Water is a shared resource that is unevenly distributed across the earth; it is governed by a highly complex cycle and subject to many threats, ranging from climate change to the needs of reckless industrial development.

‘Mine, O Thou Lord of life, send my roots rain.’

Gerard Manley Hopkins
Introducing VIVAT International

VIVAT International was founded in 2000 by the Society of the Divine Word (SVD) and the Missionary Sisters Servants of the Holy Spirit (SSpS) as an organization to lobby in favour of the poor, the marginalized and for the protection of creation at the United Nations. Since 2005, ten other congregations joined the original founders of VIVAT. Many are well known in Ireland and include the Spiritans (CSSp), the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate (OMI), the Little Sisters of the Assumption (LSA), the Missionary Sisters of the Holy Rosary (MSHR), Comboni Missionaries of the Sacred Heart (MCCI), Priests of the Sacred Heart of Jesus (SCJ), and the Religious of the Assumption (RA).

With a very wide distribution of congregations, it can be said that VIVAT has its finger on the pulse of the issues of the poor and marginalized worldwide. It is also a powerful voice as it is geared to bring their agenda to an international audience through lobbying on concrete issues presented by member congregations at the UN. How does it do this? VIVAT’s first strength is indeed in having access to the people its members are working with and their issues. It has also put an infrastructure in place to ensure effective international lobbying. VIVAT opened and staffed a UN office in New York shortly after its foundation. In 2009 it opened another office in Geneva, Switzerland, home of the UN’s Human Rights Council and numerous international human rights groups. Other offices at regional level are being considered.

Since early 2011, representatives of the congregations of VIVAT in Ireland have been meeting to focus on issues which will be prepared for lobbying at the United Nations by VIVAT.
Introduction

Water flows through the biblical story of God’s people, both as daily necessity for survival and as metaphor for all that is life-giving. Wells and rivers are places of inspired memory where poets and mystics compose songs and prayers. It’s easy to imagine the Jewish poet in exile sitting by a river in Babylon, mourning a lost homeland, or another searching for an image to capture a people’s ardent desire for close relationship with God: “like a deer that yearns for running streams, so I yearn for you, my God”. In Ireland, too, the holy wells that dot our landscape are clues to the reverence in which earlier generations held this gift.

The four reflections in this Prayer Book centre us on God’s precious gift of water. A ‘Franciscan’ space is created to ponder with gratitude and appreciation a gift to which we are intimately connected and which has power to restore and delight. This precious and vulnerable gift, the source of life and goodness, when abused and neglected, brings destruction and death, particularly to poor and vulnerable people. Aware of the many who do not have access to safe drinking water, we human beings need the wisdom to become frugal and compassionate users of a precious gift that is given indiscriminately to all living beings. It’s time to awaken to renewed respect for the sources that sustain life, and especially, the gift of water.

Water is a precious and vulnerable gift shared by all living beings. Without it, life would not be possible. In countries like Ireland, where I live and where fresh and safe drinking water is still relatively plentiful, we risk taking it for granted and, in doing so, forgetting the 894 million people worldwide who do not have access to water that is safe for drinking, cooking and cleaning—a figure that is set to double by the year 2025.

Water is a shared resource that is unevenly distributed across the earth; it is governed by a highly complex cycle and subject to many threats, ranging from climate change to the needs of reckless industrial development. In the longer term, with the world economy projected to at least triple in the next fifty years, irresponsible
planning that ignores the earth’s capacity to meet projected needs, and particularly, the need for water, would inevitably lead to conflict and instability. It is only by placing human rights, justice, equity and the protection of the natural environment at the centre of planning, that humanity can look to a sustainable future.

The quest for water is daily limiting prospects of a better life for the poorest people on earth, and also leading to conflict in rich industrial and agricultural regions. In sub-Saharan Africa, women spend a combined total of 16 million hours each day collecting drinking water; men spend 6 million hours, and children 4 million hours (UN 4th World Water Development Report 2012).

In the United States, inter-state conflict over water rights has been brewing for some time between wealthy neighbouring States. Within States that are experiencing water scarcity, cities and rural/agricultural communities compete for access to this poorly managed, poorly allocated, dwindling resource. Internationally, negotiations over water rights between neighbouring countries are close to breaking point.

It is against this background that 2013 was designated ‘UN International Year of Water Co-operation’. As members of VIVAT International, we welcome the United Nations’ formal recognition of the serious challenges faced by the human family in managing, wisely for the common good, water quality, quantity and equitable access. Many of our members have been lobbying for decades on behalf of poor communities who lack access to the basic human right of safe drinking water.

We, the members of VIVAT International Ireland, offer these prayerful reflections on water as gift of God, who ‘sends down rain to fall on the upright and the wicked alike’ (Mt 5:45), to the VIVAT family and to communities around the world who are united in bringing about the Kingdom of God on earth.

‘Mine, O Thou Lord of life, send my roots rain.’

Gerard Manley Hopkins
Let us give thanks for

Water

“Our Sister”
Introduction:

Water! We so often take it for granted! Sometimes, we have too much and sometimes too little. It is so with the rains, lakes, rivers, streams, seas and even floods, and with the dried up wells, deserts, droughts and the browning earth!

Yet, we cannot do without it. We are happy when we have enough to drink, to wash in, to water with, to cook with and to play with.

Certainly, water is a gift. Saint Francis had a lovely relationship with it. He called it his sister! An affectionate relationship, implying love, gratitude and reverence.

Action by different people:

Some participants process to the front of the gathering, with a good sized jug of WATER; a glass; some ice (if possible). Place neatly in view of all.

Leader:

An Opening Prayer:

Lord our God, in your mercy be present to your people.

We thank you for the gift of water.

You have created it to make the fields fruitful and to refresh and cleanse our bodies. You also make water an instrument of your mercy for through water you freed your people from slavery and quenched their thirst in the desert. And through water you regenerate all of creation and give us life anew.

May we your people, treasure it and respect it always,

Through Christ our Lord. Amen.
The whole community of the people of Israel moved on from the desert of Sin going from place to place as Yahweh commanded, and encamped at Rephidim. But there was no water to drink.

The people complained to Moses and said, ‘Give us water to drink.’ But Moses replied, ‘Why do you find fault with me? Why do you put Yahweh to the test?’

But the people thirsted for water there and grumbled against Moses, ‘Why did you make us leave Egypt to have us die of thirst with our children and our cattle?’

So Moses cried to Yahweh, ‘What shall I do with the people? They are almost ready to stone me!’ Yahweh said to Moses, ‘Go ahead of the people and take with you the elders of Israel. Take with you the staff with which you struck the Nile, and go. I will stand there before you on the rock at Horeb. You will strike the rock and water will flow from it and the people will drink.’ Moses did this in the presence of the elders of Israel.

Reflect silently upon the longing for water by many people in the world today.

- Where do people not have sufficient water? Why is this the case? What can be done about it? By whom?
Hymn: Psalm 23:
The Lord’s my Shepherd
(Crimmonds version, can be sung)

The Lord’s my Shepherd, I’ll not want.
He makes me down to lie
In pastures green; He leadeth me
The quiet waters by.

My soul He doth restore again;
And me to walk doth make
Within the paths of righteousness,
E’en for His own Name’s sake.

Yea, though I walk in death’s dark vale,
Yet will I fear none ill;
For Thou art with me; and Thy rod
And staff me comfort still.

My table Thou hast furnished
In presence of my foes;
My head Thou dost with oil anoint,
And my cup overflows.

Goodness and mercy all my life
Shall surely follow me;
And in God’s house forevermore
My dwelling place shall be.
Liam was a town boy. His dad worked in a town even though both his mother and father came from rural areas in Ireland. From time to time, Liam and his family would go home to his mother’s place in County Meath. It was exciting to go home to the country side. While Liam was in the country he loved to join his cousins and together with them to go and search for the eggs which the hens laid in strange places, such as under the furze bushes around the farm or in old sheds; to get the flour out of the big wooden chests in the kitchen and to live by the light of the parafin lamps. But perhaps the most exciting task was to go out in the early morning and in the evening to get the water! Accompanied by his cousins and carrying two buckets Liam would cross through two big fields until he came to a spot in the ground near the earthen bank, where there was a well. Into this well, located in a shallow hollow in the ground, a never-ending flow of clear water emerged and rippled in the light. It seemed to come from nowhere but it also never seemed to come to an end. After clearing away any insects or stray pieces of rubbish floating on top of the water, Liam would then begin to fill the buckets with the water, which was cold, clean and pure. He would then bring it home and put it in the pantry. It would then be used by the people of the house for the cooking, washing and cleaning throughout the day. It was an experience of country living that Liam would always remember and treasure. And it was just there!
A time for sharing

Prayers of Petition:

1. Let us acknowledge, with the Scriptures, that water is a gift given to us by God the Creator! As we give thanks for this precious life-giving gift, let us pray that we will always acknowledge that water is precious and must be appreciated and cared for by all of us.
   
   *Lord, hear us!*
   
   Response: *Lord, graciously hear us.*

2. Lord, let us remember with concern those many peoples in the world who do not have fresh water.
   
   *Lord, hear us!*
   
   Response: *Lord, graciously hear us.*

3. Lord, we ask you to bless the work of plumbers who make it possible to provide water to people.
   
   *Lord, hear us!*
   
   Response: *Lord, graciously hear us.*

4. Let us pray for those agencies established by governments and authorities to manage and to care for the water supplies so that they may do their work as service and not for exploitation.
   
   *Lord, hear us!*
   
   Response: *Lord, graciously hear us.*

5. Let us pray that more useful and effective ways will be found to extend the benefits of fresh water to people in dry areas of the world for their personal use as well as for agriculture and industry.
   
   *Lord, hear us!*
   
   Response: *Lord, graciously hear us.*

Action:

People can experience the goodness of the clean water by drinking a little or by wiping their face with it and feeling its coolness.
Canticle of the Creatures
St Francis:

Most High, all-powerful, good Lord,
all praise is yours, all glory, all honour, and all blessing.
To you, alone, Most High, do they belong.
No mortal lips are worthy to pronounce your name.
All praise be yours, my Lord,
through all you have made,
and first my lord Brother Sun, who brings the day;
and through whom you give us light.
How beautiful is he, how radiant in all his splendour;
Of you, Most High, he bears the likeness.
All Praise be yours, my Lord, through Sister Moon
and the stars; in the heavens you have made them,
bright, and precious, and fair.
All praise be yours, my Lord,
through Brothers wind and air, and fair and stormy,
all the weather’s moods,
by which you cherish all that you have made.
All praise be yours, my Lord, through Sister Water,
so useful, humble, precious and pure.
Praise and bless my Lord, and give him thanks
And serve him with great humility.
Our Father:

Concluding Prayer:
Father and giver of the gifts that we have,
We remember all who suffer from hunger and thirst.
We pray for those who do not have proper water supplies
And for those who have to walk miles to get water.
You have given us a wonderful world.
Let us not spoil it through greed or lack of respect.
We make this prayer in Jesus’ name

L. Let us go in peace.
All: Thanks be to God.
Let us give thanks for Water

“Precious & Vulnerable”
Leader:
Growing in awareness of water we begin the second prayer and ritual reflecting on this precious and vulnerable gift.

Hymn:
Spirit of God in the clear running water

1. Spirit of God in the clear running water,
   Blowing to greatness the trees on the hill.
   Spirit of God in the finger of morning
   Fill the earth, bring it to birth
   And blow, where you will,
   Blow, blow, blow, till I be
   But breath of the Spirit blowing in me.

2. Spirit of God, every-one’s heart is lonely
   Watching and waiting and hungry until
   Spirit of God, we long that you only
   Fulfil the earth, bring it to birth
   And blow where you will.
   Blow, blow, blow, till I be
   But breath of the Spirit blowing in me.
Water Trail
by Merlinda Bobis

In the house, the taps have dried
*I am searching for the water*
In the backyard, the pump has dried
*I am searching for the water*

Around the corner, the well has dried
*I am searching for the water*
Up the hill, the creek has dried
I am eight and it is 38

The path as dry as white bone
Cracking like my soles—but suddenly
From a distance, flowers
Large as basins and deeply pink

*But I am still searching for the water*
An hour later
So far away from home
A trickle from a boulder

And a catch in the throat—
An old man shades his sudden tears
From the heat, or me—but I have seen
*Tubig, tubig, tubig – water, water, water*

*In the Philippines ‘tubig’ is the word for water.*
Ezekiel 47:1-12

He brought me back to the entrance of the Temple, where a stream came out from under the Temple threshold and flowed eastwards, since the Temple faced east. The water flowed from under the right side of the Temple south of the altar. He took me out by the north gate and led me right round outside as far as the outer east gate where the water flowed out on the right-hand side. The man went to the east holding his measuring line and measured off a thousand cubits; he then made me wade across the stream; the water reached my ankles. He measured off another thousand and made me wade across the stream again; the water reached my knees. He measured off another thousand and made me wade across again; the water reached my waist. He measured off another thousand; it was now a river which I could not cross; the stream had swollen and was now deep water a river impossible to cross. He then said, “Do you see? He took me further then brought me back to the bank of the river. When I got back, there were many trees on each bank of the river. He said, “This water flows east down to the Arabah and to the sea; and flowing into the sea it makes its waters wholesome. Wherever the river flows, all living creatures teaming in it will live. Fish will be plentiful, for wherever the water goes it brings health, and life teams wherever the river flows. Along the river, on either bank will grow every kind of fruit tree with leaves that never wither and fruit that never fails. And their fruit will be good to eat and the leaves medicinal”.  

Silent reflection
Story from Lamalera, Flores, Indonesia by Sr Yudith Anu, SSpS

After months of scorching heat, when the first rains come, people all over the country celebrate the smell of wet earth and pouring rains.

The rainy season begins in Indonesia when strong winds from the south west begin to blow over this country. The season used to be felt in the months of October until February. Nowadays we get very little rain. It varies from one island to another.

The rainy season comes after the summer season, so this season brings relief to everybody. We enjoy the rains. Very often it rains for days. The water level rises. Trees look more and more green. People are starting to prepare their land for crops to grow. On a rainy day the sky remains covered with clouds. The sun remains hidden behind the clouds. Sometimes low-pressure occurs and it results in heavy rain.

Tanks and pools are filled with water. In this season the river water turns yellow. Roads become muddy and small children make paper boats and float them along the streams.

The rainy season is helpful to us in many ways. It is really a gift for us. The earth which was dry becomes cool and soft. The air becomes cool and comfortable. The air in this season is free from dust. Rain is helpful in agriculture. Farmers become happy to get adequate rain. We get many kinds of vegetables, therefore we are always grateful.

The rainy season is also not without troubles. It brings us some inconveniences. As roads become muddy, people face difficulty in going from one place to another. If it rains for days together, many people will suffer from starvation. Prices of essential commodities increase due to interruptions in supply of goods to the market. Many diseases break out. Malaria, dysentery and diarrhoea are quite common. Impure water is the chief reason of the spread of diseases. Floods occur and bring heavy damage to crops.

Week 2
**Ritual:**
(The leader uses discretion to ritualize or visualize the following, adapting to the group).

- Put a glass jug of clean water on a tray on a centre table with some glasses.
- There is clean water in the glass jug.
- Reflect for a moment on this water.
- How precious and vulnerable it is!
- Fill the glasses as far as you can with the water.
- In one or two it flows over onto the tray.
- Some will get little.
- There will not be enough water to fill all of them.
- Some of the glasses get none at all which represents those parts of the world that get no water.

**Silent reflection**

**Action:**
Every day during the next week:
Put a cup of water in front of you.
Look at it. Drink it slowly.
Reflect on the preciousness of water.
Reflect on its vulnerability.
Ask yourself how long you could live without water.
Ask yourself what you can do to conserve water.
Prayers of Intercession

L. Only 3% of earth’s water is fresh water.

R. Lord, make me treasure your gift of water.

L. We can save up to four gallons of water every morning by turning off the tap while we brush our teeth.

R. Lord, help me to be careful with my use of water.

L. At one drip per second, a tap can leak 3,000 gallons per year.

R. Lord, teach me to turn off the tap and conserve precious, vulnerable water.

L. Water is vital for all known forms of life.

R. Lord, fill us with knowledge that will help us to act responsibly.

L. Water on Earth moves continually through the water cycle of evaporation, transpiration, condensation and run off usually reaching the sea.

R. Lord, this knowledge is wonderful and we marvel at your greatness.

L. One billion people still lack access to safe water and over 2.5 billion lack access to adequate sanitation.

R. Lord, let me appreciate the gift of water and be sensitive to those who are dangerously short of it.

L. In the International Space Station, 93% of water is recycled including body waste.

R. Lord, let me make one change in my life to save water for the planet.
Our Father:

Concluding Prayer:
Lord, we are frail and weak in our resolve to preserve and consider the world in which we live. We need your breath to strengthen us. We desire to treasure your world, especially the precious and vulnerable gift of water. Help us to be good stewards of our earth’s resources. Amen

Resources:
please watch on YouTube:
Our thirsty World.
Water Changes everything.
Water Scarcity.
Let us give thanks for

Water

“Life-giving Resource”
Leader:
Welcome again to this our third ritual reflecting on the significance of water in our lives.
(Hymn or poem to be chosen)

Opening Prayer
God in heaven, we thank you for the gift of Water in our world. Help us to be aware of the millions of men, women and children who do not have access to clean water. Soften our hearts to do all in our power to use water wisely. Create in us an awareness that, as we reduce our water consumption, we are offering a ‘drink’ to those in other parts of the world who do not have the luxury of water in abundance.  Amen.

Psalm 72
Response: In that day Justice shall flourish and Peace, ‘til the moon be no more. Give justice to your Anointed, O God, and righteousness to those Chosen! That your people may be judged in righteousness, and your poor with justice.

Response: Let the mountains bring forth peace for the people, and the hills, justice! May your Anointed defend the cause of the poor, give deliverance to the needy.

Response: May your Anointed endure like the sun, and as long as the moon, through the ages, like rain that falls on the mown grass, like showers that water the earth.

Response:
World Scriptures
“Oh, come to the water all you who are thirsty; though you have no money, come.” (pause) Is 55:1.

“The qualities of water: freedom and benevolence…
The highest benevolence is like water.
The benevolence of water is to benefit all beings without strife.” (pause)

Tao Te Ching
“By means of water we give life to everything”. Koran 21:30.

“The water I will give will turn into an interior spring welling up into eternal life.” John 4

**Silent reflection**

**Dirty Water**

Why does this happen?

Water pollution is becoming an ever increasing problem.
Approximately half of the population in the developing world does not have access to safe drinking water.
Diseases are transmitted by unsafe drinking water.
It is often contaminated with untreated human sewage.
Diseases like typhoid and gastroenteritis are among the main causes of death in children under five in Africa.
And those just refer to the biological pollutants!
What about the chemical ones, such as, fertilizers, pesticides, silt, salinization, and mercury?
The bearers of water – life or death
An Ethiopian Story

It’s a dreary, back breaking, beast of burden, humiliating and endurance-testing human activity. In Soddo culture it is the job of the children and women to fetch water. This so taken-for-granted gift of water sustains our life and all life on our planet.

We human beings are so vulnerable to infections. The water we drink has to be quality. ‘Water is Life’ when we drink it from our shining taps and crystal clear from our plastic bottles.

What a blessing to take for granted. What a gift we seldom take time to appreciate. Available in plentiful supply, pristine quality at the turn of a tap and until the recent introduction of water charges, it cost most of us absolutely nothing.

But right across a wide area of Soddo and Gamo Gofa in southern Ethiopia where Spiritans have laboured for years, the very water that should be life-giving may very well be contaminated with deadly worms, leeches and bacteria. With chemicals such as fluoride, iron or other things, all of which cause typhoid, intestinal infections, bone decay and frequently death.
The photos here tell their story. They carry the evidence home to us – water can be a real killer.

School boy Bunuko Bundie and his friend Yohannes from the hillside village of Konchi, near Soddo town are here trying to glean cupfuls of the cleaner water from very muddy animal contaminated water flowing off the fields.

Getting this water the 2 kilometre or 40 minute walk back to their home with heavy 15-20 litre plastic containers on their heads is a slow, painful endurance test. They don’t kick up a fuss. It won’t get rid of the burden anyway. The bent over bearers of water are always the children and the women.

Bunuko and Yohannes and their parents and family and all the other school children and the adults very well know the danger of surface water from the fields washed into their little springs and wells is a hazard to their health. Boiling is an option but firewood is scarce too and has to be searched out and carried home from long distances.

Drinking water from the traditional unprotected sources is a high risk, every drop a real danger and is the primary cause of sickness in every village that does not have a protected supply.

And how proud the village are of their newly constructed piped water supply to the centre of their village. The whole village worked on it – carrying sand and stones, digging the pipeline trenches, laying the pipes. What a celebration of thanksgiving the village had on the opening day. It will be remembered. The health status of the Konchi village population of several hundred families is transformed almost overnight – they all agreed they are not getting water borne sickness any more.
Villagers walk to Konchi from all the neighbouring areas to fetch the now crystal clear life-giving water. They long for the day when their villages too will have a protected supply. Now Bunuko, Yohannes and everyone for miles around Konchi village know that ‘Water is Life’.

**Ritual:**
In a prominent place in the assembly, place a transparent glass jug containing some contaminated water and four or five empty glasses. Pour some of the water into each glass and offer it to some chosen people. (They are informed about what they are illustrating ahead of time).

Allow time for the participants to reflect on the ritual that has been performed.

**Act of Faith**

*We believe that water belongs to the earth and to all species.*
Response: *Yes Lord we believe.*

*We believe that water must be conserved for all time.*
Response: *Yes Lord we believe.*

*We believe that polluted water must be reclaimed.*
Response: *Yes Lord we believe.*

*We believe that water is best protected in natural watersheds.*
Response: *Yes Lord we believe.*

*We believe that nothing should be done to put water at risk.*
Response: *Yes Lord we believe.*

*We believe that an adequate supply of clean water is a basic human right.*
Response: *Yes Lord we believe.*

*We believe that water is a public trust to be guarded at all levels of government.*
Response: *Yes Lord we believe.*
Intercessions:
As stewards of God’s Creation we bow our heads and ask for the gifts of wisdom to respect all creation.

Lord hear us.
Response: Lord graciously hear us.

In our daily use may we become more aware of the precious gift of water. Lord hear us.
Response: Lord graciously hear us.

May we grow in a greater awareness of the sacredness of water. Lord hear us.
Response: Lord graciously hear us.

We pray for and thank those who continually work to provide and share safe drinking water for all. Lord hear us.
Response: Lord graciously hear us.
Blessing

God our creator we thank you for the gift of water that flows through the land. Help us to bring an end to misuse, waste and pollution of the water of the earth. We pray that we shall do all in our power to use water wisely. Help us to care for your life-giving gift of water. Amen

Concluding Hymn:
Let us give thanks for

Water

“Water of Life”
Leader:
Create a sacred space with candle lighting. Pour water slowly from a pitcher into a container allowing the sound of the flowing water to be heard by all.

Gathering Song:
Waters of Life by Monica Brown
www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ftze-ogkGRo

Waters of Life
Come wash over me
Let my soul drink
from your wellsprings O God

Waters of Life
Come wash over me
Quench deep within
the thirst of my soul

Opening Prayer:
Loving life-giving God, in You we live and move and have our being. May we experience our one-ness in You ever more deeply as we live through seasons of sowing and reaping, sharing and receiving, giving birth and letting go. Continue to awaken in us respect for all of life and the sources that sustain that life – especially the wonder and gift of water. We make this prayer through Christ Our Lord, Amen.
Psalm: 104 (extracts)

R: Let my soul drink from your wellsprings, O God.

Bless Yahweh, my soul,
Yahweh, my God, how great you are!
Clothed in majesty and splendour,
wrapped in light as in a robe!...

You fixed the earth on its foundations,
for ever and ever it shall not be shaken;
you covered it with the deep like a garment,
the waters overtopping the mountains...

In the ravines you opened up springs,
running down between the mountains,
supplying water for all the wild beasts;
the wild donkeys quench their thirst,
on their banks the birds of the air make their nests,
they sing among the leaves...

From the high halls you water the mountains,
satisfying the earth with the fruit of your works:
for cattle you make the grass grow,
and for people the plants they need...

To bring forth food from the earth,
and wine to cheer people’s hearts,
oil to make their faces glow,
food to make them sturdy of heart...

The trees of Yahweh drink their fill,
The cedars of Lebanon which he sowed;
There the birds build their nests,
On the highest branches the stork makes its home;
For the wild goats there are the mountains,
In the crags the coneys find refuge...
They all depend upon you,
To feed them when they need it,
You provide the food they gather,
Your open hand gives them their fill.

*R: Let my soul drink from your wellsprings, O God.*

**Water**

By Paula Gunn Allen

Water.
Lakes and rivers.
Oceans and streams.
Springs, pools and gullies.
Arroyos, creeks, watersheds.
(Lying. Dreaming on shallow shores.)
Arctic. Antarctic. Baltic.
Thames. Sacramento. Snake. (Undulant woman river.)
Hudson. Po. Rhine. Rhone.
Rain. After a lifetime of drought.
That finally cleanses the air.
The soot from our eyes.
The dingy windows of our western home.
The rooftops and branches. The wings of birds.
Sometimes when I see the destruction caused by floods, tornadoes, etc. in so many parts of the world, I ask myself: are we too late?
Story 1:
A report on Water Conservation and Reforestation, Ndu Sub-Division, Cameroon, W. Africa By Mary O’Shea, MSHR.

The environment is still high on our agenda here. Sometimes when I see the destruction caused by floods, tornadoes, etc. in so many parts of the world, I ask myself: are we too late? However, we think globally but act locally here in Ndu.

We are glad to report that our environmental team, with the help of the local administration and the European Union, has succeeded in providing a good clean water supply to three local villages in the past few years. Some women are also happy that they have retrieved their farmland now that the eucalyptus trees have been removed and will no longer be planted because of their huge intake of water. This year we are tackling water supply in a place called Kugha Plateau. We hope to supply water to five villages but there are several obstacles in the way. Although pipes had been put down years ago some of them are cracked by the roots of eucalyptus. In some of the water catchment areas we have problems with stray animals. Fencing is now being erected to protect both the water areas and Prunus Africana, an indigenous tree which is being planted to replace the eucalyptus tree. School children are involved in the “One woman, one tree; One man, one tree; One child, one tree” programme and are involved, with the local community, in the planting of these indigenous trees during the rainy season. Since water is a basic need (Millennium Development Goal No. 7), thousands of people who are marginalized are benefitting from this project.
Ritual:
Four participants take their turn raising the container or pitcher of water, and turn towards the East, South, West and North while the following four prayers are recited:

Leader:

Turning to the East...
*Great Spirit of the East,*
*As the energy of the rising sun nurtures and calls forth our planet,*
*We ask you to bless and protect our rivers and oceans.*
All: *Great Spirit of the East, bless and protect our rivers and oceans.*

Turning to the South...
*Great Spirit of the South*
*As fertility, diversity and colour abound*  
*Bless and protect the waters that gladden the heart.*
All: *Great Spirit of the South, bless and protect the waters that gladden the heart.*

Turning to the West...
*Great Spirit of the West*  
*Place of sun-set and harvesting of fruits*  
*protect us from storms and floods*  
*bless the spring and summer rains that soften the soil for growth.*
All: *Great Spirit of the West, bless the spring and summer rains that soften the soil for growth.*

Turning to the North...
*Great Spirit of the North*  
*Place of frost, ice and snow,*  
*Place of silence, hidden growth and waiting*  
*Bless and protect the waters that nurture our spirit.*
All: *Great Spirit of the North, bless and protect the waters that nurture our spirit.*
Final Prayer
Loving God, You have created everything we need for life on earth, you water its furrows abundantly, you settle its ridges, you soften it with showers, you bless its growth. (Ps.65:10). Help us to appreciate the gift of water, cleanse our hearts of greed so that all creation, everywhere, may share in this life-giving resource of water. This we ask through Christ, Our Lord, Amen.

Action:
Donate to, or participate in a water project during the coming week.

Resources: please watch on YouTube:
Water Aid: Elizabeth’s Story
Water Walk: by Water Aid
Water Poem: Inspirational Message by Lisa Lockworth
The Water Reflections Prayer Book was prepared by:
Yudith Anu, SSpS
Billy Cleary, CSSp
Mary Rose Crowe, MSHR
Liam Dunne, SVD
Michael Kane, CSSp
Carmen Lee, SSpS
Tom McCabe, OMI