



CHAPTER SIX

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SPIRITUAL MOTIVATIONS

61. I cannot fail in this regard to remind the Catholic faithful of the motivations born of their faith. I encourage my brothers and sisters of other religions to do the same, since we know that authentic faith not only gives strength to the human heart, but also transforms life, transfigures our goals and sheds light on our relationship to others and with creation as a whole.

I. IN THE LIGHT OF FAITH

62. The Bible tells us: “God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good” (Gn 1:31). His is “the earth with all that is in it” (Dt 10:14). For this reason, he tells us that, “the land shall not be sold in perpetuity, for the land is mine; with me you are but aliens and tenants” (Lv 25:23). Hence, “responsibility for God’s earth means that human beings, endowed with intelligence, must respect the laws of nature and the delicate equilibria existing between the creatures of this world.”³⁶

63. At the same time, “the universe as a whole, in all its manifold relationships, shows forth the inexhaustible richness of God.” Hence, to be wise, “we need to grasp the variety of things in their multiple relationships.”³⁷ Along this path of wisdom, it is not a matter of indifference to us that so many species are

disappearing and that the climate crisis endangers the life of many other beings.

64. Jesus “was able to invite others to be attentive to the beauty that there is in the world because he himself was in constant touch with nature, lending it an attraction full of fondness and wonder. As he made his way throughout the land, he often stopped to contemplate the beauty sown by his Father, and invited his disciples to perceive a divine message in things.”³⁸

65. Hence, “the creatures of this world no longer appear to us under merely natural guise, because the risen One is mysteriously holding them to himself and directing them towards fullness as their end. the very flowers of the field and the birds which his human eyes contemplated and admired are now imbued with his radiant presence.”³⁹ If “the universe unfolds in God, who fills it completely . . . there is a mystical meaning to be found in a leaf, in a mountain trail, in a dewdrop, in a poor person’s face.”⁴⁰ The world sings of an infinite Love: how can we fail to care for it?

II. JOURNEYING IN COMMUNION AND COMMITMENT

66. God has united us to all his creatures. Nonetheless, the technocratic paradigm can isolate us from the world that surrounds us and deceive us by making us forget that the entire world is a “contact zone.”⁴¹

67. The Judeo-Christian vision of the cosmos defends the unique and central value of the human being amid the

marvelous concert of all God’s creatures, but today we see ourselves forced to realize that it is only possible to sustain a “situated anthropocentrism.” To recognize, in other words, that human life is incomprehensible and unsustainable without other creatures. For “as part of the universe . . . all of us are linked by unseen bonds and together form a kind of universal family, a sublime communion which fills us with a sacred, affectionate and humble respect.”⁴²

68. This is not a product of our own will; its origin lies elsewhere, in the depths of our being, since “God has joined us so closely to the world around us that we can feel the desertification of the soil almost as a physical ailment, and the extinction of a species as a painful disfigurement.”⁴³ Let us stop thinking, then, of human beings as autonomous, omnipotent and limitless, and begin to think of ourselves differently, in a humbler but more fruitful way.

69. I ask everyone to accompany this pilgrimage of reconciliation with the world that is our home and to help make it more beautiful, because that commitment has to do with our personal dignity and highest values. At the same time, I cannot deny that it is necessary to be honest and recognize that the most effective solutions will not come from individual efforts alone, but above all from major political decisions on the national and international level.

70. Nonetheless, every little bit helps, and avoiding an increase of a tenth of a degree in the global temperature would already suffice to alleviate some suffering for many people. Yet what is important is something less quantitative: the need to realize that there are no lasting changes without cultural

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changes, without a maturing of lifestyles and convictions within societies, and there are no cultural changes without personal changes.

71. Efforts by households to reduce pollution and waste, and to consume with prudence, are creating a new culture. The mere fact that personal, family and community habits are changing is contributing to greater concern about the unfilled responsibilities of the political sectors and indignation at the lack of interest shown by the powerful. Let us realize, then, that even though this does not immediately produce a notable effect from the quantitative standpoint, we are helping to bring about large processes of transformation rising from deep within society.

72. If we consider that emissions per individual in the United States are about two times greater than those of individuals living in China, and about seven times greater than the average of the poorest countries,⁴⁴ we can state that a broad change in the irresponsible lifestyle connected with the Western model would have a significant long-term impact. As a result, along with indispensable political decisions, we would be making progress along the way to genuine care for one another.

73. "Praise God" is the title of this letter. For when human beings claim to take God's place, they become their own worst enemies.

Given in Rome, at the Basilica of Saint John Lateran, on 4 October, the Feast of St. Francis of Assisi, in the year 2023, the eleventh of my Pontificate.

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