



The Holy See

MESSAGE OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS ON THE OCCASION OF "WORLD WATER DAY 2019"

**To Professor José Graziano da Silva
Director General of the FAO**

Distinguished Sir,

In line with the central pillar of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, World Water Day is celebrated this year with the slogan: "Leaving no one behind". Water is an essential good for the balance of ecosystems and the survival of humankind, and it is necessary to manage it and to care for it so that it is not contaminated or lost.

At this point in time, the aridity of the planet can be seen as extending to new regions, and those suffering as a result of the lack of water sources suitable for consumption are ever more numerous. For this reason, "leaving no one behind" means committing ourselves to putting an end to this injustice. Access to this resource is a fundamental human right, which must be respected, because people's lives and their very dignity are at stake (cf. Encyclical Letter *Laudato Si'*, 30).

Joint effort is essential in order to eradicate this evil that afflicts so many of our brothers and sisters. It will be possible if we join forces in the search for the common good, when the other has a real face, takes a leading role and is placed at the centre of debate and initiatives. This is when the measures adopted will take on the flavour of encounter, and the value of responding to an injustice that must be healed.

"Leaving no one behind" also means being aware of the need to respond with concrete actions;

not only with the maintenance or improvement of water facilities, but also by investing in the future, educating new generations in the use and care of water. This task of raising awareness is a priority in a world in which everything is discarded and disdained, and which in many cases does not appreciate the importance of the resources we have at our disposal.

New generations are called — together with all inhabitants of the planet — to value and defend this resource. It is a task that begins with the awareness of those people who suffer the inevitable consequences of climate change and of all those who are victims of one or another form of exploitation and contamination of water through various factors. This educational challenge will generate a new vision of this good, producing generations that value and love the resources that our mother Earth gives us.

We are all architects of the future, and the international community, through its decisions and its efforts, is already investing in the tomorrow of our planet. It is necessary to develop financing plans as well as wide-ranging water projects. This resolve will lead to overcoming the notion of turning water into a mere commodity, regulated exclusively by market laws.

Mr Director General, the earth's disadvantaged challenge us to remedy the lack of water in their countries; amid their poverty and limitations, they also challenge us to accord the just value to this resource essential for the development of all peoples.

I ask the Lord that the efforts and initiatives carried forth on this *World Water Day* may benefit those who suffer as a result of the scarcity of this resource; and that, as Saint Francis of Assisi said, water, which is “so useful and humble, and precious, and pure”, may serve for our sustenance and benefit and that of future generations.

Vatican, 22 March 2019

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