If we nourish a trustful relationship with God, with our brothers and sisters, and with nature. Thus, an effective justice and peace will flow abundantly in our midst.

As Christian churches, and with prayerful hearts, we offer our contributions and reflections to the forthcoming United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP28), organised by the

United Nations in Dubai, UAE, from 30 November to 12 December 2023, whilst also inviting all world leaders and every person of good will to listen to science and commit to the fair implementation of the Paris Agreement.

The opportunity to create a more fair and sustainable way of living for the whole of humanity depends on our commitment to protect our common home, changing our style of life, favoring temperance and sobriety when using resources that are a gift of God for us. But in a special way, it depends on the commitment and thoughtful work of those more directly involved in politics and social life.

We invite all Christians in the churches, parishes, communities, and every person of good will across Europe to observe and celebrate the 2023 Season of Creation from 1 September to 4 October in an ecumenical spirit, united in prayer and action.

In this Season of Creation, we wish to be witnesses of Christ, the fountain of living water. We want to work and pray so that our churches may become welcoming spaces where a resounding voice is clearly heard proclaiming: *“Let justice and peace flow, like a mighty river in our world”*.

25 August 2023

Archbishop Nikitas
of Thyateira and Great Britain
CEC President

Archbishop Gintaras Grušas
Archbishop of Vilnius
CCEE President