



carmelngo

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"Water is 'a universal and inalienable right' for all people and an 'essential and indispensable gift' from God. Its use must be guided by 'reason and solidarity,' taking into account the 'growing and perennial needs of people who live in poverty'."

Catholic Social Principles
Towards Water and Sanitation



naturalgrocers.com

March 22: World Water Day

Water: Touches Every Facet of Life

*You have visited the land and watered it; Greatly have you enriched it.
God's watercourses are filled; you have prepared the grain.
Thus have you prepared the land; drenching its furrows, breaking up its clods,
softening it with showers, blessing its yield. (Psalm 65:10-11)*

The United Nations has declared March 22 as World Water Day as a means of focusing attention on the importance of freshwater and advocating for the sustainable management of freshwater resources. The fulfillment of basic human needs, the environment, socio-economic development and poverty reduction are all heavily dependent on water.

Water is the primary building block of life: without it there is no life. Good management of water is challenging in part because it is unevenly distributed. Rapid urbanization, pollution and climate change threaten the resource while demands for water are increasing in order to satisfy the needs of a growing world population for food production, energy, industrial and domestic uses. Water is a shared resource and its management needs to take into account a wide variety of conflicting interests – this demands cooperation among users.

In designating 2013 as the *UN International Year of Water Cooperation*, the UN General Assembly recognized that cooperation is essential to strike a balance between the different needs and priorities in order to share this precious resource equitably. Promoting water cooperation implies an interdisciplinary approach including: cultural, educational and scientific factors, as well as religious, ethical, social, political, legal, institutional and economic dimensions.

Water and sanitation are essential for human well-being, economic development and a healthy environment. Every year, water-related natural disasters such as storms, floods and droughts have devastating impacts on the lives of millions of people, on economies and on

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the environment. Making sure that all have access to sufficient quantity and quality of water while preventing and mitigating risks from weather-related hazards is a critical challenge of the future.

What Do We Know About Water Usage?

Eighty-five percent of the world's population lives in the driest half of the planet. Some 783 million people do not have access to clean water and 2.5 billion do not have access to adequate sanitation.

Six to eight million people die annually from the consequences of disasters and water-related diseases.

Based on business as usual, 3.5 planet Earths would be needed to sustain a global population achieving the current lifestyle of the average European or North American.

One toilet flush in the USA uses as much water as the average person in a developing country uses for a whole day's drinking, cooking, washing and cleaning.

Global population growth projections of 2–3 billion people over the next 40 years, combined with changing diets, result in a predicted increase in food demand of 70% by 2050.

Water availability is expected to decrease in many regions. Yet future global agricultural water consumption alone is estimated to increase by 19% by 2050, and will be even greater in the absence of any technological progress or policy intervention.

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Water for irrigation and food production constitutes one of the greatest pressures on freshwater resources. Agriculture accounts for 70% of global freshwater withdrawals and up to 90% in some fast-growing economies.

Economic growth and individual wealth are shifting diets from predominantly starch-based to meat and dairy, which require more water. Producing 1 kg of rice requires 3,500 L of water, one kg of beef requires 15,000 L, and a cup of coffee requires 140 L. This dietary shift is the greatest impact on water consumption over the past 30 years, and is likely to continue.

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) predicts with high confidence that water stress will increase in central and southern Europe, and by the 2070s, the number of people affected will rise from 28 million to 44 million.

The cost of adapting to the impacts of a 2°C rise in global average temperature could range from US\$70 to \$100 billion per year between 2020 and 2050 (World Bank, 2010). Of this cost, between US\$13.7 billion (drier scenario) and \$19.2 billion (wetter scenario) will be related to water, predominantly through water supply and flood management.

There are 276 trans-border river basins in the world (64 in Africa, 60 in Asia, 68 in Europe, 46 in North America and 38 in South America). Some 185 of these trans-border river basins are shared by two countries.

Forty-six percent of the world's (terrestrial) surface is covered by trans-border river basins. 148 countries include territory within one or more trans-border river basins. Thirty-nine countries have more than 90% of their territory within one or more trans-border river basins, and 21 lie entirely within one or more of these watersheds.

Rich nations are tending to maintain or increase their consumption of natural resources, but are exporting their water footprints to producer, and typically, poorer, nations. European and North American populations consume a considerable amount of virtual water

CarmeNGO is published four times each year and is distributed to those interested in the mission of the NGO. For more information or to add your name and address to our mailing list, please visit our website (carmelitengo.org) or write to us by email (jremson@carmelitengo.org) or by regular post at 1725 General Taylor Street; New Orleans, LA 70115; USA)

Websites on Water Issues:

UN-Water

www.unwater.org/water-cooperation-2013

Water for Life Decade (2005–2015)

www.unwater.org/w4life

Water and Development – Global Issues

www.globalissues.com

Natural Resources Defense Council

www.nrdc.org/water/

Water Facts: Water

www.water.org

World Water Council

www.worldwatercouncil.org

UN Global Issues: Water

www.un.org/en/globalissues/water

For more detailed information about the content of these Side Events, check the Carmelite NGO website: carmelitengo.org or www.uncsd2012.org/meetings_sidevents.html



Water in the World's Religions

Holy Water

"I wash my hands in innocence, and go around your altar, O Lord."
Psalm 26:6

Water occupies a central place in the practices and beliefs of many religions. Water cleanses by washing away impurities and any signs of defilement. Water is the primary building block of life. Without water there is no life. The significance of water manifests itself differently in different religions and beliefs but it

is its qualities of cleansing and building that gives water its place in different cultures and faiths.

Most Christian sects have an initiation ritual involving the use of water. Baptism has its origins in the symbolism of the Israelites being led out of slavery in Egypt through the Red Sea, and from the baptism of Jesus by John the Baptist in the river Jordan. Baptism is seen as a symbol of liberation from the oppression of sin that separates one from God. The use of water is important for its symbolic value; it cleanses and fills everything it enters as God fills those who are immersed in Him. Water is needed to survive physically as we need God to survive spiritually. Jesus is the living water. In John 4:14, "Whoever drinks the water I give will never be thirsty; no, the water I give shall become a fountain within him, leaping up to eternal life."

In Islam water is important for cleansing and purifying. Muslims must be ritually pure before approaching God in prayer. "O you who believe, when you prepare for prayer, wash your faces and your hand to the elbows; rub your head and your feet to the ankles." (Qur'an 5:7/8). The water of rain, rivers, and fountains runs through the pages of the Qur'an to symbolize God's benevolence: "He sends down saving rain for them when they have lost all hope and spreads abroad His mercy." (Qur'an 25:48). The believers are constantly reminded that it is God who gives sweet water to the people, and that God can withhold it: "Consider the water which you drink. Was it you that brought it down from the rain cloud or God? If God had pleased, God could make it bitter." (Qur'an 56:68-70). Believers are taught that they are only the guardians of God's creation.

In Judaism ritual washing is intended to restore or maintain a state of ritual purity. Its origins are found in the Torah. Priests had to wash their hands before taking part in Temple services. The Great Flood in Genesis tells the story of God's wrath on humankind. Only Noah, his family and a pair of each animal were saved. The flood is a divine punishment from which Noah survives because of his moral worthiness. The flood washed away all the sins of the world so that we could start anew.

Shinto is Japan's indigenous religion and is based on the veneration of the *kami* – the innumerable deities believed to inhabit mountains, trees, rocks, springs and other natural phenomenon. Worship of *kamis* always begins with the important act of purification with water. Inside the sacred shrines troughs for ritual washing are placed. Waterfalls are held sacred and standing under a waterfall is believed to purify.

Water is featured in Buddhist funerals. Water is poured into a bowl placed before the monks and the dead body. As it fills and pours over the edge, the monks recite, "As the rains fill the rivers and overflow into the ocean, so likewise may what is given here reach the departed."

Water in Hinduism has a special place because it is believed to have spiritually cleansing powers. To Hindus all water is sacred, especially rivers, and there are seven sacred rivers; the Ganges, Yamuna, Godavari, Sarasvati, Narmada, Sindhu and Kaveri. Although Hinduism encompasses many different beliefs among those that most Hindus do share is the importance of striving to attain purity and avoiding pollution. This relates to both physical cleanliness and spiritual well-being.

Water is of major importance to all living things; up to 60% of the human adult body is water. Water is necessary for our physical well-being, and it has an integral role in many religious practices and beliefs.

by Jane Remson, O. Carm. - Main Representative



Facts and Figures about the World's Water Supply

- There are 1.4 billion cubic kilometers of water on the planet but almost 97 percent is salt water. Most freshwater is locked up in glaciers or deep underground, leaving only a fraction available for human consumption or use.
- Most experts believe there is still enough water to go around, but its distribution is very uneven. North Americans have access to over 6,000 cubic meters per person per year stored in reservoirs. But the poorest African countries have less than 700 and Ethiopia has less than 50 cubic meters per person per year of water storage. Wealthy but water-scarce countries such as Saudi Arabia can afford expensive desalination projects, but poor ones cannot.
- Agriculture accounts for 66 percent of human water consumption, industry 20 percent, domestic households 10 percent, according to the World Water Council. About four percent evaporates from man-made reservoirs.
- Providing clean drinking water to the poor is one of the biggest development challenges. The United Nations Millennium Development Goals pledged at the start of this decade "to halve, by 2015, the proportion of the population without sustainable access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation." The U.N. says that since 1990, 1.6 billion people have gained access to safe water. But nearly a billion people still lack safe drinking water.

rueters.com



The Cost of Impure Water

- 3.41 million people die from water, sanitation and hygiene-related causes each year.
- Half of the world's hospital beds are filled with people suffering from water related illnesses.
- It is estimated that nearly 10% of the global disease burden could be reduced through improved water supply, sanitation, hygiene, and water resource management.

blueplanetnetwork.org



goinswriter.com

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embedded in imported food and products. Each person in North America and Europe (excluding former Soviet Union countries) consumes at least 3 cubic meters per day of virtual water in imported food, compared to 1.4 cubic meters per day in Asia and 1.1 cubic meters per day in Africa.

Land grabbing is another increasingly common phenomenon. Saudi Arabia, one of the Middle East's largest cereal growers, cut its cereal production by 12% a year to reduce the unsustainable use of groundwater. To protect its water and food security, the Saudi government issued incentives to Saudi corporations to lease large tracts of land in Africa for agricultural production. Saudi Arabia's minister of agriculture explained that the Saudi government has prioritized water security over water intensive local food production. "That is why we decided in Saudi Arabia to phase out our growing of locally produced wheat. By 2016 the government will not buy locally produced wheat." By investing in Africa to produce its staple crops, Saudi Arabia is saving the equivalent of hundreds of millions of gallons of water per year and reducing the rate of depletion of its fossil aquifers.

Pollution knows no borders. Up to 90% of wastewater in developing countries flows untreated into rivers, lakes and highly productive coastal zones, threatening health, food security and access to safe drinking and bathing water. Over 80% of used water worldwide is not collected or treated. The treatment of wastewater requires significant amounts of energy, and demand for energy to do this is expected to increase globally by 44% between 2006 and 2030.

Now We Know, What Can We Do?

The first thing we can do is to enhance our awareness. Treat water as the precious resource that it is by not wasting it. Remember, water is used by many religions for blessing its followers, and as an integral part of religious ceremonies, for example, the initiation rite of baptism. Each day thank God for the life-giving resource of water.

The next thing we can do is further educate ourselves on the global issue of water. Pay attention to what your country's policies are regarding water. We know in many parts of the world that water is scarce and because of this scarcity, peace is often threatened. Equitable sharing of water distribution is necessary to meet the different needs and priorities of all countries. Trans-border waters have proved to be a source of cooperation rather than conflict. Nearly 450 agreements on international waters were signed between 1820 and 2007. Over 90 international water agreements have been drawn up to help manage shared water basins on the African continent where about one-third of the world's major international water basins are located.

On 28 July 2010, through Resolution 64/292 the United Nations General Assembly explicitly recognized the human right to water and sanitation and acknowledged that clean drinking water and sanitation are essential to the realization of all human rights. The Resolution calls upon States and international organizations to provide financial resources, help capacity-building and technology transfer to help countries, in particular developing countries, to provide safe, clean, accessible and affordable drinking water and sanitation for all.

The Carmelite NGO supports the initiative of the *UN International Year of Water Cooperation*. You can educate yourself on this issue by going to the websites listed on page 2.

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