

*Chapter Six*  
**ECOLOGICAL EDUCATION AND SPIRITUALITY [202-246]**

- Towards a new lifestyle [203-208]
- Educating for the covenant between humanity and the environment [209-215]
- Ecological conversion [216-221]
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*Summary*

The final chapter invites everyone to the heart of ecological conversion. The roots of the cultural crisis are deep, and it is not easy to reshape habits and behaviour. Education and training are the key challenges: “change is impossible without motivation and a process of education” (15). All educational sectors are involved, primarily “at school, in families, in the media, in catechesis and elsewhere” (213).

The starting point is “to aim for a new lifestyle” (203-208), which also opens the possibility of “bringing healthy pressure to bear on those who wield political, economic and social power” (206). This is what happens when consumer choices are able to “change the way businesses operate, forcing them to consider their environmental footprint and their patterns of production” (206).

The importance of environmental education cannot be underestimated. It is able to affect actions and daily habits, the reduction of water consumption, the sorting of waste up and even “turning off unnecessary lights” (211): “An integral ecology is also made up of simple daily gestures which break with the logic of violence, exploitation and selfishness” (230). Everything will be easier starting with a contemplative outlook that comes from faith: “as believers, we do not look at the world from without but from within, conscious of the bonds with which the Father has linked us with all beings. By developing our individual, God-given capacities, an ecological conversion can inspire us to greater creativity and enthusiasm” (220).

As proposed in *Evangelii Gaudium*: “sobriety, when lived freely and consciously, is liberating” (223), just as “happiness means knowing how to limit some needs which only diminish us, and being open to the many different possibilities which life can offer” (223). In this way “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).

The saints accompany us on this journey. Saint Francis, cited several times, is “the example par excellence of care for the vulnerable and of an integral ecology lived out joyfully and authentically” (10). He is the model of “the inseparable bond between concern for nature, justice for the poor, commitment to society, and interior peace” (10). The Encyclical also mentions Saint Benedict, Saint Teresa di Lisieux and Blessed Charles de Foucauld.

After *Laudato si'*, the regular practice of an examination of conscience, the means that the Church has always recommended to orient one's life in light of the relationship with the Lord, should include a new dimension, considering not only how one has lived communion with God, with others and with oneself, but also with all creatures and with nature.