

Section 21

A Change of Heart

A frequent theme in Pope Francis' encyclical, « *Laudato Si* » (“Praise be to you, My Lord”) on care for the earth and the integrity of creation, is the statement that, “*everything is interconnected*” (*Laudato Si* n. 70; also for example in n. 16; 91; 240), or “*all creatures are connected*” (*Laudato Si* 42). The Pope declares: “*Peace, justice and the preservation of creation cannot be separated. ... Everything is related, and we human beings are united as brothers and sisters on a wonderful pilgrimage, woven together by the love God has for each of his creatures, and which also unites us in fond affection with brother sun, sister moon, brother river and mother earth*” (*Laudato Si* n. 92).

Remarkably, not unlike Pope Francis, Fr. Chevalier also points out that all creatures are connected with one another by the love of the Creator. He writes: “*How marvelous it is, this material world! What perfect unity in this indescribable variety! Not a being in isolation. On the contrary, it is an immense network, all the links of which converge at a central point: humankind. Yes, it is in humankind that this unity is achieved; and in us the affective life has a special organ; the heart. The heart! See the central point where everything converges.*” (*Le Sacré Coeur de Jésus*, p. 64-65). Further down Chevalier points to “*the mysterious chain which binds the human heart to the Heart of Christ and the Heart of Christ to the very Heart of God*” (*Le Sacré Coeur de Jésus*, p. 182; Daily Readings July 11).

Speaking about “*Ecological Education and Spirituality*” (Chapter Six), Pope Francis makes an appeal for, what he calls, an “*Ecological Conversion*” (*Laudato Si* n. 216): “*We need to experience a conversion, or change of heart*” (*Laudato Si* n. 218), he says. For, “*the emptier a person's heart is, the more he or she needs things to buy, own and consume.*” An empty heart generates “*obsession with a consumerist lifestyle,*” which results in the disappearance of “*a genuine sense of the common good.*” This might even lead, the Pope warns, “*to violence and mutual destruction*” (*Laudato Si* n. 204).

This ‘ecological conversion’ or ‘change of heart’ calls for fostering certain attitudes. The Pope declares: “*First, it entails gratitude, recognition that the world is God's loving gift. It also entails a loving awareness that we are not*

disconnected from the rest of creatures, but joined in a splendid universal communion, conscious of the bonds with which the Father has linked us to all beings.” Then, “by developing our individual, God-given capacities, an ecological conversion can inspire us to greater creativity and enthusiasm in resolving the world’s problems” (Laudato Si n. 220). Moreover, such a conversion or change of heart will lead us to, “an alternative understanding of the quality of life, encouraging a lifestyle, capable of deep enjoyment, free of the obsession with consumption” (Laudato Si n. 222).

These words of Pope Francis find resonance in Fr. Chevalier’s own heart and teachings. After all, he expected a change of heart through an encounter with the Heart of Jesus. He wrote: *“knowing the Heart of Jesus, we shall know our own heart. We shall be able to say with the Apostle: “Everything belongs to us, we belong to Jesus, and Jesus belongs to God” (1 Cor 3:22-23; Le Sacré Coeur de Jésus, p.199).*

A Reflective moment

*“A constant flood of new consumer goods can baffle the heart and prevent us from cherishing each thing and each moment.
Christian spirituality proposes a growth
marked by moderation and the capacity to be happy with little.
It is a return to that simplicity which 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.”*
(Pope Francis, Laudato Si n. 222)

*“Many people don’t pay any attention
to the miracles that are all around them
all the time here and now.”*
(Richard Rohr ofm)