



Things must change! It is time for action – action that is firmly rooted in ecological education and spirituality. When we stop and *read the signs of the times*, we become aware of our culture that promotes extreme and compulsive consumerism, selfishness, self-centredness, self-absorption, extreme individualism and competition. But we can also see that there is another, though sometimes quieter, culture that embraces simplicity, peacefulness, the common good, mutual belonging, cooperation, selflessness and gratitude. It is this second culture, one that is built upon ecological education and spirituality, that Pope Francis presents in chapter six.

ECOLOGICAL EXAMEN

Pope Francis calls us to a new lifestyle. This change starts with a deep look at ourselves: “the issue of environmental degradation challenges us to examine our lifestyle” (205-6). Let us acknowledge the ways in which we have harmed God’s creation through our actions and our failure to act. [Click here](#) for an ecological examen.

A NEW LIFESTYLE: DOING SMALL THINGS WITH GREAT LOVE

- Shop wisely: “Purchasing is always a moral – and not simply economic – act” (206). Exercise your shopping power by choosing those products/companies that choose healthy ecological practices.
- In the cooler months, use less heating and wear warmer clothes; in the warmer months, draw the shades and reduce your use of air conditioning.
- We can do small things with great love, including:
 - Avoid single use plastic and paper
 - reducing water consumption
 - separating refuse – reduce, reuse, and recycle
 - cook only what can reasonably be consumed
 - Show care for other living beings, especially those affected by climate change and those who experience poverty
 - Use public transport or car-pooling
 - Planting trees
 - Turning off unnecessary lights

**ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION SHOULD FACILITATE MAKING THE LEAP TOWARDS THE
TRANSCENDENT WHICH GIVES ECOLOGICAL ETHICS ITS DEEPEST MEANING (210).**

A NEW LIFESTYLE: PROFOUND INTERIOR CONVERSION

- **Joy:** Find joy in the ordinariness of life. “Christian spirituality proposes an alternative understanding of the quality of life, and encourages a prophetic and contemplative lifestyle, one capable of deep enjoyment free of the obsession with consumption” (222).
- **Humility:** We need God. “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” (224).
- **Fraternity:** We need each other. We are all interconnected: “We must regain the conviction that we need one another, that we have a shared responsibility for others and the world, and that being good and decent are worth it: (229)
- **Gratitude:** “One expression of this attitude is when we stop and give thanks to God before and after meals. That moment of blessing, however brief, reminds us of our dependence on God for life; it strengthens our feeling of gratitude for the gifts of creation; it acknowledges those who by their labours provide us with these goods; and it reaffirms our solidarity with those in greatest need” (227)
- **Simplicity:** For our own health and the health of the world a simple lifestyle is needed: “it allows us to stop and 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 (222).
- **Peace:** Inner peace – peace with self, with God and with others – is needed: Inner peace is closely related to care for ecology and for the common good because, lived out authentically, it is reflected in a balanced lifestyle, together with a capacity for wonder which takes us to a deeper understanding of life (225).
- **A Sacramental life and the Sacraments:** Let us seek God in all things: “Christianity does not reject matter. Rather, bodiliness is considered in all its value in the liturgical act, whereby the human body is disclosed in its inner nature as a temple of the Holy Spirit and is united with the Lord Jesus, who himself took a body for the world’s salvation”. The Sacraments are a privileged way in which nature is taken up by God to become a means of mediating supernatural life (235).
- **Sabbath Rest:** Let’s seek moments of quiet and rest. “Rest opens our eyes to the larger picture and gives us renewed sensitivity to the rights of others. And so the day of rest, centred on the Eucharist, sheds its light on the whole week, and motivates us to greater concern for nature and the poor” (237).
- **Community:** We need to work with others: “Social problems must be addressed by community networks and not simply by the sum of individual good deeds. (...) The ecological conversion needed to bring about lasting change is also a community conversion” (219).

What we all need is an “ecological conversion”, whereby the effects of their encounter with Jesus Christ become evident in their relationship with the world around them. Living our vocation to be protectors of God’s handiwork is essential to a life of virtue; it is not an optional or a secondary aspect of our Christian experience (217).

The Father is the ultimate source of everything, the loving and self-communicating foundation of all that exists. The Son, his reflection, through whom all things were created, united himself to this earth when he was formed in the womb of Mary. The Spirit, infinite bond of love, is intimately present at the very heart of the universe, inspiring and bringing new pathways. The world was created by the three Persons acting as a single divine principle, but each one of them performed this common work in accordance with his own personal property. Consequently, “when we contemplate with wonder the universe in all its grandeur and beauty, we must praise the whole Trinity” (238).

Next Steps

- **Education:** To learn more, you may be interested in accessing the [Open Access Laudato Si' Integral Ecology Library](#).
- **Spirituality:** The Catholic Women's League has prepared [Care for God's Creation Resources](#) which includes Spiritual resources.
- **Action:** Join or form a group (e.g., [The Laudato Si' Action Platform](#)) that responds to the care of the earth and the care for those who experience poverty. Start taking small steps in the home, the local community, and your faith community to promote care for the earth and to respond to the cry of the poor.



JOIN US AS WE TAKE ACTION FOR OUR PLANET & THE POOR.
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