

World Water Day



Through water, God gives life to everything



Green Anglicans

READINGS

First Reading Gen 1 : 1-10

Second Reading Rev 22:1-5

Psalm Psalm 133:1-3

Gospel John 4: 1-15

SERMON - THE SACREDNESS OF WATER

Water was present at the start of Creation and the whole history of God's work is framed by rivers. The Garden of Eden was fed by the life giving water of rivers. Water gushes and flows through the pages of Scripture. The last book of the bible reveals the image of the River of God bringing life and healing. Water is mentioned 722 times in Scripture and has many spiritual meanings. Why does water hold such a prominent place in the Bible?

The Biblical lands were dry lands and without water there would be no life. They had no great rivers such as the mighty Nile of Egypt. Apart from the river Jordan, the people of Israel were dependent on rainfall for their water. So these scriptures resonate with us in our water scarce country. The people of Israel knew the pain of thirst and the hunger that comes when the crops fail. So water became for them the symbol of spiritual life.

Water symbolizes many things in Scripture. It is the image used to describe salvation : "With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation" (Isaiah 12:3)

Water symbolizes cleansing of sins and purification- "Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water" (Hebrews 10:22).

Water is a symbol of spiritual life " For my people have committed two evils: they have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters, and hewed out cisterns for themselves, broken cisterns that can hold no water" (Jeremiah 2:13)

As Anglicans we become part of the family of God through the sacred waters of baptism. And yet we have lost the sense of sacredness of water by seeing it as something that comes out of a tap. How can we reconnect with water as something holy and precious? Christians know the name of the river that Jesus was baptized in--the Jordan River. And yet where did the water come from that was used for your baptism? Where is your River Jordan? Can you identify it and see if it is clean and free from rubbish?

In our weekly Eucharist we partake of water and wine and bread. This is to remember that both water and blood flowed from Jesus side." One of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear, and immediately blood and water flowed out." John 19:34

The challenge for us as Christians is to reclaim the sacredness of water. Can we do this liturgically in our services, by linking the service of baptism with a concern to protect the river from which it flows? Can we help our congregations to understand that we do not only partake of wine, but wine and water by emphasizing that part in the service? Can we use water liturgically for services of healing and sacred moments of absolution? Many churches have holy water at the door of the church but we do not teach about it. Can we re-claim this practice as a living part of our faith – as we are sent out into the world, we are cleansed by water but also sent out into the world to be keepers and stewards of this gift from God?

Genesis 1:1-10 - Before Creation the Spirit hovers over the waters

The first book, Genesis, starts with a wonderful poetic image of water and creation.

In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters. (Gen. 1:1–2)

Before creation even took place – the waters were there. Water is a primal element giving birth to life. It is no wonder that when a child is born the waters break to symbolize the start of the journey – a new life coming into the world. From Creation to re-creation, water gives life.

Psalm 133:3 - The Dew of Hermon as source of life

“As the dew of Hermon, and as the dew that descended on the mountains of Zion: for there the LORD commanded the blessing, even life for ever more.”

Mount Hermon stands in the buffer zone between Syrian and Israeli occupied territories. In this parched landscape it soars to 2814 metres and is snow capped. The dews of Syrian nights are heavy, when you wake in the morning it can look as if it has rained overnight. The dews that fall on the snow- capped mountain are particularly copious.

So the symbol of dew as a sign of unity is powerful – the Psalmist compares the influence of unity upon the nation to the effect of dew upon parched vegetation in a desert setting. How can we be inspired to become a sacred dew of unity bringing hope and new life to a divided and despairing society ?

Revelation 22:1-5 - The River of Life

We seem to be living in apocalyptic times. Will we run out of water? Will we reach day zero? Will the army be called in to stop us fighting over water? At such times it is important to remember that Revelation and Apocalypse are the same word. An Apocalyptic nightmare fades as a dream of vision is revealed. John of Patmos gives us a beautiful vision of the River of Life. Firstly it flows from the throne of God. Water is a free gift of God, it is sacred. We pay for the delivery but water itself is a gift. Secondly this sacred water of God brings healing and life – where it flows the trees flourish . “And the leaves of the trees are for the healing of the nations. There shall no longer be any curse.” As sacred water flows from the throne of God let us take that healing water into our communities to bring healing.

John 4:1-15 - Jesus the Living Water

In Jesus’ conversation with the Samaritan woman, he speaks to someone who is at the very bottom of society’s pecking order. She is a woman, a foreigner and considered to be immoral. Yet Jesus asks her to give him water. Jesus identifies himself as the source and giver of living water (Jn 4:10-24a). In Jewish culture there is living water (moving water) and dead water (stagnant water). The spiritual life he offers is fresh and full of life. But then he goes on to say that the Samaritan woman will herself become —a spring of water gushing up to eternal life (4:14).

This life giving water began to flow from the believing Samaritan woman as she began to share her story and many came to believe. No matter what experiences have hurt us or how unworthy we may feel, we are all called to become people who overflow with living water.

PRAYERS

Approach sentence

The river of God is full of water

let us worship and praise God

Collect

Gracious Father

your Son is the source of living water

grant that the gift of his Spirit might inspire us all

to value this gift that you have provided for our benefit

to learn to use it efficiently so that it might be shared by all

and to strive to ensure that it is available to all your people through our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ Amen.

Prayers of the people

Clouds, oceans, seas, rivers, lakes and waterfalls are your sacred gifts of life and beauty to us, O God; teach us how to use and preserve the waters of our planet.

Creator God, hear us we pray,

Give us your love for the whole of Creation.

Rain down your Spirit upon the waters of our earth; and upon those responsible for decisions concerning their purity and availability.

Creator God, hear us we pray,

Give us your love for the whole of Creation.

Nourishing God, may all the peoples and creatures of this earth have the water they need to live their lives fully. Help us to solve the problems of drought, flooding, sanitation and disease so that all may share in the banquet and none be in want.

Creator God, hear us we pray,

Give us your love for the whole of Creation.

Creator God, you are the source of living water. We confess our inadequate ways of dealing with the world's water. Free us from our misuse and waste of this precious gift, and forgive us.

Creator God, hear us we pray,

Give us your love for the whole of Creation.

God of life-giving waters, God of all those who carry water for miles, God of those whose only supply is contaminated, God of those lacking good sanitation, may water, clean and life-giving, be available to every living creature.

Creator God, hear us we pray,

Give us your love for the whole of Creation.

Compassionate God, forgive your people for their wasting, pollution, commodification and privatization of water.

Creator God, hear us we pray,

Give us your love for the whole of Creation.

Compassionate God, we pray for perseverance and courage for individuals, communities, agencies and organizations throughout the world working for water justice. May we be generous in supporting them,

Creator God, hear us we pray,

Give us your love for the whole of Creation.

Lord we pray for your Church throughout the world especially in its mission to promote justice, peace and the integrity of Creation. May we work to transform unjust structures in the provision of clean water and good sanitation. Bring churches together to work in unity so that clean water will be available to people and all creatures for today and for future generations. **Amen.** www.ctbi.org.uk/creationtime

During Eucharist while you pour water into the wine

By the mystery of this water and wine may we come to share in the divinity of Christ who humbled himself to share in our humanity.

Eucharistic Prayer for the Season of Creation can be used [Season of Creation](#)

Post communion Prayer

O Creator God

Pour out on us the water of life

that we might quench our thirst and draw strength from you

Help us to stand alongside those who struggle daily for clean water

so that all might be refreshed and renewed by your abundant love

revealed in our Lord Jesus Christ

Amen

May the Earth Continue to live

May the heavens above continue to live

May the rains continue to dampen the land

May the wet forests continue to grow

Then the flowers shall bloom

And we people shall live again

(A Hawaiian prayer)