

Water Witness

A Reflection on
Water
offered by the
Eco-Justice Committee
of the
Dominican Sisters
and Associates of
Peace
2012

Overview:

Throughout the Scriptures, we are reminded of the two greatest commandments: Loving God and loving our neighbor as ourselves. “Today, with our rise in eco-justice consciousness, we would include all creation within our notion of the ‘neighbor’ to be loved.” (Barbara Reid, OP) Water, one of God’s created and our very much prized resources, is becoming increasingly scarce in large areas of our world, among so many of our neighbors. The Dominican Sisters of Peace Eco-Justice Committee is offering ways to help us appreciate this reality by:

- Making us mindful of our present use of water;
- Providing the opportunity for us to delve more deeply into a greater understanding of the issue;
- Encouraging an active response

Our hope is that, like Daniel Berrigan and his commitment to ending nuclear proliferation, we get to the point where we “cannot not” take a stand on the issue. The choices we make in this our time and place will affect future generations.

To help facilitate this end, we offer our **Water Witness** packet:

- 1) A reflection sheet based on the theological process: observe, judge, and act is provided for your personal response.
- 2) Three suggested activities:
 - a) The Hidden Cost of Water suggests four weeks of action to increase awareness of water use.
 - b) The Gift of Water offers three reflections from a third world perspective.
 - c) Water Wisdom provides a month’s worth of photos and quotes for daily reflection and journaling.
- 3) A feedback form is also available, the information from which can, hopefully, be shared with other members of the congregation.
- 4) In addition to the packet we offer:
 - a) Legislative updates and action follow ups.
 - b) Prayers during the Lenten season that incorporate the water theme.
 - c) March 22, World Water Day, falls during Lent this year and may be chosen as the particular day for prayer and action.

Our desire is that you will engage in this effort either individually or with others, perhaps with your study group. Know that our prayer is that we may each be blessed in our chosen endeavors to honor the sacred gift of water and to make a positive difference.

Eco-Justice Committee:

Sr. Marguerite Chandler, OP (Chair)
Sr. Marilyn Ambrosic, OP
Sr. Jane Belanger, OP
Sr. Shirley Bodish, OP
Sr. Theresina Greenwell, OP

Associate Judy Hardy, OPA
Sr. Roberta Miller, OP
Sr. Judy Morris, OP
Sr. Mariellen Phelps, OP
Sr. Charlene Vogel, OP
Sr. Terry Wasinger, OP



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Reflection Process for *Water Witness* Packet

This can be done in whatever way that is appropriate for your personal preferences, situation, and time – but please utilize some evaluation process that may lead you to consider personal and/or corporate action. The various activities in the packet contain hints, suggestions and options to draw from – or you may come up with your own. The Dominican Sisters of Peace Eco-Justice Committee would be glad if you choose to share some of your reflections, giving us feedback on your use of this packet. Page three provides a cover to include with whatever written reflection you choose to use from this Theological Reflection Process that we hope you will return to the Committee.

The packet offers a variety of options for prayer, study and reflection. You may have chosen to use one or several.

1. Describe briefly which exercises in the packet that you engaged in:

- As an individual...
- In a group (describe group)...

The theological reflection process: observe, judge, act can offer a format.

OBSERVE: As you engaged the material, what facts, issues, information struck you the most?

What was awakened in you?

Were you moved to go deeper and explore more? Describe.

Was anything new for you? Explain.

What touched your prayer and how?

What changes were you moved to make as a result of your study?



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JUDGE: As you engaged the material, is your faith relevant to WATER in your awareness, choices, prayer, and liturgical life? Does and understanding of water affect your faith; and does your faith affect your understanding of water?

Were there any scriptures, Church documents or other writings that inspired you? Cite them.

Did you utilize any of the water materials in your personal prayer; in corporate prayer? Describe how.

Did your experience of the sacraments, especially Baptism as celebrated in the context of the Lenten/Easter liturgy, have deepened meaning this year?

Did you reflect on the ethical issues that your reflections sparked? Explain.

ACT: As a result of this engagement with these materials, were you moved to take some specific actions as a result?

Which, if any, of the practical activities did you practice? How did that affect you?

Have you made any concrete changes in your physical living space, your daily routines, your purchasing, or policies as a result of your water awareness? Describe.

Did you try to engage other people – students, colleagues, family members, employees, etc. – in this water awareness? Describe.

Can you formulate a commitment that you want to make regarding water:

GENERAL REFLECTION: In lieu of answering the above questions, you may simply wish to share a general thought, prayer, observation, art work, etc. that expresses your personal transformative experience as a result of this process. It would help our committee to know which process(es) you utilized and then offer whatever you wish to share.

Feedback Form for the Eco-Justice Committee's (*Water Witness*)

FEEDBACK: In addition to the committee's welcoming your responses to the *Water Witness* (Water Packet), we hope to share some additional reflections, insights, and actions Peace Sisters and Associates engaged in – think of this as preaching with one another. Please consider this. But even if you'd rather not be “published” – we hope you will share any comments you have about this process with the Committee, at least. Thanks.

___ I am willing to share any of the material that I have included in this reflection tool. You may ___, may NOT ___ use my name.

___ I do not wish to have any of my reflections “published” except for the study for the Eco-Justice committee's work.

___ I am willing to share on OPPeace the items I've marked with an asterisk (*).

Any further comments:

Please include any written material that you have used as an evaluation/reflection process during (perhaps) and after you have completed working with these materials. Please send them to Sr. Marguerite Chandler, OP (chair), either by regular mail or email.

Marguerite Chandler, OP
PO Box 484
Bath, OH 44210-0484
mcop1213@gmail.com

Name _____

Group (if applicable) _____

Address _____ City _____ St _____ Zip _____

Email _____

Thank you so much for sharing this process with us and the whole congregation.

The Dominican Sisters of Peace Eco-Justice Committee



Activity #1 – Hidden Water Costs:

Week 1

- One serving of beef (3 oz.) requires about 338 gallons of water to process.
- Can you reduce your meat consumption this week?
- Every drop counts!

Week 2

- One pound of plastic requires 24 gallons of water to produce it.
- Can you reduce your use of plastic this week?
- Plastic bags, packaging, bottled water, and all bottled drinks.
- Every piece of plastic that goes into the trash is water down the drain!
- Every drop counts!

Week 3

- One gallon of gas requires 13 gallons of water to produce it.
- Can you reduce your driving this week?
- Combine trips, car pool, walk.
- Every drop counts!

Week 4

- It takes 2.6 gallons of water to produce a sheet of letter sized paper.
- You can save 3.5 gallons of water just by recycling a pound of paper.
- Can you reduce your use of paper this week?
- Print on both sides, reuse, recycle.
- Every piece of paper that goes into the trash is water down the drain!
- Every drop counts!



Activity #2 – The Gift of Water

The power of community is the power of one multiplied by which we honor the sacred gift of water.

The following calls for our reflection. It has three sections which are interconnected in themselves as well as with public and corporate policies. It is suggested that you choose one section upon which to reflect, connect, pray and act over the month. Perhaps at the end of the month, a communal prayer service could lift up in prayer the energies created to conserve and protect this life sustaining element – water.

Part I: Reflection on our water supply

Briefly journal thoughts and feelings on these aspects of our water use:

- Are we too comfortable with our water supply?
- Can we name at least five sources for the world's water supply?

- Do I ever think about the availability of water where I live? When I want a glass of water, I merely turn on the faucet or maybe I pour a glass from bottled water bought at the store – I can buy a 24 pack on sale for \$2.88. But from where did the water come – in the faucet or from the bottle?
- Do I really know if the water I am drinking is pure – without bacteria, amoebas or poisonous chemicals?
- Do I assume I will always have water for my personal needs?

- What happens with those suffering natural disasters like snow storms, flooding from hurricanes, or long droughts. If electricity is out, water becomes a premium. Not many persons or families can afford to have gas-driven electric generators. (Many have died from monoxide fumes or fires in using such generators.)
- What happens to bodies of water (aquifers, rivers, lakes) when an oil pipeline going through or over them leaks? Is not one drop too much?
- How can I be a force to protect our local water supply? Our national water sources? Our world's water supplies?



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Part II: Reflection on activities in our water related worlds

In many parts of our world as in our mission areas in Honduras, Mexico, Peru, and Nigeria, water is either very scarce or onerous to obtain. Women in particular bear the responsibility of “fetching” buckets of water. The women cannot be fussy or worry about whether the water is clean – just that they have some for their family each day.

To have an idea of water conditions for Honduran, Mexican, or Nigerian women and to be **in solidarity with our own missionaries try for at least a week activity #1 and/or 2.**

1. Brush teeth with ½ glass of water?
2. Wash self with less than a bucket of water?
3. **Briefly journal your reflections on doing the activity.**

Below are other water challenges for the women young and elderly:

- Every couple of days, buy a 20 lb. bottle of water for drinking and washing foods.
- Store enough water in a tub at 6am for toilet flushing, cooking, cleaning, etc. before the city water is turned off.
- Remember (or know what it is) the outhouse for toilets? Flushing a toilet by using a toilet handle or just flushing a toilet is uncommon in rural areas and may be so in urban areas in the missions.
- What do I do when I think my children are constantly ill with diarrhea or stomach pain from drinking the water in the pipes or from the river or bought from the city water trucks?

In areas where water must be carried from the well or from a stream, women and children suffer from skeletal deformation because of carrying heavy jars or pans of water on the shoulder or backs or head. (Think of a neighboring river/creek in areas near us such as the Olentangy River, Cartright Creek, Big Walnut, Cedar River, or the Platte and Ohio rivers.) A family of eight must carry twice daily the equivalent of two to three buckets of water from sources compromised by animal feces, dirt, and other waste products. Water cannot be purified by boiling when wood is either scarce or too expensive to purchase.



Part III: Reflection on the Witness of Our Own Missionaries

Two convents of the Nigerian Dominican Sisters were enabled to have holes/wells drilled this year. This included piping of the well water into their convents. The Sisters write in letters of thanksgiving:

It has not been easy for us all these years living without water. For me seeing water rushing into our various bathrooms, kitchen, laundry is really a miracle and a thing of joy.

Our queue for water and carrying water upstairs is all over. The difficulty of carrying heavy gallons of water from the compound into the rooms and kitchen is now solved.

It was like a dream as I find myself under a running shower. I felt like a queen. No more struggle to fetch water, spending a huge part of our feeding impress in buying water nor do we have to beg for the water around.

We bought water for cooking, drinking, etc. Sometimes the owners allowed us to fetch the water free but not without some grudges. Now we can fetch water right in our house without looking for a vehicle and containers to go and buy water.

- Do we realize that whether we live in a house or an apartment or school or hospital we pay for our water? How much we pay depends upon how much water we use. In Columbus, Ohio, one person using eight CCF (cubic feet) of water inside the home pays \$99.34. One CCF = 748 gallons. If I run the water in cleaning my teeth or in washing dishes or in “eight minute showers” along with my flush toilets, how quickly will I use up my 5984 gallons of water?

Although most of us have never had to carry heavy buckets of water or worry about its availability, perhaps we should worry about water’s continued availability here in our state, our region, our world. What would the lack of water – and money to buy it – mean for how we live?

Water is a precious commodity in our personal world and more precious globally.

Reflection/journal:

For your reflection journaling complete the following: **The lack of water and/or the money to buy it...**

Perhaps a letter to our missionaries could be written telling them about your appreciation of the gift of water.



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Activity #3 – Water Wisdom



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Water is the driving force of all nature.

– Leonardo da Vinci



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Jiri Hoden

www.publicdomainpictures.net

**Unlike a drop of water which loses its identity
when it joins the ocean, man does not lose his
being in the society in which he lives.**

– B. R. Ambedkar



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Study how water flows in a valley stream, smoothly and freely between the rocks. Also learn from holy books and wise people. Everything – even mountains, rivers, plants, and trees – should be your teacher.

– Morihei Ueshiba



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USDA NRCS

Only 2.5% of the world's water is not salty, and two-thirds of that is trapped in the icecaps and glaciers. Of what is left, about 20% is in remote areas and most of the rest comes at the wrong time and in the wrong place, as with monsoons and floods. The amount of fresh water available for human use is less than 0.08% of all the water on the planet. About 70% of the fresh water is already used for agriculture, and the report says the demands of industry and energy will grow rapidly.

– B-BC News, “Water arithmetic 'doesn't add up,’” 13 Mar 2000



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US Fish and Wildlife Service

Concern for the fate of the great rivers of the Earth must lead us to reflect soberly on the model of development which our society is pursuing. A purely economic and technological understanding of progress, will inevitably provoke negative consequences for individuals, peoples and creation itself.

– Pope Benedict XVI, [letter to Orthodox patriarch of Constantinople](#)



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**It doesn't matter if the water is cold or warm if
you're going to have to wade through it
anyway.**

– Pierre Teilhard de Chardin



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“No man ever steps in the same river twice, for it’s not the same river and he’s not the same man.”

– Heraclitus



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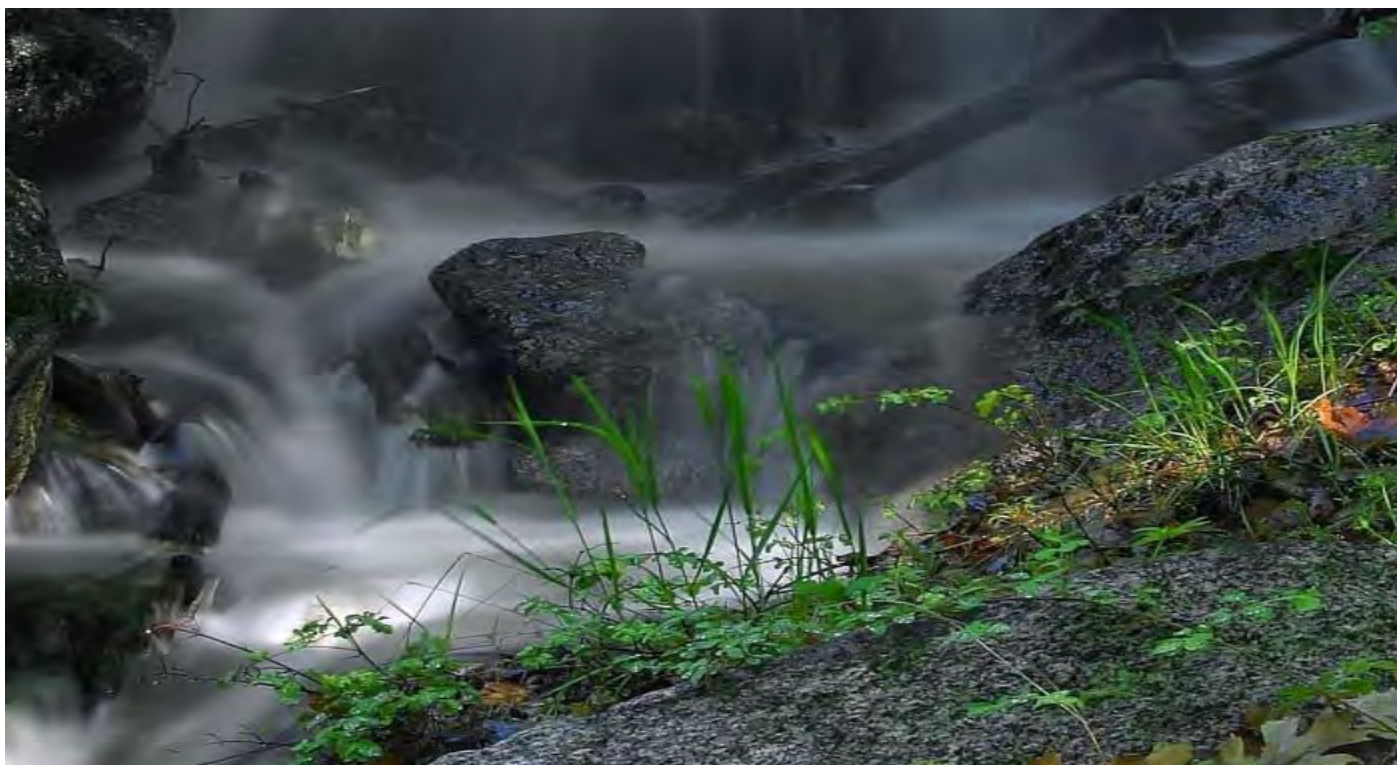
“There has been a lot said about the sacredness of our land which is our body; and the values of our culture which is our soul; but water is the blood of our tribes, and if its life-giving flow is stopped, or it is polluted, all else will die and the many thousands of years of our communal existence will come to an end.”

– Frank Tenorio, 1978



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**Be praised, My Lord, through Sister Water; she is
very useful, and humble, and precious, and pure.**

– Francis of Assisi (1181-1226) Canticle of the Sun circa 1225



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Water is also one of the four elements, the most beautiful of God's creations. It is this the Holy Scripture has in view when it says, "And the darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters." Water, then, is the most beautiful element and rich in usefulness, and purifies from all filth, and not only from the filth of the body but from that of the soul, if it should have received the grace of the Spirit.



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– John of Damascus (679?-749) Exposition of the Orthodox Faith

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**Wild rivers are Earth's renegades, defying gravity,
dancing to their own tunes, resisting the authority of
humans, always chipping away, and eventually
always winning.**

– Richard Bangs



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US Fish and Wildlife Service

We have a lot of ways to meet our energy needs. These salmon only have one river forever. If we do not support them, they will go extinct.

– Todd True



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**I hope for your help to explore and protect the wild ocean in ways that will restore the health and, in so doing, secure hope for humankind.
Health to the ocean means health for us.**

– Sylvia Earle



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US Geographic Survey

There is no water in oxygen, no water in hydrogen: it comes bubbling fresh from the imagination of the living God, rushing from under the great white throne of the glacier. The very thought of it makes one gasp with an elemental joy no metaphysician can analyze. The water itself, that dances, and sings, and slakes the wonderful thirst – symbol and picture of that draught for which the woman of Samaria made her prayer to Jesus – this lovely thing itself, whose very wetness is a delight to every inch of the human body in its embrace – this live thing which, if I might, I would have running through my room, yea, babbling along my table – this water is its own self its own truth, and is therein a truth of God.

– George Macdonald (1824-1905)



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**One can not reflect in streaming water.
Only those who know internal peace can give it
to others.**

– Lao Tzu



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The air we breathe, the water we drink, and the land we inhabit are not only critical elements in the quality of life we enjoy – they are a reflection of the majesty of our Creator.

– Rick Perry



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“Rain is grace; rain is the sky condescending
to the Earth;
without rain there would be no life.”

– John Updike



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“If we lived in a desert and our lives depended on a water supply that came out of a steel tube, we would inevitably watch that tube and talk about it understandingly. No citizen would need to be lectured about his duty toward its care and spurred to help if it were in danger.”

– Isaiah Bowman



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You should not see the desert simply as some faraway place of little rain. There are many forms of thirst.

– William Langewiesche



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Animals need water, people need it too.



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– Author Unknown

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“In an age when man has forgotten his origins and is blind even to his most essential needs for survival, water along with other resources has become the victim of his indifference.”

– Rachel Carson



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The marsh, to him who enters it in a receptive mood,
holds, besides mosquitoes and stagnation, melody, the
mystery of unknown waters, and the sweetness of Nature
undisturbed by man.

– Charles William Beebe



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**“Til taught by pain, men really know not
what good water is worth.”**



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– From “Don Juan” by Byron

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“It is water, in every form and at every scale, that saturates the mind. All the water that will ever be is, right now.”

– National Geographic, October 1993



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Rivers, ponds, lakes, and streams – they all have different names, but they all contain water. Just as religions do – they all contain truths.

– Muhammad Ali



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There's something about the water – that solitary kind of peaceful feeling. You're on Earth but not quite.

– John C. Reilly



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Water is fluid, soft, and yielding. But water will wear away rock, which is rigid and cannot yield. As a rule, whatever is fluid, soft, and yielding will overcome whatever is rigid and hard. This is another paradox: what is soft is strong.

– Lao-Tzu (600 BC)



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A river seems a magic thing. A magic, moving,
living part of the very Earth itself.

– Laura Gilpin



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Take almost any path you please, and ten to one it carries you down in a dale, and leaves you there by a pool in the stream. There is magic in it. Yes, as every one knows, meditation and water are wedded forever.

– Herman Melville



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“It is a fascinating and provocative thought that a body of water deserves to be considered as an organism in its own right.”

– Lyall Watson



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**To honor and protect the waters is our responsibility
as people of the land.**

– Winona LaDuke



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