

world is good, and all its contents are seen to be wisely and skillfully ordered."<sup>85</sup> In Holy Scripture, the image of God's plan for the world is Paradise (see Gn 2). The realization of this plan depends upon the cooperation of humankind with God. Paradise is God's gift, and at the same time, it is humankind's vocation.

110 Conceived by God as Paradise, the world is God's gift to humankind and the sphere of our relationship with God, with others, and with nature. For this reason, human beings cannot take a consumerist attitude towards the world, a world that is filled with the love and attention of the Giver. The Christian attitude towards the world is to see it as a gift of God. Growing in faith, Christians ascend in their understanding from the gifts to the Person of the Giver. Regarding the world as God's gift allows one to avoid two extremes: the reduction of its value (since the world is God's creation), or turning it into an absolute (since the world is not God).

### **c. God's Plan**

111 God the Creator fills creation with the grace of his presence, and yet at the same time, he remains unattainable in his essence. God's presence in the world is discovered through prayerful contemplation, which is capable of seeing in the world his divine Prototype, the Christ.

112 In accordance with his plan, God acts in the world; he sustains the world in existence and leads it to its final fulfilment. This action of God is referred to as the Divine Plan (Providence) of God. Divine Providence consists in his gracious "foresight" and the "counsel from before the ages" of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit;<sup>86</sup> this Providence is God's will for the world and determines the consummation of the world: "By your power you hold together the creation, and by your providence you govern the world."<sup>87</sup> This means that in the world and in our lives, there are no coincidences or random occurrences. Faith makes it possible to see the action of Divine Providence in the concrete circumstances of life.

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<sup>85</sup> GREGORY OF NYSSA, *Great Catechism*, I: PG 45, 16.

<sup>86</sup> See JOHN OF DAMASCUS, *On the Divine Images*, III, 19: PG 94, 1340.

<sup>87</sup> Трѣпѣйк, *Rite of the Great Blessing of Water for the Feast of Theophany*, Third Prayer.

*For Angels, Archangels, Thrones, Dominions, Principalities, \*  
*Authorities, Powers, and the many-eyed Cherubim praise you.*  
*Around you stand the Seraphim...*  
*(Anaphora of the Liturgy of Saint Basil the Great)*

## **2. "he Visible and Invisible World**

- 113 The Symbol of Faith points to two different dimensions of the world created by God, the visible and the invisible. Saint Maximus the Confessor teaches about the union of everything visible and invisible in creation. Basing himself on the words of Saint Paul that everything was created by Christ and for Christ (see Col 1:16-17), Maximus understands the word everything to mean the earthly visible and the heavenly invisible, the human visible and the angelic invisible. Having become incarnate, Christ has inseparably united himself with creation in the "body and blood" of his human nature.<sup>88</sup> All creation, visible and invisible, exists not by virtue of its own nature, but by virtue of the action of God's Son.
- 114 Angels, the heavenly incorporeal beings (spirits)<sup>89</sup> "have their being by the will of the Father, [they] are brought into being by the work of the Son, and are perfected by the presence of the Spirit."<sup>90</sup> God, as the highest Intelligence, fashioned the angelic intellects. He made them partakers of his inexpressible glory and formed their incorruptible essence. The angels are beacons, who reflect the Light of God. Since they have received eternal life from the Origin of Life, and because they contemplate the eternal Glory and Wisdom, they are like mirrors filled with light.<sup>91</sup>
- 115 The existence of the invisible angelic realm attests to the wealth and diversity of the world created by God. Both the visible and invisible belong to one creation, which God looks upon as good. Human beings and angels, as persons, have the opportunity to build personal and spiritual relationships with God and with one another: "Today things above keep feast with things below, and things below commune with things above."<sup>92</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> See Maximus THE CONFESSOR, Questions to Thalassios, 35: PG 90,104.

<sup>89</sup> Prayerbook Прийдіме поклонімся [Come, Let Us Bow in Worship], Prayers for Every Day, Sunday: Prayer to the Most Holy Trinity (translated from Ukrainian).

<sup>90</sup> BASIL THE GREAT, On the Holy Spirit, 16, 38: PG 32,136.

<sup>91</sup> See Octoechos, Tone 1, Monday Matins Canon, Troparia for Canticles 7, 8.

<sup>92</sup> Trebnyk, Rite of the Great Blessing of Water for the Feast of Theophany, Second Prayer.