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Message of the Holy Father to the Director General of the FAO for World Water Day

The following is the message sent by the Holy Father Francis to the director general of the FAO, Professor José Graziano da Silva, on the occasion of World Water Day, celebrated today, 22 March, on the theme: “Leaving no-one behind”:

Message of the Holy Father

To Professor José Graziano da Silva
Director General of the FAO

Distinguished Sir,

In line with the central pillar of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, World Water Day is celebrated this year with the slogan: “Leaving no-one behind”. Water is an essential good for the balance of ecosystems and human survival, and it is necessary to manage it and take care of it so that it is not contaminated or lost.

It may be seen in our days how the aridity of the planet is extending to new regions, and more and more are suffering as a result of the lack of water sources suitable for consumption. For this reason, “leaving no-one behind” means committing ourselves to putting an end to this injustice. Access to this good is a fundamental human right, which must be respected, because the life of the people and their dignity are at stake (see Encyclical Letter *Laudato si'*, 30).

Joint work is essential to eradicate this evil that afflicts so many of our brothers and sisters. It will be possible if we join efforts in the search for the common good, when the other has a real face, takes centre stage and is placed at the centre of debate and initiatives. This is when the measures adopted will take on the flavour of encounter, and the value of responding to an injustice that needs to be healed.

“Leaving no-one behind” also means being aware of the need to respond with concrete facts; not only with the maintenance or improvement of water structures, but also by investing in the future, educating new generations in the use and care of water. This task of raising awareness is a priority in a world in which everything is discarded and disdained, and which in many cases does not appreciate the importance of the resources we have at our disposal.

The new generations are called – together with all the inhabitants of the planet – to value and defend this good. It is a task that begins with the awareness of those people who suffer the inevitable consequences of climate change and of all those who are victims of one or another form of exploitation and contamination of water by various factors. This challenge of education will generate a new vision of this good, producing generations that value and love the resources that our mother gives us the Earth.

We are all architects of the future, and the International Community, with its decisions and its work, is already investing in the tomorrow of our planet. It is necessary to develop financing plans as well as long-range water projects. This firmness will lead to overcoming the vision of turning water into a mere commodity, exclusively regulated by the laws of the market.

Mr. Director-General, the disadvantaged of the earth challenge us to find a remedy for the lack of water in their countries; they also challenge us, from their poverty and limits, to accord the just value to this good, essential for the development of all peoples.

I ask the Lord that the works and initiatives carried out on this World Water Day may benefit those who suffer as a result of the scarcity of this good; and that, as Saint Francis of Assisi said, “water, which is very useful and humble and precious and chaste”, may serve for the sustenance and benefit of ourselves and for future generations.

Vatican, 22 March 2019

FRANCISCO
