

The Mysticism of *Laudato Si'* 20

WATER

Contemplate the rivers, streams, wells and all sources of fresh water, including the rain and the kitchen tap! Fall in love with water, and then make a commitment to do what you can to protect it.

The pope has much to say about our care for water. *'One particularly serious problem is the poor quality of water available to one billion of the world's poor. Unsafe water results in deaths and the spread of water-related diseases caused by micro-organisms and chemical substances. Dysentery and cholera cause infant mortality. Underground water sources are threatened by the pollution produced by mining, farming and industry. Detergents and chemical products pour into our rivers, lakes and seas'* (29).

'Even as the quality of available water is constantly diminishing, there is a growing tendency to privatize it, so it becomes a commodity subject to market laws. Yet access to safe drinkable water is a basic and universal human right: without it the poor are denied the right to a life consistent with their inalienable dignity' (30).

'Scarcity of water increases the cost of food. An acute water shortage may occur within a few decades. While the environmental repercussions could affect billions of people, the control of water by multinationals may soon become a major source of conflict. Again the poor will suffer most' (31).

The waters of the world are interlinked, and there is a limited amount of water on the planet. Each of us uses it, so each is challenged to conserve it and to promote its sustainable use. As the pope said recently, 'the right to water is decisive for the future of humanity, and I ask myself if we are not moving toward a great world war over water'. He added that while the situation is urgent, it is not insurmountable. 'Our commitment to giving water its proper place calls for developing a culture of care -- that may sound poetic, but that is fine because creation is a poem.'

With St Francis of Assisi we can praise the Creator for the gift of water:

*'Praised be you, my Lord, through Sister Water,
who is very useful and humble and precious and chaste' (87).*