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# BOLLETTINO

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## Press release of the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development on the document “Aqua fons vitae”

At the end of the month in which World Water Day 2020 was celebrated, the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development is pleased to announce the publication of *Aqua fons vitae. Orientations on Water, symbol of the cry of the poor and the cry of the Earth*, rooted in the Social Magisterium of the Popes and inspired by the work carried out by members of the national and local Church in different countries.

The document distinguishes three aspects or dimensions relating to water: 1) water for human use; 2) water as a resource used in many human activities, in particular agriculture and industry; 3) water as a surface, i.e. rivers, underground aquifers, lakes and especially oceans and seas. For each aspect, the text presents the related challenges and operational proposals to increase awareness of the issue and commitment at local level. The final part of the document proposes a reflection on education and integrity. *Aqua fons vitae* is available on the website of the Dicastery, currently in English only.

The Dicastery also announces that a strategy is being defined to address the situation regarding water, sanitation and hygiene in the broadest sense (*WASH*) in health care facilities belonging to the Catholic Church. Too many sanitation facilities in poor and developing countries do not have adequate access to water for the most basic needs of cleanliness and hygiene. Without clean water, sinks, soaps, toilets and hygiene procedures, billions of patients, care staff and families are placed at risk because there is no foundation or infrastructure for decent, safe, quality care. Births, surgery, infections, epidemics: none of these can be managed safely without water; and the situation is particularly alarming in these weeks marked by the COVID-19 pandemic. Nevertheless, thousands of healthcare facilities are functioning as they can without the safeguard of water that cleans and protects life. Some world leaders in the field of health, including the United Nations, have become increasingly aware of this issue. Coalitions of government agencies, private and charitable organisations are developing action plans to address this problem as quickly and efficiently as possible.

Traditionally, the Catholic Church has been a pioneer and extremely committed to health and health care on all continents. The Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development - following consultation with religious congregations, episcopal conferences, Catholic development agencies and qualified experts - wishes to encourage and support those already actively involved in this battle to save lives. Numerous Catholic health care systems have initiated investigations to define the extent and complexity of the problem by examining a sample

of Catholic health care facilities. The Dicastery, in collaboration with some partners, such as Catholic Relief Services and Global Water 2020, has decided to encourage this effort and to contribute to it, promoting - whenever possible - additional investigations in selected countries. The results of this study, as well as the results of other surveys recently conducted by Catholic health care organisations, will be used as a starting point for implementation and fundraising plans to support operational plans.

Organisations interested in joining this initiative may contact the Dicastery (from mid-April onwards) to request further information or discuss partnership opportunities.

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