



CATHOLIC BISHOPS CALL FOR LENTEN PRAYER AND FASTING DURING TIME OF DROUGHT

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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SACRAMENTO –*Bishop Jaime Soto, President of the California Catholic Conference of Bishops, released the following statement:*

During this Season of Lent, we, the Catholic Bishops of California, invite the Catholic community and other Californians of good will to exercise restraint in the use of water as an expression of solidarity with those whose livelihood and welfare are at risk due to extreme drought conditions.

Lent is a holy, penitential season in the Catholic Church's liturgical year, reflecting the forty days Jesus spent in the desert in fasting and prayer. In this time, Catholics unite themselves with the Lord Jesus in the struggle to overcome the power of evil and the slavery of sin. We do so with prayer, fasting, abstinence, as well as other penitential sacrifices, and charitable works.

This year, Californians are in an actual desert as an historic drought looms over us. Farmers cannot access sufficient water to raise their crops. Fields will remain fallow. Men and women will be left standing without work. Access for children and families to clean, drinkable water is uncertain. Legislators struggle to craft an equitable public policy ensuring the State's present and future water needs.

We are starkly reminded in this time of drought of our dependence on the Creator. The fragile relationship between ourselves and the creation that God has made to sustain us is threatened. Our human dignity relies on access to water. That same human dignity is diminished when we let this precious resource slip carelessly through our hands. The creation entrusted to us is a common heritage and requires us to work together as responsible stewards for the common good, especially mindful of the weak and vulnerable. As the economic and health impact of the drought grows those with limited resources will be the first to suffer. Wise conservation practices will mitigate those effects. They also serve as concrete acts of solidarity giving life and hope to other fellow Californians.

During this Lent, we pray that God opens the heavens and lets His mercy rain down upon our fields and mountains. May we receive the grace to better conserve our natural resources and expend our energies in works of charity so that justice and mutual respect may flow like a river through the cities, towns and fields of our State. Looking towards the sacred days of Easter, we hope that God's wisdom and joy may rise like a fountain of living water in the hearts and minds of all Californians.

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