

SECTION 62: A SPIRITUALITY OF THE HEART: A WAY TOWARDS A NEW LIFESTYLE

In the last chapter of 'Laudato Si', entitled "*Ecological Education and Spirituality*," Pope Francis underlines the need for a new lifestyle. The source of this new lifestyle he finds in "a *Spirituality which can change hearts*," (Evangeli Gaudium 262). He states: "*The emptier a person's heart, the more he or she needs things to buy, possess and consume*" (LS 204). Pope Benedict already declared: "*Buying is always a moral act and not only an economic one*" (LS 206). For Pope Francis, being possessed by the inner drive to consume is one of the great evils of the modern age. He states: "*To be obsessed with a consumerist lifestyle, especially when only a few can afford it, can only lead to violence and mutual destruction*" (LS 204). And not unlike Father Chevalier, he emphasizes that: "*We need to experience a conversion, or change of heart*" (LS 218).

To underline the necessity of embracing a new way of life, the Pope quotes the "*Earth Charter*", published on 29 June 2000 at 'the Peace Palace' in The Hague on the initiative of the United Nations' Commission on Environment and Development: "*As never before in history, common destiny beckons us to seek a new beginning. Let ours be a time remembered for the awakening of a new reverence for life, the firm resolve to achieve sustainability, the quickening of the struggle for justice and peace, and the joyful celebration of life*" (LS 207).

The Pope believes that this new beginning is possible, because he trusts the positive capacities that all people bear in their hearts: "*Human beings, while capable of the worst, are also capable of rising above themselves, choosing again what is good, and making a new start, despite their mental and social conditioning. No system can completely suppress our openness to what is good, true and beautiful, or our God-given ability to respond to his grace at work deep in our hearts. I appeal to everyone throughout the world not to forget this dignity which is ours*" (LS 205).

REFLECTION

*“The divine oneness of life is within
and all around us.*

*Sometimes walking alone in nature
we can feel its heartbeat
and its wonder,
and our steps become
steps of remembrance.*

*The simple practice of
“walking in a sacred manner,”
in which with every step we take,
we feel the connection with the sacred Earth,
is one way to reconnect
with the living Spirit of the Earth.*

*It is through the heart
that a real connection is made,
even if we first make it in our feet or hands.*

*Do we really feel our self
as a part of this beautiful
and suffering planet?
Do we sense its need?*

*Then this connection comes alive,
a living stream that flows from our heart
as it embraces all of life.*

*Then every step, every touch,
will be a prayer for the Earth,
a remembrance of what is sacred.”*

Vaughan-Lee, Llewellyn. *Spiritual Ecology:
The Cry of the Earth.*
Golden Sufi Centre. Kindle Edition.