

SECTION 63: SPIRITUALITY OF THE HEART: A SPIRITUALITY THAT CALLS FOR ECOLOGICAL EDUCATION

One of Pope Francis' characteristic contributions to the debate regarding the climate crisis is his emphasis on the fact that we can only change the climate, if we change ourselves. In fact, the entire final chapter of *Laudato Si* speaks of the need of a spirituality, able to create a new awareness in our hearts. The Pope writes: *"It is we human beings above all who need to change. We lack an awareness of our common origin, of our mutual belonging, and of a future to be shared with everyone. This basic awareness would enable the development of new convictions, attitudes and forms of life"* (LS 202).

It is not only companies that pollute the air that should change. It is not only politicians that should take measures to curb pollution from agriculture or from polluting traffic on land, at sea and in the air. The Pope expects much from families and family education. *"It is wonderful how education can bring about real changes in lifestyle,"* he writes. *"Education in environmental responsibility can encourage ways of acting which directly and significantly affect the world around us"* (LS 212). He continues: *"Good education plants seeds when we are young, and these seeds go on to bear fruit throughout life"* (LS 213). Such education, the Pope expects above all from families *"because the family is the heart of the culture of life"* (LS 213), and also from Christian communities (LS 214).

The first thing that families and communities should teach their children or members is to appreciate the beauty of God's creation: *"By learning to see and appreciate beauty, we learn to reject self-interested pragmatism. If someone has not learned to admire something beautiful, we should not be surprised, if he or she treats everything as an object to be used or abused without scruple"* (LS 215). Earlier, the Pope had already written: *"If we no longer speak the language of fraternity and beauty in our relationship with the world, our attitude will be that of masters, consumers, unable to set limits on their immediate needs. By contrast, if we feel intimately united with all that exists, then sobriety and care will well up spontaneously."* (LS 11).

REFLECTION

BEAUTY

*“This feeling of being grasped by beauty
should lead to certain spiritual responses:
humility, gratitude, and thanksgiving.
For this is all a gift. ...*

*Beauty is like a gift in its sheer excessiveness.
It is so much more than we might expect,
and we respond best by appreciating it.*

*Beauty is grace,
and grace asks only to be received.
For Christians,
God’s grace is made manifest in many ways.
But we should not forget
that a primary experience of it is in creation.”*

(St. Augustine praises the Lord for:)
*“the manifold diversity of beauty
in sky and earth and sea;
the abundance of light,
and its miraculous loveliness,
in sun and moon and stars;
the dark shades of woods,
the colour and fragrance of flowers;
the multitudinous varieties of birds,
with their songs and their bright plumage;
the countless living creatures
of all shapes and sizes.”*
(The City of God).

(Cloutier, David. Walking God's Earth
Liturgical Press. Kindle Edition)..