



I THIRST:
A Lenten Journey
from Desert to Garden

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The following material was created to help parish, and other, groups during Lent to heighten their appreciation of God's gift of water, God's living and acting within it, current water conditions on Earth, and how we can respond in faith. Each segment of the following material contains an excerpt from the Sunday readings during Lent; information about related wants of our age; suggestions for sharing, reflection, and action; and suggestions for a closing ritual.

Please make copies on sustainable paper, using both sides. Groups are encouraged to be creative with this material. Adapt it in any way that facilitates sharing, community building, and prayerful reflection.

Suggestions for Convener:

Before the first meeting, be sure the participants know the dates, times, and location of the first meeting. These can be altered for future meetings if the entire group agrees. Always stop in time to complete the closing and have time for socializing. Acquire desired material from the following suggestions or assign volunteers to secure it; pre-play before using to be sure everything works correctly.

Possible music for beginning recollection and closing ritual each week:

Sounds of Water (e.g., www.jetcityorange.com/SoundFiles/)

"The Lord Hears the Cry of the Poor," J. Foley, SJ

"With Joy We Shall Draw Water," R. Hurd

"Come to the Water," J. Foley, SJ

"Psalm 42" (As the Deer Longs)

"Canticle of the Sun," M. Haugen

"Come to Me and Drink," R. Hurd

Water Music, GF Handel (e.g., You Tube)

Week One: • Easy-to-read name cards for each participant. • Sufficient number of booklets.

• Centerpiece of lovely pitcher filled with tap water.

• A lovely glass for each person. • Small cloth napkins, optional. (No refreshments the first meeting.) • Music as wanted.

Week Two: • Purchase/borrow Healing Earth — Our Common Blessing (DVD) or use preview on computers. (Go to www.seescapes.com, click You Tube previews for Healing Earth, select #4: "Healing the Water.") Before group arrives, pre-play #4 to avoid delays. Make screen full size by clicking square with arrows. • Music as wanted.

Week Three: • Music as wanted.

Week Four: • Flow - For Love of Water or Tapped or Blue Gold. Each goes over an hour.

Week Five: • Music as wanted. • "Were You There" tape or words if needed. • Wooden crucifix.

Lent, Week One

Convener: Invite each member to introduce her/himself and share why s/he chose to join this group. What grace does each ask for? If helpful, place name cards where others can see them during the meeting. Decide when the meeting will end. The group can decide about refreshments at future meetings and, if wanted, how food will be provided. Distribute booklets and allow a brief time for perusal. Encourage participants to prepare before each meeting. Begin the meeting by "changing gears" with moments of silent remembrance of God's presence within, with, and beyond us. If desired, play appropriate music during this time. Participants can then read out loud what follows, and discuss questions.

Matthew 4: 2-3: Jesus prepared for the test by fasting forty days and forty nights. That left him, of course, in a state of extreme hunger

It seems safe to assume that Jesus was also in a state of extreme thirst. Humans can live without food for weeks, but after one day without water, dehydration leading to death can begin. Whatever the reality of Jesus' predicament, this story assures us that when the King welcomed into heaven those who gave drink to anyone thirsty (Mt. 24 - 26), he knew whereof he spoke. What is the thirstiest you can remember being? When have you given water to someone thirsty?

Planet Earth is about 4.5 billion years old. Our water has been here about 3.9 billion years. There has been no new water since then; it is always recycled! All life that preceded us (including Jesus) used the water that is here today; future generations will need this water. Water is a vital substance in every living cell of nearly every creature; about 70% of human body by weight is water needed for tears, blood, etc. What else in your body requires water? Water helps build animal and human communities; it shapes the land; drives climate and weather; shapes politics and policies; provides beauty, majesty, energy, and emotional power; is used in the manufacture of many products; cools and warms us. . . . Can you elaborate on anything here, or suggest additional benefits from water?

Water is more than a physical necessity. It plays key roles in religious rituals. Sacred Scripture contains over 500 references to water. It is the foundation of rituals and sacraments for Roman Catholics (and other faith traditions). Etty Hillesum (Holocaust victim) spoke of the well of her inner life becoming repeatedly cluttered with stones, gravel, and debris. Repeatedly she dug it out and found that clear cool water rose up from the depths and refreshed her. Endless sources of life-giving water remain deep within us, but our well needs constant vigilant cherishing. [For SHCJ: Cornelia gave us the image of inner wellsprings. What does this mean to you?] What does it mean to say that God lives and acts in water?

This week (and this Lent): Drink and use "Sister Water" (e.g., showering, washing dishes and clothes, entering and leaving church, watering your garden, etc.) with greater awareness, reverence, and appreciation. Create a prayer for these occasions. Next week, be prepared to share your Baptism date.

Closing: Stand reverently around the water centerpiece. One person pours just a sip of water into each glass. When all have water, form pairs. Each offer the other the water, saying her/his name and adding a brief blessing. Drink reverently in solidarity with those who are dying for lack of water. Then fill the glasses and socialize. Take booklets home to prepare for the next meeting.

Lent, Week Two

Convener: Have "Healing the Water We Drink" ready to play on the DVD or computer. Have name cards available. If anyone is absent, place her/his card in the center and remember her/him during the meeting. If anyone is new, allow time for introductions. Begin with quiet reflection, with or without music, to switch gears. Invite participants to share any experiences or insights from last week's meeting. Some might like to share the water prayer they said during the week. Then read and discuss the following:

Genesis 12: 1: God told Abram: "Leave your country, your family, and your father's home for a land that I will show you."

John 3:5: Unless a person is born again – the wind hovering over the water's creation, the invisible moving the visible, a baptism into a new life — it's not possible to enter God's kingdom.

What are your Baptism dates and circumstances? What did/ does your Baptism mean to you? What "country" did God ask you to leave through Baptism, and what is "the land" where we're invited to live?

A report by Archbishop Veglio, president of the Pontifical Council for Migrants, states, in part: People are moving away, since they can no longer make a living as a result of desertification and growing water scarcity, increasing sea-levels and 'salinisation' of agricultural land. Climate change is also increasingly causing natural disasters, like flooding and storms. As a result, conflicts about resources increase.

This new form of displacement will have enormous consequences for decades to come. The frequently-cited and accepted estimate of 200 million climate induced displaced persons by 2050 indicates the gigantic dimensions of the problem. [The flooding in Pakistan in August 2010 displaced over 21 million in that country alone.] Human migration will undoubtedly be one of the most significant consequences of the change in climate.

What is your experience of people migrating because of the above reasons? If your entire area had a major flood or drought (picture, e.g., Hurricane Katrina or the Pakistan floods), where would you go? How would you get there? What would you do for a living? How would your Baptism influence your responses?

This week: March 22 is World Water Day. Note news about those celebrating it and/or those suffering from floods, droughts, or contaminated water. Bring one example to next week's meeting. What do you know about local water issues? Remember how Jesus said that whatever you do for anyone, you do it for him.

Closing: Watch "Healing the Water." (Note that bottled water is needed for emergency situations.) Pause to reflect quietly when it ends. Pray together this or a spontaneous prayer: Bless us as we use Earth's water, Holy Mystery. May we use water mindful of those who thirst. Amen.

Lent, Week Three

Convener: Use name cards as usual. Begin with quiet reflection, with or without music, as usual. Invite participants to share any experience or insight from last week's meeting. Some might like to share news reports about water, local water issues, and/or Scripture passages that fit that news. Then read and discuss the following:

Exodus 17: 2- 3: There wasn't a drop of water for the people to drink . . . The people were thirsty for water. They complained to Moses . . . God said . . . Strike the rock and water will gush out of it . . .

Some facts:

- The present global population is about 6.8 billion.
 - Somewhere between 1 - 1.1 billion people have no access to clean drinking water: about one in six.
 - About 2.6 billion people live without proper sanitation.
 - Drought, desertification, and flooding threaten the livelihood of at least 1 billion people in over 110 countries.
 - Every 8 seconds a child dies of a preventable water-borne disease.
 - Why is water a pro-life issue?
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- Only 1% of all the water on Earth is fresh, liquid, and usable.
 - The typical American uses 50-90 gallons of water daily; England's average is c. 45 gallons.
 - The United Nations adopted a resolution July 28, 2010, stating that safe and clean drinking water and sanitation is a human right. The vote was 122 in favor and 41 abstentions. Wealthy countries, including the United States, withheld support for this UN resolution. Why?
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- Industrial animal production is at or near the top of the worldwide list for water usage, water pollution, topsoil loss, tropical rainforest destruction, and desertification.
 - More than 25% of bottled water sold in the US is from the same public water systems as tap water. Water sold in bottles is then not available to people in that area.
 - Synthetic chemicals from laundry and dishwashing soaps, chemical pesticides and fertilizers from factory farming, and chlorine bleaches pollute rivers, lakes, and coastal areas. Phosphates cause large buildups of algae and bacteria that rob water bodies of oxygen, thus choking other life forms.
 - It takes 70 gallons of water to produce 4 gallons of gasoline, and 140,000 gallons of water to produce one ton of plastic.

If you have had experiences, yourself or with others, where there was no clean water, please share.

This week: If possible, learn more about the connection between livestock production on industrial farms and famine, poverty, and drought. (Cf. vegsoc.org/environment; fao.org/ag/magazine; Jeremy Rifkin's *Beyond Beef*; recent magazine articles.) Abstaining from meat on Fridays evidently had global benefits no one realized! Grass-fed beef raised sustainably and killed humanely on family farms can contribute positively to Mother Earth. For more water information, cf. www.ucsusa.org/energy-water. Next week's meeting will explore the effect of bottling water on the global water supply.

Closing: Read "When They Find a Way" on p. 8 silently, then out loud any way the group prefers. Share any line(s) that appeal or surprise. Since "Reverence holds water," how can you be more reverential?

Lent, Week Four

Convener: In advance, play film to be sure everything works. Have name cards as usual. Because of the length of the film, do no sharing. Ask someone to read the Scripture excerpts reflectively during transition time.

Ps. 23: 1-3: God, my shepherd, I don't need a thing. You have bedded me down in lush meadows, you find me quiet pools to drink from.

John 9: 6-7: He . . . spit in the dust, made a clay paste with the saliva, rubbed the paste on the blind man's eyes, and said, "Go, wash at the Pool of Siloam." The man went and washed — and saw.

We will spend our time tonight watching [whichever film you have chosen]. Please sit where you can see and hear the film comfortably. There will be no test after the film (!) You might already be committed to this message. You might have opposite opinions. Next week we'll take a brief time to share reactions to this film.

View film.

This week: Count the number of plastic water bottles you see on TV, in films, used by friends and neighbors, etc. Estimate: consumer cost; water required (one liter "inside" plus two liters for production); pollution (over 17 million barrels of oil are needed to produce the 31.2 billion liters of bottled water used in the US in 2006; these bottles created over 2.5 million tons of CO₂ in 2006). How might you feel if you lived in an area where corporations were selling your local water? Is this a possibility in your area?

By now it will be late, so no official closing this week.

Lent, Week Five

Convener: Begin as usual with name cards and quiet reflection. Share thoughts and feelings that resulted from the film last week. Listen respectfully to whatever each one shares. This is not a time to settle disagreements. When everyone who wishes to share has done so, read and discuss the following:

John 11: 33 - 35: When Jesus saw her sobbing and the Jews with her sobbing, a deep anger welled up within him. He said, "Where did you put him?" "Master, come and see," they said. Now, Jesus wept. *John 19: 28: "I am thirsty."*

How do you feel about Jesus' weeping and thirsting?

On Holy Thursday we will participate in the ritual washing of feet (and, in some parishes, also of hands). On Good Friday we will remember Jesus' words on the cross, "I am thirsty." We will grieve and be grateful for what Jesus suffered because of love. On Holy Saturday we will participate (at least in spirit) in the blessing of holy water, Baptisms, and renewal of Baptismal promises. Sunday we will picture resurrection stories complete with gardens (that required water still present today). How might the I Thirst program influence your experience of Holy Week?

Trees protect water. The one that became Jesus' cross must have had a history that dated back millennia. Every tree alive today somehow dates back to the beginning of trees, about 370 million years ago (after land plants and animals). Trees have always required water to grow but they also give water. The leaves of an acre of trees can release 8,000 gallons of water into the air in a day! Rain forests are the main breathing mechanism for Planet Earth. (It took 60 million years for rain forests to evolve into Earth's lungs.) Trees prevent erosion (as any Haitian can attest), soak up nutrients before they run into wetlands or sewers, and improve the soil. They filter carbon dioxide in our atmosphere and protect biological diversity and endangered species, reduce stress on humans, and improve people's moods. Wangari Maathai's 2004 Nobel Peace Prize affirmed that protecting and planting trees contribute to peace. Have you a favorite tree?

This week: Remember a significant "Sister Tree" in your life and reflect gratefully on its contributions to your life and to Earth's life systems. Take an action to reduce use of paper from trees: e.g., use cloth napkins and towels or use napkins, towels and kleenex made from recycled paper; use 100% recycled paper for printer/copy paper; get off lists of junk mail (cf. www.epa.gov/boston/communities/stop_spam.html); drink fair trade organic coffee and tea . . . How else do you, or could you, use water (more) prudently and thoughtfully? How much could you reduce your water use this week? Multiply that by 52 weeks this year

Closing: Play and/or sing "Were You There." During this time, pass a crucifix and allow each participant a few moments to ponder the history of the tree on which Jesus was nailed and also his thirst. When everyone is finished, pause to think of one word that sums up this Lenten experience for you. With no discussion, anyone who wishes can share the word chosen and, if desired, add why you chose that word. When finished, pair off and share a blessing for the rest of Lent. The group might want to give a special blessing to the convener.

When They Find a Way
Catherine Callaghan, SHCJ

When they find a way, they will charge us for rainfall.
Also, a fee for early morning condensation.
Parents of impulsive six-year-olds who jump into puddles
will be severely fined.
The unwashed will habituate to each other's smells.

Sounds of restless water will be faithfully recorded and safely stored in museums.
For a price, listen to an oar quickly dipped into a stream.
Then the pressured force of water – oh, the water yields to the movement of the oar, but not silently.
What a sound saved for posterity!
Posterity?
Imagine life forms yet to evolve with no need of water.

If you can't save water, save memories of water, please.
Not just the sounds, which are infinite.
Memorize her silent depths. Find keepsakes of her sparkling fluidity.
Let your spirit soak in her transparent legacies.
Simplicity. Service. Serenity. Sacrament.

As water memories flood your soul let them quicken and nourish that radical respect
you felt as a child: Dew drops. Raindrops. And squishing socks, if
You ever stood one foot in the gutter as storm water rushed by.

Remember baths? What floats? What sinks?
Or, the texture of bath towels. Dish towels. Paper towels.
Sopping up this treasure. Or the clear expression of disbelief:
"That doesn't hold water."
So, what does hold water? Not the beaches, not the rivers.
Perry Como never sang
"Catch the falling rain and put it in your pocket. Save it for a starry day."

Reverence.

Reverence holds water. Reverence for each drop.
A reverential heart understands Why and flows into a reverential How.

Reverently.



Society of the Holy Child Jesus
AMERICAN PROVINCE

Scripture quotations are from Eugene H. Peterson's
The Message: the Bible in Contemporary Language.
Other translations can be used.

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