

INTERNATIONAL WATER DAY

*Accelerating
change*

22 March 2023



PRAYER

Creator God, who blessed us with the gift of water from the beginning of creation, and with it sanctified those who lived under sickness and sin, send us the good water we so desperately need. Through your water, we are sanctified and baptised in your name. You gave us the inexhaustible fountain, the only one from which flows living water that can quench our thirst. Infuse in us your Spirit to guide us to give a drink, to so many thirsty people today, that we may be able to commit ourselves, in your Name, to care for and respect, the essential good of water for the benefit of all. AMEN

HISTORY OF THIS DAY

In 1993, the United Nations General Assembly, following the recommendations of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, declared 22 March each year as World Water Day. This day is a great opportunity to raise awareness and inspire action to address the global water and sanitation crisis. It also marks the launch of the UN World Report on the state of our planet's water resources. Governments and all stakeholders will come together to make voluntary commitments to accelerate progress on SDG 6: Clean Water and Sanitation, and other internationally agreed water-related targets.



Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all

UN Water Conference 2023 will be held on March 22-24, with the theme 'Water and Integral development

of communities: Challenges and proposals' at the UN headquarters, New York. On this occasion a parallel event, co-sponsored by Proclade Internazionale, will be organised on March 24, at 08.30 am (New York time).

This event on water is very significant, as affordability to clean water is indispensable for the promotion of sustainable-integral-development (SDG no. 06: water and sanitation). The global community requires water, which is Pollution free (SDG 06.3), sustainably withdrawn and distributed (06.4) and available across State boundaries (06.5). Water is a basic prerogative for the elimination of hunger (SDG 02), promotion of work (SDG 08), creation of industry cum

infrastructure (SDG 09), development of sustainable cities cum communities (SDG11) and for the encouragement of responsible consumption cum production (SDG 12). The following is the link for the online participation:

[CLICK HERE](#)

Therefore, on this day, we are invited to promote awareness through publications and dissemination, organisation of conferences, round tables, seminars and exhibitions, and in our case, to pray for this day and all its significance for the good of creation.



Problems across the entire water cycle are undermining progress in major global conflicts, from health to hunger, from gender equality to employment, from education to industry, from disasters to peace. The world committed to Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 6 as part of the 2030 Agenda: “the promise that everyone would have access to safely managed water and sanitation”.



Water is essential for life and human development.

Right now, we are a long way from achieving this. Gaps in access to water supply and sanitation, population growth, intensive water use, increased rainfall variability and pollution are factors that combine in many places to make water one of the major risks to economic progress, poverty eradication and sustainable develop-

ment. 1.4 million people die annually and 74 million will see their lives shortened by diseases related to poor water, sanitation and hygiene. Today, 1 in 4 people (2 billion people) worldwide do not have access to safely managed drinking water. 2.3 billion lack basic hand-washing facilities. Globally, 44% of domestic wastewater is not safely treated. Global water demand is projected to increase by 55% by 2050.

Water is essential for life and human development. Water belongs to everyone, yet many do not benefit from this resource. In addition, safe management of water, sanitation and hygiene services is an essential part of preventing disease and protect-

ing human health during infectious outbreaks.

World Water Day is an opportunity to unite for water and accelerate change together to solve the water and sanitation crisis.

BIBLE READING



2 Kings 5:9-15

So Naaman came with his horses and chariots, and halted at the door of Elisha's house. And Elisha sent a messenger to him, saying, "Go and wash in the Jordan seven times, and your flesh shall be restored, and you shall be clean." But Naaman was angry, and went away, saying,

"Behold, I thought that he would surely come out to me, and stand, and call on the name of the Lord his God, and wave his hand over the place, and cure the leper. Are not Aba'na[a] and Pharpar, the rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? Could I not wash in them, and be clean?" So he turned and went away in a rage. But his servants came near and said to him, "My father, if the prophet had commanded you to do some great thing, would you not have done it? How much rather, then, when he says to you, 'Wash, and be clean?'"

So Naaman went down and dipped himself seven times in the Jordan, according to the word of the man of God; and his flesh was restored like the flesh of a little child, and he was clean. Then he returned to the man of God, he and all his company, and he came and stood before him; and he said, “Behold, I know that there is no God in all the earth but in Israel.

Naaman is a general in the Syrian royal army and is sick with leprosy. He is sent by the king to ask the prophet Elisha to cure him and he orders him to do something very simple: to bathe in the river Jordan seven times. Naaman is angry at Elisha’s request, as he assumed that Elisha was going to order him to do something more spectacular and important. But in the end, he does this gesture, which for him was simple and worthless. Naaman, whom no one could cure, bathed himself, and, being cured, he understood at once that what purifies is not the water but the gift of God through it.

“To go to Jesus, to drink from him, means to encounter him personally as Lord, drawing from his Word the meaning of life” - Pope Francis





The healing is due to God, as Naaman will acknowledge, and not to any special quality of those waters. But proven obedience is required, which in Naaman's story is reflected in the completion of seven immersions. A request similar to Elisha's and an obedience similar to Naaman's appear in Jesus' healing of a man born blind by applying the mud

made of saliva and washing in the pool of Siloam (cf. Jn 9:6-7). These events are a prefiguration of baptism.

For us as Christians, water is a very important element of purification and life. In the sacrament of Baptism, through water sanctified by the Spirit, we are invited to be reborn. Jesus during his public life told us "If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink" (Jn 7:37). "To go to Jesus, to drink from him, means to encounter him personally as Lord, drawing from his Word the meaning of life" (Message of the Holy Father Francis for the celebration of the IV World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation, 2019).

The Lord, who also experienced thirst on the Cross. He asked his disciples to give a drink to the thirsty people. He asks us today to give a drink. Offering water, giving to drink, in our world today does not only imply charitable gestures. It implies personal commitment, making

concrete choices, which will then be translated into personal gestures but which require global actions in order to change the situation of vulnerability and poverty associated with the lack of access to drinking water for so many of our brothers and sisters. We remember how the Lord also tells us “I was thirsty and you gave me to drink” “as you did it to one of the least of these, you did it to me”.

Like St. Francis of Assisi, we acknowledge and thank God for this gift: “Praise be to you, my Lord, for Sister Water, who is very useful, humble, and precious”.

PACEM IN TERRIS AND THE UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS: THE RIGHT TO WATER

Sixty years ago, Pope John XXIII addressed not only Catholics, but “all people of good will” (Encyclical *Pacem in Terris*) with the aim of working together in the immense task of re-establishing relations of coexistence, based on truth, justice, love and freedom, breaking down barriers of division and promoting mutual understanding, destroying the seeds of war and building harmony among all peoples.

Although the entire encyclical is of a spiritual nature, Pope John XXIII points to human as a dignified person who deserves universal rights and duties. To provide the rights there has to be in place the necessary structural conditions.

Pope John XXIII, inviting today's man to take an active part in public life under the signs of the times, points out that it is necessary that the rights of the person be reaffirmed in international legal systems.

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In this sense, and in the context of the 75th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, we raise the issue of water as a basic right which is needed to restore the human dignity which is damaged by poverty, disease and injustice.

The right to water has been recognised in a large number of international documents, but it was on 28 July 2010 that the United Nations

General Assembly explicitly recognised the human right to water and sanitation, reaffirming that clean drinking water and sanitation are essential for the realisation of human rights.

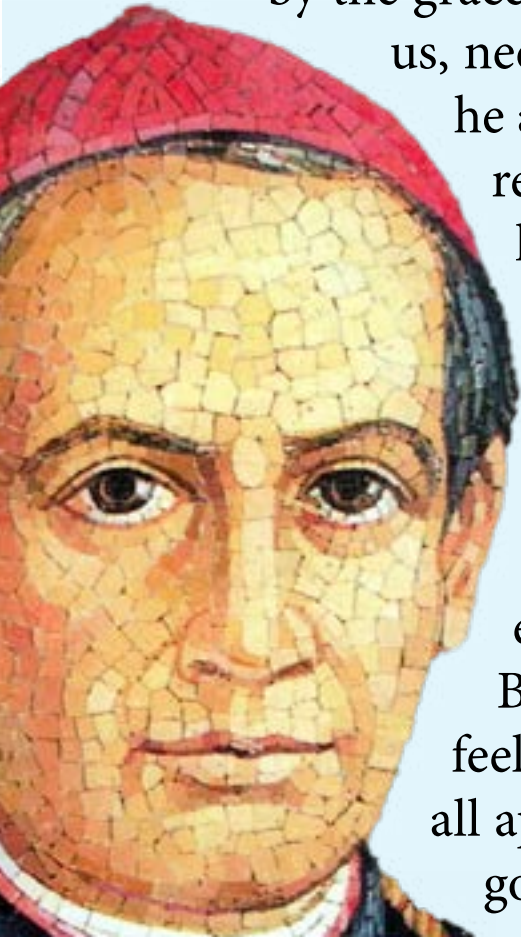
Without the access to safe drinking water, the other rights, such as the right to adequate food, to full health, to decent work, to equitable access to resources and to environmental hygiene, cannot be realised.

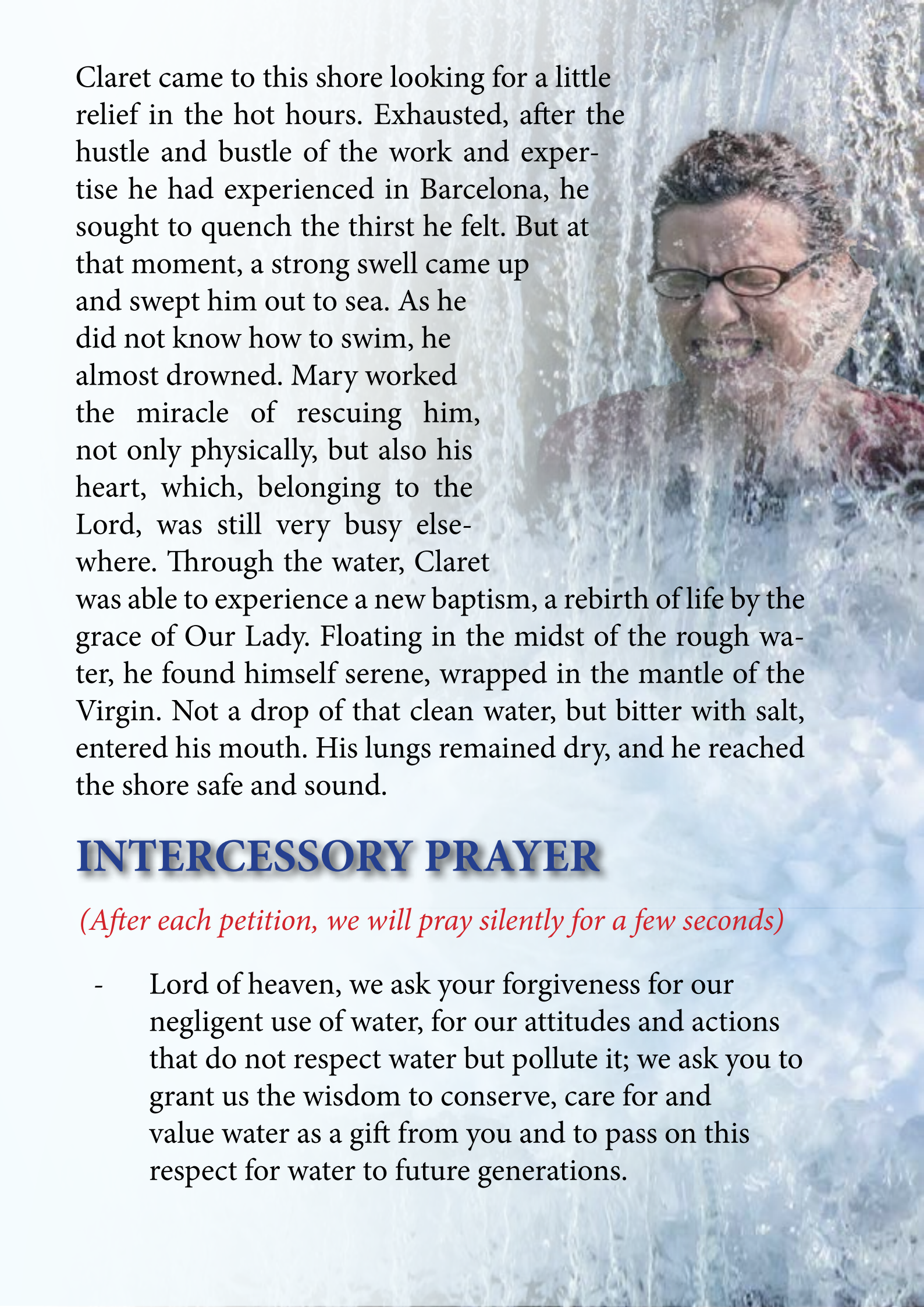


SAINT ANTHONY MARY CLARET

Water is a free gift of God the Creator for mankind, one of the indispensable goods for life and human development. As Claretian Family, we received from St. Anthony Mary Claret, by the grace of God, our charism. Claret, as it happens to us, needed water as an essential element to live, but he also narrated in his autobiography his relationship with water in different events, and he used it to grow spiritually and to make men grow with its symbolism.

From the first events that Claret narrates in his Autobiography, we find a peculiar and foundational event for Anthony, in number 71 of the same. “That last summer, the Blessed Virgin saved me from drowning in the sea. Because I had been working so hard, I didn’t feel very well during the summer. I began to lose all appetite, and the only relief I could find was to go down to the sea, wade in it, and drink a few drops of the salt water. One day as I was walking along the beach on my way to the “old sea” on the other side of La Barceloneta, a huge wave suddenly engulfed me and carried me out to sea. I saw in a moment that I was far from shore, and I was amazed to see that I was floating on the surface, although I didn’t know how to swim. I called out to the Blessed Virgin and found myself on shore without having swallowed even a drop of water. While I was in the water, I had felt exceedingly calm, but afterwards, on shore, I was horrified at the thought of the danger I had escaped through the help of the Blessed Virgin”.



A woman with glasses is smiling and looking down while standing under a shower of water. The water is splashing around her, and she appears to be enjoying the experience. The background is a soft, out-of-focus blue and white, suggesting an outdoor setting like a waterfall or a large shower.

Claret came to this shore looking for a little relief in the hot hours. Exhausted, after the hustle and bustle of the work and expertise he had experienced in Barcelona, he sought to quench the thirst he felt. But at that moment, a strong swell came up and swept him out to sea. As he did not know how to swim, he almost drowned. Mary worked the miracle of rescuing him, not only physically, but also his heart, which, belonging to the Lord, was still very busy elsewhere. Through the water, Claret was able to experience a new baptism, a rebirth of life by the grace of Our Lady. Floating in the midst of the rough water, he found himself serene, wrapped in the mantle of the Virgin. Not a drop of that clean water, but bitter with salt, entered his mouth. His lungs remained dry, and he reached the shore safe and sound.

INTERCESSORY PRAYER

(After each petition, we will pray silently for a few seconds)

- Lord of heaven, we ask your forgiveness for our negligent use of water, for our attitudes and actions that do not respect water but pollute it; we ask you to grant us the wisdom to conserve, care for and value water as a gift from you and to pass on this respect for water to future generations.

- Almighty God, we pray that you enlighten the minds and hearts of all those who are in the positions of power, that they can develop political, economic and social actions in favour of the care of water and its just distribution; that it may be a good and an equal right for all.
- Good Father, who makes the sun shine on all and causes the rain to fall, have mercy on those who suffer from drought in these days; may the rain be for us a sign of your grace and blessing.
- Fountain of Living Water that springs up to eternal life, we beseech you to help us and urge us to quench, not only the physical thirst but also the spiritual thirst of so many of our brothers and sisters, who have not drunk from your fountain; may your spirit quench their thirst and our thirst.

O Creator God, grant our petitions on behalf of your children and all creation. Through Jesus Christ our Lord, AMEN.

LINES OF ACTION

As Claretian Family, we always seek the greater glory of God and the wholistic salvation of his sons and daughters. Inspired by our charism, we shall commit to actions which are urgent, opportune and effective.

As a Claretian Family, we believe it is necessary:

- Reduction in greenhouse gas emissions depends on access to reliable water sources. Hence we shall make efforts to improve the water resources.

- Encourage investments in the banks and projects, that manage the watersheds and coastlines, which in turn produces renewable energy and sustainable food production.

- Create institutions that support climate resilience, watershed management, sustainable infrastructure and empowerment cum learning.

- Optimising water use through improved planning and incentives will help improve welfare and increase economic growth. If economic instruments such as water pricing and permits are well implemented and enforced, water resources management and protection can be improved.

- Collaborate to expand water supply and availability where possible and appropriate. This includes investments

in water storage, recycling and reuse. These interventions should be accompanied by policies that promote water efficiency and improve water distribution.

- Promote resilient economies that can limit the impact of extreme weather events and uncertainty, and that provides crop insurance to protect farmers.

- To create awareness among the people to claim their right to water and sanitation.

- To demand from the States to guarantee the right to water and sanitation, to legislate for accessibility to water, transcending the intranational and international boundaries and to hold the national and transnational corporations accountable to use and abuse of water.

CLOSING PRAYER

Almighty God, you who have so generously granted us the gift of water, from which everything comes, we thank you for this gift. We ask you to grant us the wisdom to know how to protect and administer it, so that, in building your Kingdom, this gift of water, symbol of your life-giving and purifying action, may reach everyone. We ask You to continue to send us rain, and to continue to quench our thirst for You and for Your water. To the praise and glory of Your name. Amen.

