

SEASON OF CREATION
WEEK TWO: 12th – 18th SEPTEMBER
THEME: WATER

INTRODUCTION

“Water is the basis of all life on earth. Humans need water to drink, grow food, and clean. Water also provides heat to our homes and amazing recreational opportunities (like swimming and fishing). Animals that live on land and those that live in lakes, ponds, and oceans also need clean water to survive and thrive. The health of our environment, including the health of plants and animals, is deeply tied to the health of our waterways. It is no surprise that ensuring we have access to safe, clean water is an important issue for so many people across the province, country, and the world. Teaching about water issues, taking action to conserve and preserve water, ensuring that all people and animals have access to clean water, and of course celebrating our natural resources are all important parts of a Water Awareness and Action Campaign”¹.

11 September 2021: Everyone has the Right to Clean Water.

1. What the Word of God says:

“So, Isaac departed from there and camped in the valley of Gerar and settled there. Isaac dug again the wells of water that had been dug in the days of his father Abraham; for the Philistines had stopped them up after the death of Abraham; and he gave them the names that his father had given them. But when Isaac’s servants dug in the valley and found there a well of spring water, the herders of Gerar quarreled with Isaac’s herders, saying, ‘The water is ours.’ So, he called the well Esek, because they contended with him. Then they dug another well and they quarrelled over that one also; so he called it Sitnah. He moved from there and dug another well, and they did not quarrel over it; so, he called it Rehoboth, saying, ‘Now the Lord has made room for us, and we shall be fruitful in the land.’ (Genesis 26.17-22)



2. What Laudato Si’ says:

“One particularly serious problem is the quality of water available to the poor. Every day, unsafe water results in many deaths and the spread of water-related diseases, including those caused by microorganisms and chemical substances. Dysentery and cholera, linked to inadequate hygiene and water supplies, are a significant cause of suffering and of infant mortality.” (*Laudato Si’* #29)

3. Let us Reflect :

Next to air, water is our most essential necessity. Here, Jesus, the source of Living Water, reminds us that we serve Him when we quench the physical thirst of those in need.

New reports on inequalities in access to water, sanitation and hygiene also reveals more than half of the world does not have access to safe sanitation services. Billions of people around the world are continuing to suffer from poor access to water, sanitation and hygiene, according to a new report by UNICEF and the World Health Organization. Some 2.2 billion people around the world do not have

¹https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/justpeace/documents/rc_pc_justpeace_doc_20030322_kyoto-water_en.html

safely managed* drinking water services, 4.2 billion people do not have safely managed sanitation services, and 3 billion lack basic** handwashing facilities².

4. Let us Pray:

Intercessory Prayer: *(Use a glass of clean water, a glass of salted water, a bottle of coke and an empty glass).*

Leader: *(Holding the glass of clean water)*

Lord let this glass of clean water remind us of the available sources of fresh drinking water. Help us to protect this gift. May our lives be so balanced that greed makes way for need and our wastefulness makes way for a commitment to preserve and share.

All: Fountain of life, wash us clean from greed and sin.

Leader: *(Holding the glass of salted water)*

Let this glass of salted water remind us of the tears of those whose lives have been threatened by the scarcity of water, compounded by the stigma and discrimination they face. Let those who contribute to exploitative systems and mechanisms, shed tears of repentance and learn to lead simple lives so that others can simply live.

All: Creator of new life, transform us so that we have welling within us, springs of eternal life.

Leader: *(Holding a cup of tea, coffee, juice etc)*

God of justice, we pray for all those who are resisting those who plunder and pillage our natural resources and threaten the livelihood of indigenous communities. We remember all those engaged in preservation and sharing of water, your gift of life. Strengthen the organizations and communities who work for the rights of people to have clean drinking water.

All: God of justice strengthen these “earth keepers”

Leader: *(Holding the empty glass)*

Lord we pray for all the communities who are involved in the issue of water justice. Sensitize us, to walk with all the people who lack the water of life. Help us to empty ourselves of all the prejudices and fill us with a vision of solidarity and fellowship so that we can liaise and work with other likeminded people in conserving the gift of water.

All: God of justice, give us your vision.

Leader: Lord, we pray for the universal church and its mission and vision. Transform our lifestyles so that, not only in words but in deeds we may be channels of your justice. Let your churches be role models within our communities in conserving water and preserving life in all its fullness. Make your churches work together so that justice will prevail and water will be available for all in our generation and beyond.

All: God of resurrection, make us channels of your living water.

Leader: We bring these prayers to you in the name of Christ, our Saviour,

All: Amen.³

² <https://www.who.int/news/item/18-06-2019-1-in-3-people-globally-do-not-have-access-to-safe-drinking-water-unicef-who>

³ <https://www.oikoumene.org/resources/documents/prayers-related-to-sdg6-water-and-sanitation>

5. Let us act:

- If you are among the fortunate ones to have running water in your home, think of those who struggle to provide clean drinking water for their families. When you go out today, take along a bottle of clean water and offer it to someone who might be in need of it.
- If you live in an area where water has to be fetched and carried, lend a helping hand.
- We call on all the urban-based hospitals and industries such as small-scale mining and motor garages, to desist from dumping highly toxic chemicals and medical waste into the wastewater system.

Did you know: Although the earth is made up of 70% water, only 2.5% is drinkable and of that only 1% is accessible for drinking. The other 2.5% is trapped in glaciers and snowfields.

12 September 2021:
Women and children who bear the primary
responsibility for water collection.

1. What the Word of God says:

- “They did not thirst when He led them through the deserts; He made water flow for them from the rock; He split the rock, and water gushed out.” (Isaiah 48:21)
- Come, all you who are thirsty, come to the waters. (Isaiah 55:1)
- “Jesus answered, “Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, *but whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst*. Indeed, the water I give them will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life.” (John 4:13-14)



2. What Laudato Si' says:

“Access to safe drinkable water is a basic and universal human right, since it is essential to human survival and, as such, is a condition for the exercise of other human rights.” (*Laudato Si'* # 30)

3. Let us Reflect:

Women and girls have transported water from distant sources for millennia. In Genesis 24, Abraham's servant first saw Rebekah, Isaac's future wife, at a well. Jesus also met the Samaritan woman at a well. In most of the developing world, women and girls disproportionately bear the burden of collecting water for their families. Transporting water from distant sources is no less difficult now than it was then. The process consumes precious time that could be used for more productive activities, such as farming or going to school.

4. Let us Pray:

We pray for all who seek to rebuild communities shattered by the circle of economic injustice, poverty, and violence. We pray for all women who suffer from violence, and yet continue to care for family and children, to grow and prepare food, carry water, earn a living and offer support to others. We pray for all whose homes are lost to floods, typhoons and hurricanes, and for those whose lands and homes will be swallowed by the sea.

5. Let us Act

- If we are among those privileged people who have running water in our homes, today, every time we open up the tap, let us be grateful for what we have and mindful of people who have to walk kilometres each day to access clean drinking water.
- Speak to someone who doesn't have access to clean running water in their homes about their needs and experiences.
- If you are in the position to do so, can you lobby groups to initiate programs to improve access to water for these people.

13 September 2021: Pray and Act for Improved Sanitation for all

1. What the word of God says: —Psalm 65:9 (NIV)

“The streams of God are filled with water to provide the people with grain, for so you have ordained it.”



2. What Laudato Si' says:

Underground water sources in many places are threatened by the pollution produced in certain mining, farming and industrial activities, especially in countries lacking adequate regulation or controls. It is not only a question of industrial waste. Detergents and chemical products, commonly used in many places of the world, continue to pour into our rivers, lakes and seas. (*Laudato Si'* 29)

3. Let us Reflect:

Benefits of improved sanitation extend well beyond reducing the risk of diarrhoea. These include: reducing the spread of intestinal worms, schistosomiasis and trachoma, which are neglected tropical diseases that cause suffering for millions; reducing the severity and impact of malnutrition. Some 827 000 people in low- and middle-income countries die as a result of inadequate water, sanitation, and hygiene each year, representing 60% of total diarrhoeal deaths. Poor sanitation is believed to be the main cause in some 432 000 of these deaths.

Every day, children under the age of 5 die from diarrhoea caused by poor water and sanitation. And during the coronavirus pandemic, access to clean water has become even more critical in order to stop the spread of COVID-19. One of the key coronavirus prevention elements is frequent handwashing — an impossibility without having readily available water.

4. Let us Pray:

Great and Merciful God we turn to you today to implore your protection on the most vulnerable and especially children whose health is endangered by dirty water and poor sanitation and hygienic practices, through no fault of their own. Lead civil authorities and their local communities to discover clean water sources close by so they can enjoy better health.

5. Let us Act:

- Am I, as an individual, or as a community, willing to lobby and advocate with my church group and/or local government for disadvantaged groups to have access to improved sanitation?
- Familiarise yourself with the problem of inadequate sanitation in poorer communities through Youtube [*Lack of proper sanitation in Southern Africa – awareness*]

14 September 2021: Help fight the global water crisis

1. What the Word of God says:

“Behold, I will stand there before you by the rock at Horeb. And when you strike the rock, water will come out of it for the people to drink. So Moses did this in the sight of the elders of Israel.” (Exodus 17:6)

“And they thirsted not *when* he led them through the deserts: he caused the waters to flow out of the rock for them: he struck the rock also, and the waters gushed out.” – (Isaiah 48:21)



2. What Laudato Si' says:

“Even as the quality of available water is constantly diminishing, in some places there is a growing tendency, despite its scarcity, to privatize this resource, turning it into a commodity subject to the laws of the market.” (*Laudato Si'* 30)

3. Let us Reflect: The effect of the global water crisis

The global water crisis isn't new. It isn't covered up. At best, it's forgotten. At worst, it's ignored. The statistics are abundant about how much running water is wasted in first world countries, even just by leaving the tap running while brushing teeth. Although it's not easy to just make a plan and solve the global water crisis, it's easier than it seems to help provide clean water to people who don't have access to it. More than 1 billion people do not have access to a source of clean drinking water, and around 3 billion experience water scarcity at least one month per year.

Interestingly enough, there is no global water scarcity as such, but a number of places and regions are chronically short of water because its use at the global level has increased more than twice as fast as the population over the last century. Pressure on water resources is increasing in several parts of the world, especially in China, India, Pakistan, in the Middle East and many countries and regions of Africa.

4. Let us Pray:

Our God, father and mother, from, through and to whom all lives flow, Your name is holy for you water every creature with life. May the 'waters rolling in justice' come down among us and dwell as in your presence. Give us water sufficient for our living, and help us to share water and other resources with those who are dying of thirst. Forgive us our insincerity, insensitivity and irresponsibility in saving and preserving water, and for our abuse of creation. And teach us to forgive one another. Lead us not into the temptation of accumulation, greed and power over water, and deliver us from greedy life styles. For your word is like water cleansing us from evil, your reign is righteousness flowing like an ever-flowing stream dismantling the powers and principalities from generation to generation, from history to history, for ever and ever. Amen.⁴

⁴ <https://www.oikoumene.org/>

5. Let us Act:

Bring attention to the water crisis in conversations. Make sure friends and family know that of course not everyone has access to clean, running water, but providing that access is much, much easier than it seems.

15 September 2021: Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-based Activities

1. What the Word of God says:

"You shall not pollute the land in which you live, for blood pollutes the land, and no atonement can be made for the land for the blood that is shed in it, except by the blood of the one who shed it. You shall not defile the land in which you live, in the midst of which I dwell, for I the Lord dwell in the midst of the people of Israel." (Numbers 35:33-34) (ESV)



2. What Laudato Si' says:

In his message on the fourth World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation, Pope Francis said, "We cannot allow our seas and oceans to be littered by endless fields of floating plastic." "We need to pray as if everything depended on God's providence, and work as if everything depended on us," he said⁵. "Our world owes a great social debt towards the poor who lack access to drinking water, because they are denied the right to a life consistent with their inalienable dignity," he said.

3. Let us Reflect:

We do not have an impersonal God who is too busy to care about the daily needs of His children. Instead, He is available 24/7 to lead, comfort, and guide His children. We have the Holy Spirit living within our hearts who guides and directs us. We have a wonderful Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, who sits at God's right hand and makes intercession for us, His children. And, God the Father is available at all times to hear the prayer of His dear children. When we pollute our land and water, it is clear that we are also defiling the House of God. Climate change resulting from environmental pollution affects the geographical distribution of many infectious diseases, as do natural disasters. The interactions between humans and their physical surroundings have been extensively studied, as multiple human activities influence the environment. Pollution is defined as the introduction into the environment of substances harmful to humans and other living organisms. Pollutants are harmful solids, liquids, or gases produced in higher than usual concentrations that reduce the quality of our environment. Human activities have an adverse effect on the environment by polluting the water we drink, the air we breathe, and the soil in which plants grow.

4. Let us Pray: That those who risk their lives at sea in search of a better future may be kept safe.

4.1 A Prayer for Seafarers

Heavenly Father, we pray for all who sacrifice their home and family life, to work as seafarers. We think of the many months at sea, enduring the hardships and dangers of heavy seas, storms and strong winds far away from home. Look with favour on all seafarers who miss their families and loved ones, comfort those who feel isolated or lonely, scared or insecure. Bring

⁵ <https://www.dw.com/en/pope-francis-calls-for-end-to-plastic-pollution-of-oceans/a-45317637>

them safely home to shore, and at the end of their contract, return them into the loving arms of their families and friends. We ask this in the name of Our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

4.2 A Prayer for the Families of Seafarers

God of all goodness, look with kindness and compassion on all those who wait for the safe return of their loved ones who work upon the seas. Draw near to them in times of worry, restore them in times of sickness, and strengthen them when they are weary. Help them to trust in your unfailing mercy and to know at all times your sustaining love. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

5. Let us Act:

- **Add reusable eating utensils to your bag**

Carrying a spare set of washable utensils is a small act, but it will keep hundreds of plastic forks, spoons and knives out of landfills if you stick to it.

- **Carry a reusable bag with you**

It is estimated that, world-wide, we use 4 TRILLION plastic bags each year. Besides being made from fossil fuels, the average plastic bag is only used for 10-20 minutes (just think about how quickly you can get from the grocery store to your house). Unfortunately, that plastic bag lives on much, much longer — perhaps as much as 1,000 years in a landfill. What's worse, plastic grocery bags aren't recyclable.

In fact, plastic bags spell big trouble for recycling facilities, getting caught in the machinery and slowing or even halting the entire recycling process. They're called 'tanglers' by professionals in the recycling business for a reason...

According to Waste Management, only 1% of grocery bags are returned to grocery stores for recycling. The key to improving our environmental behavior is to make a plan, and build your environmental muscle memory: *Put your recyclable bags somewhere that will ensure you always remember to bring them with you.*

Through this act of green, you have created a concrete plan to ensure you will always have your reusable grocery bags on hand when you need them. But it only counts if you stick to the plan, so build a plan and keep to it!⁶



16 September 2021: Pray for the Renewal of Environment and Climate

1. What the Word of God says:

"Water will gush forth in the wilderness and streams in the desert. (Isaiah 35:6) ...You will winnow them, and a wind will carry them away; a gale will scatter them. But you will rejoice in the LORD; you will glory in the Holy One of Israel. The poor and needy seek water, but there is none; their tongues are parched with thirst. I, the LORD, will answer them; I, the God of Israel, will not forsake them. I will open rivers on the barren heights, and fountains in the middle of the valleys. I will turn the desert into a pool of water, and the dry land into flowing springs.... (Isaiah 41:16 -18)



⁶ <https://www.earthday.org/actions/always-carry-a-reusable-bag/>

2. What Laudato Si' says

"If someone has not learned to stop and admire something beautiful, we should not be surprised if he or she treats everything as an object to be used and abused without scruple. If we want to bring about deep change, we need to realize that certain mindsets really do influence our behaviour. Our efforts at education will be inadequate and ineffectual unless we strive to promote a new way of thinking about human beings, life, society and our relationship with nature. Otherwise, the paradigm of consumerism will continue to advance, with the help of the media and the highly effective workings of the market."

3. Let us Reflect

Environmental damage, together with climate change, is driving the water-related crises we see around the world. Floods, drought and water pollution are all made worse by degraded vegetation, soil, rivers and lakes. When we neglect our ecosystems, we make it harder to provide everyone with the clean water we need to survive and thrive.

As Christians we are called to love God and to love our global neighbours as ourselves. All of creation is God's, therefore we have a duty to treat it with respect as we would a gift. Additionally, now that we have become aware of the links between our daily actions and climate change impacts and biodiversity loss, this involves doing what we can to stop our lifestyles harming other people and creatures

4. Let us Pray:

All powerful God...bring healing to our lives, that we may protect the world and not prey on it, that we may sow beauty, not pollution and destruction.

Touch the hearts of those who look only for gain at the expense of the poor and the earth.

Teach us to discover the worth of each thing, to be filled with awe and contemplation, to recognize that we are profoundly united with every creature as we journey towards your infinite light.

We thank you for being with us each day. Encourage us, we pray, in our struggle for justice, love and peace. *Pope Francis.*

5. Let us Act:

As it is often those who have done least to cause climate change that suffer the worst of it's effects, acting to reduce our impacts becomes a matter of justice. Now that we have become aware of the links between our daily actions and climate change impacts and biodiversity loss, we need to do what we can to stop our lifestyles and our church, work or school activities harming the planet, our global neighbours and other creatures.

17 September 2021: Pray for people to discover Jesus as the Source of *Living Water.*

1. What the word of God says:

My soul thirsts for You, my flesh yearns for You, in a dry and weary land where there is no water. (Psalm 63:1)

"Neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Romans 8: 38-39)



2. What Laudato Si' says:

“We must regain the conviction that we need one another, that we have a shared responsibility for others and the world, and that being good and decent are worth it. We have had enough of immorality and the mockery of ethics, goodness, faith and honesty. It is time to acknowledge that light-hearted superficiality has done us no good. When the foundations of social life are corroded, what ensues are battles over conflicting interests, new forms of violence and brutality, and obstacles to the growth of a genuine culture of care for the environment.”

3. Let us Reflect:

Romans 8 has brought comfort to many in times of trouble, reminding us of the power of God's saving love for us.

But the letter isn't just about God's plan for saving humanity. Paul mentions 'all creation'. And in an earlier part of the chapter, he says that it, too, is part of God's plan for redemption.

“The whole creation has been groaning in the pains of childbirth until now” Paul notes, as it “waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God.”

For Paul, the suffering of creation is part and parcel of the Fall: human sin has distorted not only our lives, but also the life of the world around us.

In today's world, it's not hard to see a linkage between human action and creation's pain – we have only to look at the rising heat that intensifies droughts and storms, the many creatures on the brink of extinction, the rivers that flow polluted, the mountains and hills stripped of their resources. Our careless treatment of God's gifts strains the natural world beyond its capacity and leads to natural – and human – distress.

But what has been distorted by the Fall can also be redeemed by God. After Paul talks about creation “waiting with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God,” he also says that “creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God.”

In other words, as humanity is transformed by the power of God's redemptive work, creation, too, will be set free to flourish.

This isn't the only place where the apostle links God's redemption of humanity and of the wider creation of which we are a part. Colossians 1 speaks of Christ's role in the formation of all that is, and then of his role in its restoration. “God was pleased,” the epistle reminds us, “through [Christ] to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.”

What might this mean for us in our daily lives?

As Christians, prayer that God's love will shape our human relationships is in our DNA.

But if Christ's reconciliation incorporates all creation, then allowing God's love to reshape our relations with the rest of the natural world is also a core part of our life of faith.

That's a large task! But as Operation Noah's *Climate Change and the Purposes of God* notes, citing Romans, we can 'Act with hope'.

Confident in God's redemption plan, we can face issues that might otherwise seem overwhelming. And slowly, by God's grace, we can be confident we will see signs of redemption – in ourselves, others and earth, 'our common home'⁷.

4. Let us Pray:

The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not want.

He makes me lie down in green pastures; he leads me beside still waters; he restores my soul.

He leads me in right paths for his name's sake.

Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I fear no evil; for you are with me; your rod and your staff— they comfort me.

You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.

⁷ <https://www.oxford.anglican.org/the-earths-redemption/>

Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord my whole life long

5. Let us Act:

There are many things we can do:

Learning more about the issues;

making practical and financial changes;

working with our church communities and charities to care for the people and wildlife suffering from the effects of climate change and environmental damage;

making friends, family and the powers that be, aware of the climate and environmental crises.

As a church we affirm water as the cradle and source of life, an expression of God's grace in perpetuity for the whole of creation.

We are called to exercise responsible stewardship for this unique trust, and to preserve and share it for the benefit of humanity and all creation.

Furthermore, we share the following convictions: **that access to water is a fundamental human right, that the protection and control of water resources is a central public responsibility, and that water must not be treated as a commodity but as an essential social good for the present and future generations.**

Finally, we recognise water as a sacred gift of God.