



**DICASTERY FOR PROMOTING
INTEGRAL HUMAN DEVELOPMENT**

Regarding the next World Water Day, the Dicastery announces “Five public conversations inspired by *Aqua fons vitae*”, online March 22- 26

Last year, the Dicastery for the Promotion of Integral Human Development published [*Aqua fons vitae: Orientations on water, symbol of the cry of the poor and the cry of the Earth*](#). This document is rooted in the Social Teachings of the Popes and draws on the work that members of the Church at the national and local levels have done in different countries. It also draws on various reports and technical documents from the United Nations, the OECD, and civil society.

"Water" is a term that draws attention to several challenges for the human family. It should be noted that although "everything is connected," as Pope Francis teaches in his encyclical *Laudato si'* (nos. 16, 117), [*Aqua fons vitae*](#) describes three aspects or dimensions of water: 1) water for human use, a right that also covers sanitation; 2) water as a resource used in many human activities, especially agriculture and industry; and 3) water as a surface, i.e., rivers, groundwater, lakes, and especially seas and oceans. For each aspect, the document presents related challenges, and operational proposals for local awareness and engagement. The initial part of the document urges recognition of the many values of water: a religious value, a socio-cultural and aesthetic value, an institutional and peace value, and finally an economic value. The final part of *Aqua fons vitae* offers a reflection on education and integrity.

It is worth noting that in the interval between now and the publication of *Aqua fons vitae*, important negotiations have taken place in the area of so-called "hydro-diplomacy", while the need to protect the oceans and their resources seems to be increasingly understood. The lack of adequate WASH (Water, Sanitation and Hygiene) conditions in schools, health facilities and households has been repeatedly identified as a major obstacle in combating the COVID pandemic and Ebola, as well as being a major deficiency in health care. More and more voices have warned of the dangers of chemical pollution and micro-plastics in water. New speculative financial activities have begun to focus on water itself. It must also be acknowledged that numerous education and training initiatives have taken place and are being organized, despite the restrictions imposed by the pandemic. Commendable awareness and advocacy activities are underway. Initiatives to strengthen sustainable and inclusive agriculture are increasingly taking into account water constraints related to climate change or competitive demands on this precious resource.

The management of water -this precious common good- in responsibility and solidarity will undoubtedly play a key role in the recovery of our societies from the ongoing pandemic. This will be essential in peace processes and the consolidation of legality, in the

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advent of an inclusive, sustainable and just economy. In this regard, Pope Francis noted in his recent encyclical *Fratelli tutti*: “When we speak of the need to care for our common home, our planet, we appeal to that spark of universal consciousness and mutual concern that may still be present in people’s hearts. Those who enjoy a surplus of water yet choose to conserve it for the sake of the greater human family have attained a moral stature that allows them to look beyond themselves and the group to which they belong. How marvellously human! The same attitude is demanded if we are to recognize the rights of all people” (n. 117)

This year, World Water Day will be celebrated on March 22 with the theme "Valuing Water." The Dicastery is taking this opportunity to organize a series of public dialogues to further promote *Aqua fons vitae* consisting of five webinars designed for a broad audience, with an informative purpose and a desire to promote interdisciplinary collaboration. Speakers from different countries, religious congregations, various Church structures, and international or regional organizations will share their insights and testimonies on the themes of *Aqua fons vitae*. These webinars are being organized in partnership with one or more organizations. They will take place in different languages and at different times, one per day, from March 22 to March 26.

- General information and contact with the water-related activities Department water@humandevlopment.va
- Press contact: press@humandevlopment.va
- More info and links for the Webinars www.humandevlopment.va

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