

## Laudato Si Essay

As Americans, we take the luxury of running water for granted. The water we wash our hands with has always been there, we've never needed to worry about whether or not our water supply will stop or that it is unclean and unsafe for us to use. We thought that problem was long behind us. However, we could not be more wrong. According to a survey by the nonprofit human rights organization DigDeep, "Today, more than two million Americans live without running water and basic indoor plumbing..." To give you some perspective, Keystone, West Virginia has been under a boiled water advisory for over eight years. Their water is so contaminated to the point where it cannot be used until all the toxins are boiled out of it.

As said in a letter from Pope Francis, it is our job to protect the Earth and the people within it. Based on the Catholic Social Teachings we can spot many injustices to human beings due to the problems caused by the scarcity of fresh, running water. Looking at the Laudato Si, we can see that there are many things we must acknowledge in order to fully understand what we can do for God's creation, our home, Earth. Lastly, with all the information we obtain, we can figure out what we can do to help and make a difference.

Based on my knowledge of the Catholic Social Teachings, in order to have a strong functioning society it is our responsibility as Catholics to *help maintain the life and dignity of the human person, help our community, and care for God's creation*. Having access to water is, I believe, one of our basic rights as human beings. The average person can survive only three days without water. If obtaining water is so difficult, then it becomes more difficult to survive. It is our responsibility to help in our communities. Whether that is distributing fresh water to those

who need it, or raising awareness to the problem. The last Social Teaching that we must follow is the act of caring for God's creation. What immediately comes to mind when I say this may be our Earth, but really *we* are God's creations as well, meaning we should care for and support ourselves and one another especially when it comes to the problem of fresh and running water.

Pope Francis' letter, the *Laudato Si*, tells us about all the ways in which we should care for God's creation. A quote that stood out to me was "*One particular serious problem is the quality of water available to the poor. Every day, unsafe water results in many deaths and the spread of water-related diseases, including those caused by microorganisms and chemical substances.*" (LS 29) This quote illustrates the dire situation that the water problem has caused. People in underserved communities across the world have suffered not having fresh, running water at their disposal. They need to travel to a source of fresh water quite often and use the water they do have smartly. They are also forced to buy bottled water which, overtime, becomes quite pricey. This point is further stressed in the following quote; "*The rich and the poor have equal dignity, for 'the Lord' is the maker of them all' (Prov 22:2).*" (LS 94) This quote proves that all people, no matter how rich or poor you are, are made by God and in His image. This relates back to how underserved communities have less access to fresh water because, as some may say, they fly under the radar or are considered less important. In actuality, these communities need more attention than those that are privileged and functioning. We need to help everyone and care for God's creation.

So, what exactly can we do to solve this problem? One of the easiest ways to help make a difference is to raise awareness. Many people aren't aware of the problems that others face. In fact, it is proven that communities that faced the fresh water problem were unaware that others across the country dealt with it too. Don't be afraid to make a splash so that it's heard that this

problem is one that needs urgent fixing. You can also donate money to nonprofits such as DigDeep which help communities that deal with scarcity of freshwater. Organizations such as DigDeep not only raise awareness to government leaders, they also donate money to help communities that don't receive fresh water to obtain it in an easier, more realistic way.

In conclusion, the scarcity of functioning freshwater systems across the world is a problem that should be addressed as soon as possible. Although we may not experience its effects first hand, we as human beings are a community, a family, and we must stick together and stand up for one another no matter what, as a family does. It is our right as people to be heard. We have the right to use our voice and express that our needs need to be met. We are all united under God, and regardless of our differences, we should stand with Him and therefore with each other through thick and thin. One for all and all for one.

#### Work Cited:

Pope Francis. (2015). [On Care for Our Common Home] [Encyclical letter]. Retrieved from: <https://www.usccb.org/offices/general-secretariat/laudato-si-care-our-common-home>.

