



The Holy See

**MESSAGE OF THE HOLY FATHER FRANCIS
TO THE PARTICIPANTS IN THE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE
“THE MANAGEMENT OF A COMMON ASSET: ACCESS TO DRINKABLE WATER FOR ALL”
[PONTIFICAL URBAN UNIVERSITY, 8 NOVEMBER 2018]**

*Dear Cardinal,
Rector Magnificus,
Brothers and sisters,*

I congratulate you for the organization of the Conference *The management of a common good: access to drinkable water for all*.

Water is fundamental for life. In many areas of the world, our brothers and sisters cannot have a dignified life precisely due to the lack of access to clean water. The dramatic statistics on thirst, especially the situation of those people who become ill and often die as a result of unhealthy water, is a terrible disgrace for 21st century humanity.

Unfortunately, in many of the countries where the population lacks regular access to drinking water, there is no short supply of arms and ammunition, which continue to degrade the situation! Corruption and the interests of an economy that excludes and kills too often prevail over efforts which, made in solidarity, should guarantee access to water. The statistics on thirst call for commitment and determination, and all the institutional, organizational, educational, technological and financial efforts must not be hindered.

I have already proposed several considerations on this issue in the Encyclical *Laudato si'*, and in the recent *Message for the Day of Prayer for the protection of creation*. I hope that those who intervene and participate in this Conference may share in their professional and political environments the urgency, necessary will and determination. The Holy See and the Church are committed to promoting access to drinkable water for all. This commitment is manifested in many initiatives such as the building of infrastructure, training, advocacy, assistance to endangered

populations, including migrants, whose water supply is compromised, and in recalling the set of ethical references and principles that spring from the Gospel and from a healthy anthropology.

A suitable anthropology is indeed indispensable for responsible and cooperative lifestyles, for a true ecology (cf. *Laudato si'*, 118; 122), as well as for the acknowledgement of access to water as a right that stems from human dignity, and therefore is incompatible with the concept of water as just any other merchandise. Gospel principles and values must lead to concrete commitment on the part of all to achieve the common good of the entire human family (cf. Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii gaudium*, 179-183). From the standpoint of faith, in every thirsty human being we perceive the very image of God, as we read in the Gospel of Matthew, "I was thirsty and you gave me to drink" (Mt 25:35). This Conference aptly involves representatives of various faiths and cultures; the twofold spiritual and cultural dimension of water must never be overlooked, as it is central to forming the social fabric, co-existence and community organization.

I invite you to reflect on the symbolism of water in the main religious traditions, and likewise urge you to contemplate this resource that, as Saint Francis of Assisi wrote, is "*multo utile et humile et preziosa et casta*" ("very useful and humble and precious and chaste").

I implore the blessing of the Almighty Creator upon each of you, your families, and the initiatives aimed at a better management of water. I wish you all the best in your work, and I ask you, please, to pray for me.

From the Vatican, 7 November 2018

Francis