

MESSAGE OF HIS HOLINESS
POPE FRANCIS
FOR THE
WORLD DAY OF PRAYER FOR THE CARE OF CREATION

1 SEPTEMBER 2018

Dear brothers and sisters,

On this Day of Prayer, I wish first to thank the Lord for the gift of our common home and for all those men and women of good will committed to protecting it. I am likewise grateful for the many projects aimed at promoting the study and the safeguarding of ecosystems, for the efforts being made to develop more sustainable agriculture and more responsible nutrition, and for the various educational, spiritual and liturgical initiatives that involve Christians throughout the world in the care of creation.

It must be acknowledged that we have not succeeded in responsibly protecting creation. The environmental situation, both on the global level and in many specific places, cannot be considered satisfactory. Rightly, there is a growing sense of the need for a renewed and sound relationship between humanity and creation, and the conviction that only an authentic and integral vision of humanity will permit us to take better care of our planet for the benefit of present and future generations. For “there is no ecology without an adequate anthropology” (*Laudato Si'*, 118).

On this *World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation*, which the Catholic Church for several years now has celebrated in union with our Orthodox brothers and sisters and with participation of other Churches and Christian communities, I would like to draw attention to the question of *water*. It is a very simple and precious element, yet access to it is, sadly, for many people difficult if not impossible. Nonetheless, “access to safe drinkable water is a basic and universal human right, since it is essential to human survival and, as such, is a condition for the exercise of other human rights. Our world owes a great social debt towards the poor who lack access to drinking water, because they are denied the right to a life consistent with their inalienable dignity” (*ibid.*, 30).

Water invites us to reflect on our origins. The human body is mostly composed of water, and many civilizations throughout history arose near great rivers that marked their identity. In an evocative image, the beginning of the book of Genesis states that, in the beginning, the spirit of the Creator “swept over the face of the waters (1:2)”.

In considering the fundamental role of water in creation and in human development, I feel the need to give thanks to God for “Sister Water”, simple and useful for life like nothing else on our planet. Precisely for this reason, care for water sources and water basins is an urgent imperative. Today, more than ever, we need to look beyond immediate concerns (cf. *Laudato Si'*, 36) and beyond a purely utilitarian view of reality, “in which efficiency and productivity are entirely geared to our individual benefit” (*ibid.*, 159). We urgently need shared projects and concrete gestures that recognize that every privatization of the natural good of water, at the expense of the human right to have access to this good, is unacceptable.

For us Christians, water represents an essential element of purification and of life. We think immediately of baptism, the sacrament of our rebirth. Water made holy by the Spirit is the matter by which God has given us life and renewed us; it is the blessed source of undying life. For Christians of different confessions,