



## Justice, Peace, and Integrity of Creation

*Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate – US Province*

### 2017 World Water Day: Why waste water?

#### The Call for Stewardship of Water

*Responding to Signs of Our Times in the Spirit of St. Eugene De Mazenod*

*“Oh, come to the water, all you who are thirsty.”*

Isaiah 55:1

March 22, 2017 is World Water Day. To mark this observance OMI JPIC has developed this second in a series of resources for Oblates in the U.S. Province. Last month, in a letter addressed to the Province, Fr. Bill Antone, OMI, invited Oblates and Associates to reflect on challenges within our nation today. He asked, “How can we be engaged? He then recommends an effective response by calling us to “...reflect deeply on how our Catholic faith and principles can shed light upon a myriad of questions we face concerning immigrants, ecology, economy, trade, human rights, race, patriotism, church unity, world order, checks and balances, war and peace.” We hope this resource leads us all to thoughtful reflection and action for communities struggling to experience this basic human right, close access to clean water.

#### OVERVIEW

World Water Day was formally proposed in 1992 at the UN Conference on Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. The first observance was the following year. Since then each year the world marks March 22 as a day to give attention and take action on the global water crisis. Each year a different water-related issue is addressed. “Why waste water?” is 2017’s theme centered on reducing and reusing wastewater. Wastewater is a valuable resource to help achieve *UN Sustainable Development Goal 6 – Clean Water & Sanitation*, which aims to halve the proportion of untreated wastewater and increase water recycling and safe reuse.

Today, there are over 663 million people living without a safe water supply close to home. Some have to travel far to a safe water source. Others are sickened by local contaminated water. Access to water, but also safe water are key issues affecting communities in both the developed and developing world.

On World Water Day 2012 retired Oblate Bishop Emeritus of San Angelo, Texas Michael Pfeifer, OMI, noted, “WATER! It is essential for life and all of us must take much more responsibility for using this wonderful God-given gift, preserving and working together to find new sources of water that are necessary for all life on planet Earth.”

**Oblates are doing just that in their various ministries around the world. What follows are two of these stories; with things we as individuals can do to make a difference.**

## Zambia

*Oblate Radio Liseli* is empowering people through community programs. One recent program in 2016 focused on the limited access to clean running water experienced by many communities of Mongu in Zambia's Western Province. On behalf of its listeners, *Oblate Radio Liseli* brought attention to this issue and challenged the local water authority (Western Water and Sewerage Company) to address it.

Western Water and Sewerage Company responded by drilling four boreholes in affected areas. One of the boreholes drilled in the township of *Imwiko* is already up and running. The company continues to drill subsequent boreholes and hopes to have most of them operational soon. This is one example of how this community radio reached out beyond spreading the Word of God to incorporating programs that transform the lives of people.

## Canada

OMI LaCombe through its Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation (JPIC) ministry partners with Canadian Aboriginal Peoples helping them assert their rights in land claims and enter negotiations over natural resources found on their traditional territories. At its fall 2016 symposium titled, "Our Common Home: as long as the rivers flow", OMI LaCombe joined other groups to draft a collective statement about water and treaty rights, in the context of *Laudato Si's* call to care for our common home and each other.

In an article about the event that appeared in the *Prairie Messenger*, organizers expressed that a collective statement was crafted as 'a reference point and a model for engagement, dialogue and awareness that could be shared and promoted in various ways.' One of the organizers, Chris Hrynkow of St. Thomas More College noted, "Water is a path of dialogue and action." He also described how water was chosen as a 'nexus or junction point' to bring people together to address reconciliation with indigenous peoples, stating, "Water is something we need — it is part of us." He stressed that the symposium statement comes out of this particular time and place, and challenged participants to "incarnate" the experience by going forth from the gathering with concrete, personal pledges for action.

### Reflection and Discussion

During this Lenten Season:

- How does your Liturgical celebration and participation reflect the Sacredness of Water as a gift of God?
- What issues arise in your Community, State and Region in regard to Water as a Common Good and basic human right?

### Action

- Do you know your water footprint? Evaluate it here: [www.watercalculator.org](http://www.watercalculator.org)
- Visit [Catholic Rural Life's website](https://catholicrurallife.org/resources/education-and-action/placards-for-a-just-food-system/water-a-sacramental-commons/) (<https://catholicrurallife.org/resources/education-and-action/placards-for-a-just-food-system/water-a-sacramental-commons/>) to read about Water as a Sacrificial Commons for all.
- Join Interfaith Center for Corporate Responsibility (ICCR) in a petition asking Perdue to "Come Clean" by adopting a water stewardship policy for its poultry farming and processing. Perdue has a 10-year track record of water and environmental safety violations. Please consider adding your name by visiting [Change.org](https://www.change.org) (<https://www.change.org>).