



**THE GLOBAL CATHOLIC
CLIMATE MOVEMENT**

**JUSTITIA ET PAX
EUROPA**

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European Justice and Peace Commissions Unite in Call to Protect Water



The Conference of European Justice and Peace Commissions is promoting care for creation as part of its international workshop and general assembly meeting. The topic of the meeting is “**Water: Source of Life Human right and Responsibility for Europe.**” This marks the first time that European Justice and Peace leadership has dedicated its meeting to the topic of water.

Top catholic leaders from around the continent were present together with public authorities and experts. Among them, H.E. Mgr. Jean Claude Hollerich, Archbishop of Luxemburg, President of Justice and Peace Europe, and president of COMECE was joined by Cardinal Juan José Omella, archbishop of Barcelona, H.E. Joan Enric Vives, archbishop of La Seu d'Urgell and Co-prince of Andorra, former accompanying bishop of Justice and Peace Spain, H.E. Sebastià Taltavull, bishop of Mallorca and

Accompanying Bishop of Justice and Peace Spain, H.E. Angelo Massafra, Archbishop of Scutari-Pult, Member of the Commission for Pastoral Social Work Member of the Council of Bishops' Conference in Europe (CCEE). Mr. Tebaldo Vinciguerra, collaborator of the Dicastery for the Promotion of Integral Human Development, inserted the issues related to the right to access to water in the framework of the core principles of the CST and insisted in the connections between the implementation of this right, education, lifestyles and cultures. He also underscored that recent pronouncements of the Pope and the Holy See insisted frequently on water and spirituality ([link](#) Message on the World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation).

The meeting took place in Barcelona from 28- 30 September in the Salesian Seminar. The Conference of European Justice and Peace Commissions is a network of 31 national Justice and Peace Commissions, which are mandated by their bishops' conferences.

To mark the occasion of the workshop, a coalition of justice and ecology institutions organized a **European symbolic action**. The action, titled "Via Aqua," saw leaders walk through the the area of the Llobregat River Delta. Leaders contemplated water as their "sister," following the words of St. Francis.

The action was organized by Justice and Peace Europe, the Spanish Justice and Peace Commission, the Barcelona Justice and Peace Commission, Connect yourself for Justice and the Global Catholic Climate Movement. The location of the action is significant. The Llobregat River Delta is a protected natural area. The route enable leaders to witness the recovery of riverlands that had been polluted, and to reflect on how shared, long-term efforts have protected this work of the Creator and preserved it for future generations.

Leaders brought stories of the waters in their home countries.

- The National Justice and Peace Commission of Scotland brought the cry of sister water of Kilninian beach on the Isle of Mull, where plastic pollution has scarred the pristine white sands of the beach, threatening seabirds, fish and other marine creatures.
- The Spanish Commission for Justice and Peace brought the cry of sister water from the south of Spain, where a shortage of water for human consumption and agricultural use is leading to conflict between communities.
- The Justice and Peace Commission of Malta brought the cry of sister water through seawater from the beaches of Malta, which hears pleas for help from those crossing in search of a new life.

The leaders symbolically enacted their commitment by immersing their hands in a bowl of water, the "Source of Tears" which represented the suffering of "sister water" and their promise to protect her.

These events fall within the [Season of Creation](#), an annual celebration of prayer and action to protect creation. The Season is an ecumenical celebration shared by many Christians. It runs annually from September 1 through October 4, the Feast of St. Francis, who is the patron saint of ecology in many traditions. The theme of this year's celebration is "walking together".

Mgr. Jean-Claude Hollerich, Archbishop of Luxembourg and President of the Conference of European Justice and Peace Commissions said: 'This year's symbolic action was a moving experience. Praying and

walking in silence through the fragile ecosystem of Llobregat river delta allowed us to better connect with each other, with nature and with God. It allowed us to better listen to the cry of sister water.’

Cecilia Dall’Oglio, European Programs Manager of Global Catholic Climate Movement, which helped organize the symbolic action, encouraged the event by saying: ‘Justice and Peace Commissions demonstrated their strong will to engage their Bishops’ Conferences in living Laudato Si’ in catholic communities, in particular on occasion of Season of Creation.’

[Global Catholic Climate Movement](#) is a community of over 650 member organizations and thousands of Catholics responding to Pope Francis’ call to action in the Laudato Si’ encyclical.

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Contributions to represent the cry of sister water from European Justice and Peace Commissions

The JP Commission of Austria brings the cry of sister water of the Alps.

The lack of snow due to low precipitation or high temperatures is an immense challenge for winter sport destinations and especially the mountain railway companies. Artificial snow production is the key adaptation strategy to rising temperatures, enhanced economic competition and increasing requirements of winter tourists. The increase in artificial snow production in the Alps has been dramatic in recent years. This has significant effects to the sustainable use of water and does not seem sustainable from an ecological and economic point of view.

The JP Commission of Belgium francophone brings the cry of sister water of Belgium.

The Justice and Peace Commission of Belgium francophone brings the cry of sister water of Belgium, where water distribution meters have been installed in 2000 households. It aims to restrict access to water for the poorest people who have difficulty paying their water bills, affecting their daily lives very severely.

The JP Commission of Denmark brings the cry of sister water of Mørkøv.

The Justice and Peace Commission of Denmark brings the cry of sister water of Mørkøv, where sludge has polluted the waters and all life in the stream has died. Also, after a very dry summer, when the rain finally came, massive amounts of pesticides have been washed out into the groundwater, polluting many wells and making the water undrinkable.

The JP Commission of Germany brings the cry of sister water of the Baltic Sea.

The JP Commission of Germany brings the cry of sister water of the Baltic Sea that, connecting people in Northern Europe, is threatened by enlarging death zones. Our way of agriculture and industrial production is suffocating the Sea. Beside that thousands of tons of ammunition from the Second World War including chemical weapons are rotting in the sea. They are a threat to the environment and to fishermen. Lord give us the capacity to cooperate as neighbours for the sake of all.

The JP Commission of Irish brings the cry of sister water of Ireland.

The Justice and Peace Commission of Ireland brings the cry of sister water of Ireland, where, as societies,

we are discovering the damage that we are inflicting on our environment and its future impacts for all. As faith communities, we are called to expand our understanding of faith to include environmental responsibility. We are invited to repentance for the ways in which we have damaged the earth's waters and to a way of living which respects "sister water".

This summer Ireland experienced unusually hot weather resulting in water shortages. This brought home to many the scarcity of the resource that is often taken for granted. Restrictions were imposed and people were conscious of not wasting water. However this was not proposed as a life-long commitment, but rather a temporary action. Imagine the benefits for ourselves and for our environment if this way of behaving could become a habit. As the waters become further polluted, this is having a dramatically adverse effect on the fishing and agriculture industries that are vital to Ireland's economy, as well as damaging our food sources and marine eco-systems. As water becomes less readily available, there is a corresponding risk of commodification and increases in food prices which will impact the poor in our society above all.

The JP Commission of Italy brings the cry of sister water of the Tirino river.

The Justice and Peace Commission of Italy brings the cry of sister water of the Tirino river, that is suffering because of one of the biggest disasters perpetrated by human beings in the last years in Italy. A huge dump made of chemical wastes, despite it has been secured, is still polluting that land and that river.

The JP Commission of Luxembourg brings the cry of sister water of Luxembourg

The Justice & Peace Commission of Luxembourg brings the cry of sister water of Luxembourg where only two percent of the waterways are considered to be "good" according to the EU.

Nitrates, phosphoric compounds, polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons and contaminated sites in industrial wastelands combine to form a harmful cocktail. Our concern for water quality is developing into a struggle without end.

The JP Commission of Malta brings the cry of sister water of the coasts of Malta.

The Justice and Peace Commission of Malta brings the cry of sister water through seawater from the beaches of Malta, where prioritisation of economic gains, and lack of will to change our methods of consumption, is increasingly making our bathing waters a less healthy environment. The ever increasing amount of ships which pass by the islands, is polluting our waters with fossil fuels, the fish farming industry is damaging areas of the sea-bed, and every now and then slime from this industry washes up on our shores. This cry is also the cry of the people who cross these waters in search of a new life, yet many face hostility and death in these waters.

The JP Commission of Portugal brings the cry of sister water of the Portuguese territory.

The Justice and Peace Commission of Portugal brings the cry of sister water of the Portuguese territory. By the end of December 2017, 58,3% of the Portuguese territory was in severe drought, 29,1% in moderate drought, 6,4% in extreme drought, 5,6% in weak drought and 0,6% in that season's normal situation. From then till now the situation has been better, but, according to the Portuguese minister of the environment, it is most expected that periods of drought like this will continue to occur in the future.

The JP Commission of Scotland brings the cry of sister water of Kilninian beach, Isle of Mull.

The National Justice & Peace Commission of Scotland brings the cry of sister water of Kilninian beach, Isle of Mull where plastic pollution has scarred the pristine white sands of the beach, destroying its beauty, and putting at risk the lives of seabirds, fish and other marine creatures.

The JP Commission of Slovakia brings the cry of sister water of region "Žitný ostrov".

The JP Commission of Slovakia brings the cry of sister water of region "Žitný ostrov", where the indifference of people and the carelessness of public authorities has led to an illegal dump which is posing a serious threat to the environment and to the drinking water in the South-Western region of Slovakia. Žitný ostrov is the largest groundwater reservoir of drinking water in Slovakia.

The JP Commission of Spain brings the cry of sister water of the South of Spain.

The Spanish Commission for Justice and Peace brings the cry of sister water of the south of Spain where shortage of water for human consumption and agricultural use exist and it generates both rationalization of supply and conflict between the different Autonomous Communities due to the cession of water from the hydrographic basins (Guadalquivir, Tajo, Segura). Likewise, the water of the Mediterranean Sea carries people who suffer poverty, persecution, violence. They throw themselves into the sea (their bodies and souls), risking their lives to reach another shore where their hopes can flourish.

"Justice and Peace Europe" brings the cry of sister water of Cape Town in South Africa

Justice and Peace Commission brings the cry of sister water of Cape Town South Africa, where in January the JP Secretary General had the privilege to travel to. At that time the regional government had announced that the largest South African City would run out of water by 20 April. The government announced "day zero" – a moment when dam levels would be so low that they would turn off the taps in Cape Town and send people to communal water collection points. Today dams have reached again a level of 75% of their capacity, but the apocalyptic notion I experienced led people to reduce their water consumption to 50 liters per person. As global temperatures continue to rise, cities around the world will have to figure out how to do more with less water. The Western Cape's multi-pronged response will serve as a blueprint for cities that find themselves, like Cape Town, looking at near-empty dams.

The Global Catholic Climate Movement brings the cry of sister water of the Indian subcontinent.

The Global Catholic Climate Movement brings the cry of sister water of India and Pakistan, where the strong impacts of climate change are causing extreme and more frequent drought and floods. India is facing simultaneously both water crisis in Bangalore, where actual water supplies are at the minimum and declined by 85 percent in the last decade, and extreme floods in Kerala where more than 1 million people were displaced and at least 445 others have died, mostly due to falling debris, collapsed buildings and lack of food and water. The situation is serious also in Pakistan where water resources are running dry at alarming rate. Productivity and fertilization of agriculture and food security are being badly affected and drinking water scarcity has made lives of the people miserable with a high increase of physical diseases caused by contaminated and untreated water.