



Water

"You will be like a well-watered garden, like a spring whose waters never fail." —Isaiah 58:11

Resources adapted from the 21 Day Environmental Justice Challenge

In his encyclical, *Laudato Si'*, Pope Francis writes, "access to safe drinkable water is a basic and universal human right, since it is essential to human survival and, as such, is a condition for the exercise of other human rights. 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." (#30)

Inside America's Water Crisis

A study found that between 2013 and 2017, around 1.1 million people in the U.S. had insecure water access. Almost a half of these people lived in the 50 largest metropolitan areas of the U.S. This included 65,000 people in New York who did not have access to piped water. [Click here to read more about the consequences of this lack of access.](#)

A 2017 study found that 61 million Americans do not drink their tap water. Lower-income Americans are less likely to drink their tap water, forcing them to purchase bottled water. [Click here to read more about this disparity.](#)



This dynamic is more pronounced and damaging for Indigenous People in the United States. Contaminated groundwater from power plants and other industrial runoff poisoned publicly accessible drinking water. 100 years ago, contaminated water was the leading cause of death in the United States. The government invested heavily to ensure the safety of drinking water, but many communities were left behind. [Click here to learn more](#)

How does water scarcity drive conflict around the world?

- * In Syria, a 2006 drought is believed to have contributed to the outbreak of the Syrian Civil War. Failing crops forced farmers to migrate to cities, causing unemployment and economic angst. [Read more by clicking here.](#)
- * In Darfur, improved ground-water management reduced water scarcity and helped bring the combatant factions in the country together, contributing to the peace in the region. [Click here to learn more.](#)

A Prayer for Water Justice

Let us lift our voices in prayer for all persons who are on the margins, especially those who do not have access to safe water sources.

Refrain after each intercession: Plant our hearts near streams of compassion.

We pray for the 663 million people who lack access to safe water...

We pray for the women and children who spend hours each day walking to collect water...

We pray for the 800,000 deaths per year attributable to unsafe water supply, poor sanitation and hygiene...

We pray for a reduction in the 38 billion plastic water bottles that end up in landfills every year...

We pray for greater accountability and transparency when public water systems are threatened...

Good and gracious God, we pray for humility to see all the ways we take water for granted. Send Your Spirit to change the hearts of those who use water to create strife and conflict. Have mercy on those who are sick or in need because they cannot access safe water. We are thankful for Your gift of water seen in the beauty of waterfalls, placid lakes, rivers that move people and commerce, oceans full of amazing creatures. Give us guidance on how to be better stewards of a finite resource. We ask all of this in Your name.

Amen.

Learn more about the organizations sponsoring the 21 Day Environmental Justice Challenge: [Catholic Climate Covenant](#), [Global Catholic Climate Movement](#), [Ignatian Solidarity Network](#), the [Jesuit Conference Office of Justice and Ecology](#) and [the Sisters of Mercy](#).