



The Holy See

***LETTER OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI
TO HIS EMINENCE CARDINAL RENATO RAFFAELE MARTINO
REPRESENTATIVE OF THE HOLY SEE
TO THE DAY OF THE HOLY SEE
AT THE INTERNATIONAL EXPO IN ZARAGOZA****

*To His Eminence Cardinal Renato Raffaele Martino
Representative of the Holy See
to The Day of the Holy See
at the International Expo in Zaragoza*

I am pleased to send a Message of faith and hope to all whom, in these days, are visiting Expo Zaragoza 2008 which is dedicated to the complex topics related to the value of water for human life and for maintaining the balance between the different elements of our world. The Holy See has fittingly desired to be present at the Expo with a stand prepared jointly with the Archdiocese of Zaragoza. I thank the Archdiocese for its generous commitment to promoting appropriate cultural initiatives that bring the visitor closer to the immeasurable patrimony of spirituality, art and social wisdom inspired by water and preserved by the Catholic Church.

Indeed, we must be aware that water - an essential and indispensable good that the Lord has given mankind in order to maintain and develop life - is considered today, because of the pursuit and pressure of multiple social and economic factors, as a good that must be especially protected by means of clear national and international policies, and used in accordance with sensible criteria of solidarity and responsibility. The use of water - that is valued as a universal and inalienable right - is connected with the growing and peremptory needs of people who live in poverty, taking into account that "inadequate access to safe drinking water affects the well-being of a huge number of people and is often the cause of disease, suffering, conflicts, poverty and even death" (Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, n. 484). With regard to the right to water, moreover, it should be stressed that this right is founded on the

dignity of the human person; it is necessary in this perspective to examine attentively the approach of those who consider and treat water merely as an economic commodity. Its use must be rational and supportive, the result of a balanced synergy between the public and private sectors.

The fact that water today is considered principally as a material commodity must not make us forget the religious meanings that believing humanity, and especially Christianity, has developed on the basis of water, giving it great value as a precious immaterial good which never fails to enrich human life on this earth. How can we forget on this occasion the evocative message that binds us to the Sacred Scriptures, in which water is treated as a *symbol of purification* (cf. Ps 51[50]: 4; Jn 13: 8), and *of life* (cf. Jn 3: 5; Gal 3: 27)? The full recovery of this spiritual dimension guarantees and presupposes a rightly adapted approach by involved parties, within national and international spheres, to the ethical, political and economic problems regarding complex water management.

Together with my very best wishes that the Zaragoza Expo will inspire the appropriate thoughts in all who visit it and encourage the competent authorities to make opportune decisions on behalf of a good that is so essential to the life of the human being on earth, I impart the Apostolic Blessing to all, as a pledge of abundant heavenly gifts.

From the Vatican, 10 July 2008.

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