

Give the Thirsty to Drink

In the Future : Water ?

In the future water will be argued over more than in the past. Already today we can see how a country steals water by deviating it to another country or uses river water without respecting the bordering countries.

Today **millions of people in the world** still have to make serious financial and/or physical efforts to obtain water. **As a consequence they have fewer opportunities to escape from poverty.**
Lack of water really does entail insufficient possibilities for development.

The link between water scarcity and poverty speaks for itself, but is nevertheless more complex than is generally assumed. The installation of a pump or water pipe does not necessarily imply that women and children can take optimal advantage of the nearby and pure water. Also, apart from the availability of water, the fight against poverty equally has to do with how efficiently the available water is used.

A child's well-being is highly dependent on both the quality and the availability of water, and on how well this precious resource is managed. Around the world, both biological disease agents and chemical pollutants are compromising drinking-water quality. **Contaminated water causes a range of diseases** which are often life-threatening. Of the waterborne diseases affecting children, the most deadly are diarrhoeal infections. Childhood diarrhoea is closely associated with insufficient water supply, inadequate sanitation, water contaminated with communicable disease agents, and poor hygiene practices.

Lack of adequate sanitary facilities and poor hygienic practices are common throughout the developing countries.

4,900 children died every day in 2006. 1,800,000 died during that entire year. **What killed them? Among several killers, the foremost is a lack of access to clean drinking water. How can we condemn an entire portion of the human race to these mortal risks?** The issue is not linked solely to a lack of water, but is largely related to the absence of international will to find a solution. **The lack of clean drinking water is an offense to mankind and is ethically intolerable especially in the technologically advanced 21st century. Water must become a priority on our collective agenda.**

Children around the world missed 443 million school days due to sickness from bad drinking water, or because they had to go and retrieve water for their families. A child, Yeni Bazan, ten year old from El Alto, Bolivia, witnesses: *"Of course I would like to go to school. I want to learn to read and to write, but I can't. My mum needs me to go and find water."*

How can we justify the condemnation of a large portion of the human race to this kind of mortal risks in the 21st century? The issue has much more to do with apathy than water scarcity. With only 10 billion dollars we could cut the deficit, in clean water and sanitation around the world, in half by 2015. 10 billion dollars is less than 5 days of military expenditure, and less than half of what developed countries spend per year on mineral water. The poor in Latin America must buy water in bottles and bring it back to their home, paying a great deal more than those who can simply turn on the tap. Twenty percent of the poorest population of El Salvador, Jamaica and Nicaragua spend **10 percent of their income on water.**

The lack of clean water and sanitation is an affront to humanity and is inadmissible in a continent like Latin America which has so much potential. It violates the right to a dignified life of millions of human beings and is ethically intolerable. We must put these issues at the forefront of our collective agenda, and take action.

The water that Jesus gives us to drink is His Spirit. He wants to become within us a spring that wells up and that preserves us from drying up interiorly.

In Jesus, the Samaritan woman meets the seventh man who satisfies her desire for a love. The love that Jesus gives wells up from God, a love that will never run out.

Jesus wants to quench our thirst and invites us:

If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me!

Let the man come and drink who believes in me!

As Scripture says: From his breast shall flow springs of living water. (Jn 7:37)

Listening to the Words of Jesus, opening oneself to Him and believing in Him means to drink. The one who drinks of Jesus' Spirit does not have to return every time to drink so as to quench his thirst. Instead, in Him alone an inner spring will open, the source of the Holy Spirit, from which he may drink forever.

Let us listen to Christ on the cross saying to us, **"I am thirsty."** (Jn 19:28) The thirst that comes with the agony of the crucifixion is excruciating and very real. **What does Jesus desire strongly on the cross?**

- Jesus on the cross is saying: "I want people to come to the banquet of graces". He wants everything that he has done not to be in vain nor be fruitless. **He is thirsting for souls to come and drink.** Let us remember what He said to the Samaritan woman.

"If you only knew what God is offering and who it is that is saying to you

'Give me something to drink'

you would have been the one to ask and

He would have given you living water". (Jn 4:10)

- **He thirsts for messengers and apostles** who will bring the good news of redemption to others. When he says "I am thirsty", he is saying, "will you take what you have received and spread it? I need apostles. Bring the message to your home, to your school, to your friends, to your profession ... don't let my Passion be in vain."
- **He is thirsty for souls.** He wants people to receive what he has given. **"I need hands, I need hearts, I need tongues, I need feet, I need lives. I thirst for them."** **He is thirsting for us** so that we will come and be the disciples he needs, that we will be this presence in the world.
- Jesus says, "Whatever you did to the least of my brothers, you did it to me". Jesus has identified himself with us: any person who thirsts, Christ thirsts in him. Any time we feed the hungry or give a drink to the thirsty, we do so to Christ. So when we hear Christ on the cross say, "I am thirsty" and wish we could do something about it, he is reminding us to look around to discover him thirsting in our neighbour.

Let us open your eyes to the physical needs of those around you. Let us open your eyes to the spiritual thirst of those around you. Who is going to bring them peace, who is going to bring them hope, who is going to bring meaning to their lives, bringing them salvation?

- Listen to Christ who says "I am thirsty", and give of the gift you have received. What about your friend who no longer practices his faith, or the ones who express their hunger and thirst in their excesses?

How are you going to give them a drink...?

- **Are you able to notice the thirst of those around? Do you hear their cry?**

They are sheep without a shepherd; who will teach them? Who will give them hope?

Who will bring comfort and solace into lives that are so often full of suffering?

"I was thirsty and you gave me a drink", or "Where were you when I was thirsty?"

"Were you not able to think of others instead of only yourself?"

The global water crisis is the leading cause of death and disease in the world, taking the lives of more than 14,000 people each day, 11,000 of them children under 5. In addition to the health problems, women and girls spend more than 200 million hours **every day walking to collect water from distant, often polluted sources**—time that could be better spent on more productive endeavours such as work and school. When you combine these factors, it's clear that the global water crisis is the single biggest problem facing the world's poor, preventing them from reaching even the first rung on the socio-economic ladder.

Water is basic. When there's not enough of it, people die. When there's not enough to keep crops properly irrigated, there's famine. So it's not a big shock that when water decreases, conflict over it increases. Or to put it more simply, a lack of water leads to war.

The problem of water scarcity is a growing worldwide phenomenon. Net renewable water resources have declined dramatically and in little less than 20 years from now we will reach dangerously low levels. Water scarcity already affects every single continent. The situation is getting worse due to population growth, urbanization and the increase in domestic and industrial water use. By 2025, nearly 2 billion people will be living in countries or regions with absolute water shortage.

Everyone needs water and everyone needs to take responsibility. Actively support governments, non-governmental organizations and private foundations which are making it a priority to deliver affordable good quality water to people.

In short, do your part by conserving, recycling and protecting water more efficiently.

Reflection

- *How can we condemn an entire portion of the human race to these mortal risks?*
- *The lack of clean drinking water is an offense to mankind and is ethically intolerable especially in the technologically advanced 21st century.*
- *Everyone needs water and everyone needs to take responsibility.*
- *Do your part by conserving, recycling and protecting water more efficiently.*

Offer Something to Drink ...

Offering something to drink to someone is an important form of **hospitality and dedication**. By doing this one does not quench only the physical thirst of the human being, but also the thirst of **being close and showing affection**. I show the other person that I am interested in him/her. It is also enjoyable to share a glass of wine because, drinking it, I would like to talk of important things. I invite you to share some time with me and talk of the things that occupy my thoughts.

For Jesus, thirst is also the image of the **deepest yearning** of the human being. When Jesus talks of thirst with the Samaritan woman, He does not just mean only water, but the **thirst of the heart**. Jesus is thirsty and asks the Samaritan woman: "Give me something to drink." (Jn 4:7) He admits he is thirsty. But He is talking about deeper realities, **of thirst for love, for life, and for vitality**. And Jesus promises the woman:

**Whoever drinks of this water will get thirsty again;
but anyone who drinks the water that I shall give will never be thirsty again.
The water that I shall give will turn into a spring inside him,
welling up to eternal life. (Jn 4:13)**

- People are thirsting for love. We should give affection, recognition and a sense of protection and communion. We must give them what we have received in our turn: the Spirit of love that Jesus transmitted to us through His death and which has become in us a spring of endless love.
- We must give **something to drink even to our enemy** who is thirsty:

If your enemy is hungry, give something to eat, if he is thirsty, give something to drink.

At His death Jesus poured out His Spirit of love on everyone, disregarding whether they are good or evil, friends or enemies. A work of mercy is the expression of faith which in us gushes from the source of love that satisfies our own thirst. This source is enough not only for us but also for the people whom we meet. **If we offer the water of our love to others our spring will never run dry but it will continue to gush forth.**

☩ The Charism of Magdalene

In the charismatic intuitions of one of Magdalene's mystical experiences, provoked by the Scripture passage, Exodus 25:40, we find the invitation to contemplate and act according to the Exemplar, Jesus Christ: **"Inspice et Fac secundum Exemplar"**.

More than an invitation, it is the proposal of a style of life, an essential choice that brings about and fills the heart. The invitation to "contemplate and act" brings out the **essence of the Canossian Charism which calls us to live a spirituality makes us remain close to Jesus, the only source of our attention for others and inserts us more deeply in reality.**

Action is already present in contemplation, because in contemplation intimacy with God is realised which is the way to remain in today's world, aware of difficulties, attentive and active in facing them and trying to solve them.

"My dear friends, I invite you to rediscover the value of prayer, its mysterious force, its capacity not only to bring us back to God but to introduce us to the radical truth of the human person. Prayer sets us on the way of conversion, conversion to the fullness of our humanity, that is, conversion to beauty, solidarity and love. In fact, it is God's will that every person may reach as much as possible his/her full human realization. (John Paul II)

Contemplation is the only motivation for acting in a coherent way, since every day is different and rich in encounters and events which invite us to be authentic, to be free and feel ourselves to be instruments of the One who acts.

If we are not moved to tears, in front of the consummation of God's Son and if our gaze is not amazed and transparent like those who have made the experience of a continual renewal of life, faith and mercy because we have been personally touched by love. This love is gratuitous, completely regenerating and abundant; without it we cannot do anything for the poor of today and neither be witnesses and collaborators for peace and justice.

Being rooted in contemplations means growing in the experience and certainty the One who operates and guides history is the Lord.

Contemplation and action are the criteria on which we work out the synthesis of our lives. Seeing reality that surrounds us in a positive way helps us to be instruments of change and of hope. We must be convinced that our spirituality brings with it, thanks to the Spirit of God, an inexhaustible force of transformation and allows us to identify practical modalities so that this change may come about regarding the identity of our charism and of the need of making it more understandable today.

"In the meantime, let us help each other with prayer and since the Novena of Our Lady of Sorrows is approaching, let us be united so that our Mother may obtain for us all that we need ... we have declared ourselves people who wish to imitate the Crucified One and Our Lady of Sorrows."

