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## **I believe in God, Creator of Heaven and Earth Faith, its beginnings and its fruits**

### **Introduction <sup>1</sup>**

The Nicene Constantinopolitan Creed, in the French version, begins with these words: “***I believe in one God, the all-powerful Father, Creator of heaven and earth, of the visible and invisible universe***”. If one wants to speak about Faith, Ecology, and Politics, these few words contain a whole set of affirmations. This sequence is consistent; it is like the programme God established of the relations between God, man, and all creation.

### **I — I believe in God**

#### **□ God's movement towards me**

But first of all, we must agree on the meaning of the expression “**I believe**”. In other words, we must specify what we mean by the Faith, what this word means for us in the religious and Christian context.

First, let us note that Faith is an interpersonal relationship. Saying “I believe” is incomplete. One must say, “I believe in someone, in something”. Faith is a movement towards God. But since God is infinitely great, and I am finite and limited, it is not possible that I started this movement. Given that there is a limited movement from me to God, who is infinitely great, supposes and implies that there was a first ontological movement of God towards me. My faith is in response to a sign, a call, an invitation, a proposition that God makes to me to enter into a relationship with him.

My faith is not, therefore, initially an intelligent movement, as if I were to say, “I see, I understand”. It is first of all a movement of free will from the heart: “I want to approach God, I want to accept his invitation”. Why? — Because, a spiritual instinct urges me to welcome God’s initiative as a gesture of love. Because, God created me: “in his image and likeness”. Naturally, God’s move towards me, leads me to imitate him. God, in his immensity, does not owe me anything in my smallness. Yet he gives me everything: everything that I am and everything I have. Whoever is comfortable in his faith might say, “He loves me and invites me to love him”. Because he loves me, he invites me to love him. It is legitimate to think that a child, whom no one has influenced against the faith by word or deed, is naturally open to the faith.

The beginning of this dialogue between God and the one, whom he has invited to answer him, is not confused but steady. From the start it is God who comes to me, gives me everything. From the outset, a spiritual instinct prompts me to welcome him and wish to give him a gift too. Little by little the intellect forms an image of the One who has approached me, and of the relationship that he and I live. At first one accepts this reality, which becomes more and more confident, more and more happy. It is my faith in being given, and in him who gives it. Then with the awakening of the conscience and the intellect, progress takes place in fits and starts, in which the educated believer will see the action of the Holy Spirit. This progress is facilitated, or not, by a Christian education, by encounters, by the interpretation of events, by a greater or smaller opening, or almost nil, to beauty, to the goodness of nature, which I may, or may not, interpret as God's benevolent gift. We are becoming accustomed to Pope Francis’ phraseology. Here, Pope Francis would call this benevolent gift a “caress of God”.

#### **□ Attempts to “see” God**

When, using the Nicene Constantinopolitan Creed, I say, “***I believe in God***”, I exert myself, body and mind, reason and freedom, in relation to a reality that I cannot see that I do not touch with the senses or reason. At first, the pictorial representations of God, unless they are simply symbolic, look altogether naïve. What have been called the “proof of the existence of God”, which theodicy lectures usually deal with, does not really reach the divine reality. Saint Bonaventure wrote a magnificent book entitled: “*Journey of the Mind to God*” (1259). He wrote

this work from his experience of faith. And he did not claim, starting from creatures, to prove the existence of the Creator. Had he done so, he would have sought to submit the infinite and the absolute to the finite and the relative.

To say “*I believe in God*” is to recognize a reality, of whose existence I know neither by observation nor by verification, not by reasoning based on research nor from evidence. One has to recognize it and commit oneself to it. In other words, the act of faith is an act not of reason that demonstrates and proves, but of freedom that decides. But it does not decide in total freedom. No such freedom exists in humanity. To say “*I believe in God*” is to decide to recognize the reality of God, and it is to decide to recognize a dependency on God that is not bilateral. It is to recognize that I totally depend on a Creator God, who, however, does not depend on me in any way.

#### □ **Some grounds for belief which are not causes**

However, this free act of the recognition of God, with neither evidence nor proof is not an irrational act. I do not recognize God by virtue of **causes**, which would necessarily produce their effect. I recognize God by virtue of **motives**. The **motif** makes the decision reasonable, but not necessary. I am not obliged by reason or logic to recognize God. If I had thought so, I would have reduced God to what my reason can grasp. Now, if God is light for my reason, he is not in the least grasped by it.

At the beginning of my life, I instinctively accepted myself as being given by another. As one’s person and one’s faculties develop, I wish to form an image of God which satisfies me; I wish to represent him in a way which seems to me to correspond to what I instinctively live or think I live. But I must not lose sight of the fact that, however fine and beautiful my representation may be, it will inevitably fall short of the divine reality. These depictions and representations, conceptual or drawn, are always totally inadequate. Hence, the endless debate of theologians, who compare one inadequate representation of God to another. Thus, Thomas Aquinas’ audacious but just comment: *It is fair to say, “that ‘God exists’ is self-evident” ... but it is even more accurate to say, “that God exists is not self-evident” because our concept of existence does not belong to God.... It is fair to say that “God is infinite goodness”. But it is more accurate to say that God is not good, because our concept of goodness does not belong to God*, etc., (*cf. S. Th.*, I, q. 2, a. 1-3: *The Existence of God*).

The motives for faith are extremely varied; they differ from person to person. And we cannot forget that no **motive** has the value of **cause**. One believes because one’s education introduced one to faith, and that, having been fortunate enough to have had a rather harmonious life, one never thought to call that faith into question. Another may say, but it is a choice one makes, one does not yield to any necessity: “For the universe to exist, it must have had a Creator”. But this is adherence to a culture, rather than submission to a necessity.

Yet another might say, “Without God, the universe and human life would be senseless. In their elaboration they tend to their own realization, but this realization could not succeed. For the universe and human life to have a meaning and finality, there must be a Creator who posits the beings, maintains them in existence, and is the sense of their development”. Here we make God play the role of postulator. Either God in his reality is of a completely different order than our logical needs. But this consideration gives some support to the faith, showing that in the Faith there is no illogicality.

#### □ **Imagine God?**

We said that we cannot believe in God without creating an image. We added that every representation of God, intellectual or pictorial, although not without value, is totally inadequate. But we must admit that the Christian faith has an immense advantage over the other monotheistic beliefs: because we believe that God became man in Jesus Christ. And this Jesus is known to us from the Gospels and from other texts in the New Testament. Thus, our representation of God will be much less inadequate than that of believers who do not know of the Incarnation.

#### □ **Lastly**

We can conclude that our faith is the free recognition of the Creator God, “infinitely great”, who gives us life, conscience, freedom, intellect. The intelligence that we have of the Creator God represents him as active, but our faith is not linked to any representation. However, the

recognition of the Incarnation in the Christian faith bears immensely important elements for the quality of our knowledge of God.

## II — I believe in God, Creator of Heaven and Earth

### □ God will always love what He has created for love

The first “instinctive” knowledge of God is that, God calls me into existence, and by the same movement calls me to have an active personal relationship with him. The development of conscience, intellect, and freedom will make me recognize God as my Creator and, as the Creator of all things. In this creation, God does not create “ex nihilo” [from nothing], as a formula that had its hour of glory stated. God creates from himself. This formula, whose representation is necessarily imperfect, is fundamentally correct, unlike the preceding one. God does not create me from nothing, but from himself: and every creature likewise.

To recognize in all that exists a “creation”, the result of a movement of God, a benevolent movement, that brings a creature into being, has very important consequences for our relationship with creatures, human beings, the realities of our earth, and our behaviour in and towards the cosmos. I consider myself the recipient of God’s “benevolence”. When I believe in God, I believe in a benevolent God, and I consider my existence, given by him, a testimony of his benevolence.

From there, legitimately, I extend this faith in the benevolence of God to all other human creatures, and by extension, to all that God has created “for man”, that is, to all terrestrial reality, and furthermore by extension to the whole cosmos. This benevolence of God towards his creature is expressed in the symbolic account in Genesis by the repeated formula: “***And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good***” (Gn 1:31). This formula states that God, in his benevolence, created only good things, and that the source of evil and misfortune does not pertain to the created condition.

The symbolic account of the creation of humanity states unequivocally/forcefully:

***“So God created man in his own image,  
in the image of God he created him;  
male and female he created them”*** (Gn 1:27).

One cannot but notice the insistence: ***He created in his image; in his image he created***. The natural vocation of man, endowed with intelligence and freedom, is to reproduce, at his level, what God is: Creator loving his creature, benevolent (that is to say good) to his creature. This insistence expresses a fundamental feature of God's benevolence towards his creature: if God is benevolent to his creature, man should be benevolent to him, naturally, to God first, then to every creature. The natural vocation of man is to be benevolent towards God, that is, to love God; and thus to be kind to other human beings: “to love one's neighbour”; and to be kind to all creatures, according to each one's place in the whole of creation. And here we are at the threshold of Ecology. — Indeed, at the very heart of Ecology.

### □ What if we refuse to recognize the created condition of man and the world?

But it may be useful, before proceeding, to examine what would happen if man, created by God, were to reject the idea of creation.

The Abrahamic religions and some others (in sub-Saharan Africa in particular) believe that man is created by God, and draw the consequences. But some trends of thought, ancient or modern, do not explain the world or humanity by a creation. Well, one supposes that the world and nature have always been there (which does not match the current theories on evolution). Or one might suppose that human freedom is only an illusion, and that the mind is nothing more than an epilogue of matter. Or else one dismisses the question. How did the world begin, and how did mankind appear? No one knows, and one will not tire oneself searching. One is faced with evidence that it exists and one leaves it at that; does not even enquire whether this existence has a meaning, which might indicate which road man should follow, so that he may make rational decisions.

But the question is far from unimportant for the happiness or misery of our world. Whoever believes that the world and man come from a God, who created everything through love, builds his whole life on the thought of the benevolence of God. He is disposed to have trust in life, confidence in others, in nature, in the future. Whoever does not believe in a creation out of love, and sees no relation between the existence of the world, and human life and love, seeks to give meaning to life in a different way. So, either, like Marx and other theoretically atheist thinkers, he borrows certain values from a religious vision of the world: such as the equality of men, the fundamental rights of each person, the justice due to all, the mutual respect of men and women ... or one may consider that the human person has no more value than any other being that nature has or produces. Human life has no particular value; medical experiments on human beings are made without scruple; embryos are produced and manipulated; one speaks of making them evolve in order to produce unknown species, derivations of humanity; cloning is tried.... Not to mention, of course, older practices such as insemination by anonymous sperm, or the right to abortion.

Thus, if one does not accept the origin of man in a benevolent creator God, or the success of human life in a progressive resemblance of the creature to his Creator, one abdicates the best way to live in this world, according to the most important human values, and for the believer, the most sacred. The most essential values count for nothing. Human life is no longer sacred or precious. Nothing prevents treating the human person as any other object. And if man is not the product of a creative Love, what might one not permit to happen to nature, the material world and the cosmos? But it is generally thought in the Church that, alongside some thinkers who explicitly profess an atheism which they hold to be based on sound rational arguments, the majority of men acknowledge certain values, often without being able to explain them theoretically. These values include: respect for human life and the integrity of people, respect for legitimate authority, respect for the common good and other peoples' welfare, respect for the truth, right to education, information, health, etc. These values are simply those of Natural Law, which Moses simplified in his Decalogue.

The Church proposes both a benevolent Creator God, and his Incarnation. In contrast to atheism, whose strongest form is theoretical materialism, there is faith in Jesus as true God and true man. The Church presents this view to the world. And it proposes faith, not merely as an idea, because "the historical man, called Jesus of Nazareth, is God made man", but also all the consequences that derive from faith for humanity: that Jesus is God in humanity. Thus, new light is projected on the dignity of man, his history, and his destiny. Above all, faith in the Incarnation illuminates the nature and dignity of the human person.

### III — From praise of the beauty of creatures, to the universal destination of goods

In the thought of the Abrahamic religions God creates humanity out of love and with love. At least Jews and Christians think that God wants all men and women to be equal in the heart of God. All must respect and promote the recognition of this equality. And for man and woman he creates everything we call "nature" and "cosmos". His wills therefore that the resources and the beauty of nature and of the cosmos be equally available to all. This entails on the part of everyone respect for nature, out of respect for the Creator, as well as respect for all the men and women for whom God created it.

Today, "**Ecology**" is a popular topic. The first meaning of this word, coined in the nineteenth century, was the study of ecosystems and their respective relationship. Today, **Ecologism** is a current of thought calling for respect for the natural balance, the safeguard of the environment against the pollution caused by industry (*cf.* Larousse).

Such ecological concern is relatively recent. Since the human populations were relatively small, imbalances in man's relationship with nature have not always existed. For a long time nature was extolled for its beauty, which spoke of the beauty of the Creator, of its utility, its abundance. The Creator was praised for his generosity and his munificence was celebrated: as yet no one had seen how limited the resources of nature were.

Many saints in the Church have paid the greatest attention to the realities of nature. Before them, the author of the Book of Genesis repeated a refrain at each phase of the symbolic story of creation: “*God saw that it was good*”. In the Gospels, Jesus speaks constantly of nature, with sympathy. He naturally saw nature as the work of the benevolent Creator God. He constantly made comparisons with the examples nature provides. He speaks of life, light, salt, wheat, fig tree, olive trees, harvests. He compares the wheat and the tares. He curses the barren fig tree which withers. He invites us to observe the growth of the mustard seed, and the dough rising under the action of the leaven. Like the prophets, he often uses the image of the flock, and he presents himself as the “true Shepherd”. He asserts that in nature nothing is impure; it is the heart of man that can be impure. He speaks of the rain, torrents, the sea, clouds. He heals the infirm, the deaf, the blind, the lame.... He is on the sea shore, on the mountain, in the desert; he climbs the mountain to pray, or to teach....

Many of the saints of the Church, all perhaps in various ways, have loved nature, praised it in song, but also used and protected it. Perhaps the most well-known text is Francis of Assisi’s, who left us more than one poem that expresses his enthusiasm:

### *The Song of Creation*

O Most High, all-powerful, good Lord God,  
to you, be praise, glory,  
honour and all blessing!...  
To you alone, supreme God, these appertain  
and no man is worthy to pronounce your name.

Be praised, my Lord, for all your creation,  
and especially for our Brother Sun,  
who brings us the day and the light;  
he is strong and shines magnificently.  
O Lord, we think of you when we look at him.  
Be praised, my Lord, for Sister Moon,  
and for the Stars!  
Which you have set shining and lovely  
in the heavens.  
Be praised, my Lord,  
for our Brothers Wind and Air,  
and every kind of weather  
by which you, Lord,  
uphold life in all your creatures.  
Be praised, my Lord, for Sister Water,  
who is very useful to us,  
and humble and precious and pure.  
Be praised, my Lord, for Brother Fire,  
through whom you give us light in the darkness!  
He is bright and lively and strong.  
Be praised, my Lord,  
for Sister Earth, our Mother,  
who nourishes us and sustains us,  
bringing forth  
fruit and vegetables of many kinds  
and flowers of many colours!  
Be praised, my Lord,  
for those who forgive for love of you;  
and for those  
who suffer injustice and tribulation!  
To those who bear sickness and weakness  
in peace and patience  
— You will grant a crown!  
Be praised, my Lord, for our Sister Death of the body  
whom we must all face.  
Unhappy only those who die in mortal sin!

But happy are those who have fulfilled your holy will,  
for eternally they will live with you!

I praise and bless you, Lord,  
And I give thanks to you,  
and I will serve you in all humility!

This Cantic of Francis of Assisi, a Christian hymn, very beautiful and well known, should not let us ignore the fact that our Muslim brothers also marvel and give thanks to the Creator for his creation:

*Reader's prayer in the Ko'ran*

Lord,

I am the little grain of desert sand that the rain of your benefits fertilize. I do not deserve that you should perceive, one day, my good deeds. I too often content myself with relying on your indulgence, your mercy. Too often I have not revered your power by contemplating a leaf or a forest, a sea or a drop of water, a dawn or a rose petal. Too often I have not listened to what you were saying in the rumble of thunder, in the song of the fountains, in the complaints of the poor. The silence of the night was for me your silence. I did good, thinking that you saw me. I did wrong, thinking that you did not see me. When I suffered, I did not think others suffered more than me. When I was happy, I thought I was the craftsman of my happiness. I allowed myself to look at you, to talk to you ... I dared to discuss goodness, evil, life, death. I dared to interpret your words. I dared to raise my head in the storm of your revelations, Lord who germinates the seeds! Lord who destroys the harvest! Lord of the Sun, of battle and the peaceful Moon! Lord of the dove and the lion, the blade of grass and the cedar, moss and marble! Lord of oases and deserts! Lord who overthrew the palaces of Babylon! Lord who provides a tent for the nomad! Lord who gave us day and night, water and bread, hope and sleep! Lord of life, death and resurrection, I prostrate myself before your majesty! I annihilate myself before your power! I no longer know whether I exist when I have pronounced your name!

And how do **our Jewish brothers** feel in front of nature? How do they live in the midst of his wonders? Whoever wants to know, re-read the *Cantic of Canticles*.

#### □ **Destruction, waste and pollution**

One's wonder before nature naturally refers one to the Creator. The Creator loves his work. "**God could not destroy what he has created for love**", Thomas Aquinas said in the 13th century. It was one of his arguments when speaking of the immortality of the soul. God protects what He has created for love. At each instant, he gives each man his life. At every moment he maintains in existence all he created for the good of man. At every moment the good of man is his project. And this goes to the point of dying on the cross for the sake of his creatures.

And what will be the Christian attitude, the attitude of the man who is created in the image of God? He will share this love of God for his creatures, and the joy of the Creator. The attitude of the man to whom Jesus wanted to teach love, and universal love, will be to discover and share the love of God for his creatures.

It will no doubt be **respect** for what God has made, respect for beauty, order, and measure. It will then be **the idea of equity and sharing**. In spite of the exhortations of the prophets, of Jesus and of Saint Paul, it will take time before **the idea of the equality of the dignity and rights** of all human beings, master and slave, man and woman, takes effect in society. For the idea of equality entails that of equity and sharing: and **the democratic idea** implies equal dignity and rights, and responsibilities. It is present almost everywhere as a theory, but it is far from entering into force everywhere.

And the idea of the **Common Good** that should ensue is deliberately ignored at many international finance meetings, and especially in many practices of some States and many multinationals. Think of the refusal of the United States to ratify the Kyoto Protocol which aimed to reduce the emission of greenhouse gases. In many places, people complain about the degradation of nature around mines, oil wells and nuclear power plants. We have seen entire areas whose food production could not be consumed, because of the proximity to chemical plants, or

caused by the passage of radioactive clouds. In Lubumbashi (in the South-East of the Democratic Republic of Congo) one talks about “*nuisance dust*”. Even a light breeze, during the first fusion which eliminates the sulphur from the copper ore, spreads these sulphureous fumes which prevent people from living within this zone and any food crop from growing there. A large campaign took place a few years ago in Lubumbashi, to prevent the construction of a plant on a certain site, because this plant would have polluted the main water table which provides drinking water for the city.

In our country there was a time when large industrial firms, operating under the umbrella of Charter Companies, had to fulfill, in concomitance with important exploitation rights, some very important duties including urban housing, the inhabitants’ health, schooling for children, urban planning/roads, electricity, and the water supply. But this period has almost been forgotten, and it will be scarcely mentioned, or actually omitted from history textbooks, to avoid comparison with current governments and the predatory companies we know today, which, without any civic concern or respect for the environment, act with impunity.

### □ **Unbridled exploitation**

In 2013, two harmful types of exploitation of raw materials were introduced; both of which were highly damaging to the local population. On the one hand, mostly foreign companies, which obtained huge exploitation rights in exchange for minimal royalties, and on the other, illegal and unmonitored artisanal exploitation (that is to say on the margin of all law). Their illegal operations are protected by armed militias, and their profits go to near or distant aliens. Here we have the unrestricted destruction of nature, the refusal to do any research for the common good, the exploitation by States, offences against the most fundamental rights of millions of people who are forced to flee their land. The cultivation of these agricultural areas is the population’s only form of livelihood and even of survival.

The often ambiguous action of various NGOs adds to this emergency situation. Indeed, it is common that sums allocated by the United Nations, or by States, for social, medical, nutritional, or educational projects, are for the most part expended on the maintenance, remuneration and transport of the members of these NGOs. Some State agents, detailed to escort them, do not render the operation, expected to be beneficial, more efficient. We are therefore far from a sincere and effective search for the common good. And we are far from the ecological ideal.

### □ **Indispensable ecology**

The problem of ecology for Christians can be formulated as follows:

*“Ecology is the science that is dedicated to the relationship between man and his natural environment. It is on the Agenda because it concerns a major problem of our time, that of the degradation of this relationship, threatening the survival of humanity. So we often speak of the ecological crisis”* (cf. Théo).

The ecological question arises because it is linked to economic problems, present and future, that are caused by the way of exploiting the planet, in many fields. The consequences for society are often dramatic. Over-fishing no longer allows fish stocks to reproduce. The over-consumption of lake water dries it up and stops the local fishermen from making a living. The over-consumption of wood/deforestation gradually deprives the planet of a mechanism that regulates rainfall and the purification of the air, etc. Modern industrial growth is the cause, especially due to the unruly conditions in which it has spread.

The danger comes primarily from the depletion of natural resources. Some areas of the oceans are so over-fished by fishermen that some species of fish or whales have disappeared. The limited fishing quota has not been respected. Over-grazing in the Sahel is causing further desertification with little rainfall, etc.

Scientists have estimated that if all of humanity were to live at the economic level of the USA, Australia or New Zealand, the planet would need 2.5 times more resources than it has.

However this is not the case; a very small minority of the inhabitants of the planet consumes most of the resources, leaving the majority of human beings to share the small amount that remains.

Balance is needed between man and the environment from which he derives his vital resources. Now, the exploitation of nature is such that certain plants or species, such as forests, can no longer regenerate at the rate of consumption. Thus, we are preparing a much more difficult life for our successors than ours.

Industrial over-production generates superfluous waste. In some cases, it can no longer be stored, eliminated or recycled. One remembers the highly toxic waste dumped in several places around the city of Abidjan. An industrial company, not knowing how to get rid of its toxic waste, paid a transport company to remove and dispose of it as it wished. A minister from the Ivory Coast had authorized the dumping of this toxic waste in the garbage sites around Abidjan, with the worst consequences for the health of the population. After years the damage to nature and man is still very evident in Abidjan.

Where can contaminated grey-water, possibly toxic, be discharged — in rivers, in oceans? That's what is done. And we know there are rivers, lakes and sea-shores where no life is possible for any animal or vegetable species. A 'dead sea' is the result.

The pollution of the air, the waters and the earth sometimes reaches a degree that creates anxiety. It comes from chemical plants, but also from the exhaust of vehicles, and of course from nuclear explosions. And here, no country is safe from what a neighbouring country may do. The winds blow toxic gases that cause damage far from their place of emission, without any compensation being provided by the polluters. And we know that the maxim the "**polluter pays**" seldom has a practical side.

Modern man does not think enough about the fact that he has "**only one Earth**", which he is exhausting. He must undertake to manage the resources and ecosystems if he wishes to transmit a habitable earth to his descendants.

#### □ **Different forms of pollution**

There are other forms of degradation of the nature God created for the good of man, which pollute the environment of the life of men, fruit of a Creator's Love. We can mention **noise pollution** in many urban areas. But there is worse: there is a **spiritual pollution**, largely broadcast by the media, often without any real possibility of redress. Think of the imposition of this strange "Gender ideology", in countries of the Third World, on pain of forfeiting the allocation of essential financial or technical assistance. Furthermore, think of the imposition of this *ideology* in children's education, which deliberately presents the family as a source of constraints which would debase man. Furthermore, we can see this spiritual pollution in many advertisements. To remedy this, some States, aware of the consequences, prohibit advertisements for alcohol or tobacco. But the weaker States dare not prohibit what earns income.

#### **IV — Faith in a Creator God, Ecology, and Politics**

So, we have slipped from **Faith in a Creator God** to **Ecology**, and Ecology leads us to **Politics**. Who can oppose over-consumption, waste, lack of equity in the distribution of resources, and the various forms of pollution, if not the politicians in authority?

Some States have dared, despite the lack of income for public expenditure, prohibit certain advertising. Many others are anxious for income. There is a law in our country that prohibits night-time noise after 22.00 hours. But some drinking establishments and some "revival churches" make a great deal of night-time noise until the early hours of the morning, and the local authorities apparently do not dare to enforce the law. And we hope they are not paid for a job they do not do.

A very serious form of pollution threatens the future of the country: namely, **corruption in schools and universities**. The corruption of mind and conscience is fostering serious damage for



the future of the country and its people. The level of knowledge of the students leaving secondary school here is often much lower than that of children leaving primary school in other countries. The end result, which is happening, will be a generation of uneducated trainers, French or English teachers who know neither, teachers of morality without morals. And although the State states that it is fighting corruption, its agents, often heavily involved in corruption, make fear reign among those who dare to, or try to, reject or fight it.

Is there a civic body which has not been weakened in its scope; rendered ineffective by this moral pollution? **The Assembly?** Who said that MPs were paid to vote for the election of the Speaker for one term? **The Judiciary? The Administration? The Army? The Police Force? The educational world: school, university and polytechnic?** Everyone here knows the answer to this dramatic list.

## Conclusion

So, is there no hope at all? By what means can the recovery begin? It must begin by taking into account the first words of the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed; unless we are too religiously polluted to believe it anymore.

At the beginning of all existence is the God who creates, out of love and with love, men and women in his likeness. These men and women will find the meaning and success of their lives by sharing their Creator's love for his creatures. May our ministers and elected representatives spend five minutes each morning to think about Pope Francis' Teaching, broadcast each morning by various media and by web-sites. One day, this might be: **"Do not live a double life"** (6 May 2016), or **"Give up the idols that prevent one from worshipping God"**, or **Ask for the grace "to go forward without being discouraged"** (5 Feb. 2019), **"Do not be robbed of 'hope'"** (17 Jan. 2016).

Every day, Pope Francis gives advice **"for all"**; advice enlightened by Faith and experience, to put our society back on its feet, to clean it up, to restore to it the dynamism that can make it the driving force of a new society for the whole of Africa. These tips are given for the most part to "put Jesus back at the center of life". Let us remember the time when the President of the Republic wanted to remove all religious symbols from public life, which resulted in the lack of all forms of honesty in public life, and in the dramatic deterioration of schools.

What would we like? A "voluntarist policy", which goes back to the origin and to the explanation of all and everything "in one God ... Creator of Heaven and earth, of the visible and invisible universe", and places Christ at the centre, his rightful place, in our human affairs? Some Islamic States do it successfully. Why not those in which, despite everything, a certain Christian ethic predominates?

It is not about an affected devotion. It is about the **power** that, through the power of the Holy Spirit, imbued Christ before the public authorities who sentenced him to death, and that imbued the Apostles before the same authorities, and continues to animate the martyrs of today.

## FOOTNOTE:

<sup>1</sup> This text has been taken from a Conference that was proposed at the Major Seminary of St Cyprian in Kikwit/RDCongo in 2013.

(Ref: *Telema — Review of Christian Reflection and Creativity in Africa*, N. 2/14, 2014, pp. 2-14).