

WATER – AND THE FEAST OF EASTER

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At Easter we celebrate the waters of Baptism which bring us new life.

Let us also celebrate, protect and give thanks for the natural water which sustains all life. Without water there is no life as we know it. As humans we wonder whether other intelligent beings exist in the universe, and whether there may be any form of life in the other planets of our solar system. When scientists seek to answer the question the first thing they look for is evidence of the presence of water. Currently probes are going to Mars and Venus looking for any signs of water being present there in the past. On our own planet life first emerged in the oceans but life on dry land is dependent on fresh water from rain and underground wells; drought means that crops and vegetation die so food supply is diminished. Human beings can live for a considerable time without food but they do not survive long without fresh water.

And yet, despite being so dependent on water, often we humans have not looked on water as a gift to be cherished and respected. Those of us who live in areas where there is no shortage of water can use it with abandon, often wastefully. We turn on taps taking it for granted that water will flow. We pollute our seas and rivers using them as waste dumps; marine life is now under threat; coral reefs are dying and fishing stocks are being depleted; and unless our livelihood is threatened directly we do not notice the damage being done.

Living in Scotland we find it hard to imagine life without a ready supply of water but there are other parts of the world where water is a very precious commodity. We have washing machines and do not rely on the nearest river; our fields and gardens are green and we do not worry about drought destroying our crops. By contrast some people, like those whose homes have been devastated by floodwater, must look on water as a threat. Low-lying communities are being forced out, as melting glaciers cause rising sea-levels to overwhelm their land. Water supply is also being used as a weapon. Palestinian communities in the West Bank see their water stores and pipes being destroyed by illegal settlers. Anything we do to contribute to climate change exacerbates these gross inequalities in access to water. Poor governance and natural variations are partly responsible, but it falls to us all to do what we can to enable everyone to have the water they need to thrive. We can start by considering our own use of water and supporting charities like Water Aid.

As we renew our baptismal vows with the living water which brings new life let us also learn to respect and protect our natural water. When we make the Sign of the Cross with holy water let us give thanks for the gift of baptismal water and the gift of natural water, and make it our concern to see that both are shared with everyone.