



Finding joy in simplicity and solidarity with all God's creatures - The throwaway culture and the proposal of a new lifestyle

Pope Francis sees one of the causes for the destruction of the environment in a wasteful way of life. The mechanisms of the market push us to accumulate unnecessary consumer goods, create an illusion of freedom and leave us with an inner emptiness. Following the way of St. Francis of Assisi he invites us to live a different spirituality in deep communion with all God's creatures, in a liberating simplicity and in solidarity with the poor expressed in small daily gestures.

- ✿ We lack **an awareness of our common origin, of our mutual belonging**, and of a future to be shared with everyone. This basic awareness would enable the development of new convictions, attitudes and forms of life. A great cultural, spiritual and educational challenge stands before us, and it will demand that we set out on the long path of renewal. (Laudato Si 202)
- ✿ A constant flood of new consumer goods can baffle the heart and prevent us from cherishing each thing and each moment. To be serenely present to each reality, however small it may be, opens us to much greater horizons of understanding and personal fulfilment. (222) The emptier a person's heart is, the more he or she needs things to buy, own and consume... **Obsession with a consumerist lifestyle**, above all when few people are capable of maintaining it, **can only lead to violence** and mutual destruction. (204)
- ✿ The pace of consumption, waste and environmental change has so stretched the planet's capacity that **our contemporary lifestyle, unsustainable** as it is, can only precipitate catastrophes, such as those which even now periodically occur in different areas of the world. (161)
- ✿ The existence of laws and regulations is insufficient in the long run to curb bad conduct... Only by cultivating sound virtues will people be able to make a selfless ecological commitment... **Education in environmental responsibility** can encourage ways of acting which directly and significantly affect the world around us. (211) All Christian communities have an important role to play in ecological education. It is my hope that our **seminaries and houses of formation** will provide an education in responsible simplicity of life, in grateful contemplation of God's world, and in concern for the needs of the poor and the protection of the environment. (214)
- ✿ 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... 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. (222) Such **sobriety, when lived freely and consciously, is liberating**... In reality, those who enjoy more and live better each moment are those who have given up dipping here and there, always on the look-out for what they do not have. Even living on little, they can live a lot, above all when they cultivate other pleasures and find satisfaction in fraternal encounters, in service, in developing their gifts, in music and art, in contact with nature, in prayer. (223) We are speaking of an attitude of the heart, one which approaches life with serene attentiveness, which is capable of being fully present to someone without thinking of what comes next, which accepts each moment as a gift from God to be lived to the full. (226) One expression of this attitude is when we stop and **give thanks to God before and after meals**. (227)

