

**Section 56**  
**Spirituality of the Heart:**  
**The Praise of God from the Heart of Creation.**

Not only the book of Genesis, but also other books of the Bible teach us to care for nature and in particular for animals, says the Pope. Sabbath rest, he states, applies not only to human beings, but also to the animals that work for us (Exodus 23:12). Regarding nature, the Pope underlines the fact that the Bible rejects inalienable possession of the land: "*The land should not be sold in perpetuity, for the land is mine, and you are but aliens, who have become my tenants*" (Leviticus 25:23) (LS 67).

Several psalms invite both us humans and other creatures to praise the Lord. "*Praise him, sun and moon, praise him, all you shining stars! Praise him, you highest heavens, and you waters above the heavens! Let them praise the name of the Lord, for he commanded and they were created*" (Ps 148:3-5). (LS 72).

From the first moment of creation, all living and non-living nature praises the Creator simply by being there. No human being is needed for this. All creatures praise God in their own way by existing, regardless of whether they are useful to humans. The hymn of praise of the three young men is a hymn of praise of the whole of creation: "*All creatures, praise the Lord*" (Daniel, Deuterocanonical).

The Pope quotes the words of the Catechism, which says: "*Each of the various creatures is willed by God in its own being and reflects in its own way a ray of God's infinite wisdom and goodness. Human beings must therefore respect the special goodness of each creature in order to avoid any misuse of things*". (LS 69).

The Pope refers to St Francis of Assisi, who reminds us to read nature as a beautiful book, in which God speaks to us and shows us his beauty and goodness (LS 12): "*When we can see God reflected in all that exists, our hearts are moved to praise the Lord for all his creatures and to worship him in union with them. This sentiment finds magnificent expression in the hymn of Saint Francis of Assisi: "Praised be you, my Lord, with all your creatures"* (LS 87).

## REFLECTION

"How marvellous it is, this material world!  
What perfect unity  
in this indescribable variety.  
Not a being in isolation!  
On the contrary,  
everywhere union of forces,  
a combination of influences;  
each element is useful for the whole,  
and the whole is useful for each element.

It is an immense network  
all the links of which hold together  
and converge at a central point:  
the human being...

A human being is not just a mineral that blooms,  
a shrub that feels,  
an animal that reasons.  
A human being is a mineral, a tree, an animal  
who prays, who worships, who gives thanks.  
In us, matter becomes religious."

*Jules Chevalier MSC,  
Le Sacré Coeur de Jésus 1900, p.. 62.  
English translation by Dennis Murphy MSC.*