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Social Justice

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Water Essay

Globally, there is a severe water crisis. In both developed and underdeveloped countries, billions of people face the looming threat of little to no accessible, clean water. As much as half of the world's population could be facing water scarcity by 2025, a statistic that puts the severity of the problem into perspective. Around 4 billion people around the world experience water scarcity for at least one month of the year and around 2 billion people live in countries where there is an inadequate water supply.

In Keystone, West Virginia, a small coal mining town in the United States, there is an extreme water crisis. For the past eight years, residents of the town have been instructed to boil their water before using it to prevent the spread of harmful materials. Residents have reported the water to be extremely unclean, unsafe, and dangerous. One resident, Hattie Avery, has lived in Keystone her entire life. She has been an inspiring advocate for change in Keystone, fighting for lawmakers and local politicians to take notice and help the community fight their current water crisis. Around the world, people like Hattie Avery fight for change concerning water scarcity. In Pope Francis' 2015 encyclical *Laudato Si*, he calls for people around the world to work to conserve water and help those in need. Pope Francis warns of the unsustainable water consumption levels of developed countries and wealthier sectors of society, especially the tendency to waste and discard water that is unavailable to poorer nations. Both the situation in Keystone and Pope Francis' encyclical remind us to uphold the Catholic Social Teaching of

rights and responsibilities. It is an all encompassing CST that reminds us that we have the responsibility to care for the basic human rights of others, especially those in need. Water, including access, cleanliness, and general use, is a basic right that all humans are entitled to. We need to work to ensure that each person on this planet has adequate access to clean and safe water.

In Pope Francis' *Message of His Holiness Pope Francis on the Occasion of "World Water Day 2019,"* he asks us to "leave no one behind." This message means that we have the responsibility to call upon our fellow brothers and sisters of wealthier and developed nations to help those in need. Pope Francis reminds us that access to water is a fundamental human right that must be respected. Therefore, we, as a faith community, must be helping those in need and treating them with the very dignity and respect that we demand for ourselves. Pope Francis ends his message by stating "as Saint Francis of Assisi said, water, which is 'so useful and humble, and precious, and pure,' may serve for our sustenance and benefit and that of future generations." Pope Francis and Saint Francis of Assisi remind us both of the importance of helping others receive adequate water supplies that ensure current and future generations can survive and flourish. We must care for those around us, especially those suffering, because it is our duty to do so. When we help others, we help ourselves and the world around us. In caring for others and their right to water, we are helping the Earth and all those that inhabit it.

Personally, I try to limit my water usage and only use when absolutely necessary. I also try to donate to organizations that support efforts to supply water to those in need. Water is a basic, fundamental human right. It is necessary for all people, plants, and animals to survive. Without water, none of us would be able to thrive. We need to help others find adequate water sources that allow them to live a healthy, sustainable lifestyle and support generations to come.