

CARE FOR EARTH, CARE FOR EACH OTHER—FRANCISCAN FEDERATION 2007

Statement of Resolution. In the Franciscan dynamic of right relationship, we realize that when we care for all of creation on Earth, we care for each other. This resolution reminds the members of the Federation of our call to care for and preserve Sister Water. Caring for and relating to water as “Sister” requires us to take action individually, collectively and in solidarity with people throughout the planet to address water scarcity and water quality. In conjunction with the “International Decade for Action: “Water for Life,” we need to respond through prayer, education and advocacy in order to preserve, protect, and use wisely the gift of water.

Background. 75% of Earth’s surface is covered by water, however, usable freshwater is only about 2.6% of all the water on Earth. More than one billion people in the world lack access to safe drinking water. Every week 30,000 people die from diarrhea-related diseases and from other causes easily prevented by a safe water supply. Nearly 6,000 children die every day from diseases due to unsafe water and poor sanitation. By 2025 nearly two-thirds of the world’s population will face a serious water shortage. Currently, 1 billion people lack adequate water. Those who are economically poor throughout the world find it increasingly difficult to meet daily requirements for water. As such, their survival is at risk. Women and children are most adversely affected.

Rationale. As Franciscans we are called to care for all of creation. We need to be mindful that water is a precious gift that must be given freely and equally since water belongs to all living beings. We are responsible for preserving water and passing it onto future generations. Increasingly, people, creatures and plants of the world find themselves grappling with the consequence of a diminished supply of safe water. The situation grows dire due to the swell of human demand, corporate privatization, and the degradation of water quality. The common threads linking the problem of water on a global scale are poverty, war, unjust economics and a lack of infrastructure. Global warming is blamed for upsetting the environment so as to impede reasonable access to water. Scientific studies verify damage to the Earth’s habitats, while noting an increase in regions suffering drought and flooding; the melting of the polar icecaps and the glaciers are further evidence of global warming. Increasingly, wars are fought over water. Since we humans are approximately 90% water, the idea of caring for water in reality is caring for all life. Water, like the pulse of a beating heart, keeps life flowing freely: through the gift of Baptism, through blessed holy water, through cleansing, and through drinking. Water is a source of tranquility, provides recreation and a habitat for living creatures.

Call to Respond:

1. That the members of the Franciscan Federation be mindful of their use of water and pray in thanksgiving for the gift of Sister Water.

2. Take one specific personal action to conserve water. Visit www.wateruseitwisely.com for information on saving water.
3. Contract your local water company to ascertain where your water comes from and details about its quality. Request that your local water company provide you with this information...It is a law.
4. Contact your legislator regarding what the U.S. is contributing via policies or funding toward the issue of safe/clean water in the world.
5. Individual communities and the Franciscan Federation is welcome to sign onto Corporate Accountability International, a concerted effort to defend water as a basic human right:
 - Information from Corporate Accountability International (CAI), www.stopcorporateabuse.org
 - Join postcard campaign to address bottled water and privatization issue, contact Zandra [Rice—zrice@stopcorporateabuse.org](mailto:zrice@stopcorporateabuse.org).
 - Stop buying bottled water. Reuse your bottle and place sticker on bottle, "Think Outside the Bottle."
6. CAI is working with Polaris Institute to secure the human right a consistent portable supply of water and reasonable access to a source. Some suggested areas for the Water Campaign include: 1) the tap water challenge, 2) sponsoring a water fountain, 3) boycott bottle water, 4) Municipal waters campaign, 5) a water fast and 6) a water ceremony.
7. Consider the CAI and Polaris Institute ideas as ways of bridging the water resolutions, noting the delicate relationship that exists and mingles with a variety of human issues, including human trafficking and the situation in Darfur. A water fast could be sponsored as a way to stand in solidarity with those in Sudan and victims of human trafficking—it would serve as a symbolic connection with their suffering.
8. Endorse as a Federation the New Mexico Call for Nuclear Disarmament. New nuclear weapons are being researched and built which contaminate water within New Mexico, uranium mining affects water quality, tests in Nevada jeopardizes the water of Shoshone and other citizens, the affects on water of depleted uranium used in current weapons of war is uncertain. This action places the Franciscan Federation in solidarity with others. The topic of water serves as the entrée for discussion about nuclear disarmament. The Call for Nuclear Disarmament challenges elected leaders to:
 - Stop the design and manufacture of all nuclear weapons, including plutonium bomb cores in places like Los Alamos, New Mexico, and elsewhere.
 - Dismantle nuclear arsenals in concert with other nuclear powers, pursuant to Article VI of the Nonproliferation Treaty.
 - Halt disposal of nuclear waste at Los Alamos and other places.
9. Commit financial resources to support water needs in an economically poor area by working with Water Partners International or Catholic Relief Services/Caritas. Both work collaboratively with communities.

Other Sources of Information:

“Preserving Water” and “Caring for Water” 2006 Federation Proposals and “Water Campaign Feast Day,” 2006.

“The Gift of Sister Water,” by Gerri Thatcher.

Interfaith Statement on Water from World Water Forum, Mexico City, March 2006.

“Resolution to Action,” LCWR Global Concerns Committee. Vol. 14, #3. June 2005.

The Global Water Crisis-Food for Thought. Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns. Jan/Feb. 2005.

“The Global Water Crisis.” The Coalition Courier. Region VI Coalition for Responsible Investments. Vol. 3, Issue 1. Mt. St. Joseph Ohio Feb. 2005.

The Wooden Bell. Catholic Relief Services. Vol. 17, #1. October 2005.

“The Global Water Crisis.” Interfaith Center on corporate Responsibility. The Corporate Examiner. Vol. 32, #10. December 6, 2004.

Contact Persons: Sr Lorraine Campanelli, OSF, and Region One Steering Committee, Sr. Joan Brown, OSF, joankansas@junocom, Sr. Marge Wissman, OSF, mwissman@oldenburgosf.com and Sr. Sheila Kinsey, OSF, skinsey@wheatonfranciscan.org.