

Section 58
Spirituality of the Heart:
A Spirituality of personal depth.

In chapter three of *Laudato Si*, Pope Francis elaborates on the human causes of the climate crisis. One of the causes he identifies, is a growing technological mentality (see LS 101). We rightly rejoice at the many technical developments, which offer us so many new possibilities, for example in the fields of medicine and communication. *“Science and technology are wonderful products of a God-given human creativity”* (LS 102), he writes. So, we can only be grateful for the efforts of scientists and technicians, who constantly show us new ways to achieve a sustainable living environment (cf. LS 102).

However, these technical developments have also a downside. A mentality is growing, claiming that everything that people are technically able to develop, is also valuable and therefore must be developed, without asking whether this new development will benefit humankind (See LS 104). But we must bear in mind that, *“our immense technological development has not been accompanied by a development in human responsibility, values and conscience.... We cannot claim to have a sound ethics, a culture and spirituality genuinely capable of setting limits and teaching clear-minded self-restraint”* (LS 105). To make technology serve human wellbeing requires *“a distinctive way of thinking, policies, an educational program, a lifestyle and a spirituality”* (LS 111).

“Above all, we human beings need to change” (LS 202), declares the Pope in chapter 6, in which he underlines the necessity of an *“ecological education and spirituality”*. By this he means to say that we need education and spirituality that generate environmental responsibility. What he has in mind is an education in simple actions, which will lead to a personal spirituality that will give meaning and depth to our lives. In the following text for reflection the Pope describes it as follows:

REFLECTION

“There is a nobility in the duty to care for creation through little daily actions, and it is wonderful how education can bring about real changes in lifestyle.

Education in environmental responsibility can encourage ways of acting which significantly affect the world around us, such as avoiding the use of plastic and paper, reducing water consumption, separating refuse, cooking only what can reasonably be consumed, showing care for other living beings, using public transport or car-pooling, planting trees, turning off unnecessary lights, or any number of other practices.

All of these reflect a generous and worthy creativity, which brings out the best in human beings. Reusing something instead of immediately discarding it, can be an act of love which expresses our own dignity.”
(LS 211).

“Such actions can restore our sense of self-esteem; they enable us to live more fully and to feel that life on earth is worthwhile” (LS 212).

“Ecological education can take place in a variety of settings: at school, in families, in the media, in catechesis and elsewhere.

In the family we first learn how to show love and respect for life; we are taught the proper use of things, order and cleanliness, ... and care for all creatures.

These simple gestures of heartfelt courtesy help to create a culture of shared life and respect for our surroundings.” (LS 213).

(Pope Francis 'Laudato Si', Rome, Pentecost May 2015)