

**SECTION 55: SPIRITUALITY OF THE HEART:
A SPIRITUALITY OF RELATIONSHIPS**
(Hans Kwakman MSC)

The biblical stories of creation are permeated by profound wisdom. In symbolic language they tell us that in God's creation everything is connected. *How* the cosmos came into being is investigated and studied by the physical sciences. The biblical stories proclaim that human existence is based on four closely connected relationships: our relationship with God, neighbour, ourselves and the cosmos (LS 66).

Pope Francis quotes Psalm 33: "*By the word of the Lord the heavens are made*" (Ps 33:6). In doing so, he emphasizes that the universe and humankind did not come into existence by chance, but were given to us by God as a rich and abundant gift. God's creative word expresses God's free choice, arising from God's loving heart.

Creation is thus given to us as a gift, and we are called to respect this gift and to manage it with care. By caring for the order of creation with respect, we honour God as the Creator. "*A spirituality that forgets that God is the Almighty Creator is unacceptable*" (LS 75).

However, when we dishonour the riches of the earth, we sin against God, the Creator, just as we sin against God when we deliberately dishonour our relationship with our fellow human beings or ourselves. To explain this, Pope Francis quotes the words of Patriarch Bartholomew, the leader of the Eastern Orthodox Church: "*To destroy the biological diversity of God's creation; to damage the integrity of the earth by causing climate change; to strip the earth of its natural forests or abolish its wetlands; to soil water, land, air, and life on earth - these are sins. To commit a crime against the natural world is to sin against ourselves and to sin against God*" (LS 8).

Abuse of the riches of the earth is a violation of our relationship with God, with our fellow human beings, and with ourselves. In that case we are not faithful to our calling to love God and His creation.

REFLECTION

*“To follow Jesus means
being led by the Spirit
as he was Spirit-led at every stage of his journey.*

*This involves a truly personal discernment,
but it is never an individualistic one.
The Spirit of God is always the Spirit of communion, communion
with our human sisters and brothers
and communion with the whole of creation.*

*It is not difficult to see the Spirit at work
in great movements of our times:
the ecological movement,
the movement seeking justice and peace
above all for the poor of the Earth,
and the feminist movement
seeking the full equality of women.
In spite of all the human failures and sin
that play a role in these movements,
they are places where the Spirit of God
is powerfully at work,
calling us to our own part
in these movements of liberation and hope.*

*To be led by the Spirit
at the beginning of the twenty-first century
is to be involved in the transition
from “a period of human devastation of the Earth”
to a period when humans
will be present to the planet
in a mutually beneficial manner.”*

Edwards, Denis. Ecology at the Heart of Faith.
Orbis Books. Kindle Edition.