News
EarthBeat



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Chapter 6, section 3: Ecological Conversion

In this section, Pope Francis empowers Christians by offering "suggestions for an ecological spirituality grounded in the convictions of our faith" (217).

He makes the case that Christians need to undergo a profound, interior "ecological conversation," or the process whereby the effects of our relationship with Jesus Christ becomes evident in our relationships with the world around us. Francis explains: "The ecological crisis is also a summons to profound interior conversion. It must be said that some committed and prayerful Christians, with the excuse of realism and pragmatism, tend to ridicule expressions of concern for the environment. Others are passive; they choose not to change their habits and thus become inconsistent… 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).

Furthermore, for meaningful change to occur, ecological conversions need to go mainstream within Christianity. "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).

REFLECT

Spirituality is at the center of true ecological conversion.

Christians are well-positioned to lead on matters of social and environmental justice because we are called to live like Jesus, who emphasized caring for each other and the environment. Having a strong sense of spirituality is what can keep us inspired, even after the good intentions behind our commitments may start to fade. Francis describes this type of inspiration as an "interior impulse which encourages, motivates, nourishes and gives meaning to our individual and communal activity" in his 2013 apostolic exhortation, *Evangelii Gaudium*.

In *Laudato Si*', Francis says: "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 to all beings. By developing our individual, God-given capacities, an ecological conversion can inspire us to greater creativity and enthusiasm in resolving the world's problems and in offering ourselves to God 'as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable' (*Romans* 12:1)" (220).

ACT

So, how can you align your spirituality with the imperative to care for our common home? A 2018 blog post by Annelise Hardegree, a Christian stay-at-home mom, suggests the following: "It's time to stop putting our focus on fighting against science, but instead, seeing science as a revelation of the mysteries and glories of God's creation. Find those beautiful and interesting things around you that glorify God and start trying to find ways to protect them."

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