

United Nations creates World Water Day to address water crisis

Sharon Abercrombie | Mar. 25, 2013 Eco Catholic

Indigenous people have always celebrated the four elements of earth, air, water and fire because of the life-giving gifts they bring to us. They ensure our very survival on this planet.

The Zoroastrian religion, a pre-Islamic, monotheistic faith founded by the prophet Zarathustra, in sixth-century B.C. Persia (now Iran) paid homage to the four elements by assigning an angel to each of them. The angel of water is named Anahita.

Thousands of years after Zarathustra, we contemporary earthlings might well need to become Anahita guardian-angels-in-residence to protect this most precious of resources.

Our water element is becoming an endangered species. Droughts, a climbing world population, unsustainable dam construction, political conflicts, and human disregard of consequences are putting this precious resource at major peril. Unless we act, the survival of every living thing on this planet -- plant, animal, soil, human -- could be seriously imperiled.

The North American Justice Promoters from Dominican congregations across the United States and the March edition of the Carbon Rangers/Ecozoic Times newsletter (an Edmund Rice Christian Brothers monthly publication) have both addressed the water crisis to mark March 22 as the first World Water Day.

The United Nations [has instituted the day](#) [1] to underscore the seriousness of the issue.

At their annual meeting March 9 in Grand Rapids, Mich., the Dominican justice promoters singled out the people of Palestine to call attention to the issues of water inadequacy there. Sr. Judy Morris, a Dominican Sister of Peace, told *NCR* the statement "is not anti-Israel." Rather, it has to do "with water as a basic human right. Every human has the right to water," she said.

But in Palestine, having access to it is a daily struggle for people.

"Israeli settlements, which are illegal under international law and consensus, have robbed the Palestinians of water, cutting off access to their natural springs and siphoning off the supplies of their aquifer," reads the statement from the Dominican justice promoters. They then quoted findings from the World Health Organization: "This leaves West Bank Palestinians with an average of 73 litres per person each day, well below the recommended 100 liters minimum."

It contrasted West Bank settlements where each person receives up to 400 liters each day. Many use this water to maintain swimming pools and spas.

A [recent UN report](#) [2] on settlements states that "forcible takeovers and vandalism by settlers increasingly impair access to water. ... Some of the seized springs are turned into 'tourist attractions' or recreational sites, which receive Israeli government support."

The justice promoters also called attention to Gaza, where the lack of potable water has reached crisis proportions. Only 5 percent of the water there is drinkable. Since 2007, Israel has ruled against allowing the entry of materials to rehabilitate water and wastewater systems of Gaza. The prohibition occurred on two occasions after Israeli attacks destroyed such facilities during bombing attacks in 2008 and 2012.

Declaring that it is grieved by the injustice, the group has called "for the return of both water and land rights to those from whom these have been wrongfully taken."

Edmund Rice Christian Br. Kevin Cawley, newsletter editor for the Carbon Rangers/Ecozoic Times, supplies additional information regarding the water situation. One billion people across the globe have no fresh water, and 2 billion lack basic sanitation, he writes. About 4,500 children die of water-related diseases every day, the equivalent of 10 jumbo jets falling out of the sky with no survivors.

Water shortages threaten the food future of the Arabic Middle East, the newsletter reports. During a September meeting of 40 former leaders in Oslo, Norway, former Canadian Prime Minister Jean Chretien said the world needs to find the equivalent of the flow of 20 Nile rivers by 2025 to grow enough food to feed a rising population and help avoid conflicts over water scarcity.

The leaders' study found that water has been a factor in other crises, such as the impact of global warming.

In another story, the newsletter talks about dam construction. Many experts are beginning to believe the problems around them outweigh the benefits of providing water and energy. They recommend replacing them with other forms of renewable energy, such as solar power and wind energy.

Cawley's newsletter also provides a Freshwater 101 quiz to help us learn how to become conscientious aquatic guardian angels. He writes: "We can each do something, especially if we are in the developed world where most of the damage is the result of how we are using up resources without regard to ultimate consequences. We can make a difference when we wake up to these facts. We can change. We can do better and then everyone will do better."

Source URL (retrieved on 06/24/2017 - 08:57): <https://www.ncronline.org/blogs/eco-catholic/united-nations-creates-world-water-day-address-water-crisis>

Links:

[1] <http://www.unwater.org/watercooperation2013/>

[2]

<http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/HRBodies/HRCouncil/RegularSession/Session19/FFM/FFMSettlements.pdf>