# RECOLLECTION

September 2026

Living Water
Season of Creation 2026

IMMERSION IN LIVING WATER
Ezekiel 47:9, 12

When the ecumenical team chose—"Living Water" as the theme for the "Season of Creation 2026" SOC"—in reference to the Book of Ezekiel (47:9,12), it could never have imagined that the topic of water would make headlines across all media in Europe.

Everywhere, water has become one of the main concerns for local communities: yet another heatwave in 2026; lack of rain; parched soil; plants and trees suffering from water and heat stress; scorched lawns and struggling vegetable gardens; meagre, if not non-existent agricultural yields; fish dying in rivers; a reduction in, or even a halt to, river traffic; a drop in electricity generation from hydroelectric power stations; the problem of cooling nuclear power stations and AI data centres;





the water requirements for fighting devastating fires; the sharp rise in deaths caused by heat and dehydration; calls to reduce water consumption; the ban on swimming due to the presence of blue-green algae and other bacteria… Please add to the list yourselves!

This year, the list of concerns and challenges is a long one, and it highlights just how much water is the source of life at every level of existence. Over the past few years, we have seen that what was once exceptional has now become the norm, heralding a new climate regime.

**The myth of abundant water**

In his book entitled "We Are Made of Water", the author Simon Porcher raises a pertinent point that gave me food for thought, which is reflected in this text. When it comes to water and the many challenges it poses in Europe, climate change is highlighted in media and political discourse. According to the author, 'the heart of the problem lies elsewhere: our societies are organised around the myth of abundant water'. 'We have constructed 'imaginaries of domination, abundance and control'[1]. 'We have forgotten that water is the result of fragile balances, complex natural cycles and demanding technical choices' (ibid., p. 17), and that we must relearn how to live within limits.

**Let us draw on our own experiences in Africa:**

We have often had first-hand experiences with water and can therefore better understand that water is a limited resource. Think of the farmers in the Sahel who were desperately waiting for rain. A poor harvest led to famine. Dried-up wells forced women to walk several kilometres with their buckets or jerry cans balancing on their heads. Boreholes were being drilled deeper and deeper. The lack of drinking water in the villages that welcomed us led us to opt for the local beer made from red sorghum,

[1] Simon Porcher « Nous sommes faits d'eau–l'avenir d'une ressource vitale », Editeur Les Corpsconducteurs, 2026, pp.11-12.

known as ‘dolo’. That way, we could be sure the water had been boiled to kill all germs and parasites. Remember too, those torrential downpours that caused the mud-brick huts to collapse. Water: an essential element for survival. These experiences in Burkina Faso, Mali and other parts of Africa help us to understand even more clearly that ‘water is life’.

## 1 – Meditation on water as the source of life

**The ‘Season of Creation’ presents us with a passage from the prophet Ezekiel 47:9,12:**

*Wherever the river flows, all living creatures teeming in it will live. Fish will be very plentiful, for wherever the water goes it brings health, and life teems wherever the river flows…. Along the river, on either bank, will grow every kind of fruit tree with leaves that never wither and fruit that never fails; they will bear new fruit every month, because this water comes from the sanctuary. And their fruit will be good to eat and the leaves medicinal."*

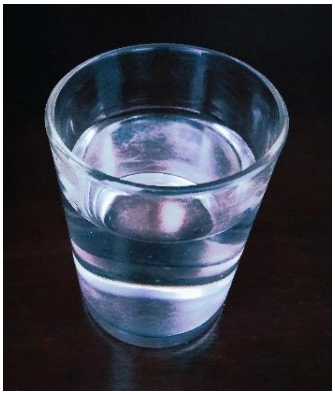


**A brief comment:**

“Living Water” is a powerful biblical vision of hope and ecological healing. Set amid exile and loss, the image of living water flowing from God’s sanctuary reveals divine healing that renews land, water, biodiversity, and human responsibility towards the whole creation.

**Learning to appreciate water as the source of life!**

(Personal exercise)



Take a glass and fill it with water. Drink it slowly. Enjoy the refreshing effect. This water gives you life! Isn’t our body made up of 60 to 70 per cent water? Thanks to this water, our organs are supplied with fluid, our blood circulates and carries oxygen, and our kidneys filter and eliminate toxins. Water ensures that all our vital functions work properly.

➔ **Be thankful for this life-giving water!**

**Water in our religious and liturgical practices:**

Water is constantly present in our religious and liturgical practices. Here are two examples:

**1/ The ritual of blessing with holy water**

When you enter or leave a chapel or church, you take some holy water and make the sign of the cross on your forehead. This practice, which had fallen out of use during the Covid pandemic, is finally making a comeback. My mother used to trace a cross on my forehead with holy water when I was leaving the house. Just recently, during a visit to my former parish priest, we traced a cross on each other’s foreheads with holy water before parting.

This rite reminds us that God’s blessing consists in giving us life and keeping us safe from danger. Yes, God is with us wherever we go, in our encounters and in our conversations, both in times of happiness as in difficult situations. God is our source of life.

➔ **Live and practice this rite of holy water with full attention, and recognize God as the source of life.**

**2/ Offertory words: 'By the mystery of this water and wine, may we come to share in the divinity of Christ, who humbled himself to share in our humanity'.**

Every day, during our Eucharistic celebrations, we say these words often in a hurry, almost on reflex. It would be good to take a moment to reflect on what we are saying and what we are hearing.

➔ **Meditate on the meaning of what you say and what you hear.**

How can you become even more united with Jesus Christ in your life? Unite yourselves with him, with his whole life right up to his death, for the water that flows from his heart for humanity never runs dry. Unite yourselves with him, for Jesus Christ is the living water from which you are invited to drink, just as the Samaritan woman at the well (Jn 4, 14).

**A little gem of wisdom from St Jean-Marie Vianney, the Curé d'Ars:**

'He who communicates loses himself in God like a drop of water in the ocean. They can no more be separated.'

Just as a drop of water falling into the sea becomes part of it and can no longer be distinguished, the soul unites so closely with God that it becomes one with Him.

## 2 – New challenges and concerns that water presents us with in this day and age

Water, the source of life, God's gift and promise to all creation and to the whole of humanity – both present and future generations – cannot leave us indifferent when we reflect on the many concerns of people and the challenges that water poses to us in our time.

Let us relate the water rites we celebrate in our liturgies to our daily lives. Let us be attentive to what is happening in the world and incorporate all of this into our prayers, our intercessions, as well as into our way of life and our commitment to JPIC-RD.

### Tensions and conflicts over water

In his message of 1 September to mark the 'World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation', Pope Leo addresses in particular the issue of water-related tensions and conflicts of interest, which risk escalating into armed conflicts. This poses a long-term threat to the lives of hundreds of millions of people. The title of the message, 'They shall beat their swords into ploughshares and their spears into pruning hooks' (Isaiah 2:4), is inspired by Isaiah's vision, which prophesies the transformation of weapons into agricultural tools. The Pope explicitly calls for development and sustainability to be prioritised over violence and destruction.

### Water as a unifying issue

It is important to emphasise that 'the water cycle connects us all'. Water flows, it is shared; it knows no borders. Water is at once local, regional, global and planetary. Moreover, it can never be taken for granted.

The encyclical Laudato Si' placed great emphasis on the fact that "everything in the world is connected" (LS no. 16). Water is a prime example demonstrating that all of creation forms an interconnected community of life. Indeed, 'water is not a resource to be exploited or a mere part of the landscape; it is a living common good, shared with all

species' (ibid., p. 66). Consequently, "interdependence obliges us to think of one world with a common plan" (LS no. 164).

## Water as a catalyst for cooperation

The common good must be shared and governed collectively. Water encourages us to reconnect with others – with both human and non-human beings. Water compels us to cooperate, not only amongst citizens of the same country, but also between states and, beyond that, with the whole creation. Only in this way can we strengthen our resilience and secure our future. The 'we' is to be understood inclusively and encompasses all of creation, both the present generation and future generations. In this way, water can become a catalyst for cooperation.

In light of what we have been experiencing in recent months, water must increasingly become a public, national and international political priority. For our part, the Church unequivocally emphasises the following point: "Yet 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" (LS no. 30).

## Water challenges our way of life

Water is also becoming a cultural priority. Obsessed with the short term, with domination and profit, (an extractivist mindset and) with the exploitation of ecosystems, and characterised by a profound insensitivity to living things, this worldview has led to the 'throwaway culture' denounced in Laudato Si', nos. 20–22.



"The pace of consumption, waste and environmental change has so stretched the planet's capacity that our contemporary lifestyle, unsustainable as it is, can only precipitate catastrophes, such as those which even now periodically occur in different areas of the world" (LS No. 161). Indeed, there is an urgent need for different practices, different habits and a different way of life – one that also takes water sobriety into account.

**Conclusion**

Although we cannot cover every aspect of the water issue here, it is clear that water is the major challenge of the 21st century, and that this topic will be the subject of increasingly important debates in the future. 'To recognise water as a shared resource, as a heritage to be passed on, is to accept that it does not belong to us, that it existed before us and that it will outlive us' (ibid., p. 13).

Drawing on our faith and encouraged by God's promise, we can commit ourselves with confidence and perseverance to ensuring living water for all.

En puisant dans notre foi et soutenu par la promesse de Dieu, nous pouvons nous engager avec confiance et persévérance en faveur de l'eau vive pour tous.

Have a blessed time of prayer.

May living water refresh and strengthen you!

**Produced on 20/08/2026 and shared by the JPIC-RD Coordination of the Missionaries of Africa, Europe - Charles Degroux 118, 1040 Brussels - andreasgopfert@gmail.com**