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## 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)

The following is the message sent by the Holy Father Francis to the participants in the international conference organized by the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development, in collaboration with the embassies accredited to the Holy See of France, Italy, Monaco and the United States, on the theme *The management of a common asset: access to drinkable water for all*, taking place today in Rome at the Pontifical Urban University:

### Message of the Holy Father

Mister Cardinal,  
Magnificent Rector,  
Brothers and sisters

I congratulate you for the organization of the Conference *The management of a common asset: 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 sicken and often die as a result of contaminated water, is a great shame for humanity of the 21st century.

Unfortunately, in many of the countries where the population does not have regular access to drinkable water, there is no lack of supply of weapons and ammunition, which continue to deteriorate the situation! Corruption and the interests of an economy that excludes and kills too often prevail over efforts made in solidarity to guarantee access to water. The statistics on thirst demand commitment and determination, and all the institutional, organizational, educational, technological and financial efforts must not be lacking.

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 necessary urgency, will and determination. The Holy See and the Church are committed to promoting access to drinkable water for all. This commitment is made manifest in many initiatives such as the realization of infrastructure, training, advocacy, assistance to endangered populations whose water supply is compromised, including migrants, and the reiteration of 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 solidary lifestyles, for a true ecology (cf. *Laudato si'*, 118; 122), as well as for the acknowledgement of access to water as a right deriving from human dignity, and therefore incompatible with the concept of water as an asset like any other. Gospel principles and values must lead to concrete effort on the part of all to achieve the common good of the entire human family (cf. Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii gaudium*, 179-183). This Conference opportunely involves representatives of various faiths and cultures; the dual spiritual and cultural dimension of water must never be neglected, inasmuch as it is central in forming the social fabric, co-existence and community organization.

I invite you to reflect on the symbolism of water in the main religious traditions, also urging you to contemplate this resource that, as Saint Francis of Assisi wrote, is «*multo utile et humile et preziosa et casta*».

I implore the blessing of the Most High Creator upon each one of you, your families, and the initiatives aiming 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

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