



# A DAY OF PRAYER -

A Faith Reflection on Water

5th of June 2010

World Environment Day

ALL YOU WHO ARE THIRSTY  
COME TO THE WATER

Isaiah 55:1

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**The Carmelite NGO**

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**“You do not wash blood away with blood, but with water.”**

- Turkey

## **The Religious Importance of Water**

Water is not only the basis of life on earth, it also plays a central role in the practices and beliefs of many of the world's religions. Water is a primary building block of life; without it there is no life. Water purifies and cleanses the body both spiritually and externally. These two qualities give a highly symbolic and almost sacred status to water. Water is a pertinent element in ceremonies, religious rites, and cultures.

Water is involved in the rites of major religions. In Buddhism, water is used during funerals. A bowl of overflowing water is placed before the monks and the body of the deceased.

In Christianity, water is used in baptism. When one is baptized, he or she may be partially or fully immersed in water or one's head has a few drops of water poured onto it. In baptism, water symbolizes purifying the body and rejecting sin. In the New Testament, water is seen as the 'water of life,' which represents eternal life.

In Hinduism, water has powers of spiritual purification. All water is sacred to Hindus, especially rivers. The seven sacred rivers (Ganges, Godavari, Kaveri, Narmada, Sarasvati, Sindu, and Yamuna Rivers) in Hinduism represent great equalizers. Before entering the temple, one must bathe in a nearby water source. Funerals are held near rivers. Water is poured on the burning funeral pyre, so the soul cannot escape. The cremated ashes are thrown into a holy river a few days later.

In Islam, water is the utmost source of purification. Islam has three ablutions. The first involves completely purifying the body; it is mandatory after sex, and advised before touching the Koran and before Friday prayers. The second cleansing is before each of the five daily prayers. Muslims must bathe their head, hands, forearms, and feet. Mosques provide sources of

water for this ablution. For the third ablution Muslims may use sand to cleanse themselves if water is scarce.

In Judaism, water is used to maintain a pure state. The origins of water are found in the Torah.

Water is important in all aspects of life and is essential in keeping religious and cultural practices alive.

- Jill Tatarski, Loyola University New Orleans



**Water, water, water is life. Children need water.  
Mothers need water. Elderly need water.  
Sick people need water.  
Water, water, water is life.**

- Uganda

## **Psalm 107**

Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good.

The Lord changed the desert into pools of water,  
Waterless land into water springs.  
And there he settled the hungry,

And they built a city to dwell in.

They sowed fields and planted vineyards,  
And they obtained a fruitful yield.

He blessed them, and they became very many;  
Nor did he suffer their cattle to decrease.  
And they dwindled and were brought low through  
Oppression, affliction and sorrow.

But the Lord who pours out contempt upon princes,  
And sends them astray through a trackless waste,  
Lifted up the needy out of misery and  
Made the families numerous like flocks.

The upright see this and rejoice,  
And all wickedness closes its mouth.

Who is wise enough to observe these things  
And to understand the favors of the Lord.

Give thanks to the Lord for he is good.

**+** **+** **+**

## **Isaiah 35: 1-4, 6-7**



**I pray for the ones who help me.  
I pray that the word of God will spread and  
live long.  
I pray for rain and food,  
because there are so many people who  
have neither.  
I pray for more justice and peace in this  
world.**

*- Ethiopia*

The desert and the parched land will exult;  
The steppe will rejoice and bloom.

They will bloom with abundant flowers,  
And rejoice with joyful song.

The glory of Lebanon will be given to them,  
The splendor of Carmel and Sharon;

They will see the glory of the Lord,  
The splendor of our God.

Strengthen the hands that are feeble,  
Make firm the knees that are weak.

Say to those whose hearts are frightened,  
Be strong, fear not! Here is your God.

Then the eyes of the blind be opened,  
The ears of the deaf be cleared;

Then will the lame leap like a stag,  
Then the tongue of the dumb will sing.

Streams will burst forth in the desert,  
And rivers in the steppe.

The burning sands will become pools,  
And the thirsty ground, springs of water;

The abode where jackals lurk  
Will be a marsh for the reed and papyrus.  
The desert and the parched land will exult.



**Sometimes I will go without food so my grandchildren will**

**have water. Water comes before food. Soon we will have to drink air.**

- Ghana

## **Psalm 36:6-10**

O Lord, your kindness reaches to heaven;  
Your faithfulness, to the clouds.

Your justice is like the mountains of God;  
Your judgments, like the mighty deep;  
People and beast you save, O Lord.

How precious is your kindness, O God!  
The children take refuge in the shadow of your wings.

They have their fill of the prime gifts of your house;  
From your delightful stream you give them to drink.

For with you is the fountain of life,  
And in your light we see light.



**Water is life and because we have no water, life is miserable.**

- Kenya

## **Reading from John 4: 7-15**



The hour was about noon. When a Samaritan woman came to draw water, Jesus said to her, "Give me a drink." The Samaritan woman said to Jesus, "You are a Jew. How can you ask me for a drink?" Jesus replied: "If only you recognized God's gift, and who it is that is asking you for a drink, you would have asked him instead, and he would have given you living water." Sir, she challenged him, you do not have a bucket and this well is deep. Where do you expect to get this flowing water? Surely you do not pretend to be greater than our ancestor Jacob, who gave us this well and drank from it with his sons and his flocks. Jesus replied: "Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again. But whoever drinks the water I give will never be thirsty; no, the water I give shall become a fountain within him leaping up to provide eternal life." *The Word of God.*



## Prayers of Petition

Gracious God, hear our prayers.  
Hear the cries of all who thirst this day  
for safe water  
for food  
for safe haven  
for health  
for justice  
for peace.

Give us the courage to respond to your call. Amen.

### *Let Us Pray*

God of life, God of all those who walk miles for water,  
God of those whose only supply is contaminated,  
bringing death, not life. May water, clean and life-giving,  
be available to every living creature. May that vision move  
forward. May your will be done. Amen

- United Kingdom

The period 2005-2015 has been proclaimed by the United Nations

as the International Decade for Action on 'Water for Life'.

*For information go to:*  
[un.org/waterforlifedecade](http://un.org/waterforlifedecade)

## About Water

- ◇ 1 of every 6 people in the world lacks access to safe drinking water.
- ◇ Twice as many lack access to improved sanitation.
- ◇ 80 countries, home to 40% of the world's population, are encountering serious water shortages.
- ◇ One toilet flush in the U.S. uses as much water as the average person in a developing country uses for a whole day's drinking, cooking, washing, and cleaning.
- ◇ Two million people – most of them children – die each year from waterborne disease.

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