

Laudato Si' and Water



March 22 is **World Water Day**, a day to reflect on the true value of water and how we can better protect this vital resource.

*Loving God, we ask for Your blessings on children, mothers, fathers, and communities who are thirsty. Purify, protect, and multiply their **water** sources. Strengthen their resolve so they may fully enjoy the benefits of clean **water** — essentials like education, gardens of fresh produce, and good health.*

Five years ago, Pope Francis issued the Encyclical “Laudato Si’” (“On Care for our Common Home”). The letter tackles various environmental challenges, including biodiversity, food, and especially the critical issue of **fresh water**. Even though 71 percent of the Earth’s surface is covered by water, less than 1 percent is **fresh water** that is suitable for human consumption. Today, around 1 in 3 people live without safe drinking water, and global water demand is expected to increase by more than 50 percent by 2040.



Water is a symbol of baptism and new life (being born of the Spirit). It represents cleansing and healing. It also reminds us of the story of Jesus and the Woman at the Well, when Jesus offered her "living water."

Care for water is a critical issue of our time. Pope Francis identifies five key problems related to water:

- the lack of access to clean drinking water “indispensable for human life and for supporting terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems” (section 28),
- the challenges for food production due to droughts and disparities in water availability and “water poverty” (section 28),
- the continued prevalence of water-related diseases afflicting the poor (section 29),
- contamination of groundwater (section 29),
- and the trend toward privatization and commodification of a resource the Vatican describes as an “basic and universal human right” (section 30).

Pope Francis calls us to protect the sacredness of water, the element used in the sacrament of Baptism to symbolize the grace of God which cleanses us and gives us life. He makes clear the need for access to water to be a right without restriction for all people. “Our world has a grave social debt towards the poor who lack access to drinking water, because they are denied the right to a life consistent with their inalienable dignity.” [section 30]



This recent Netflix video provides an overview of the world water crisis: <http://bit.ly/WaterCrisis-YouTube>

Closer to home, The State newspaper produced this South Carolina Water Crisis by the Numbers video <http://bit.ly/SCWaterNumbers>

Water is complex because it is linked to almost everything in the world. But complexity should not hinder understanding. Water is a precondition for human existence and for the sustainability of the planet. To explore the multiple dimensions of water, go to <https://www.unwater.org/water-facts/>

Water Conservation

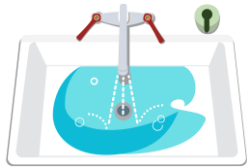


Personal habits affect the water we use inside and outside our homes, through the food we eat, the products we purchase and even the energy we use. Here are some suggestions from the EPA as to what one can do to help address conservation of water.



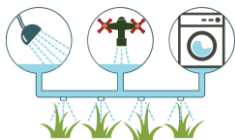
Bathrooms:

- Never use your toilet as a waste basket.
- Do not let the water run while shaving or brushing teeth.
- Take short showers instead of tub baths. Turn off the water flow while soaping or shampooing.
- Never pour water down the drain when there may be another use for it – such as watering a plant or garden.



Kitchen and Laundry:

- Keep drinking water in the refrigerator instead of letting the faucet run until the water is cool.
- Wash fruits and vegetables in a basin. Use a vegetable brush.
- Do not use water to defrost frozen foods, thaw in the refrigerator overnight.
- Use a dishpan for washing and rinsing dishes.
- Scrape, rather than rinse, dishes before loading into the dishwasher.
- Add food waste to your compost pile instead of using the garbage disposal
- Operate the dishwasher only when completely full.
- Use the appropriate water level or load size selection on the washing machine.



Outside:

- Sweep driveways, sidewalks and steps rather than hosing off.
- Wash cars with water from a bucket or consider using a commercial car wash that recycles water.
- When using a hose, control the flow with an automatic shut-off nozzle.
- If you have a swimming pool, consider a new water-saving pool filter.
- Lower pool water level to reduce amount of water splashed out.
- Use a pool cover to reduce evaporation when pool is not being used

Equipment:



- Repair toilet leaks. A leaky toilet can waste 200 gallons per day.
- Install ultra-low flow toilets, or place a plastic container filled with water or gravel in the tank of your conventional toilet.
- Install low-flow aerators and shower heads.
- Consider purchasing a high efficiency washing machine which can save over 50% in water and energy use.

Ready to explore your Water Footprint and learn more about your direct and virtual water use? Calculate your “water footprint” and look for water savings at <https://www.watercalculator.org/> At this website, you can also learn about how your choices and habits affect your water use inside and outside of your home, through the food you eat, the products you buy and even the energy you use.