

# WORLD WATER DAY

22 March 2025



## Opening Prayer

O Creator and merciful God,

We thank you for the sacred gift of water, source of life and renewal.

In every drop we perceive your infinite love:

is useful, nourishing the earth and our bodies;

is humble, flowing with the simplicity of Your creation;

is precious, a treasure that reflects the beauty of Your work;

and reminds us of the eternity of Your unconditional love.

Bless, Lord, this vital liquid and help us to honour it,

that in its purity and constant flow we may see the reflection of Your goodness.

Amen.



## Introduction

World Water Day, celebrated on 22 March every year since 1993, is an annual United Nations observance that focuses on the importance of freshwater.

World Water Day celebrates water and raises awareness of the 2.2 billion people who live without access to safe drinking water. It is about taking action to address the global water crisis. One of the main objectives of World Water Day is to support the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 6: water and sanitation for all by 2030.

Each year, UN-Water, the United Nations coordination mechanism on water and sanitation, sets the theme for World Water Day. In 2023, the theme focused on Accelerating Change. In 2024, Harnessing Water for Peace. In 2025, the theme will be Preserving Glaciers.

## **Did you know that?**

- In 2023, glaciers lost more than 600 gigatons of water, the largest mass loss recorded in 50 years (WMO World Meteorological Organization).
- Approximately 70% of the Earth's freshwater exists in the form of snow or ice (WMO).
- Nearly 2 billion people depend on water from glaciers, snowmelt and mountain runoff for drinking, agriculture and energy production (UN-Water/UNESCO).
- Increased glacier melt contributes significantly to global sea level rise, which is now approximately 20 cm above the level recorded in 1900 (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change).

Limiting global warming to 1.5°C could save glaciers in two-thirds of World Heritage sites (UNESCO/IUCN)

## **Biblical Text**

We offer you two texts:

"Like a deer panting for water, so my whole being seeks you, O God." Psalm 42:1

"But whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never thirst again, but within him that water will become a spring of water welling up to eternal life."

John 4:14

## **Reflection**

Two reflections are also offered here: one on Claret spiritual experience that can be read personally and the other from the encyclical *Laudato Si*, which can be read in community.

## **Some Reflections of Father Claret**



St. Anthony Mary Claret often uses the symbolism of water in his writings. For him, water is a symbol charged with multiple spiritual meanings: Water represents divine grace, it is a symbol of eternal life, it is part of his vocation discernment, of his Marian experience, and above all we see clearly that this element of nature is very important for his life according to his own cultural background, and therefore it acquires an important symbolic value in his experience of faith.

For Claret, water is necessary for the earth to produce, and in the same way, he recognises that, as a human being, he needs the grace of God to perform good works (Aut 680). Likewise, in comparing his physical existence to the workings of a water mill, Claret stresses that, although our body may seem to us to be our own, it is in fact a gift received from God, our Creator. Without "water" - that vital grace that drives and sustains us - we would not be able to function or move forward on our journey. This image reminds us of our total dependence on the Creator to live and to fulfil our mission in the world (Aut 344).

Passing by a river, Claret shares how water teaches us to think of eternity. Its constant flow and life-giving capacity symbolise not only daily renewal, but also the promise of an existence that transcends the temporal. Water, in this sense, becomes a living reminder that our walk on earth is oriented towards an eternal life, where divine grace is never exhausted (Aut 336).

In number 71 of the autobiography "we can notice Claret's attitude towards the water of the sea, an attitude of relief, admiration and serenity at finding himself floating in it without knowing how to swim, although at the end he felt horrified at the thought of the danger. He also narrates how he felt Mary's maternal protection again. Above all, it is remarkable how Claret was able to manage a paradoxical moment between external danger and inner serenity". (Claretian Ecospirituality, Efrain Mamaní CMF)

In short, for St. Anthony Mary Claret water is much more than a natural element: it is part of Creation that reflects God's grace for the human being who approaches it with humility, it is also the reminder of our total dependence on God and the image of a life that, flowing like a river, leads us towards eternity. Claret lived his relationship with nature in a harmonious way, because it was part of his life and therefore of his spirituality.

## **Laudato Si and the Water Commitment**

28. Clean and safe drinking water is an issue of primary importance, because it is indispensable for human life and for sustaining terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems. Freshwater sources supply health, agricultural and industrial sectors.



Water supply has remained relatively constant for a long time, but now in many places demand exceeds sustainable supply, with serious short- and long-term consequences. Large cities that depend on a significant level of water storage suffer periods of water stress, which at critical times is not always managed with adequate governance and fairness.

Social water poverty is particularly prevalent in Africa, where large sections of the population do not have access to safe drinking water, or suffer from droughts that hamper food production. In some countries, there are regions with abundant water and at the same time others with severe water

scarcity. 29. A particularly serious problem is the quality of water available to the poor, which causes many deaths every day. Water-related diseases, including those caused by micro-organisms and chemicals, are common among the poor. Diarrhoea and cholera, which are linked to inadequate sanitation and water supply, are a significant factor in child suffering and mortality. Groundwater in many places is threatened by pollution from some extractive, agricultural and industrial activities, especially in countries where there is insufficient regulation and controls. We should not only think of discharges from factories. Detergents and chemicals used by people in many parts of the world continue to leak into rivers, lakes and seas.

30. While the quality of available water is constantly deteriorating, in some places there is a growing tendency to privatise this scarce resource, turning it into a commodity that is regulated by the laws of the market. In reality, access to safe and potable water is a basic, fundamental and universal human right, because it determines the survival of people, and is therefore a condition for the exercise of other human rights. This world owes a serious social debt to the poor who do not have access to safe drinking water, because that is to deny them the right to life rooted in their inalienable dignity. This debt can be paid partly by an increase in funding to provide clean water and sanitary services among the poor. But water continues to be wasted, not only in the developed world but also in developing countries which possess it in abundance. This shows that the problem of water is partly an educational and cultural issue, since there is little awareness of the seriousness of such behaviour within a context of great inequality..

31. Further water scarcity will increase the cost of food and various products that depend on its use. Some studies have warned of the possibility of acute water shortages within a few decades if urgent action is not taken. The environmental impacts could affect billions of people, but the control of water by large global corporations is likely to become one of the major sources of conflict in this century.

### **Intercessions**

To each intercession we respond: Give us, O Lord, of this water of yours!

· We ask the Holy Spirit to enlighten all the rulers of this world so that they may understand that access to safe and potable water is a right of every human being, and to put all means in place to make this right a reality, especially among the poorest. Let us pray

· We ask God the Father to make all human beings understand that the waste and pollution of water is a grave sin against the Creator. Let us pray

· We pray for all associations and organisations working to prevent infant mortality, especially that caused by water pollution. Let us pray

· We ask God the Creator to make all human beings aware of our responsibilities in global problems such as the preservation of glaciers or global warming. Let us pray

· We ask Jesus Christ to help us to live as he lived in life-giving relationship with all creation, with our sisters and brothers and with God the Trinity. Let us pray.

Creator and merciful God, hear our pleading and help us to be useful and humble like our sister water whom we honour today as your wonderful creature. We ask this through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen



### **A Commitment**

As Laudato Si says, the water problem is partly an educational and cultural issue and we need to raise awareness and invite others to be aware of this challenge. That is why we propose that we all become sensitive to water waste, that we help to raise awareness among our neighbours and others with whom we interact.

We also invite you to collaborate with concrete actions in water preservation and flood prevention. It is difficult to give advice in this regard since we live in very different realities, but we invite you to investigate what solutions are being implemented in your country or community and to collaborate with community efforts and implement concrete actions in your environment.



## Closing prayer

"Praise be to you my Lord for Sister Water, who is very useful, and humble, and precious, and chaste."

As St. Francis prayed in gratitude for Sister Water, so we pray in gratitude for her generosity in sustaining life. O water, in your mysterious beauty you make the desert bloom. One tiny drop, gathered with thousands of drops, waters the seeds and future harvests to nourish us and all creatures. One tiny drop multiplied, quenches our burning thirst. More than three quarters of our bodies, like the body of the earth, are made of water. We are water people. We are a planet of water. O compassionate God, who with your divine breath upon the waters created all that exists, we ask your forgiveness for our careless use of water, for our attitudes that disrespect and pollute it, and we beseech you to grant us wisdom to conserve and care for it. In this time of drought, as we wait and seek the gift of rain on the earth, we also wait for the rain of grace on our souls. Come to our aid and deliver us from hatred, greed, fear, and our lack of love for your gifts on earth. Transform us into rivers of living water, so that life, hope and love for the earth and for all people may flourish in our wake. All this we ask of you, Creator God, source of Grace, through Jesus Christ, the Eternal Word, and the Spirit, the Wellspring of Wisdom. AMEN.

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