



ECOLOGY/WATER

The following article/meditation on water is the fourth of a series on the ecology submitted by CLC Ixthus, the National Working Group on Ecology. The first article/meditation was on ecology itself and it was followed by articles on Soil Sustainability, and Sustainability of the Forest. All four articles/meditation have been submitted to the CLC newsletter UPDATE and can also be accessed in the CLC Canada website.

The ecological crisis summons us to a profound spiritual conversion: Christians are called to “an ecological conversion whereby the effects of their encounter with Jesus Christ become evident in their relationship with the world around them”. For “living our vocation to be protectors of God’s handiwork is essential to a life of virtue; it is not an optional or a secondary aspect of our Christian experience”.

From the Holy Father’s letter of 6 August 2015 to Cardinals Koch and Turkson.

The world is in the midst of a global water crisis, where lack of adequate freshwater supplies and poor management threaten the health of both humans and ecosystems. Each year, two million people die due to diseases caused by poor water quality and inadequate sanitation, and the health of millions more is harmed. Coastal oceans provide some 20% of the animal protein in the human diet, but are in a perilous state due to climate change and local degradation. These water problems will continue growing as world population climbs and climate change alters global water distribution patterns.

A critical factor contributing to the water crisis is the lack of local capacity, educational, managerial, technological and institutional structures for effective water management in many developing countries.

Did you know that Canada is one of the highest water users per capita in the world? It's no wonder that easy access to safe, clean water is considered to be an important issue. Managing Canada's water resources, which represents about seven per cent of the worlds renewable freshwater, is everyone’s responsibility.

Canada has abundant water, yet water in many indigenous communities in Ontario is not safe to drink, Human Rights Watch said in a new report. The water on which many First Nations communities in Canada, on lands known as reserves, depend is contaminated, hard to access, or toxic due to faulty treatment systems. The federal and provincial governments need to take urgent steps to address their role in this crisis.

WATER IN A BOTTLE

In the middle of a drought in southern Ontario, bottled water giant Nestlé continues to extract over four million litres of groundwater every day from an aquifer near Guelph. Nestlé pays just \$3.71 for every 1 million litres it pumps out of the ground, which it then ships out of the community in hundreds of millions of single-use plastic bottles for sale all over North America – at an astronomical mark up.

Between 2011 and 2015, the aquifer that supplies the main Nestlé production well dropped about 1.5 metres, while Nestlé’s water taking increased 33 per cent over the same period.

To make matter worse, Nestlé just bought another well in Middlebrook, Ontario, despite the local municipality’s attempt to purchase it to safeguard their municipal water supply.

Does that sound like a company you want to support? That's why the Council of Canadians has just launched a national campaign to encourage people to stop buying Nestlé bottled water and its other products.

Nestlé’s greed doesn't end in Ontario. Its operations in British Columbia have also stirred up opposition from communities trying to protect their water. Despite the severe 2015 drought, Nestlé continues to extract 265 million litres from a well in Hope, B.C. located in Stolo Territory. The well connects to an aquifer that approximately 6,000 nearby residents in Hope rely on as their primary source of water.

And around the world, Nestlé is pumping water out of communities and reaping enormous profits. Groundwater resources are finite. Droughts, climate change and over-extraction continue to impact our limited water sources. At this pace, we will not have enough for our future needs. So wasting our limited groundwater on frivolous and consumptive uses such as bottled water is madness.

Enough is enough. We must come together and support communities who are standing up and saying “no” to Nestlé’s water grabs and profit-making off of this precious shared resource. See link:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cxPL14smXaA>

Submitted by the Council of Canadians

Marion Reid is a former lieutenant governor of P.E.I., Member of the Legislative Assembly, and Speaker of the P.E.I. Legislature. She has written the following article in the PEI Guardian news paper.

WHEN THE WELL GOES DRY

There is no legitimate reason ever to put P.E.I.’s finite water resource on the market. I will never forget the day, January 8, 1956, when I turned on the tap and no water came. Just below the house was a well about 50 feet deep encased with smooth stones, and for over 100 years it supplied all the water for the family, and barns full of livestock. Then nothing! Suddenly we understood in a whole new way that old saying about not missing the water until the well runs dry. Islanders today need to ponder that.

My husband, Lea, was a mechanic and fashioned a rig to plow the snow and smooth it for the cattle to go to the brook below our house. The ice was broken and the animals were glad to get their water. Buckets of water were carried on the tractor to water the horses and other stock. Once the animals were fed and the bawling stopped, large cream cans were filled with water from our neighbors. Things were looking up, and within three days a well digging company from Charlottetown had a new well, 165 feet deep, in operation; however, it had been a disturbing experience, and I think of it often these days as the demand for our water increases, and its quality deteriorates.

And I know it firsthand. Years ago, I would watch the tide and go down to the river and dig a bucket of clams for chowder. Our children fished there as well. They caught trout, often with just a bent pin and worms, the fish were so plentiful. Nothing better than the first pan trout, rolled in flour and fried in butter. As well there were smelts, eels and salmon in the river. But no more. The river is anoxic. The fish cannot live there. And I grieve for that river and others like it across the Island.

I am greatly disturbed that we permit the type of agriculture responsible for these sad changes, and that we are contemplating the sale of our water to corporations who clearly don't care about the situation of which I speak.

I have researched these matters extensively. Humanity is polluting and depleting the Earth's finite water supply at a steadily increasing rate. Lake Superior, the world's largest fresh water lake has dropped to its lowest level in 80 years. The St. Lawrence River has dropped by more than a meter, reaching the lowest point in a century. The Great Lakes hold one-fifth of the world's freshwater, and every day four trillion liters of water are being pumped out. Do the research and find out who is draining Lake Michigan. Unless we respond, one day the tap will be turned on and no water will come, like it was for me in 1956. And unless we change course it is not *if it happens*, but *when* it happens. Chief Dan George authored a little book I treasure, and what he predicted has come to pass. He wrote, "Man who does not keep the earth sacred creates much sorrow. We are as much alive as we keep the earth alive."

The older farmers remember the boggy spots that couldn't be cultivated. We had these areas in our fields, and had to haul the tractor out when you went too close. Today there is not a wet area on any of those fields – they are all bone dry.

And if what happened to us in 1956 happened today it would be pointless to drive the cattle to the river. And why? Because the Hope River is anoxic – sick unto death because of the tons of toxic top soil that have washed into the river.

I am happy to say that for 100 years there has never been a hedgerow removed on the farm where I raised my children. Further, we always used a three (and often a four) year crop rotation, and planted alfalfa to restore nitrogen to the land. The land is very productive, and I tell the children we will keep this healthy land because we will always need it: a place to grow our own good food. But none of this is possible without water. We need to conserve and protect our water supply, and there is no legitimate reason ever to put our finite water resource on the market. Further, we have no right to do that as our ground water belongs to everyone. I am only one person, but my conscience will not allow me to remain silent on this matter.

Former Island premier J. Angus MacLean, a committed conservationist, and custodian of the Island landscape, believed that land was our most precious resource. Consequently, P.E.I. is the only

province in Canada that has control of the sale of its land. It would never have entered Angus' mind that one day we might be selling our water on the open market. He would have been appalled, as I am.

Multi-nationals the world over are buying up water rights and making billions of dollars, and the poor who can't afford to buy that water have to drink what is often polluted. Indeed, one of the leading causes of mortality among children worldwide is their lack of access to clean water. Do we want to be a part of that? I don't think so.

MEDITATION ON WATER

THE SPIRIT HOVERS OVER CREATION

PREPARATION

Symbols needed for this prayer meditation: glass of water and a small bowl of water.

This can be done with a group or individually.

At my/our prayer place, I consider how the Spirit hovers over me/us in her work of continuing creation. I/we make a gesture of reverence and humility.

Slowly read and meditate on the 3 Scripture readings below and the words taken from the Liturgy of Baptism to anchor oneself in the power of the Divine creativity.

- Gn 1: 1-4 (NIV) In the beginning God created the heavens and earth. Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters. And God said, "Let there be light," and there was light. God saw that the light was good, and he separated the light from the darkness
- Wis11:24 – 12-1: Lord, you love all things that exist, and detest none of the things that you have made, for you would not have made anything if you had hated it. How would anything have endured if you had not willed it? Or how would anything not called forth by you have been preserved? You spare all things, for they are yours, O Lord who love the living. For your immortal spirit is in all things.
- Is 40:12 -13: Who has measured the waters in the hollow of his hand and marked off the heavens with a span, enclosed the dust of the earth in a measure, and weighed the mountains in scales and the hills in a balance? Who has directed the Spirit of the Lord, or as his counselor has instructed him?
- "At the very dawn of creation your Spirit breathed on the waters, making them the wellspring of all holiness. We ask you, Father, with your Son to send the Holy Spirit upon the water of this font (Liturgy of Baptism)

PRAYER

With simple words I/we offer my whole self to the Spirit.

DESIRE

I/we desire to know the creative God.

CONTEMPLATION

With my imagination, I contemplate the creation of the universe;

First, the vision – I imagine the creation of the universe, 13.7 billion years ago. I see the big bang and the creation of particles and antiparticles, the fundamental forces of gravity, electromagnetism, strong and weak nuclear forces and the prodigious expansion of everything.

PAUSE TO REFLECT ON THE ABOVE

I see, in my own way, protons and neutrons binding in the cooling universe to form hydrogen and helium nuclei, until at 300.000 years, the first atoms form, and photons of light are released in a sea of radiation. I see the Spirit above and in everything, even in direction itself. I hear, “Let there be light!”

PAUSE TO REFLECT ON THE ABOVE

Then, over eons, I see all the elements being progressively created in stars, everyone complex in the burning hearts and explosive deaths.

PAUSE TO REFLECT ON THE ABOVE

Second – the relationship – I consider my profound relationship to the beginning of creation. I drink a glass. In it I am drinking the hydrogen created in the first moment of creation of all hydrogen around and within me was created then and none since. I can say, in a very real way, that part of me was there in the beginning.

PAUSE TO REFLECT ON THE ABOVE

Every other element in my body was created in generations of stars. Physically, I carry the story of creation within me. What difference does this make to the way I relate to the universe?

PAUSE TO REFLECT ON THE ABOVE

COLLOQUY OF SENSES

In reverence I take a bowl of water, symbol of the waters of creation. I bless it. I gently blow over the face of the water, asking myself how I might join in the Spirit’s work of loving creation.

I conclude my conversation, as with a friend, by sharing my thoughts and feelings with the Holy Spirit.

If you are in a group, share in spiritual conversation what has been your experience. End with OUR FATHER. You might want to do some spiritual writing in your journal at the conclusion of this exercise.

Consider writing a letter to your MLA and/or the Federal Minister of the Environment about the need to manage Canada’s water resources. For help visit: *Council of Canadians web site*