



Laudato Si': Chapter 6 – Ecological Education and Spirituality

The sixth chapter, “Ecological Education and Spirituality,” shifts attention to the individual believer, families and communities, and invites us to make a difference in small but tangible ways. Consumer choices, the cultivation of ecological virtues such as reducing wastefulness, and environmental education for the young are explained as practical steps leading to a deeper, spiritual “ecological conversion” through which the follower of Christ recognizes the true worth of all created entities.

The statement “God created the world, writing into it an order and a dynamism that human beings have no right to ignore” [221] stands in the hallowed natural law tradition of Aristotle and Aquinas that every creature has in its nature an end, a “telos”, which humans should respect and honor. The intrinsic value of non-humans is noted when the encyclical states that the “ultimate purpose of other creatures is not to be found in us” but rather in the Risen Christ who embraces all things [83].

Chapter 6 Reflections:

A TIME TO ACT – CIVIL AND POLITICAL LEADERS

“To take up these responsibilities and the costs they entail, politicians will inevitably clash with the mindset of short-term gain and results which dominates present-day economics and politics. But if they are courageous, they will attest to their God-given dignity and leave behind a testimony of selfless responsibility.” (no. 181)

“Public pressure has to be exerted in order to bring about decisive political action. Society, through non-governmental organizations and intermediate groups, must put pressure on governments to develop more rigorous regulations, procedures and controls. Unless citizens control political power – national, regional and municipal – it will not be possible to control damage to the environment.

Local legislation can be more effective, too, if agreements exist between neighboring communities to support the same environmental policies.” (no. 179)

Questions

1. How can faith communities in the United States be involved in exerting pressure on leaders and governments, both locally and nationally, to be more responsible stewards of creation?
2. What ideas do you have to help civil and political leaders make decisions and policies that will benefit the generations to come, instead of only considering the short-term?

Chapter 6 Reflections:

A REASON TO HOPE

“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.” (no. 225)

“The God who created the universe out of nothing can also intervene in this world and overcome every form of evil. Injustice is not invincible.” (no. 74)

“We must not think that these efforts are not going to change the world.” (no. 212)

Questions:

1. In the face of vast challenges, why does our faith call us to hope?
2. How can we live out God’s vision for healed and renewed relationships with God, self, others and creation?