



The Holy See

MESSAGE OF THE HOLY FATHER FRANCIS ON THE OCCASION OF THE EVENT "INMERSOS EN EL CAMBIO" IN COSTA RICA

Pontifical Message

*To His Excellency Federico Zamora Cordero
Ambassador of Costa Rica to the Holy See*

Dear Ambassador:

I am pleased to respond to your invitation to join the High Level Event on Ocean Action, “Immersed in Change”, which will take place in the city of San José on the 7th and 8th of next June.

It is significant that one of the most emblematic images of the city of Rome is that of Oceanus, on a chariot of sea horses guided by tritons, making its way through its streets. It would almost seem as if the city itself were *immersed* in the domain of the sea. In this way, the ancients wanted to celebrate the arrival of water in the centre of the city, which thus regained its majesty after years of famine and distress, imposed by the wars that destroyed its infrastructures.

Water is necessary for human life; no progress, not even social progress, can exist without it. Even the great city of Rome is immersed in the conceptual ocean of the power of water. Those who have gone before us honoured it, not only in their art, but with prayer in praise of the Creator. Saint Francis of Assisi, in the Canticle of the Creatures, evokes her as “sister water”, calling her “useful, humble, precious and chaste”.

However, it is regrettable to note that we distort such epithets by turning what is useful, like water, into an object of exploitation. We abuse that which performs humble and silent work for the common good. And instead of considering it a precious gift from God, we turn it into a bargaining chip, a cause for speculation and even a vehicle for extortion.

The *Poverello* of Assisi ends by defining water as *chaste*. The *Acqua Vergine*, Virgin Water, that springs from the Trevi Fountain owes its name to a young village maiden who boldly pointed out to the Roman legionaries where the spring was, and it was also highly prized for its purity. All that goodness that water brings to simple people is in danger of being undermined by malice, selfishness, and contempt for others.

May the image of this beautiful Roman fountain help us to realize that our entire civilization is immersed in the ocean, to understand that a radical change is needed, to recover the meaning of these adjectives used by Saint Francis. Let us value its common utility in food security, its humble work in climate regulation, let us fight against pollution to restore its precious beauty, and let us resolve not to violate its purity, leaving it as a legacy for coming generations.

Your Excellency, please convey to all the participants in this event my greetings and my blessing that the work being undertaken will restore the oceans and all they contain to their rightful dignity as God's creatures.

Fraternally yours,

Vatican, 5 April 2024

FRANCIS

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