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LETTER TO TOURISTS AND HOLIDAY MAKERS

"The voice of the Lord is upon the waters" (Psalm 29)

Dear tourists and visitors:

Welcome.

Most of you who visit us come here because you feel attracted to water in our beaches, rivers, lakes, waterfalls, islands, water parks ... Others also seek hydrotherapy in spas and thermal baths, somewhere else. And a lot of you enjoy it by doing water or snow sports in your spare time. The truth is that "water" is a universal appeal and an essential good for survival and leisure. Even those of us who live in these Levantine soil appreciate its presence, with a careful use for agriculture and tourism.

In order to safeguard this universal good, the Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People, in the World Tourism Day 2013, in accordance with United Nations, devoted its message to "Tourism and Water: Protecting our Common Future" and pointed out "that water is basic for sustainable development, particularly for environmental integrity and the eradication of poverty and hunger. It is essential for human health and welfare ... ". We can neither squander nor pollute it, in tourist resorts. Ecological tourism is, therefore, essential.

To appreciate water in all its dimensions, we must go back to its origin and consequences. Water is not only an atmospheric element but it also ultimately leads us to God.

As an utmost member of creation, we must value it as a gift of God by means of which He exercises His providential sovereignty. In the Scriptures we are revealed that God, Lord of the Universe, dispenses water at His Will and has the destiny of man in His hands (Job 12:15). So water is a sign and memory of His goodness and His love for mankind, as through it they get all kinds of food, thus providing their subsistence.

Water, with its symbolic value, also plays a key role on Redemption. It states the Divine life communicated to us through Christ: the revitalizing waters that Ezekiel saw flowing down from the temple (47.1 to 12) are the same waters that flow down from Christ, according to John. These waters are the Holy Spirit (Jn 7.37 s). The symbolism finds its full meaning in Christian baptism, where the water actually purifies and generates the life of God in the baptized.

Water is also a means of knowledge and access to God. The immensity and beauty we perceive in the sea, waterfalls, aquatic shows, etc. show the Supreme Beauty of God; and, according to Benedict XVI, they are the "Via Pulchritudinis" (the Way of Beauty), a road which can carry those who contemplates it in front of the Lord of the Universe. Although Pope Francis also warned that "We are losing our attitude of wonder, of contemplation, of listening to creation." And when he started his pontificate, he invited everyone to be "protectors of creation, protectors of God's plan inscribed in nature".

In unison with the Pope, the Pontifical Council also settles that "all those involved in the phenomenon of tourism have a serious responsibility to manage water so that this industry is indeed a source of social, ecological, cultural and economic wealth".

Finally, I also want to highlight a few points:

- We need to be in solidarity with those who are suffering water shortage and to seek together a sustainable tourism development.
- We have to make good use of the water that God gives us. This requires promoting small gestures. The people in charge of it must also encourage its wise use with appropriate policies and efficient equipment.
- We must educate the tourism industry to become "Responsible Citizenship". Promoting a culture of solidarity, sobriety, self-discipline and encounter.
- Using water thoughtlessly, shows immaturity. Believers, however, must admire and pray through it, as St. Francis of Assisi did, praising God for all creatures: "Because of our sister water, praised be my Lord!".
- Upon contact with water, Christians should thank the Lord for "our daily bread" which arises from it and remember its saving action in our baptism.

Finally, I want to tell you that the Diocese of Orihuela-Alicante, with its priests, religious people, the faithful and parish churches is at your service. I hope you attend our celebrations and activities and take an active part in them. And let's all together praise God as members of the only Church of Christ. May the Virgin Mary, our Mother, bless you. I commend you to her.

Enjoy a happy holiday!

✠ Jesús Murgui Soriano
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