



# **I THIRST:**

## **A Lenten Journey from Desert to Garden**

*We praise you, Lord, for Sister Water, so useful, humble, precious and pure.*  
**St. Francis of Assisi**

## *I Thirst: A Lenten Journey from Desert to Garden*

### **Suggestions for Convener:**

This material was created to help people heighten their appreciation of God's gift of water, God's living and acting within it, current water conditions on Earth, and how we can respond in faith.

Please make copies on both sides of sustainable paper.

Groups are encouraged to be creative with this material. Adapt it in any way that facilitates sharing, community building, and prayerful reflection.

Before the first meeting, be sure the participants know the dates, times, and location of the first meeting. These can be altered for future meetings if the entire group agrees. Stop in time to complete the closing and for socializing. Acquire desired material from the following suggestions or assign volunteers to secure it; pre-play music and media before using to be sure everything works correctly.

### **Some suggested music:**

Sounds of Water (e.g., [www.jetcityorange.com/SoundFiles/](http://www.jetcityorange.com/SoundFiles/))

Water Music on YouTube: GF Handel, Aleksei Stevens

"With Joy We Shall Draw Water," R. Hurd

"Canticle of the Sun," M. Haugen

"Psalm 42" (As the Deer Longs)

"Come to Me and Drink," R. Hurd

"Come to the Water," J. Foley

**Week One:** • Easy-to-read name cards for each participant. When participants are absent, put names in the center to remember them in prayer.

- Sufficient number of booklets.
- Music as wanted.
- Centerpiece of pitcher filled with filtered (if possible) tap water.
- A lovely glass for each person.

**Week Two:** • Purchase/borrow Healing Earth — Our Common Blessing (DVD) or use preview on computers. ([www.seescapes.com](http://www.seescapes.com); click Meditations; choose "Healing Earth"; preview #4: "Healing the Water.")

- Music as wanted.

**Week Three:** • Music as wanted.

**Week Four:** • Flow - For Love of Water or Tapped or Blue Gold or other film that explore Earth's water crisis. Use about 30 minutes of it.

**Week Five:** • "Were You There" tape or words if needed. • Wooden crucifix.

## Lent, Week One: The Wonder of Water

### I. Intro

Welcome, intros (name cards), overview; if not coming, please let leader know. (Give phone number.) How do you feel about spending five faith-sharing weeks on water during Lent? What are your hopes for this time?

The group decides about refreshments at future meetings and, if wanted, how food will be provided. Distribute booklets and allow a brief time for perusal. Begin the meeting by "changing gears" with whatever will help participants remember the divine presence – quiet reflection, music, etc. Then read the following Scripture:

**Matthew 4: 2-3: *Jesus prepared for the test by fasting forty days and forty nights. That left him, of course, in a state of extreme hunger . . . .***

Silent reflection, followed by sharing: What is the thirstiest you can remember being?

### II. Input

It seems safe to assume that Jesus was also in a state of extreme thirst. Humans can live without food for weeks, but after one day without water, dehydration leading to death can begin. When else would Jesus have needed water during his life? When the King welcomed into heaven those who gave drink to anyone thirsty (Mt. 34 - 46), he knew whereof he spoke. We now know more about water than anyone in Jesus' time could have guessed.



Earth is about 4.5 billion years old. Only after it cooled sufficiently — about 3.9 billion years ago — could water accumulate, most probably coming from comets and asteroids that regularly strike Earth. Like Earth itself, Sister Water dates ultimately to stars! Far from being just a resource, water is a vital member of creation's communion of subjects. All life that preceded us, starting with the earliest life forms and including Jesus' life, depended on water. Earth's finite water is continually being recycled — rain, steam, glaciers, oceans, etc. — to become clean and reusable. Future generations will continue to need these water molecules to survive and thrive.

Water is a vital substance in every living cell of nearly every creature; 60 - 70% of human body (by weight) is water. Earth's surface, too, is about 70% water! We are completely interconnected.

Water helps build animal and human communities; it shapes the land; drives climate and weather; shapes politics and policies; provides beauty, majesty, energy, and emotional experience; is used in the manufacture of many products; cools and warms us. . . . Can you elaborate on anything here, or suggest additional benefits from water?

Water is more than a physical necessity. God reveals divine presence through creation's water. Water has key roles in rituals and sacraments for Roman Catholics (and other religions). Sacred Scripture contains over 500 references to water. What Scripture reference to water attracts you?

Etty Hillesum (Holocaust victim) spoke of the well of her inner life becoming repeatedly cluttered with stones, gravel, and debris. Repeatedly she dug it out and found that clear cool water rose up from the depths and refreshed her. Endless sources of life-giving water remain deep within us, but our well needs constant vigilant cherishing. [For SHCJ: Cornelia gave us the image of inner wellsprings. What does this mean to you?]

### **III. What is God saying to us?**

What can we learn about God because of water? How does God speak to you through water?

**IV. This week** (and this Lent): Drink and use "Sister Water" (e.g., showering, washing dishes and clothes, entering and leaving church, watering your garden, etc.) with greater awareness, reverence, appreciation and wonder. "Wonder is not just another emotion; it is rather an opening into the heart of the universe." (B. Swimme and M.E. Tucker) Will someone write a prayer about water to start our session next week and to end it Week Three (same prayer)? Everyone prepare to share anything significant about your Baptism — date, circumstances, etc. — and what Baptism means to you. Mark your calendar for March 22, World Water Day.

**V. Closing:** Stand around the water centerpiece. One person reverently pours water into each glass. When all have water, pray as follows:

*All: Gracious God, present everywhere, may your love, like water, pour over our thirsty spirits, cleansing, refreshing, and renewing us this Lent. Be present as we seek to know you, to love you, and to respond to your unconditional love for us. Amen.*

Drink a sip of the water and savor it in silence. Remember those who are dying for lack of water.

**Reader:** A water molecule born billion of years ago has repeatedly become steam, clouds, rain, glaciers, oceans, rivers, dew, water in wells and aquifers, water in the faucet, water in these glasses, in our mouths, our veins, our brains, our dreams, this prayer . . . .

**Leader:** *Like the deer that yearns for running streams,*

**All:** *So my soul is yearning for you, my God. Amen.*

Drink all the water and socialize.

Take your booklet home and bring it each week.



## Lent, Week Two: World Water Facts

### I. Intro

Notes

Volunteer reads prayer s/he wrote, followed by silent reflection. Then read:

**Genesis 12: 1: *God told Abram: "Leave your country, your family, and your father's home for a land that I will show you."***

**John 3:5: *Unless a person is born again – the wind hovering over the water's creation, the invisible moving the visible, a baptism into a new life — it's not possible to enter God's kingdom.***

What are your Baptism dates and circumstances? What did/does your Baptism mean to you? Any significant water experiences this week?

### II. Input

- Only 1% of all the water on Earth is fresh and liquid and usable. About 3% is fresh (e.g., in glaciers). What about the rest?

- The present global population is about 7 billion people.

- Nearly 1 billion people have no access to clean drinking water. About 2.5 billion people live without proper sanitation.

- Every day, 2,000 - 6,000 children die of preventable water-related diseases.

- Drought, desertification, or flooding threaten the lives of at least 1 billion people in over 110 countries.

- The average American lifestyle is kept afloat by about 2,000 gallons of H<sub>2</sub>O a day — twice the global average.

- Many Church statements affirm that the right to safe drinking water is a universal and inalienable right.

- The U.N. adopted a resolution July 28, 2010, stating that access to safe and clean drinking water and sanitation is a human right. The vote was 122 in favor and 41 abstentions. Industrialized countries like the United States and Canada withheld support for this resolution. Why might that be?

A report by Archbishop Veglio, president of the Pontifical Council for Migrants, states, in part: *People are moving away, since they can no longer make a living as a result of desertification and growing water scarcity, increasing sea-levels and 'salinisation' of agricultural land. Climate change is also increasingly causing natural disasters, like flooding and storms. As a result, conflicts about resources increase.*



*This new form of displacement will have enormous consequences for decades to come. The frequently-cited and accepted estimate of 200 million climate induced displaced persons by 2050 indicates the gigantic dimensions of the problem. [The flooding in Pakistan in August 2010 displaced over 21 million in that country alone.] Human migration will undoubtedly be one of the most significant consequences of the change in climate.*

If your area had a major flood or drought (picture, e.g., Typhoon Haiyan) — and you survived — where would you go? How would you get there? What would you do for a living? How would your Baptism influence your responses?

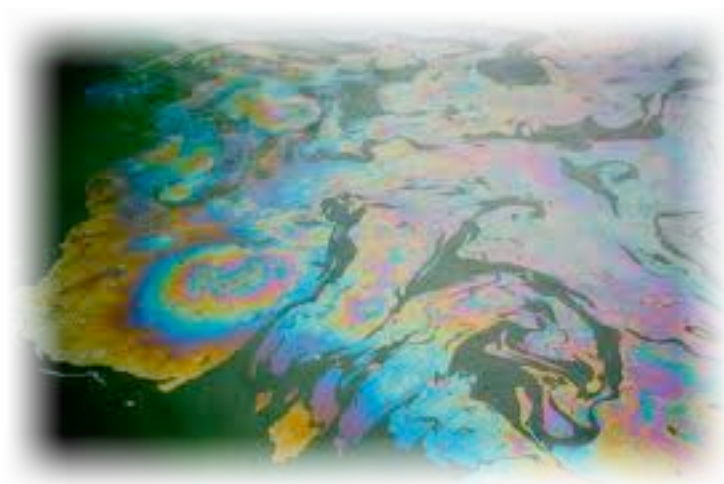
### **III. What is God saying to us?**

God's words were pretty direct: Jesus said that whatever you do for anyone, you do it for him.

**IV. This week:** Find a meaningful poem about water to share next week — and perhaps to share with others on Saturday, March 22, World Water Day. For example, read "When They Find a Way" on p. 12; G. M. Hopkins' "Inversnaid"; M. Oliver's "At Blackwater Pond."

**V. Closing:** Watch Len Sroka's "Healing the Water." (Note that bottled water is used only for emergency situations.) Pause to reflect quietly when it ends. Pray together:

*Bless us as we use Earth's water, Holy Mystery. May we use water mindful of those who thirst. May we be mindful of how water blesses our lives. Amen.*



## Lent, Week Three: Some Issues Contributing to the World Water Situation

### I. Intro

Notes

Begin with quiet reflection as usual. Invite participants to share poetry about water and, if they wish, what they like about it. Then read:

**Exodus 17: 2- 3:** *There wasn't a drop of water for the people to drink . . . The people were thirsty for water. They complained to Moses . . . God said . . . Strike the rock and water will gush out of it . . . .*

How does this reading relate to today's world? What could you answer if anyone says you are foolish to conserve water?

### II. Input

These are some of the causes of water pollution and scarcity, many of which "cross-cut" (issues that impact other issues):

- **Industrial animal production** is at or near the top of the worldwide list for water usage, water pollution, topsoil loss, tropical rainforest destruction, and desertification. It takes 2500 gallons of water and many pounds of grain to produce one pound of beef. Abstaining from meat on Fridays evidently had global benefits no one realized! Grass-fed beef raised sustainably on family farms can contribute positively to Mother Earth. What are other reasons that motivate people to abstain from beef?



- **Industrial agriculture** (factory farming) uses excess water. Chemical fertilizers and pesticides run off the land to pollute water sources. As of July 2013, they have affected waters throughout the Mississippi basin and caused a Dead Zone at the mouth of the Mississippi River that is larger than the state of Connecticut.

- **Synthetic chemicals** from laundry and dishwashing soaps and chlorine bleaches pollute rivers, lakes, and coastal areas. Phosphates cause large buildups of algae and bacteria that rob water bodies of oxygen, thus choking other life forms. Drugs flushed in toilets and sinks damage water.



- **Hydraulic fracturing (fracking)**, a method to remove gas from shale, uses large amounts of water with chemicals that result in the water's becoming excessively contaminated, including with radioactivity. It requires considerable treatment before being discharged, or is stored in outdoor pits, or injected into deep wells, causing land tremors in some areas. (See "Time for an Energy Change": <http://ecospiritualityresources.com/media.>)

- **Mountaintop removal** for coal results in waste that is dumped into valleys, blocking streams. Excess water from coal processing includes toxic chemicals (sludge).

- **Climate change** exacerbates drought and flooding in many parts of the world. Rising sea levels are inundating low-lying shorelines and drowning islands. As we read last week, because of severe weather events and drought, women and children migrate, become refugees and hence more vulnerable to increased poverty and trafficking.

- **Energy uses** ([www.ucsusa.org/energy-water](http://www.ucsusa.org/energy-water)) It takes 70 gallons of water to produce 4 gallons of gasoline, and the same amount to produce one pound of plastic.

- **Bottled water** (More on this Week Four)



### III. What is God saying to — and through — us?

We cannot limit the ways Divine Love will speak to our hearts. As you review these and other issues that damage and threaten water and all life, what do you hear God saying? Some have heard a call to lament and grieve the causes of pollution and scarcity; to learn more; to better reverence and be more grateful for water; to conserve water by wise use of it; to lobby for better protection of rivers, lakes, and oceans; to somehow get more involved. Perhaps you'll "hear" connections between issues and one or more Stations of the Cross or one or more of Jesus' last words. For example, millions of people are being condemned to death by water pollution and scarcity. Many are forced to say: I am thirsty. Take a few minutes to consider the issues, listening for how our Creator Spirit invites you to respond. (Pause.) If you wish, share what you "heard."

God also speaks *through* us as we respond to our call to turn these realities into new life for Earth and all its inhabitants. We do not act alone. Through God's Spirit we are connected with all those, living and dead, who work(ed) to protect Earth's water. In this holy endeavor, we can be confident because "God can do anything, far more than you could ever ask or imagine or guess or request in your wildest dreams! Divine Love does it not by pushing us around but by working within us, God's Spirit deeply and gently within us." Eph. 3: 20 - 21

### IV. This week:

Calculate your water footprint (e.g. at <http://environment.nationalgeographic.com/environment/freshwater/change-the-course/water-footprint-calculator/>). Note where you could reduce it. We won't share results!

**V. Closing:** Read pp. 9-10 silently. When some have finished (others can finish at home), share reactions. The volunteer who wrote the prayer for Week Two concludes the meeting by reading that prayer.





"Official" excerpts from a 17 page **Report by the Working Group Commissioned by the Pontifical Academy of Sciences (glaciologists, climate scientists, meteorologists, hydrologists, physicists, chemists, mountaineers, and lawyers), Vatican, April 2011:**

**Declaration:**

We call on all people and nations to recognize the serious and potentially irreversible impacts of global warming caused by the anthropogenic emissions of greenhouse gases and other pollutants, and by changes in forests, wetlands, grasslands, and other land uses. We appeal to all nations to develop and implement, without delay, effective and fair policies to reduce the causes and impacts of climate change on communities and ecosystems, including mountain glaciers and their watersheds, aware that we all live in the same home. By acting now, in the spirit of common but differentiated responsibility, we accept our duty to one another and to the stewardship of a planet blessed with the gift of life.

We are committed to ensuring that all inhabitants of this planet receive their daily bread, fresh air to breathe and clean water to drink as we are aware that, if we want justice and peace, we must protect the habitat that sustains us. The believers among us ask God to grant us this wish.

**Anthropocene:** Aggressive exploitation of fossil fuels and other natural resources has damaged the air we breathe, the water we drink, and the land we inhabit. To give one example, some 1000 billion tons of carbon dioxide and other climatically important “greenhouse” gases have been pumped into the atmosphere. As a result, the concentration of carbon dioxide in the air now exceeds the highest levels of the last 800,000 years. The climatic and ecological impacts of this human interference with the Earth System are expected to last for many millennia, warranting a new name, **The Anthropocene**, for the new “man-made” geologic epoch we are living in. **Perspective on Past Changes:** In response to the argument that “since the Earth has experienced alternating cold periods (ice ages or glacials) and warm periods (inter-glacials) during the past, today’s climate and ice cover changes are entirely natural events”, we state:

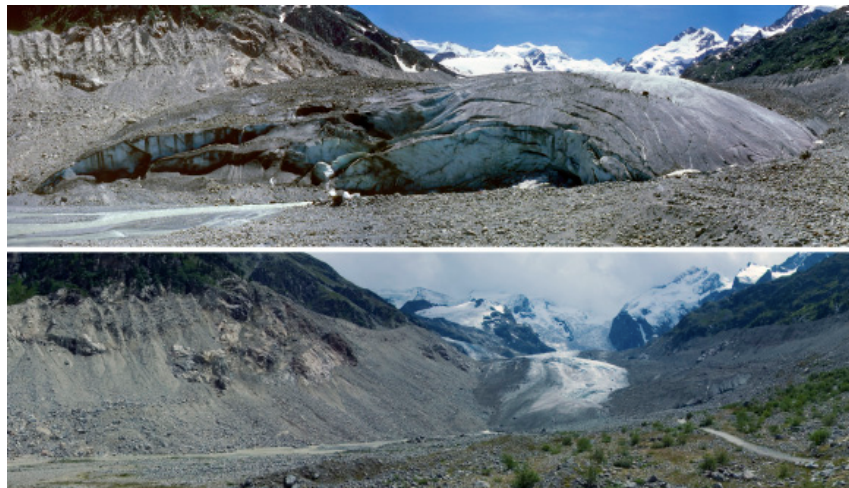
*The primary triggers for ice ages and inter-glacials are well understood to be changes in the astronomical parameters related to the motion of our planet within the solar system and natural feedback processes in the climate system. The time scales between these triggers are in the range of 10,000 years or longer. By contrast, the observed human-induced changes in carbon dioxide, other greenhouse gases, and soot concentrations are taking place on 10-100 year timescales—at least a hundred times as fast. It is particularly worrying that this release of global warming agents is occurring during an interglacial period when the Earth was already at a natural temperature maximum.*

**Three Recommended Measures:** Human-caused changes in the composition of the air and air quality result in more than 2 million premature deaths worldwide every year and threaten water and food security—especially among those “bottom 3 billion” people who are too poor to avail of the protections made possible by fossil fuel use and industrialization. Since a sustainable future based on the continued extraction of coal, oil and gas in the “business-as-usual mode” will

not be possible because of both resource depletion and environmental damages (as caused, e.g., by dangerous sea level rise) we urge our societies to:

- I. Reduce worldwide carbon dioxide emissions without delay, using all means possible to meet ambitious international global warming targets and ensure the long-term stability of the climate system.** All nations must focus on a rapid transition to renewable energy sources and other strategies to reduce CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. Nations should also avoid removal of carbon sinks by stopping deforestation, and should strengthen carbon sinks by reforestation of degraded lands. They also need to develop and deploy technologies that draw down excess carbon dioxide in the atmosphere. These actions must be accomplished within a few decades. *A Report by the Working Group Commissioned by the Pontifical Academy of Sciences - Page 5*
- II. Reduce the concentrations of warming air pollutants (dark soot, methane, lower atmosphere ozone, and hydrofluorocarbons) by as much as 50% ,** to slow down climate change during this century while preventing millions of premature deaths from respiratory disease and millions of tons of crop damages every year.
- III. Prepare to adapt to the climatic changes, both chronic and abrupt, that society will be unable to mitigate.** In particular, we call for a global capacity-building initiative to assess the natural and social impacts of climate change in mountain systems and related watersheds.

*The cost of the three recommended measures pales in comparison to the price the world will pay if we fail to act now.*



Morteratsch Glacier (Alps) 1985 - 2007

## Lent, Week Four: Who Owns Water?

### I. Intro

Notes , including making plans if group decides to celebrate after the final meeting.

Silent prayer

**Ps. 23: 1-3:** *God, my shepherd, I don't need a thing. You have bedded me down in lush meadows, you find me quiet pools to drink from.*

**John 9: 6-7:** *He . . . spit in the dust, made a clay paste with the saliva, rubbed the paste on the blind man's eyes, and said, "Go, wash at the Pool of Siloam." The man went and washed — and saw.*

Why might Jesus have spit and made clay paste? Why the references to pools?

### II. Input

We will spend our time tonight watching [whichever film you have chosen].



View about 30 - 40 minutes of the film.

### III. What is God saying to us?

Share your response to the film in one word or phrase.

**IV. This week:** Lent 4.5 says: "If there's only one thing you can do [about water], give up bottled water." Notice the number of plastic water bottles you see on TV, in films, used by friends and neighbors, etc. Estimate: consumer

cost; water required (one liter "inside" plus two liters for production); pollution (over 17 million barrels of oil are needed to produce the 31.2 billion liter-bottles used in the U.S. in 2006; these bottles created over 2.5 million tons of CO<sub>2</sub> in 2006).

Consider: How might you feel if you lived in an area where corporations were selling your local water? Is this a possibility in your area?

**V.** By now it will be late, so no official closing this week.

FYI: Alternatives to Nestle and Pepsi: Cadbury Schweppes Americas Beverages make and distribute the following in the USA:

Dr. Pepper; 7 UP; Snapple; Motts; Schweppes; RC Cola; A & W Root beer; Sunkist Soda; Canada Dry; Welch's; Hawaiian Punch; Diet Rite

When They Find a Way  
Catherine Callaghan, SHCJ

When they find a way, they will charge us for rainfall.  
Also, a fee for early morning condensation.  
Parents of impulsive six-year-olds who jump into puddles  
will be severely fined.  
The unwashed will habituate to each other's smells.

Sounds of restless water will be faithfully recorded and safely stored in museums.  
For a price, listen to an oar quickly dipped into a stream.  
Then the pressured force of water – oh, the water yields to the movement of the oar, but not  
silently.

What a sound saved for posterity!  
Posterity?  
Imagine life forms yet to evolve with no need of water.

If you can't save water, save memories of water, please.  
Not just the sounds, which are infinite.  
Memorize her silent depths. Find keepsakes of her sparkling fluidity.  
Let your spirit soak in her transparent legacies.  
Simplicity. Service. Serenity. Sacrament.

As water memories flood your soul let them quicken and nourish that radical respect  
you felt as a child: Dew drops. Raindrops. And squishing socks, if  
You ever stood one foot in the gutter as storm water rushed by.

Remember baths? What floats? What sinks?  
Or, the texture of bath towels. Dish towels. Paper towels.  
Sopping up this treasure. Or the clear expression of disbelief:  
"That doesn't hold water."  
So, what does hold water? Not the beaches, not the rivers.  
Perry Como never sang  
"Catch the falling rain and put it in your pocket. Save it for a starry day."

Reverence.

Reverence holds water. Reverence for each drop.  
A reverential heart understands Why and flows into a reverential How.

Reverently.

## Lent, Week Five: Behold, behold, the Wood of the Cross

### I. Intro

Notes

Silent prayer

**John 11: 33 - 35:** *When Jesus saw her sobbing and the Jews with her sobbing, a deep anger welled up within him. He said, "Where did you put him?" "Master, come and see," they said. Now, Jesus wept.*

**John 19: 28:** *"I am thirsty."*

How do you feel about Jesus' weeping and thirsting?



### II. Input

The tree that became Jesus' cross had a history that dated back millennia. Every tree alive today somehow dates back to the beginning of trees, about 370 million years ago (after land plants and animals) and ultimately to stardust, like everything earthly.

Trees protect water. They require water to grow, but they also give water. The leaves of an acre of trees can release 8,000 gallons of water into the air in a day! Trees filter carbon dioxide in our atmosphere, protect biological diversity and endangered species, reduce stress on humans, and improve people's moods.

Rain forests are an important breathing mechanism for Planet Earth. It took 60 million years for rain forests to evolve into Earth's lungs. Trees prevent erosion (as any Haitian can attest), soak up nutrients before they run into wetlands or sewers, and improve the soil.

Wangari Maathai's 2004 Nobel Peace Prize affirmed that protecting and planting trees contribute to peace. What is the connection?

### III. What is God saying to us?

Palms will be blessed with holy water before distribution on Palm Sunday. On Holy Thursday parishioners will participate in the ritual washing of feet (and, in some parishes, also of hands). On Good Friday we will remember Jesus' words on the cross, "I am thirsty." We will grieve and be grateful for what Jesus suffered. On Holy Saturday we will participate (at least in spirit) in the blessing of holy water, Baptisms, and renewal of Baptismal promises. Sunday we will picture resurrection stories complete with gardens that required water still present today. What connection is God asking us to make between/among the *I Thirst* program and these Holy Week and Easter experiences?

**IV. This week:** On Good Friday when you reverence the cross, remember the importance of all trees. Remember a significant "Sister Tree" in your life and reflect gratefully on its contributions to your life and to Earth's life systems. Take an action to protect trees this week. For example,

- Use cloth napkins and towels or use napkins, towels and kleenex made from recycled paper;
- Use 100% recycled or sustainable paper for printer/copy paper;
- Get off lists of junk mail (cf. [www.epa.gov/boston/communities/stop\\_spam.html](http://www.epa.gov/boston/communities/stop_spam.html)); <https://www.dmachoice.org/>; <https://www.catalogchoice.org/>; 1-888-5-OPTOUT.
- Plant trees that will be cared for to maturity. E.g., [www.treesforthefuture.org/](http://www.treesforthefuture.org/); [www.arborday.org](http://www.arborday.org).
- Contact your legislators and ask what each is doing/will do to protect water and trees.

How else do you, or could you, celebrate and protect trees as a way to protect Earth's water? (FYI, Arbor Day is April 25.)

**V. Closing:** Place the crucifix where it is visible to all. Play and/or sing "Were You There."

Pray together: *Creator God, present within us and all creation, your waters refresh our bodies and give life to the Earth. From the hardness of our hearts bring forth the waters of compassion and care. Open our hearts to the water crisis of our world. Guide us in ways we can reduce our waste and over-consumption of your resources. Teach us to use our sacred waters wisely.* (Lent 4.5)

*We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you, because by your holy cross we see the nobility of the human spirit and the Spirit of God at work. We see how you were ready to stand by your convictions despite the consequences. We are humbled, inspired, and grateful. Amen.*

## VI. Evaluation

- Think of one word that sums up this Lenten experience for you. With no discussion, share the word (or phrase).
- When everyone has shared a word, share anything from the five weeks that you feel called to remember and incorporate in your life.
- Share anything you think would improve the program. (Please send ideas to [terrishcj@aol.com](mailto:terrishcj@aol.com).)

**VII.** If the group so chooses, celebrate the end of *I Thirst* and your anticipation of Easter.



Society of the Holy Child Jesus  
AMERICAN PROVINCE

Produced by Terri MacKenzie, SHCJ, with thanks to T.J. Murphy, Ph.D., Nancy Frommelt, OSF, and past participants. Scripture quotations are from Eugene H. Peterson's *The Message: the Bible in Contemporary Language*.