



# **For All the Earth (1 Cor 10:26) Integrating Charism, Mission, and Care of Creation**

**Session 1: Crisis & Charism**

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What is ours to do?

- Why does this matter now?
- Why us?
- What are we to do about it?
- And How are we to do it?

# A Reading from the Book of Genesis and *Laudato Si'*

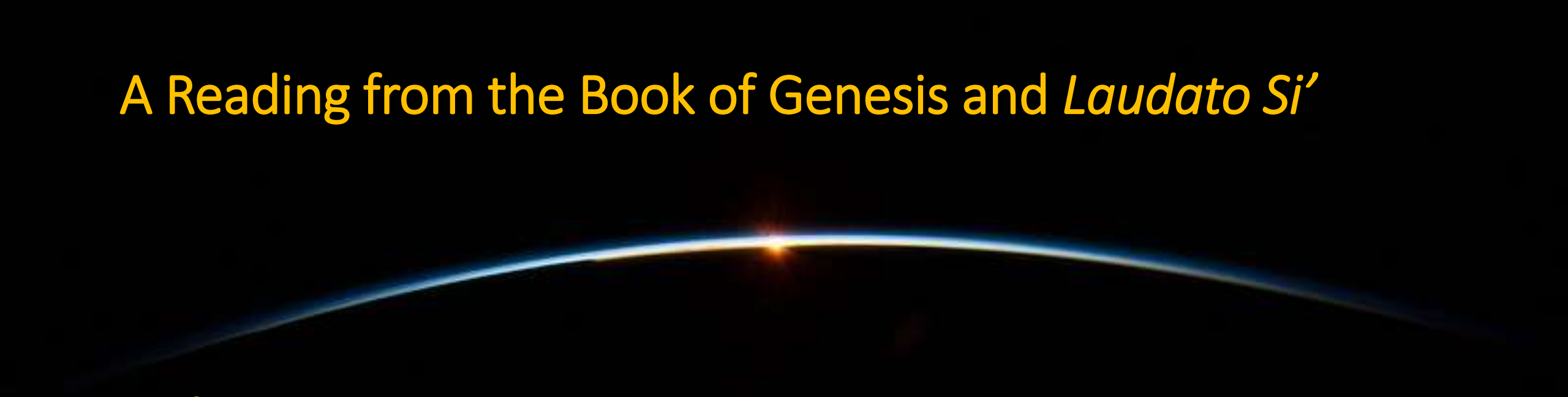
- In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, <sup>2</sup> the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters. (Gen 1:1-2)
  - 99. *In the Christian understanding of the world, the destiny of all creation is bound up with the mystery of Christ, present from the beginning... One Person of the Trinity entered into the created cosmos, throwing in his lot with it, even to the cross.*

# A Reading from the Book of Genesis and *Laudato Si'*

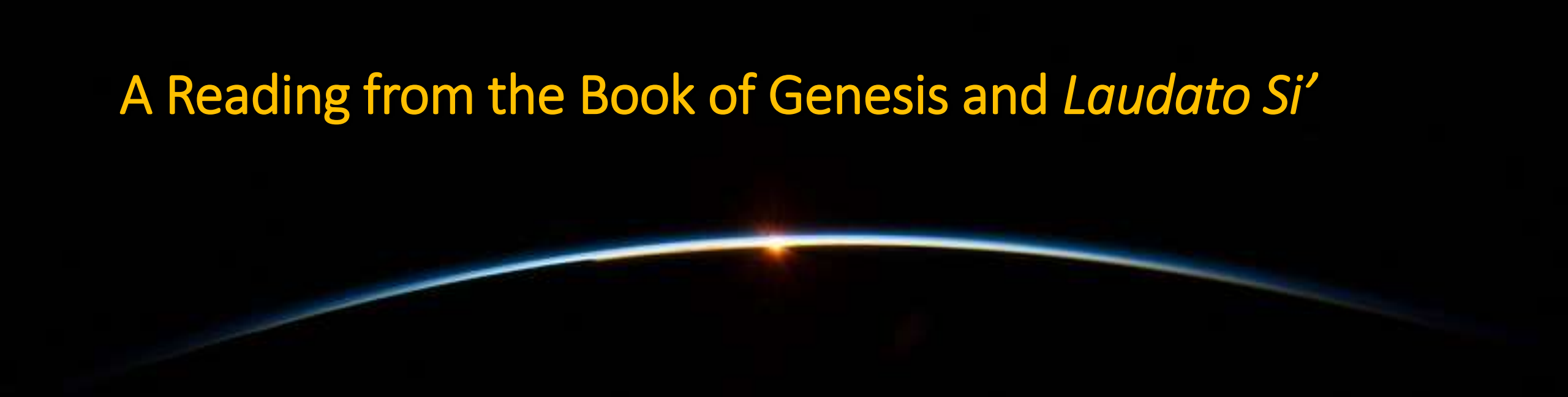
- <sup>3</sup> Then God said, “Let there be light”; and there was light. <sup>4</sup> And God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness. <sup>5</sup> God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day. (Gen 1:3-5)
  - 246. *Teach us to discover the worth of each thing, to be filled with awe and contemplation, to recognize that we are profoundly united with every creature as we journey towards your infinite light.*



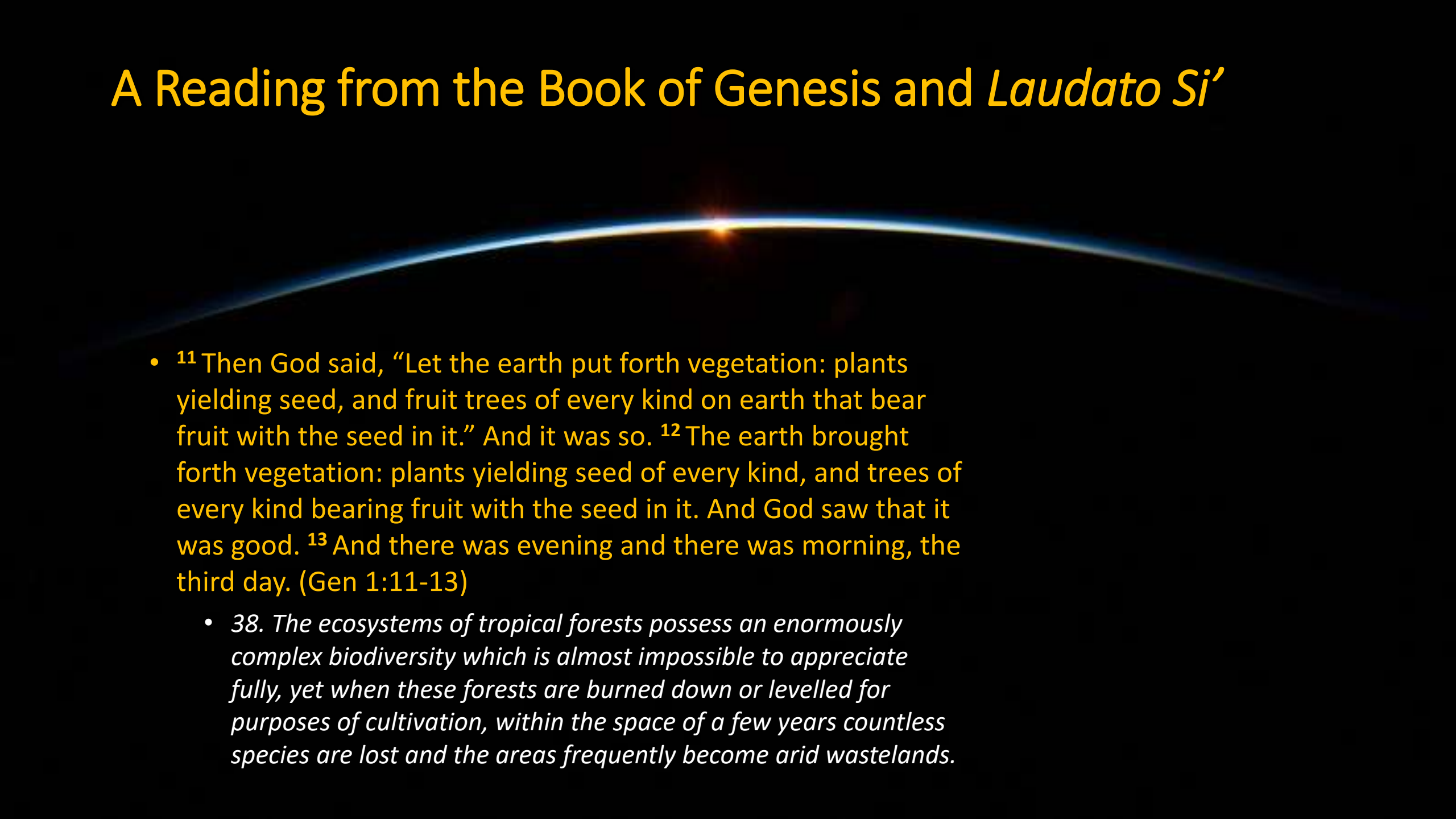
# A Reading from the Book of Genesis and *Laudato Si'*

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- <sup>6</sup> And God said, “Let there be a dome in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters.” <sup>7</sup> So God made the dome and separated the waters that were under the dome from the waters that were above the dome. And it was so. <sup>8</sup> God called the dome Sky. And there was evening and there was morning, the second day. (Gen 1:6-8)
    - *87. Praised be you, my Lord, through Brother Wind, and through the air, cloudy and serene, and every kind of weather.*

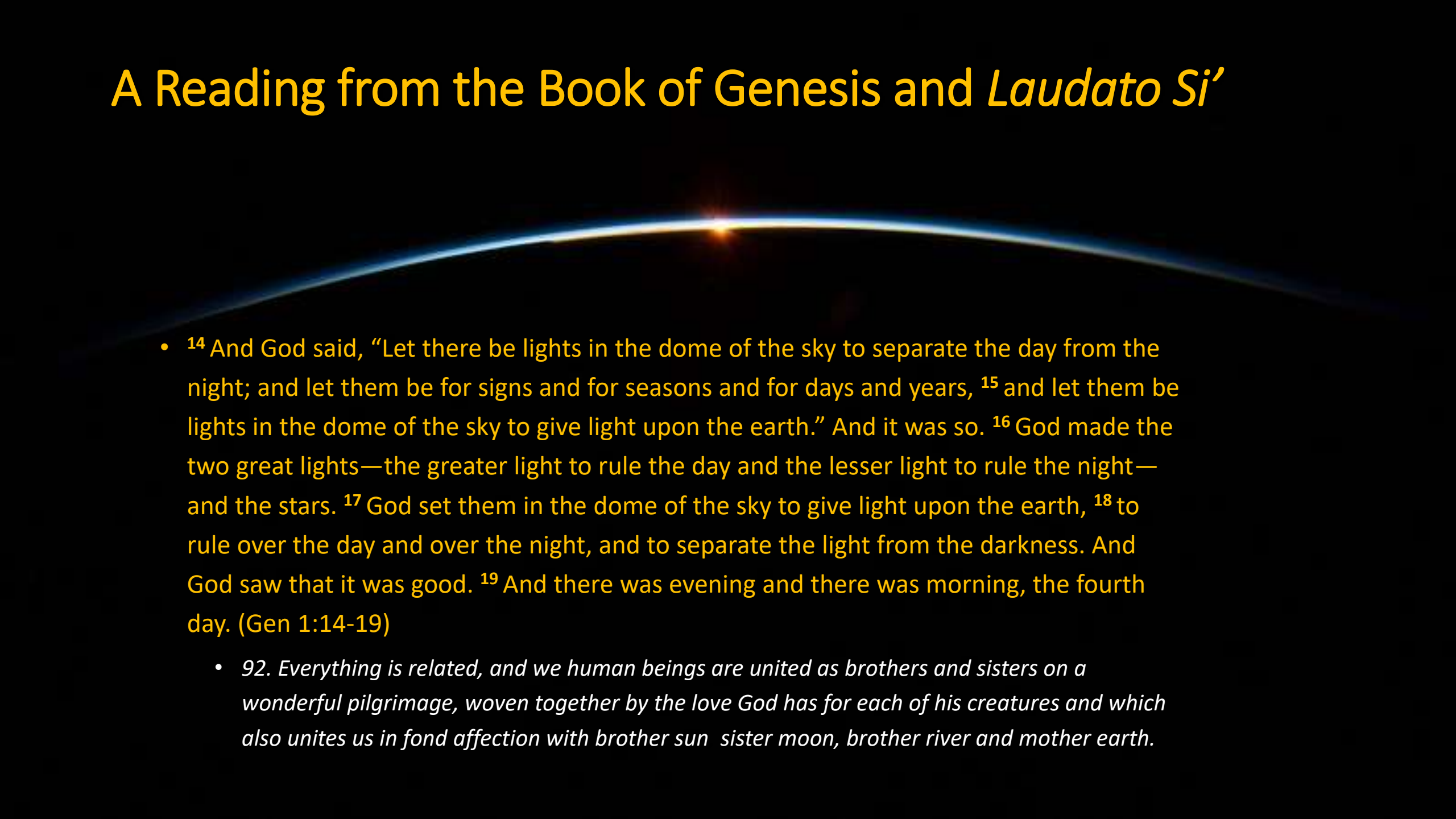
# A Reading from the Book of Genesis and *Laudato Si'*

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- <sup>9</sup> And God said, “Let the waters under the sky be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear.” And it was so. <sup>10</sup> God called the dry land Earth, and the waters that were gathered together he called Seas. And God saw that it was good. (Gen 1:9-10)
    - *41. All of this helps us to see that every intervention in nature can have consequences which are not immediately evident, and that certain ways of exploiting resources prove costly in terms of degradation which ultimately reaches the ocean bed itself.*

# A Reading from the Book of Genesis and *Laudato Si'*

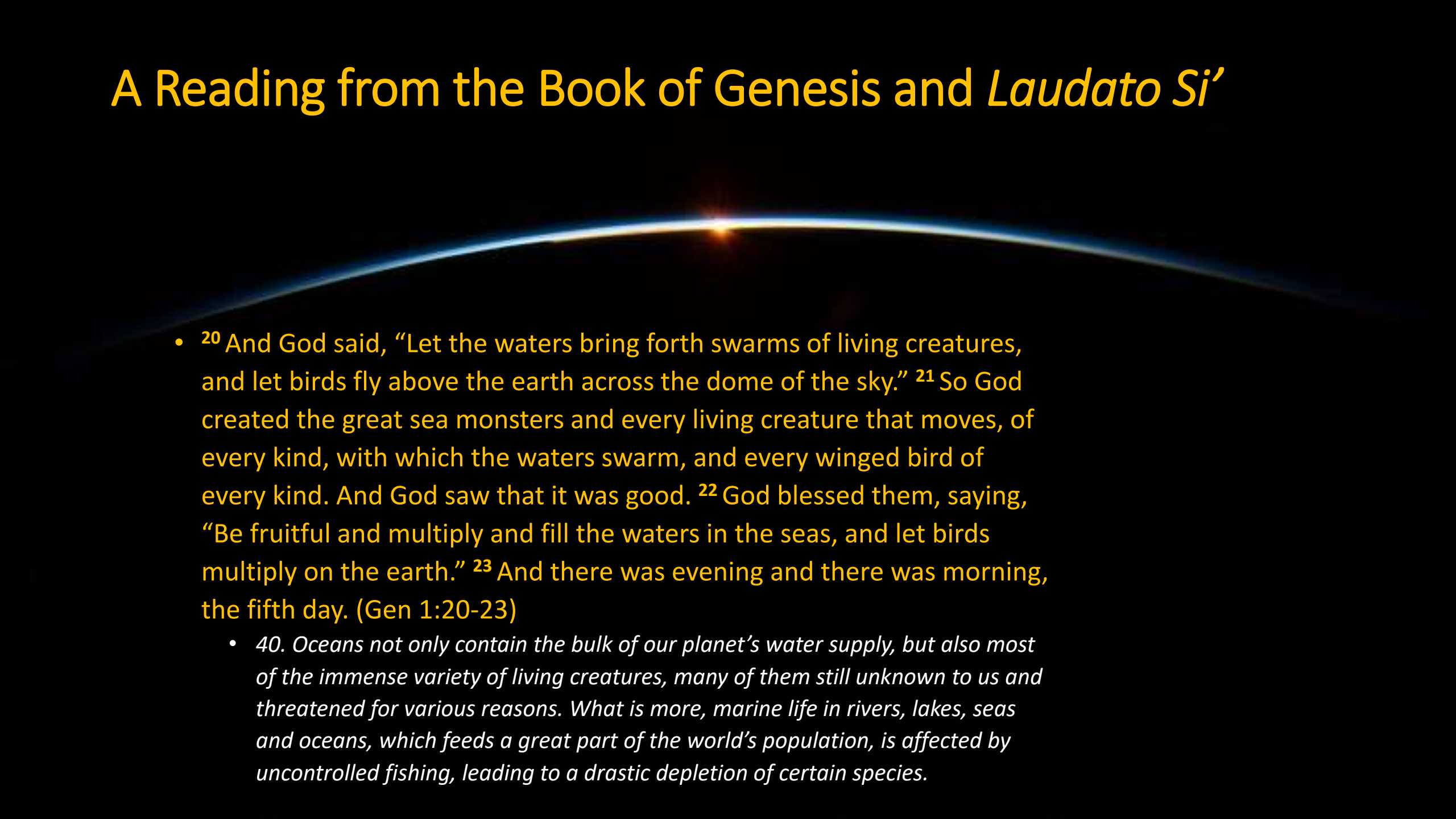
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- <sup>11</sup> Then God said, “Let the earth put forth vegetation: plants yielding seed, and fruit trees of every kind on earth that bear fruit with the seed in it.” And it was so. <sup>12</sup> The earth brought forth vegetation: plants yielding seed of every kind, and trees of every kind bearing fruit with the seed in it. And God saw that it was good. <sup>13</sup> And there was evening and there was morning, the third day. (Gen 1:11-13)
    - 38. *The ecosystems of tropical forests possess an enormously complex biodiversity which is almost impossible to appreciate fully, yet when these forests are burned down or levelled for purposes of cultivation, within the space of a few years countless species are lost and the areas frequently become arid wastelands.*

# A Reading from the Book of Genesis and *Laudato Si'*

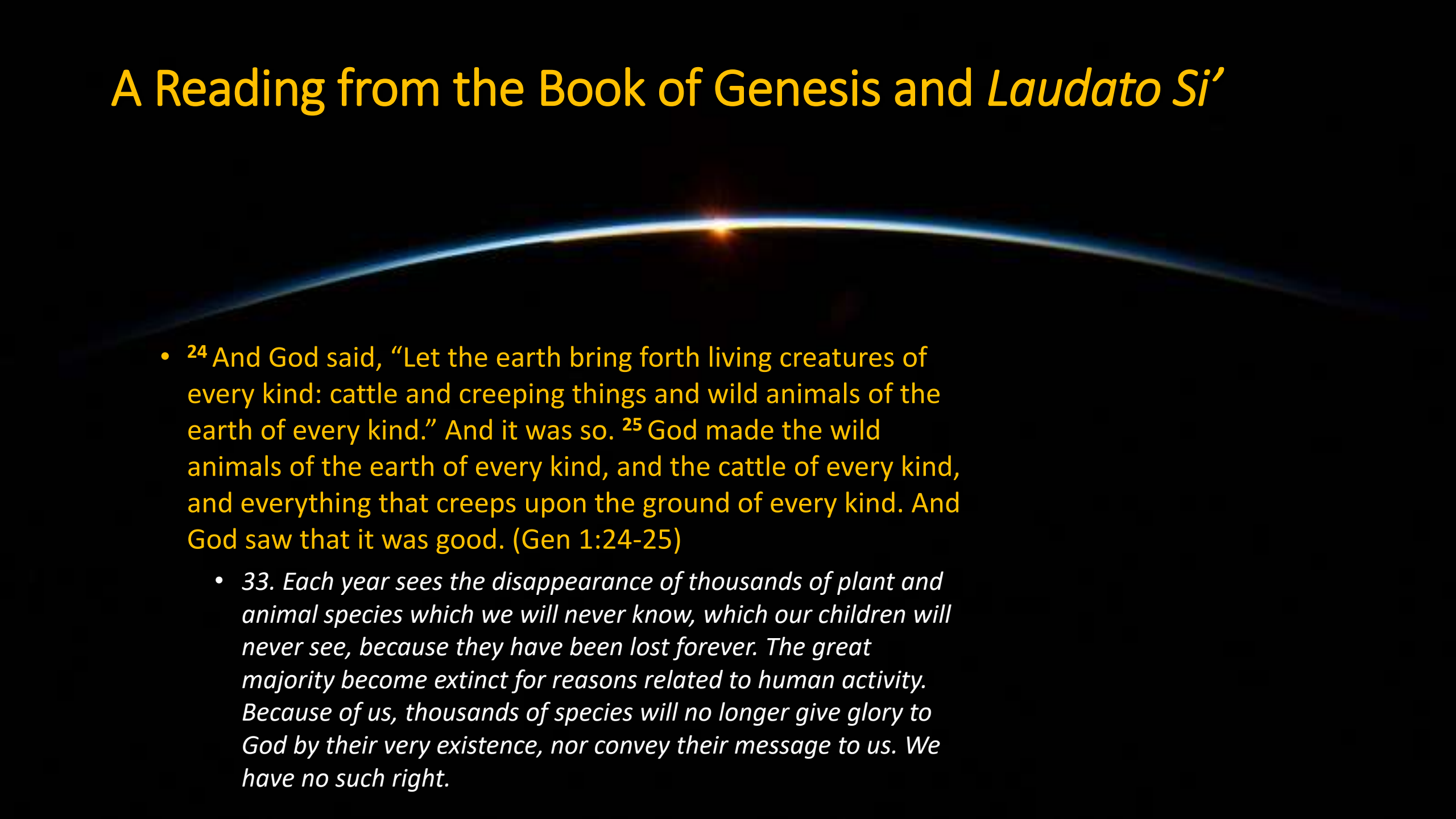
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- <sup>14</sup> And God said, “Let there be lights in the dome of the sky to separate the day from the night; and let them be for signs and for seasons and for days and years, <sup>15</sup> and let them be lights in the dome of the sky to give light upon the earth.” And it was so. <sup>16</sup> God made the two great lights—the greater light to rule the day and the lesser light to rule the night—and the stars. <sup>17</sup> God set them in the dome of the sky to give light upon the earth, <sup>18</sup> to rule over the day and over the night, and to separate the light from the darkness. And God saw that it was good. <sup>19</sup> And there was evening and there was morning, the fourth day. (Gen 1:14-19)
  - *92. Everything is related, and we human beings are united as brothers and sisters on a wonderful pilgrimage, woven together by the love God has for each of his creatures and which also unites us in fond affection with brother sun sister moon, brother river and mother earth.*



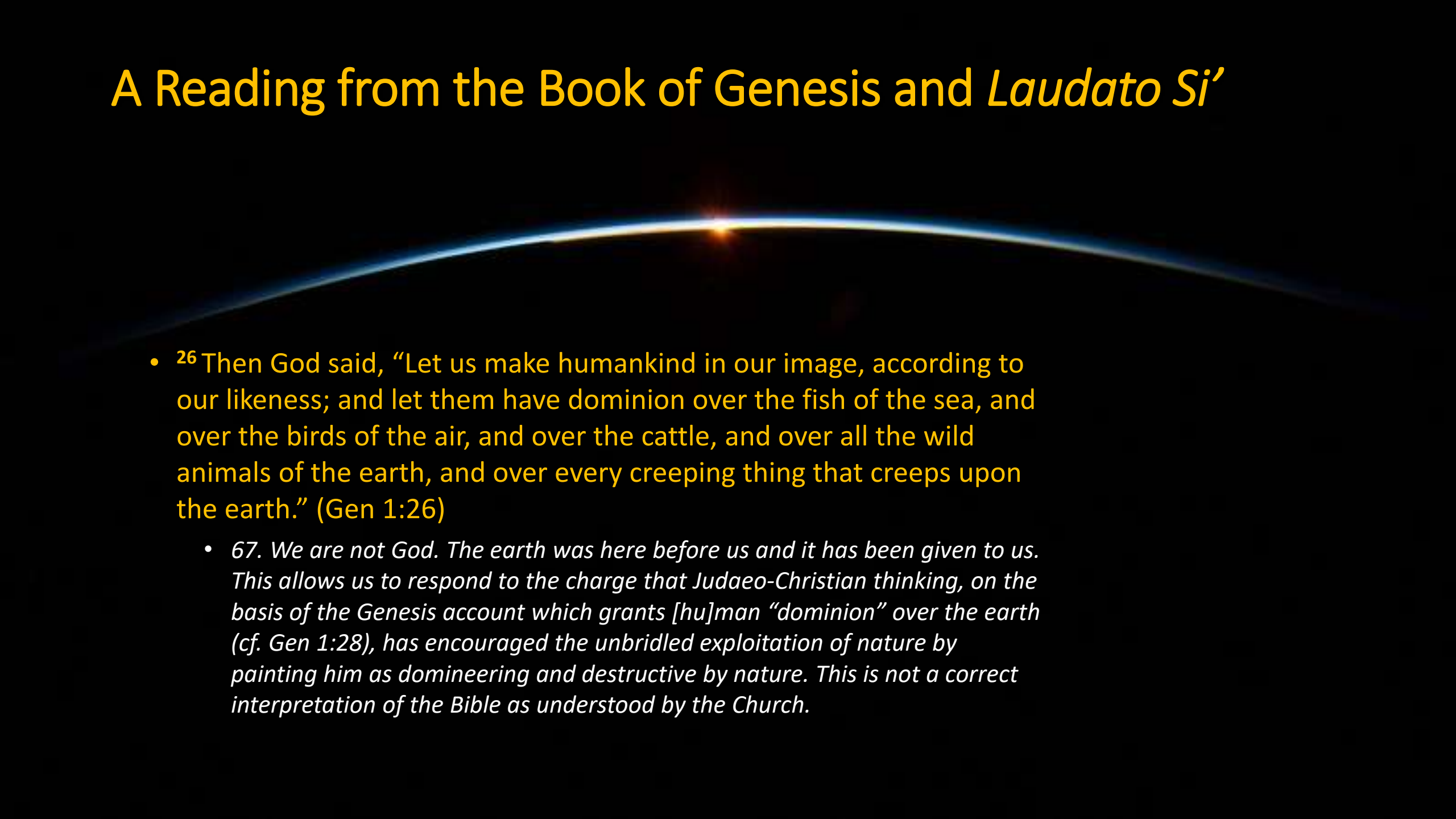
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- <sup>20</sup> And God said, “Let the waters bring forth swarms of living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the dome of the sky.” <sup>21</sup> So God created the great sea monsters and every living creature that moves, of every kind, with which the waters swarm, and every winged bird of every kind. And God saw that it was good. <sup>22</sup> God blessed them, saying, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the waters in the seas, and let birds multiply on the earth.” <sup>23</sup> And there was evening and there was morning, the fifth day. (Gen 1:20-23)
    - 40. *Oceans not only contain the bulk of our planet’s water supply, but also most of the immense variety of living creatures, many of them still unknown to us and threatened for various reasons. What is more, marine life in rivers, lakes, seas and oceans, which feeds a great part of the world’s population, is affected by uncontrolled fishing, leading to a drastic depletion of certain species.*

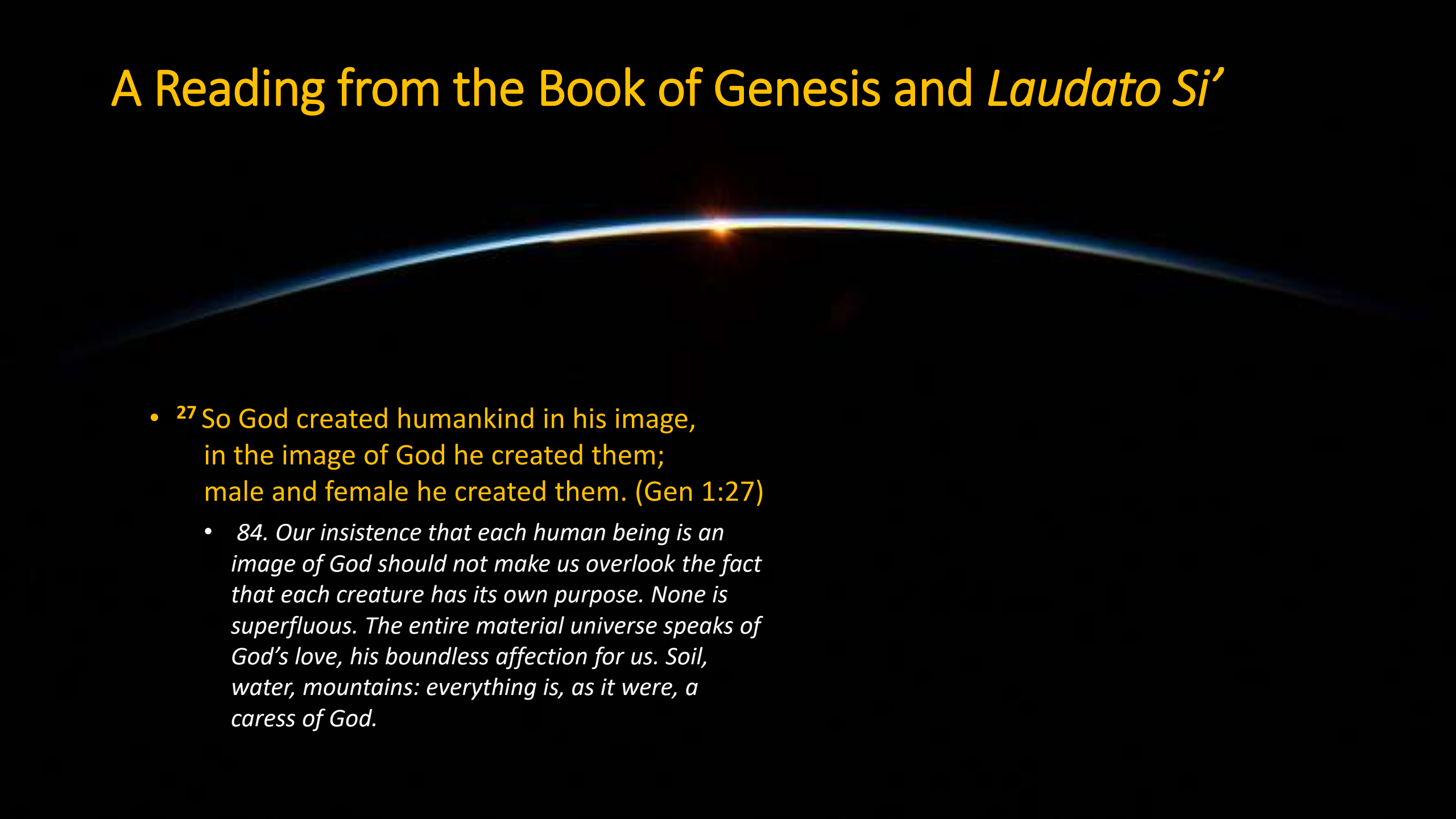
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- <sup>24</sup> And God said, “Let the earth bring forth living creatures of every kind: cattle and creeping things and wild animals of the earth of every kind.” And it was so. <sup>25</sup> God made the wild animals of the earth of every kind, and the cattle of every kind, and everything that creeps upon the ground of every kind. And God saw that it was good. (Gen 1:24-25)
    - *33. Each year sees the disappearance of thousands of plant and animal species which we will never know, which our children will never see, because they have been lost forever. The great majority become extinct for reasons related to human activity. Because of us, thousands of species will no longer give glory to God by their very existence, nor convey their message to us. We have no such right.*

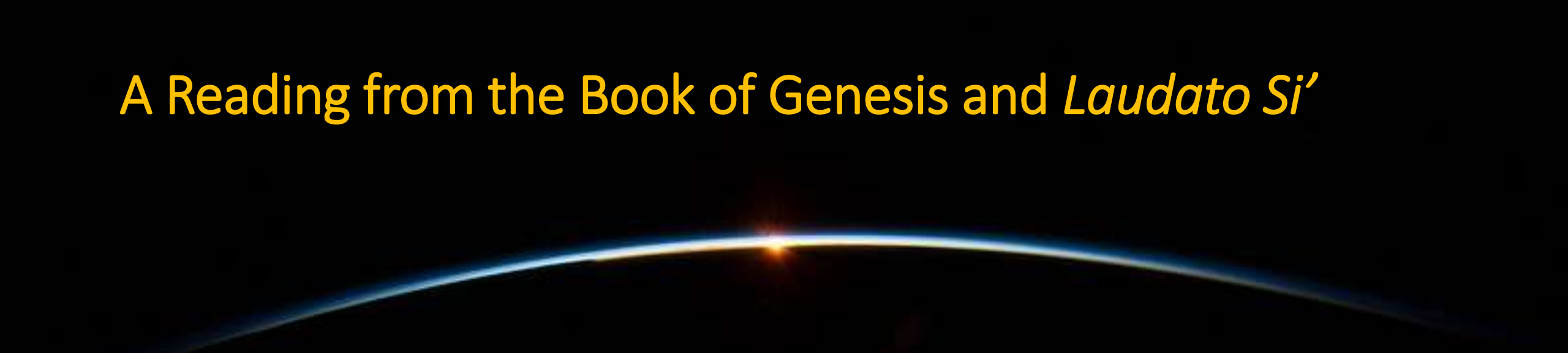
# A Reading from the Book of Genesis and *Laudato Si'*

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- <sup>26</sup> Then God said, “Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth.” (Gen 1:26)
    - 67. *We are not God. The earth was here before us and it has been given to us. This allows us to respond to the charge that Judaeo-Christian thinking, on the basis of the Genesis account which grants [hu]man “dominion” over the earth (cf. Gen 1:28), has encouraged the unbridled exploitation of nature by painting him as domineering and destructive by nature. This is not a correct interpretation of the Bible as understood by the Church.*

# A Reading from the Book of Genesis and *Laudato Si'*

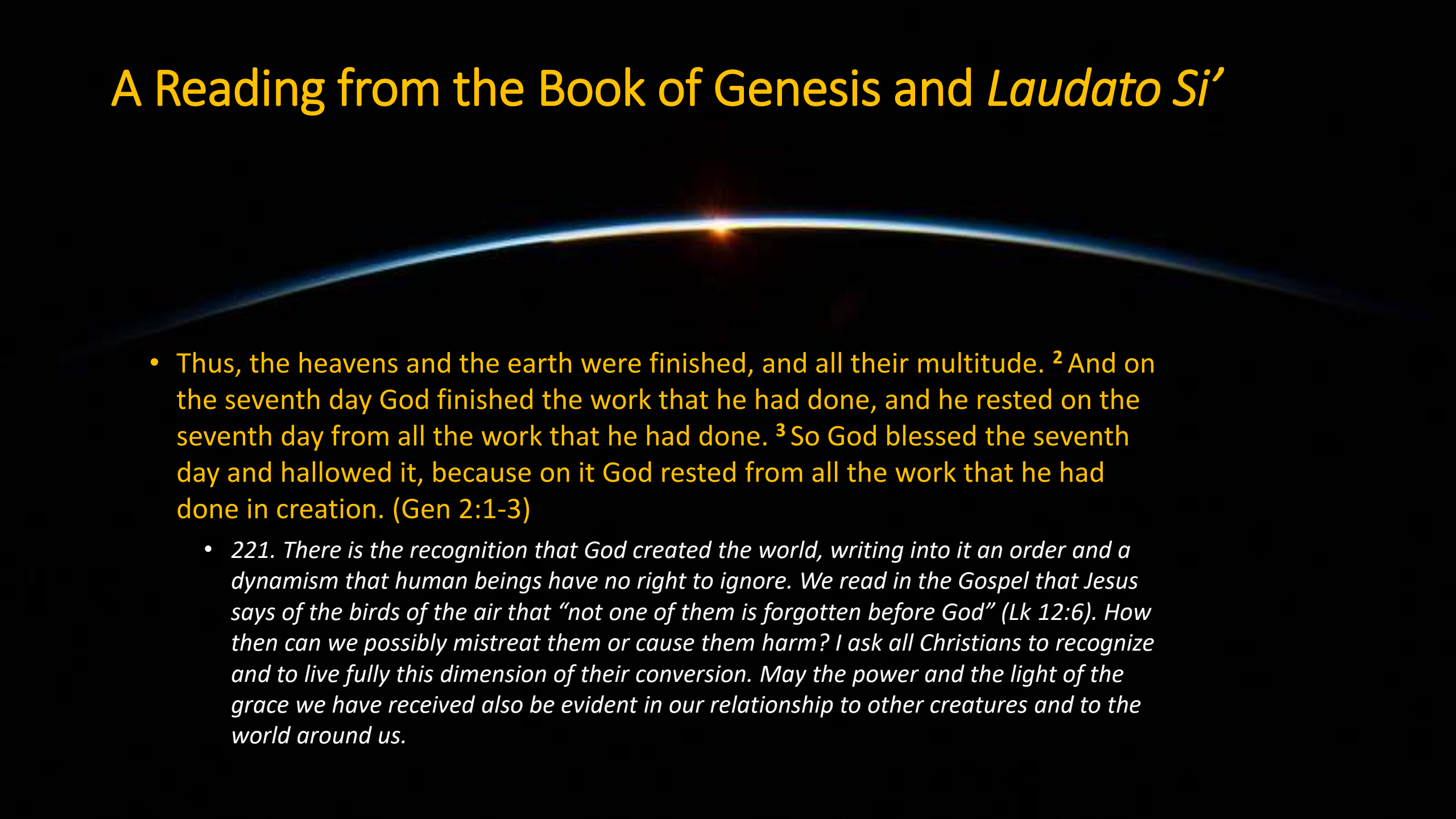
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- <sup>27</sup> So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. (Gen 1:27)
  - 84. *Our insistence that each human being is an image of God should not make us overlook the fact that each creature has its own purpose. None is superfluous. The entire material universe speaks of God's love, his boundless affection for us. Soil, water, mountains: everything is, as it were, a caress of God.*

# A Reading from the Book of Genesis and *Laudato Si'*

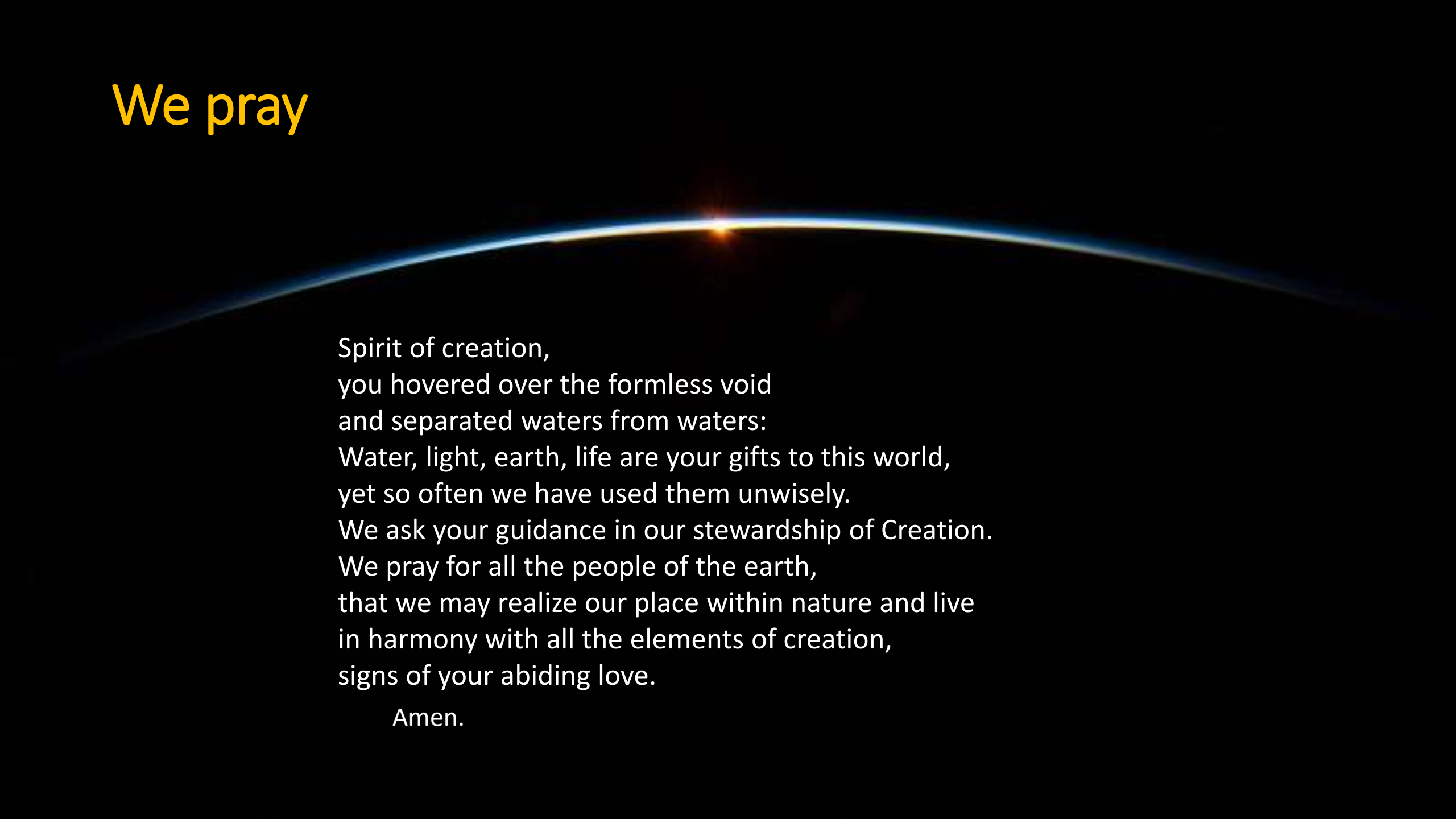
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- <sup>28</sup> God blessed them, and God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth.” <sup>29</sup> God said, “See, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit; you shall have them for food. <sup>30</sup> And to every beast of the earth, and to every bird of the air, and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food.” And it was so. <sup>31</sup> God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day. (Gen 1:28-31)
    - 67. *Each community can take from the bounty of the earth whatever it needs for subsistence, but it also has the duty to protect the earth and to ensure its fruitfulness for coming generations.*



# A Reading from the Book of Genesis and *Laudato Si'*

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- Thus, the heavens and the earth were finished, and all their multitude. <sup>2</sup> And on the seventh day God finished the work that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all the work that he had done. <sup>3</sup> So God blessed the seventh day and hallowed it, because on it God rested from all the work that he had done in creation. (Gen 2:1-3)
    - 221. *There is the recognition that God created the world, writing into it an order and a dynamism that human beings have no right to ignore. We read in the Gospel that Jesus says of the birds of the air that “not one of them is forgotten before God” (Lk 12:6). How then can we possibly mistreat them or cause them harm? I ask all Christians to recognize and to live fully this dimension of their conversion. May the power and the light of the grace we have received also be evident in our relationship to other creatures and to the world around us.*

# We pray



Spirit of creation,  
you hovered over the formless void  
and separated waters from waters:  
Water, light, earth, life are your gifts to this world,  
yet so often we have used them unwisely.  
We ask your guidance in our stewardship of Creation.  
We pray for all the people of the earth,  
that we may realize our place within nature and live  
in harmony with all the elements of creation,  
signs of your abiding love.

Amen.



This can't wait.







This can't wait.





This can't wait.





# The Anthropocene: Playing God

- “The Anthropocene is named after humans because it is a time when humans have massive, Earth-changing impacts, altering the chemistry of the atmosphere (climate change), changing DNA (genetic modification), and depositing non-biodegradable plastic, Styrofoam, and radioactive materials around the planet.”
  - Sam Mickey, *Whole Earth Thinking and Planetary Coexistence* (New York: Routledge, 2016), 6.



# Mass Extinction?

- In the last 500 years, scientists estimate that 900 species have become extinct largely due to human causes.
- “Today, the synergistic effects of human impacts are laying the groundwork for a comparably great Anthropocene mass extinction . . . with unknown ecological and evolutionary consequences.”
  - J. B. C. Jackson, “Ecological Extinction and Evolution in the Brave New Ocean,” *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 105 (2008): 11458.







## Pope Francis

- This sister now cries out to us because of the harm we have inflicted on her by our irresponsible use and abuse of the goods with which God has endowed her.
- We have come to see ourselves as her lords and masters, entitled to plunder her at will. The violence present in our hearts, wounded by sin, is also reflected in the symptoms of sickness evident in the soil, in the water, in the air and in all forms of life.



# Pope Francis

- This is why the earth herself, burdened and laid waste, is among the most abandoned and maltreated of our poor; she “groans in travail” (*Rom 8:22*).
- We have forgotten that we ourselves are dust of the earth (cf. *Gen 2:7*); our very bodies are made up of her elements, we breathe her air and we receive life and refreshment from her waters.
  - *Laudato Si’ 2*



# Our task

- [Humankind] is that part of reality in which and through which the cosmic process has become conscious and has begun to comprehend itself. [Our] supreme task is to increase that conscious comprehension and to apply it as fully as possible to guide the course of events.
  - Julian Huxley, *Religion without Revelation* (London: Max Parrish, 1959), 236.





# Discussion

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- When you hear the statistics and the grave concerns, what response stirs within you?
- How have you and your congregation experienced and/or responded to the climate crises?



# Why us?

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- Aren't we all in the midst of a transformation of religious life?
- Aren't many individual congregations facing questions about their very future? How is this not one more thing?
- Or more pointedly, as vowed religious why is the situation of Earth of particular concern to us?





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## How does Jesus redeem us from entropy?

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- In Christ, the living God who creates and empowers the evolutionary world also enters into the fray, personally drinking the cup of suffering and going down into the nothingness of death, to transform it from within. Hope springs from this divine presence amid the turmoil.
  - Elizabeth A. Johnson, *Ask the Beasts: Darwin and the God of Love* (London: Bloomsbury, 2014), 192.



# Deep Incarnation

- The incarnation of God in Christ can be understood as a radical or “deep” incarnation, that is, an incarnation into the very tissue of biological existence and system of nature. Understood this way, the death of Christ becomes an icon of God’s redemptive co-suffering with all sentient life as well as with the victims of social competition. God bears the costs of evolution, the price involved in the hardship of natural selection.
  - Niels Gregersen, “The Cross of Christ in an Evolutionary World,” *Dialogue: A Journal of Theology* 40 (2001): 205.







# Jesus and the Good News of God

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- At his baptism, Jesus has a profound spiritual experience in which he comes to recognize that he is God's beloved son.
- After John's arrest, something signals to Jesus that now he must act on his sonship, taking up the work of his father, "proclaiming the good news of God."
- The Greek reads *to euaggelion tou theou*, the gospel of God. As Mark presents it, Jesus does not proclaim the gospel of Jesus but the gospel of God.



# God is faithful to God's promises

- “As for me, I am establishing my covenant with you and your descendants after you, and with every living creature that is with you, the birds, the domestic animals, and every animal of the earth with you, as many as came out of the ark.” (Gen 9:8-10)

# *Hesed and Pistis*

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- The Hebrew term, *hesed* captures the breadth and depth of God's commitment to relationship and stalwart dependability. It appears 249 times in the Old Testament, often translated as "steadfast love"
- "What we learn about God from Jesus is not contrary to what had already been revealed about the loving-kindness and fidelity of God through the history and scriptures of Israel."
  - Elizabeth A. Johnson, *Creation and the Cross: The Mercy of God for a Planet in Peril* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2018), 182.



# The Kairos of God's Reign

- Everything Jesus does in the Gospel of Mark is designed to affirm his authority:
  - the spirit-possessed are freed (Mark 1:23-27; 5:2-19; 9:17-27),
  - the sick and infirm are healed (1:30-31; 3:1-6; 5:25-34; 6:54-56; 7:29-30),
  - the lepers cleansed (1:40-45),
  - the paralyzed walk (2:3-12),
  - tax collectors and sinners are welcomed (2:15), the sea is calmed and mastered (4:37-39; 6:48-51);
  - the dead resuscitated (5:35-42),
  - the hungry are fed (6:35-44 8:2-9),
  - the deaf hear (7:32-35),
  - and the blind see (8:22-26; 10:46-52).

Jesus healing the Blind Man,  
Painted by Brian Jekel

# Jesus and the Natural World

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- Jesus speaks about
  - seeds and soil (Mark 4:3-8),
  - the birds of the air that don't work and yet are fed (Luke 12:24; Matt 6:26),
  - a misfortunate ox in a well (Luke 14:4),
  - the potential of mustard seeds (Mark 4:30-32; Luke 13:18-19; Matt 13:31-32),
  - the couture of a field of lilies (Luke 12:27; Matt 6:28-30),
  - the value of sparrows (Luke 12:6; Matt 10:29),
  - hungry dogs at dinner time (Mark 7:27-28; Matt 15:26-27),
  - consoling dogs (Luke 16:21)





# Jesus and the Natural World



- Sheep without shepherds (Mark 6:34; Matt 9:36),
- Sheep among wolves (Matt 10:16, John 10:12),
- The value of sheep (Matt 12:12),
- Lost sheep (Matt 15:24, Luke 15:4; Matt 18:12),
- The difference between sheep and goats (Matt 25:32),
- Scattered sheep (Mark 14:27; Matt 26:31),
- Sacrificial sheep (John 2:14),
- Giving one's life for the sheep (John 10:15),
- Obedient sheep (John 10:27),
- Feeding sheep (John 21:17).

# Evolutionary View of the Reign of God

- As Teilhard de Chardin presented, the Gospel call means “returning to the world with new vision and a deeper conviction to take hold of Christ in the heart of matter and to further Christ in the universality of his incarnation.”
- He “urged Christians to participate in the process of Christogenesis, to risk, get involved, aim toward union with others, for the entire creation is waiting to give birth to God.”
  - Ilia Delio, *Making All Things New: Catholicity, Cosmology, Consciousness* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2015), 93-4.







# Good News for all Creation

- For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the children of God; for the creation was subjected to futility, not of its own will but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and will obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. We know that the whole creation has been groaning in labor pains until now. (Rom 8:19-22)



# Accompaniment

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- Bring creation into the picture, it is not hard to see how such an accompaniment theology can also embrace the natural world. Today's science has made abundantly clear that deep relationality runs through the whole cosmos.
- Thanks to the evolution of life, human beings are genetically related in kinship to all other species on our planet, and this whole living community is composed of chemical materials available from debris left by the death of a previous generation of stars.
- As John Muir wrote, "When we try to pick out anything by itself, we find it hitched to everything else in the Universe."
- So when an early Christian hymn sings that Christ is "the firstborn of all creation," and again, "the firstborn of the dead," (Col 1:15-18), we can see not only the human dead but the dead of all creation, every species, included.
  - Johnson, *Creation and the Cross*, 159.



A photograph of a person walking a dog through a forest with vibrant autumn foliage. The person is seen from behind, wearing a plaid shirt and dark pants. The dog is a medium-sized, brown and white animal. The forest floor is covered in fallen leaves and low-lying vegetation. The trees are tall and thin, with leaves in shades of yellow, orange, and red. The sky is visible through the canopy, appearing overcast.

# Mission in an unfinished Universe

- The reign of God viewed through Teilhard de Chardin's evolutionary Christogenesis and Johnson's theology of accompaniment provokes a new understanding of mission and therefore ministry in an unfinished universe, an understanding that recognizes the cost of complexity, the need for a new ethic that supports our evolving sense of mission, and a clear statement of direction.





# Discussion

Jesus draws from the created world to express the beauty, potential, hiddenness, and becoming of the reign of God.

- Does Creation inspire you?
- How have you encountered the Divine in nature?



# God's radical commitment to the Cosmos

- The one who was totally centered on a gracious God upholding all creation, the one who interpreted God's law in a "humanizing" way, the one who ate scandalous meals with public sinners, who delighted and challenged his hearers with the artistry of his parables, who taught the impossible, like love of the enemy, the one who vigorously confronted those in authority, the one whose presence brought joy and happiness, the one who called his followers to a new family, the one who faced failure and death because of the positions he took, the one who has been raised up and vindicated by God...



Last Supper by Sergio Gomez



# God's radical commitment to the Cosmos

- This very specific Jesus is the symbol and the reality of God's radical commitment to the cosmos. And this same Jesus is the symbol and the reality of the cosmos returning God's embrace with a definitive "yes."
  - Denis Edwards, *Jesus and the Cosmos* (New York: Paulist Press, 1991), 76.





# At the heart of the Universe

- “Those who believe in Christ make a wager that love as Jesus enfleshed it in a human way reveals the ineffable compassion of God; this love is the meaning encoded at the core of human life and at the heart of the universe itself.”
  - Johnson, *Ask the Beasts*, 201.





# Charism and Community

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- The word “charism” comes from the Greek *charis*, which is often translated as “grace” or “favor.” We learn from St. Paul that at baptism we receive the gifts of the Holy Spirit. They are a down payment on the fullness of the reign of God. Paul also calls these “fruits,” and they include love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness (Gal 5:22).
- Though these gifts differ, they are all from the same spirit (1 Cor 12:14).
- By virtue of our baptism, we, too, have a particular grace or charism given to us by the Spirit.



# Homework

- How would you describe your congregational or society's charism?
- How is your congregation or society's charism enfolded in your mission?
- How is your congregation or society's mission reflected in your ministries?

