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Water is essential for all life. We citizens of the Blue Planet need water to survive.

Yet not all in our world have sufficient freshwater for their daily needs and the situation is getting worse. More than 650 million of the world's poorest are living without access to an 'improved source of drinking water' and 2.5 billion people live without basic sanitation. By 2025, it is estimated that 1800 million people will be living in countries or regions with absolute water scarcity, and two-thirds of the world's population could be under water stress.

As the world's population grows, the demand for water is rising rapidly - to produce more food, to meet the needs of rapidly expanding cities and industries and to generate more electricity. But as demand grows, water supply is becoming more variable and less reliable. Climate Change is affecting rainfall patterns, causing both more intense and out of season flooding, as well as higher temperatures and prolonged droughts.

In the India state of Maharashtra, two poor monsoon seasons have left dams at low levels or empty. The Maharashtrian town of Latur now depends on a train of 10 tankers to bring 500,000 litres of water from hundreds of kilometres away two to three times a week. While in neighbouring Rajasthan, India's hottest day on record 51C was recorded at Phalodi on 20 May.

The World Economic Forum's Global Risks Report 2016 identifies 'water crises' as the global risk of highest concern for the next 10 years. Many of these risks will be concentrated in the Asia-Pacific region, close to Australia. Already some 90% of humanitarian disasters are water-related, including floods, droughts, cyclones, and land-slides. The majority of the people affected by these 'natural' disasters live in the Asia region.

The world is facing a water crisis. We can 'manufacture' more freshwater through very energy intensive desalination, but the solution to the crisis, as in most natural resource issues, is to recognise that it is a finite resource and it must be managed carefully and equitably so that people, agriculture and industry may have enough for their needs. Australia is lucky because living in the driest inhabited continent we have learnt over many decades how to manage water in the context of scarcity. So much so that many countries around the world are keen to learn from our experience, especially in the Murray Darling River Basin.

Thirteen countries in the Middle East will face severe water crises within the next 25 years, and Palestine ranks as one of the highest risks. Water scarcity has already been blamed as one of the underlying issues in the Syrian civil war and also a root cause of the conflict in Yemen.

Reflecting life, history and revelation in that region, the Bible is rich with stories and analogies about water. Water in the Bible begins in Genesis and ends in Revelation. We who have been offered the opportunity to 'drink of living water' are called to share our gift by ensuring all have the benefit of life giving water. Here are three ways we can become part of the solution to the global water crisis.

Firstly, we all need to be water conscious. After the Millennium drought, Australians had substantially reduced their daily use of water and even though the rains have come, we have remained sparing in our water use. We need to maintain those newly found good habits.

Secondly, we must reduce our carbon emissions to lessen the impact of climate change. Extreme weather events and prolonged drought will have a devastating impact on the lives of poor people living in marginal lands, be they low coastal lands or dry rain-fed agriculture lands.

Thirdly, when we shop look for the Fair Trade label, and ask if the cotton clothes you plan to buy are from sustainable sources. Cotton is one of the world's most important natural fibres but it also a very thirsty crop. Thanks to the international **Better Cotton Initiative**, many garment manufacturers are now buying cotton from sources that use water sustainably. Check the BCI website for a list.

June 5 in World Environment Day with the Invitation "Join the race to make the world a better place". Can we afford not to join the race?