

## CHURCH DOCUMENTS ON ECOLOGY :

World Peace Day Message of John Paul II (January 1, 1990)  
Catechism of the Catholic Church: 299-301; 307; 339-341; 344  
Encyclical Letter *Populorum Progressio*, 22,23-24,69  
Encyclical Letter, Centesimus Annus, 37-38  
Encyclical *Laborem Exercens*, 4  
Mater et Magistra, 196,199  
Octogesima Adveniens, 21  
Dogmatic Constitution, Lumen Gentium,#36  
Pastoral Constitution Gaudium et Spes #34  
Synod of Bishops: Justice in the World, Chapter 1 #2  
Encyclical, Evangelium Vitae #42  
Apostolic Exhortation, Vita Consecrata # 90  
Apostolic Exhortation, Ecclesia in America #25  
Apostolic Exhortation, Ecclesia in Asia #41  
Apostolic Exhortation, Ecclesia in Oceania #31  
“Water, Fount of Life and a Gift for All”. Bolivian Episcopal Conference,  
Cochabamba, February 12, 2003. (Spanish).

## SOME ETHICAL CHALLENGES AND EXTRACTS FROM THE HOLY SEE TEXT FOR KYOTO<sup>25</sup> (IN BOXES) :

### 1. Access to clean and sufficient water supply is a Human Right:

- **"Water is a common good of humankind.** This is the basis for cooperation toward a water policy that gives priority to persons living in poverty ..."
- **"The centrality of the human person** must be foremost in any consideration..."
- **"The water services in many developing countries are,** however, **still plainly inadequate** in providing safe water supplies. The situation is so dramatic that it will not be overcome without increased development assistance and focused private investment from abroad,"
- **"Funds released through debt relief** could well be utilized in improving water services,"

### 2. Privatization and the common good:

there are inherent dangers associated with viewing ***water as just another commodity***, to be sold in the market place.

- **"The principle of the universal destination of the goods of creation** confirms that people and countries, including future generations, have the right to fundamental access to those goods..."
- "It has proved to be extremely difficult to establish the right balance of ***public-private partnerships and serious errors have been committed.***"
- "... ***empowering local governments and local communities to manage water supplies must be emphasized.*** Water management should be based on a participatory approach, involving users, planners and policy makers at all levels."
- "In any formation of private sector involvement with the state, ***there must exist a general parity among the parties allowing for informed decisions and sound agreements.*** A core concern in private sector involvement in the water sector is to ensure that efforts to achieve a water service that is efficient and reliable do not cause undue negative effects for the poor and low income families."

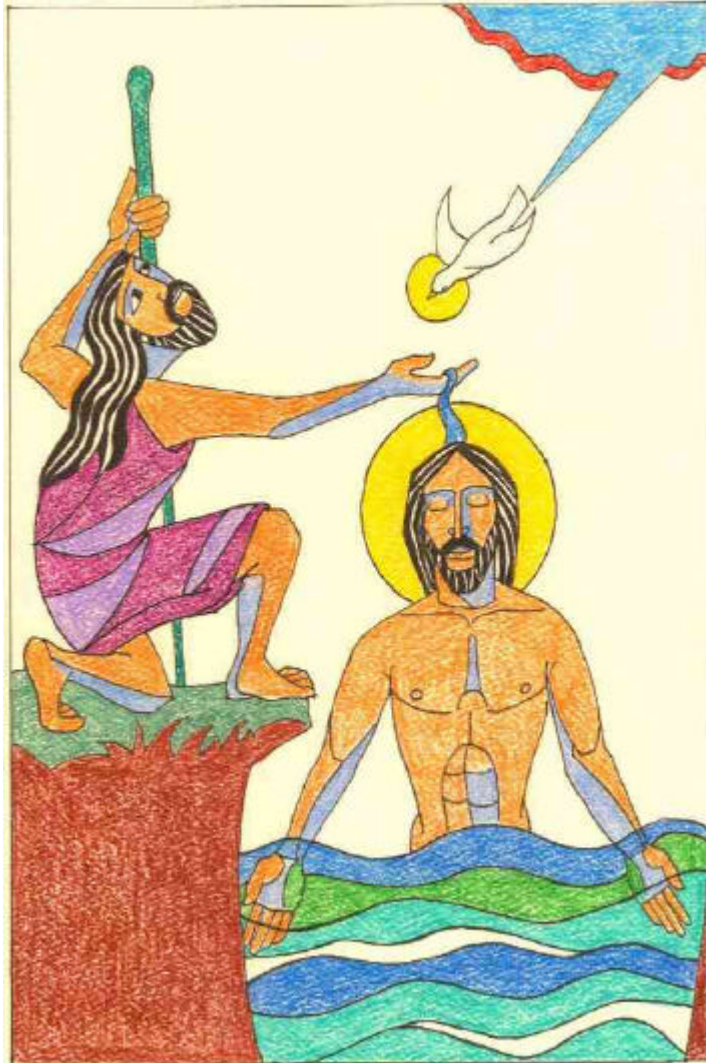
3. **The Integrity of Creation:** A Christian is called to promote and protect the environment, not only for the benefits of the human community, but for the integrity of the whole of creation.
4. **The Prevention Principle:** Prevention of harm is the best method of environmental protection and pro-poor strategies.
5. **The Precautionary Principle:** Pollution is unacceptable. Decisions and actions must be taken to avoid the possibility of serious or irreversible environmental harm, even where scientific knowledge is insufficient or inconclusive.
6. **The Polluter pays Principle:** Those causing harm should pay compensation to victims and pay for redress of environmental damage caused.
7. **Righteous indignation:** knowledge of environmental degradation and exclusion from access to water, along with the dangers inherent in its commercialization in favour of the privileged, should elicit a feeling of indignation from the followers of Jesus.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

Water refreshes and renews: a pool revives and restores limbs that are tired and weary; a fountain cools and soothes a spirit that is burdened and troubled; a bath cleans and purifies a body that is dirty and contaminated. Not surprisingly, people choose places close to water for holidays to be renewed and refreshed.

Water has a cycle all its own that is beyond our control. The rain that falls on all, rich and poor alike, reminds us that creation is a gift entrusted to our care. Water belongs to no one in particular but is freely given for the good of all.

Whenever politics or economics seek to block general access to this universal right, the natural order of things is upended. “The principle water difficulty today is not one of absolute scarcity, but rather of distribution and resources.

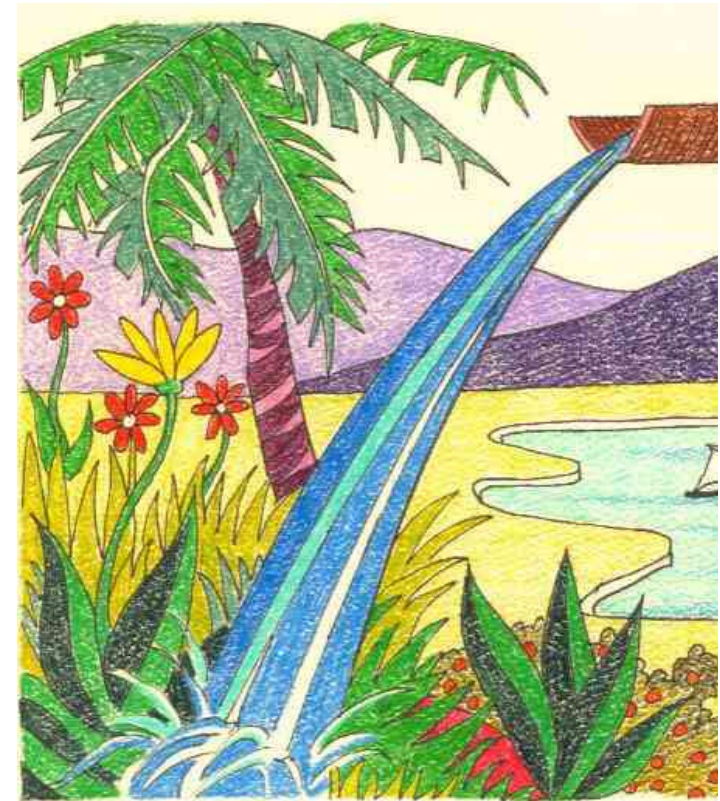


## ACT

### WHY SHOULD RELIGIOUS BE CONCERNED AND INVOLVED IN ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES?

Water is a key factor in the earth’s marvellous capacity to absorb pain, to restore itself.

But today’s attack is overwhelming and places the survival of the human species at risk. While the hydrological system unravels, millions are hurting because their right to water has been taken.



We are in a position to defend both our brothers and sisters and nature itself.

A landmark Papal document devoted exclusively to the environment and development issues entitled, Peace with God the Creator. Peace with all Creation (January 1, 1990) states that “Christians, in particular realize that their duty towards nature and creation is an essential part of their faith.” (no. 15)<sup>26</sup> Ecological integrity is an essential part of all faith traditions and is an important issue around which dialogue, collaboration and mutual understanding can be promoted. People of faith from all traditions are bringing together concern for humanity and care for the earth that supports life. They are working together

<sup>26</sup> Reference to all of the Holy See’s World Day for Peace messages, including on the environment, 1990, in 6 languages: [http://www.vatican.va/holy\\_father/john\\_paul\\_ii/messages/peace/index.htm](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/messages/peace/index.htm)

## QUESTIONS FOR THE "SEE" SECTION:

1. Of the facts on water which one challenges/disturbs you most and why?
2. Which of these facts relate most to your area and country?
3. Which of the facts give you most hope and why?
4. How do you and your community contribute to the "water problem"?
5. What are your feelings about control of water resources by private enterprise? Share.

## JUDGE

### WATER IN THE BIBLE<sup>22</sup>

During the early centuries of its existence in Palestine, the Jewish people never succeeded in occupying the seashore. They were not a people of the beach and sea. The sea with its waves and mysterious depths frightened them.

The people lived more in the central highlands and depended for water on the rain and springs. Water falls from on high, from heaven, on rainy days. In the springs, the water comes from below, from the earth. Besides, no matter what direction one takes, locally or far away, it is certain that one will meet water, in the sea. Water exists above, beneath and to the side. Starting from this empirical observation, they drew up the image of creation. On the second day, God separated the waters, that of above and that of below, and created space. On the third day, here below, God separated the dry land from the flooded land and made the land appear. The very beautiful poetry of Psalm 104 describes how God succeeded in mastering the water and putting it at the service of life.

Before occupying the land in the 13th century before Christ, the people were nomads, who roamed the desert and found life in the springs in the middle of the desert. Jesus is the Good Shepherd that leads his sheep to the springs of eternal life (Ps. 23, Jn 10).

When the monarchy fell in 587 BC and the traditional signs of the presence of God, the temple, possession of the land, sacrifices, priesthood and Jerusalem, were destroyed, many said: "God has abandoned us and forgotten about us." But Jeremiah replied: "God has not forgotten! God has not broken the alliance with us!" – "How do you know this?" they asked. "Because the rain continues to fall in

<sup>22</sup> Fr. Carlos Mesters, O.Carm. /2003.

## PROTECTING AND PRESERVING WATER

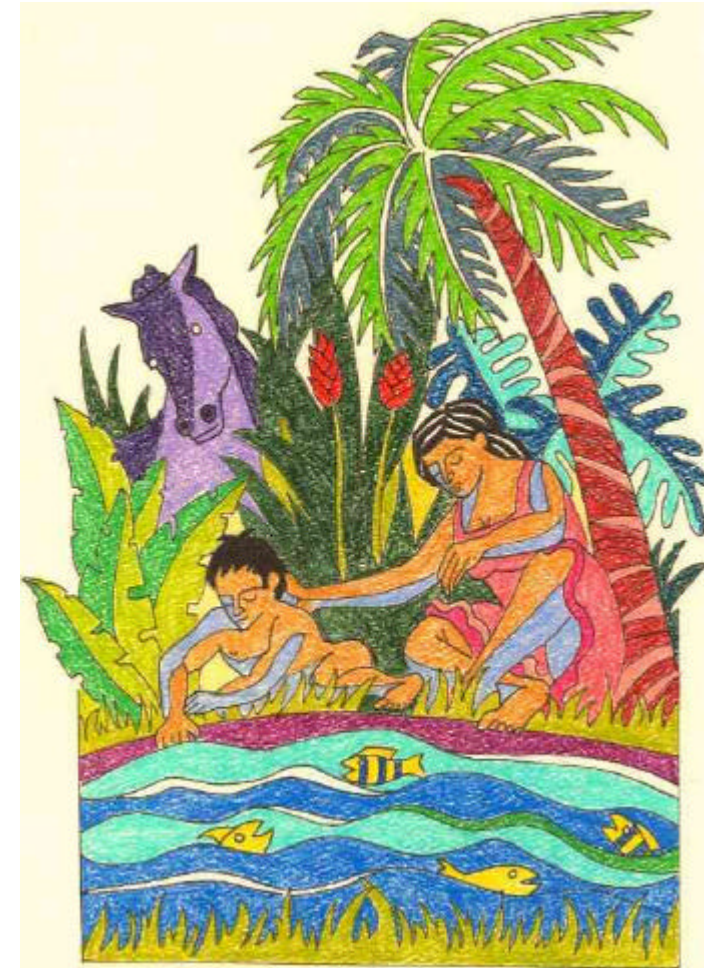
### A Few Things You can Do...

#### CONTEMPLATE...

- Every time you see or use water, remember it is a gift of God. Learn to develop a reverential attitude to this vital liquid. It is not just a commodity or object but rather "our sister". By developing a contemplative gaze we are led to the Creator through creatures: "All praise be Yours, my Lord, through Sister Water, so useful, lowly, precious, and pure."
- Water is life – life for the poor – life for the world.

#### LEARN

- Be an advocate and defender of "water for all" as a Human Right. Develop a critical consciousness. Be wary of recommendations that take responsibility away from local and national governments on water issues and hand them over to private companies, especially multi-nationals.
- Involve civic society in planning and implementing strategies to defend and preserve water.



essential, not only for human life, but for animal and plant life as well as for the life of the planet itself. Water services have therefore been the responsibility of public and municipal systems.

Under the World Trade Organization (WTO)<sup>16</sup> and its General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS),<sup>17</sup> water services are coming under a new set of rules. The rules enable multinational companies to “buy and sell” water rights in the country of their choice. Consider these examples:

- Alaska Water Exports at one time had a proposal to haul glaciers from Alaska to Saudi Arabia
- The Swiss multinational, Nestle Corporation, owner of 68 bottled water companies, pumps water from Lake Michigan in the United States at a profit of about \$1.8 million dollars a day. Sixty-five per cent of the water leaves the area in large trucks to be sold in other places.
- In 1998, a Canadian Company received permission to haul off 156 million gallons of Lake Superior water every year and sell it in Asia.<sup>18</sup> The proposal was eventually rejected because of public and political outrage.

The first big water war of the 21<sup>st</sup> century took place in Bolivia, when the World Bank refused to renew a \$25 million loan unless water services were privatized. After the public water utility in the city of Cochabamba was sold to Bechtel, a powerful U.S. corporation, water rates were immediately increased. The people of Cochabamba protested in massive street demonstrations for days which eventually led to a general strike that shut down the city’s economy and Bechtel was forced to leave the country. As this is being written, Bechtel is suing the government of Bolivia for \$25 million in a “secret court” of the WTO!

The World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) make, in many cases, new loans conditional on the privatization of water and other services! “A random

<sup>16</sup> The World Trade Organization (WTO), which sets the rules for International Trade, embodies an unshaken belief in the benevolence of market forces. Focusing on the removal of so-called barriers to trade, it seeks to establish open markets across the globe, unencumbered by culture, political traditions, social rights, or environmental protection.

<sup>17</sup> **General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS)**. - One of the effects of globalisation is the rapid and often unnecessary pressure for the privatisation and corporate takeover of public services – including education, healthcare, water management and municipal services – in countries all over the world. Large trans-national corporations in the service industries are working with national governments and international bodies, to establish a set of powerful trade rules that will prise open the services market internationally. This is the subject of the negotiations presently ongoing at the headquarters of the **World Trade Organization** in Geneva, where national governments are negotiating a new trade and investment treaty.

<sup>18</sup> Defend the Global Commons (Vol.2 No.1 Jan 2003) [www.citizen.org/cmep/water](http://www.citizen.org/cmep/water)

- **Structural Conversion:** Support some campaign either nationally or internationally that is working to ensure a just legal framework for the protection of and access to water and/or sanitation facilities. Evaluate this at some future date.
- Change your daily habits and help reduce water pollution and water use. Drive less and bike, walk or carpool more to help reduce the production of toxic air pollutants that cause acid rain.
- Always take a shower rather than a bath – if under five minutes you can save up to a 1000 gallons per month. Don't clean your teeth with the water running – you can save four gallons per minute - and whenever you use water, use less.
- Turn down your water heater temperature and your home thermostat to reduce energy use and help curb pollutants that cause acid rain.
- Share your knowledge and activities with others!
- **WHAT ELSE?**

#### QUESTIONS FOR THE “ACT” SECTION

1. Describe some activities taking place locally or near you to defend and protect water resources. Who are involved and why?
2. How can you and your community contribute to the “water solution”?
3. Are any members of your congregation working in countries where water is being "privatized"? Find out from them what is happening. Ask if there are actions being requested of the international community

6. Under the Millennium Development Goals, 2000, the UN General Assembly agreed to halve by 2015 the number of people (then 1.2 billion) without access to safe water. A similar 2015 target for sanitation (lacked by an estimated 2.4 billion people) was subsequently agreed by the World Summit on Sustainable Development, 2002.
7. Global water usage is divided thusly: agriculture: 70%; industry: 22% and domestic 8%.<sup>4</sup>
8. **Hidden Uses of water:** The Average water (in litres) needed to produce a kilo of: potatoes (1000), maize (1,400), rice (3,400), chicken (4,600) and beef (42,500)<sup>5</sup>.
9. More than half of the world's major rivers are being seriously depleted and polluted, and 25 million people fled their homes in 1998 because of contamination and depletion of river basins, outnumbering war-related refugees for the first time<sup>6</sup>.
10. The UN Food and Agriculture Organization has estimated that 100 tourists use the same amount of water in 55 days that could grow rice to feed 100 local villagers for 15 years.<sup>7</sup>
11. Typhoid, malaria, dengue, cholera and other water-related diseases are responsible for about 5 million deaths per year. This means that every minute of the day, somewhere in the world, ten persons, usually children, die unnecessary deaths.<sup>8</sup>
12. **Comparison of water consumption per day:** The Gambia (4.5 litres); Mali (8.0); USA (500); and England (200). The recommended basic requirement per person is 50 litres, but people can get by with 30 litres.<sup>9</sup>
13. **Water and Food Security:** In the World Peace Day Message 2002,<sup>10</sup> Pope John Paul II stated that 'water is a basic factor of food security'. Using sophisticated computer modeling, a report by the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI)<sup>11</sup> projects that by 2025, water scarcity will cause annual global losses of 350 million metric tons of potential food production—slightly more than the entire current U.S. grain crop. In other words, it now appears that one of the main factors limiting future food production will be water.

<sup>4</sup> Rob Boden, Water Supply: Our Impact on the Planet (Hodder Wayland 2002)

<sup>5</sup> Peter Gleick, The World's Water 2000-2001 (Island Press 2000)

<sup>6</sup> Latin America Press, #7, Feb. 28,2000

<sup>7</sup> Guardian Unlimited, May 12, 2001; article by Esther Addley: "Tourist's Water Demands Bleed Resorts

Dry

<sup>8</sup> [www.worldwater.org](http://www.worldwater.org)

<sup>9</sup> New Internationalist Magazine, March 2003

<sup>10</sup> Reference to all of the Holy See's World Day for Peace messages, including, 2001, in 6 languages:

[http://www.vatican.va/holy\\_father/john\\_paul\\_ii/messages/peace/index.htm](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/messages/peace/index.htm)

<sup>11</sup> "The Global Water Outlook to 2025: Averting an Impending Crisis"  
<http://www.ifpri.org/pubs/fpr/fprwater2025.pdf>

## RESOURCES AND REFERENCES :

### WEBSITES:

#### IN SEVERAL LANGUAGES:

1. **The World Water Development Report: Water for People, Water for Life (UN):** the report can be ordered on line. A good executive summary (36 pages) is available in seven languages:  
[http://www.unesco.org/water/wwap/wwdr/ex\\_summary/](http://www.unesco.org/water/wwap/wwdr/ex_summary/)
2. **International Year of Freshwater (Official Site):** – English, Spanish and French - For information on *what is happening in your country* click on the section "**The Year around the World**".  
[http://www.wateryear2003.org/ev.php?URL\\_ID=1456&URL\\_DO=DO\\_TOPIC&URL\\_SECTION=201](http://www.wateryear2003.org/ev.php?URL_ID=1456&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201)
3. **Water justice for all: global and local resistance to the control and commodification of water.** Twenty six pages. Published by Friends of the Earth. Available in English, French, Spanish and Japanese.  
<http://www.foei.org/index.php>
4. **Document: Water a Right for all - European Africa Faith and Justice Network.** (English and Spanish):  
<http://www.aefjn.org/english/issues/equitable%20trade.htm>
5. **Report by the International Commission on Dams:**  
<http://www.damsreport.org/> Download the complete report in English and Spanish at: <http://www.damsreport.org/report/> **Report Overview** available in English, German, Spanish, French, Portuguese, Hindi, Polish, Russian, Chinese and Japanese at: <http://www.damsreport.org/report/overviews.htm>
6. **International Gender and Trade Network (IGTN):** - Spanish and English -  
<http://www.igtan.org/EconoLit/Literacy.html>
7. **UNESCO and Water:** - English, French and Spanish -  
[http://www.unesco.org/water/index\\_es.shtml](http://www.unesco.org/water/index_es.shtml)
8. **Global Environmental Outlook 3 (GEO 3-)** provides an overview of the main environmental developments over the past three decades (English, Spanish, French and Russian), and how social, economic and other factors have contributed to the changes that have occurred.  
<http://www.rolac.unep.mx/geo/geo3/> A Section of this report is on Freshwater  
<http://www.grida.no/geo/geo3/english/265.htm> (English).
9. **World Social Forum - Water:** - English, Spanish and Portuguese –  
[http://agenciartamamior.uol.com.br/agencia.asp?coluna=forum\\_agua](http://agenciartamamior.uol.com.br/agencia.asp?coluna=forum_agua)
10. **Swiss Coalition:** - German, French, Italian and English -  
<http://www.swisscoalition.ch/deutsch/pagesnav/H.htm>
11. **World Water Rescue Foundation:** - English, Arabic, Chinese, French, Russian and Spanish - <http://www.wwrf.org>

However, this right has yet to be formally recognised by the international community, despite lengthy discussion and negotiations within the three "World Water Forum" events of 1996, 2000 and 2003, an International Freshwater conference in 2001 and discussions within the United Nations. No consensus on the issue emerged from the World Water Forum in Kyoto, March 2003, or from the G8 Summit in Evian (1-3 June, 2003) in its Action Plan for Water - seven of the G8 leaders representing Christian nations. It was in Kyoto that the Vatican reiterated and elaborated its strong support for the right to water. Extracts from the Vatican paper will be presented later in this booklet.

People have no alternative to water, even when price increases threaten their accessibility to it. Therefore, the provision of these goods cannot be left to market forces. "Water by its very nature cannot be treated as a mere commodity among other commodities. Catholic social thought has always stressed that the defence and preservation of certain common goods, such as the natural and human environments, cannot be safeguarded simply by market forces, since they touch on fundamental human needs which escape market logic". (cf. *Centesimus Annus*, 40).

This booklet, following the "see, judge and act" method, aims to give you clear information on issues related to water. It is the second booklet in a series on environmental issues put together by a working group of International JPIC promoters based in Rome.

Our overall goal is to help encourage sustainable lifestyles in religious communities. The first booklet was dedicated to Climate Change and Global Warming ([www.ofm-ipic.org/globalwarming](http://www.ofm-ipic.org/globalwarming)). There is already a wealth of information available on water so we do not propose to give an exhaustive exposé on all aspects of the theme. The signs of the times call us to environmental conversion. We hope this booklet will be a step in that direction.

A central question is why we should be more involved in this and other issues relating to Social and Environmental Justice. Water is an essential element not only for growing crops and raising animals, but also for people's very survival. Yet water scarcity is widespread. In many rural areas, water tables are falling, wells are contaminated and a rapidly decreasing run-off/water flow is available. Competitive claims on water resources by irrigation, industry and urban domestic consumers often favour the more

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"Praised be You, my Lord, through  
Sister Water, so useful, lowly,  
precious and pure."<sup>1</sup>

(Canticle of the Creatures, St. Francis of  
Assisi.)

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<sup>1</sup> Commentary - "Sister Water - A Franciscan Perspective", by Bro. Celso Márcio Teixeira ofm. c.f.,  
<http://www.ofm:pic.org/ecology>