

Section 59
Spirituality of the Heart:
An environmentally conscious spirituality

Pope Francis sees another deeper cause of the climate crisis in which we find ourselves, as a wrong perception of humanity's role in creation (LS 116). In working the earth, we humans are not independent agents who can go—our own way, but collaborators with the Creator.

The Pope supports the view that God respects human autonomy, independence and freedom. God does not intervene, even when we make wrong decisions (LS 80). However, this autonomy and freedom must be exercised in collaboration with God and one's fellow human beings. Together we are responsible for the prudent cultivation of the earth (LS 119).

According to the Christian vision, God entrusts us humans with the task of cultivating and developing the earth, together with, and for one another. The abundance of the earth is a gift from God to all humankind, including future generations. But, when we see ourselves as the rulers of creation, we tend to give priority to our own interests and to regard *“everything as irrelevant unless it serves one's own immediate interests”* (LS 122).

The Pope states: *“Christian spirituality proposes a return to that simplicity which allows us to appreciate the small things, to be grateful for the opportunities which life affords us, to be spiritually detached from what we possess, and not to succumb to sadness for what we lack”* (LS 222).

And he continues: *“It is not easy to promote this kind of healthy humility or happy sobriety when we consider ourselves autonomous, when we exclude God from our lives or replace him with our own ego and think that our subjective feelings can define what is right and what is wrong”* (LS 224).

REFLECTION

An environmentally conscious spirituality
What does that mean?

*Joyfully experiencing being included
in the overwhelming beauty of creation.*

*Experiencing being part of
the 14-billion-year history of the universe
and the 3.8-billion-year evolution of life on earth.*

*Experiencing this evolution as directed
toward God's ultimate self-gift to us all in love
through Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit.*

*Experiencing being called to solidarity
with all creatures and guided by God's Spirit,
to accept other creatures as related to us.*

*Experiencing with concern the enormity
of the environmental problem:
how rainforests continue to be destroyed,
animal and plant species become extinct,
more and more carbon being pumped
into the atmosphere.*

*Feeling desperate, yet remaining hopeful
by seeing this as a participation in the way of the cross
and as an invitation to remain committed
to the wholeness of creation,
as we entrust this damaged earth to God's care.*

*Experiencing a conversion from consumerism
to the simplicity of the basic necessities of life:
food, clothing, shelter, medical care,
appropriate education, loving relationships,
meaningful work, an enriching spiritual life,
time with friends and with the nature around us.*

(Free from: Denis Edwards, *Ecology at the Heart of Faith*.
Orbis Books. Kindle Edition, chapter 7).