

Water Ritual

Let justice flow like water.
And integrity like an unfailing stream.



Introduction: Fresh water—its distribution, degradation and disappearance—is one of the greatest concerns for humankind at the dawn of the new millennium. Future wars could be fought over it rather than for oil. The poor would continue to suffer inordinately in such power struggles.

Water needs to be respected and shared for the common good. In a spirit of solidarity with all peoples and all of creation, this ritual invites reflection on this wonderful gift from God.

Preparation and Symbols: Have a glass or chalice of water or wine. Place a basin of water in the center of the circle.

Call to Prayer

Leader Earth Maker, come to our assistance.

All God, make haste to help us.

Leader Let justice flow like water.

All And integrity like an unfailing stream.

Leader Rise, gentle flowing God,
raise your hand, do not forget the poor.

All You, yourself, have seen the distress and grief,
you watch and take them into your hands.

Leader Gentle God, you listen to the wants of the
humble, you bring strength to their hearts.

All Grant them a hearing, judging in favor of the
orphaned and the exploited so that earthborn women
and men may strike fear no longer.

Prayer

*"Magnificat" -- Luke 1:47-55 or
version (below) by Rachel Doerfler, CSA*

To you, O God. I sing my grateful hymn
Of praise and joy for mercy without end
And faithfulness beyond the grasp and hold
Of constant human infidelity.

My heart proclaims the marvels you have done:
With love you brought me forth and filled my life
With Spirit gifts;
You marked me as your own,



A chosen one with nothing left ungiven
Or kept for purposes outside love's choice
Of me to be forever bound by love.
All praise and glory to your name, blessing
And thanksgiving from age to age for bread
And wine -- your Body, offered broken, given;
Your Blood, a seal of pardon and of peace.
No words can tell of all the miracles
There are because your love will not be stilled
Or limited.
Your promises are rich,
Fulfillment of them is according to
Your tender mercy and your gracious care
For those who have no life or meaning apart
From you, to whom be praise forever more.

I will sing songs, I will be glad, I will
Rejoice with a full heart as I recall
The benefits of your measureless love
To me. And if, in human frailty,
Gratitude is small against such lavish
Giving, there still remains the certainty
And calm assurance that love is met with
Love and seeks no other recompense or
Return except to find full-emptiness
Hollowed out and waiting.
Only eager
Waiting, in humbleness and quiet peace,
For the gentle touch and holding of all
Love seeks to give.
No more than this is asked.
I lift my emptiness in full response.

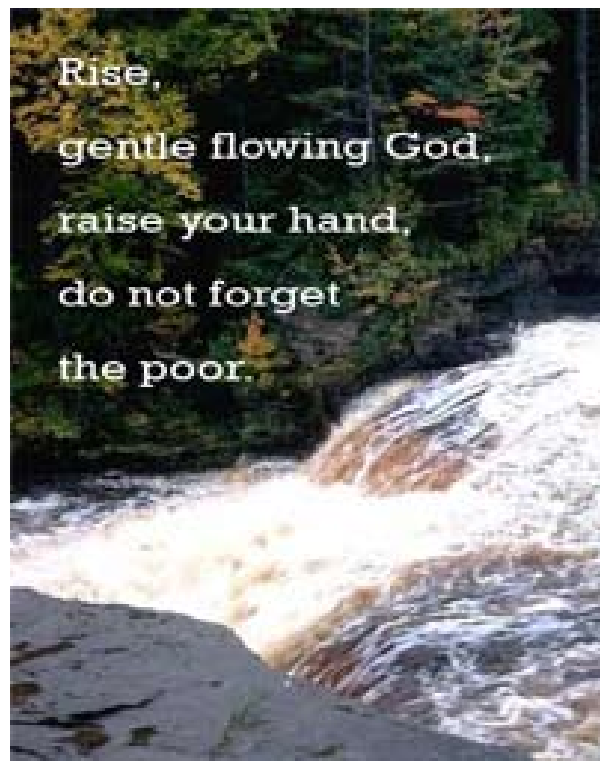
(from Woman Song II, National Sisters Vocation Conference)

Prayers of Celebration and Concern

Response: Grant this, O Creator God!

1. We thank you God for your love which became flesh and lived among us in the person of Jesus Christ. *May we follow your example in loving your people.... (pause after each)*
2. We thank you God for the great people of faith: Sarah, Deborah, Abraham, Moses, and Ruth. For Teresa of Avila, Catherine of Siena and Ambrose. For Dorothy Day, Thomas Merton, Martin Luther King, Jr., Dorothy Kazel, Ita Ford, Maura Clarke, Jean Donovan, and Phil Berrigan. *May the shining example of these people of faith encourage and strengthen us in our journey...*
3. We thank you God for our sisters and brothers who labor with the poor and oppressed at home and abroad, especially those in Afghanistan, Puerto Rico, El Salvador, Korea, Peru, Colombia, and Iraq. Let us all remember and support them. *Give them the courage and strength to bring justice and peace to our people...*
4. We thank you, God, for the gift of water: a blessing and a right for all peoples. *May all peoples share access to water and share the benefits of this wonderful gift of life.*
5. We thank you God for the wonderful work you are doing in our world today liberating and freeing others to be fully what you have called them to be. *Help us to be faithful to this inner truth which you have written in our hearts...*
6. We thank you for and ask your blessing on our sisters and brothers in ministry in all faith-traditions. *May their work bear much fruit...*
7. We thank you God for all our fathers/mothers, grandmothers/ fathers, aunts/uncles, sisters/brothers, and nieces/nephews. *May they be faithful to your call for them. And may you grant eternal rest to those whom you have called home...*
8. We thank you God for our many friends in community and in our family with whom we study, live and minister side by side. *May the time we spend with them be a sacred time of sharing and caring...*

(Pause to allow time for other prayers.)



Reflective Reading

The Spirit of Yahweh hovered over the water. It is this gift of water we celebrate today.

No element is mentioned more often in Scripture: water for cleansing, water for baptism, for refreshment and life, water for transition from one stage of life to another, water for blessing.

We claim the water of life, whose rush announces the birth of a baby, a water of life that nourishes seeds and plant roots deep in the earth. We celebrate water without which all that lives would shrivel and wither away, water of our life.

Water is the primary substance of the human body; our bodies are 70 percent water. Throughout the world the amount of water each person uses varies. Today one billion people do not have access to safe drinking water. Water covers 70 percent of the earth's surface and yet a little less than one percent of the earth's water is available for human use. These waters show evidence of human toxic life-styles. It is predicted that by 2020 nearly 50 nations will suffer severe water shortages. In the future water is something nations may go to war over.

We are called to look with new eyes upon the gift of water, to renew waters that have been polluted and

contaminated, and to act for justice in the use and distribution of water for all peoples throughout our world.

We celebrate our common thirst and the God who gifts us with water; a gift to treasure and to use with care and justice.

(Take time apart to reflect on the following questions.)

Reflective Questions

Let stories surface within. Name how I am open to life flowing... moving... probing... growing...

- * as woman/man
- * in weakness
- * in denying my strength
- * by my fear of losing control if I love too much
- * by taking blessings, like water, for granted
- * by conserving use of water
- * by working to restore polluted waters

Song

Play “Come to the Water” from *Lift Up Your Hearts*

While the song or instrumental music is playing, invite each person to take the common cup, hold it, and look into the water. See beyond where you are in time and dare to see into the future. Quietly give thanks to God. When finished, give the cup to the next person. Share thoughts from the reflection time.

Closing

Prayer

God of our hope. we give thanks for this day and these people. and for the gospel which gives this day meaning and your people direction. Stay close to us. Do not pass from our view lest we lose our way and our heart.

Encourage us. Root us in you. Make us so desire your life in us that our only fear is your absence and our greatest joy is your love.

Ritual Blessing

Bless each other with water.



Acknowledgments

“Water Ritual”: a modified version of a prayer service in *More Than Words, Prayer and Ritual for Inclusive Communities* by Janet Schaffran, CDP, and Pat Kosak, CSJ. from *Hill Connections* (<http://hillconnections.org>), a web site linking *Contemplation* and *Social Justice*.