

Justice, Peace & Integrity of Creation News

Congregation of the Sisters of Bon Secours



Ecological Conversion - Water

March, 2018
Vol. 3, Number 7



*“We affirm that water is a sacred gift...
a basic human right... a shared legacy... a public trust...
a collective responsibility.”*

(Congregation of the Sisters of Bon Secours, Corporate Statement on Water, 2013)

Compelled by the global water crisis and in fidelity to our commitment to defend and care for all creation, the Sisters of Bon Secours promulgated a Corporate Statement on Water in 2013. For most of us who live with an abundance of water, we can easily take this resource for granted and treat it as a commodity rather than the sacred gift it is – a gift that is essential for all of life.

This month we enter more deeply into the Lenten season with its focus on conversion and we also commemorate World Water Day. These days offer us an opportunity to reflect more intentionally on our Water Statement and notice the change of heart this statement asks of us. As you read, ponder and discuss this issue of JPIC News, let your heart be open to how God is inviting you to make the Bon Secours Statement on Water a living document in your personal and communal lives.

March
JPIC Days of Remembrance

March 3
World Wildlife Day



March 8
International Women's Day



Globally, women and girls are the primary water collectors for their families and for this reason many girls do not attend school.

March 22
World Water Day



March 25
International Day of Remembrance
of the Victims of Slavery and the
Transatlantic Slave Trade

Water – A Basic Human Right

Clean, accessible water for all is an essential part of the world we want to live in. There is sufficient fresh water on the planet to achieve this. But due to bad economics or poor infrastructure, every year millions of people, most of them children, die from diseases associated with inadequate water supply, sanitation and hygiene.

Water scarcity, poor water quality and inadequate sanitation negatively impact food security, livelihood choices and educational opportunities for poor families across the world. Drought afflicts some of the world's poorest countries, worsening hunger and malnutrition.

By 2050, at least one in four people is likely to live in a country affected by chronic or recurring shortages of fresh water. Source: www.UN.org

**What are the water issues in your country?
Who is affected by drought? Poor water quality?**

Learn about organizations in your country that are addressing water issues and join them in advocating for water as a basic human right.



By 2030, achieve universal and equitable access to safe and affordable drinking water for all.

By 2030, protect and restore water-related ecosystems, including mountains, forests, wetlands, rivers, aquifers and lakes.

We affirm
that water is a
sacred gift
that connects all life.



Bon Secours
Corporate Statement on Water



Mother Earth
and all beings of which
she is composed
have the right to water
as a source of life.

World People's Conference on
Climate Change, Bolivia 2010



Water – A sacred gift

*How mindful are you of the sacredness of water as you use it throughout the day?
Where do you see water being wasted in your personal life? In your communal life?
What practices have you adopted (or can you adopt) to minimize your use of water?*

**We support actions and policies that ensure humans and other species
access to adequate, safe water essential for life.**

*What actions and policies in your country or city ensure adequate and safe water?
Are there any actions and/or policies that are of concern to you?
How are you or will you use your voice to insure access to safe water?*

*“Water continues
to be wasted,
not only in the developed
world but also in
developing countries which
possess it in abundance.*

Pope Francis, Laudato Si' #30



Bottled Water

Bottled water means massive corporate profits—and less support for public water. The three largest water bottling companies in the world are Nestlé (including Perrier, Vittel, Pellegrino, Arrowhead, Calistoga, Ice Mountain, Deer Park, and Poland Springs brands), Coca-Cola (Dasani), and PepsiCo (Aquafina). These multinational corporations sell single-use plastic bottles that end up as waste in landfills and ultimately litter our oceans. These companies pump water from natural springs or aquifers or rely on municipal water which is then bottled for sale for profit.

*Are there ways you support the privatization of water?
If yes, why? If no, why?
What, if any, alternatives do you have
to bottled water?*

We oppose actions and policies that favor the privatization of water.

Corporations are seeking to control and restrict increasingly scarce and polluted water supplies. But we must treat water like the priceless resource it is—and as essential for life. However, increasingly, water is viewed as a source of windfall profits.

Privatization is the process of transferring, selling or divesting government (usually state or municipal-owned) services and/or assets to private ownership or control. In the case of water services, it can mean a private corporation contracting with a municipality to maintain and/or operate water delivery services and then charging users enough for that service to earn a profit.

Major companies involved in efforts to privatize water services around the world are: Suez, Veolia, and Saur, (all three French owned), Thames Water (an English company) and Bechtel (U.S.).

*How informed are you about who manages the water assets in your city?
Are there any efforts to privatize water where you live?*

International Justice, Peace & Integrity of Creation Committee

- Sr. Teresa Margot Benites Montero, CBS (Peru)
- Sr. Fran Gorsuch, CBS (USA)
- Sr. Mary Beth Hamm, SSJ Co-chair
- Sr. Mary Leamy, CBS (Ireland)
- Sr. Anne Marie Mack, CBS (USA) Chair
- Sr. Noelia Lara Núñez, CBS (Peru)
- Sr. Marguerite Provost, CBS (France)
- Sr. Alice Talone, CBS (USA)
- Sr. Katherine Tierney, CBS (Ireland)
- Sr. Yolanda Morales Valiente, CBS (Peru)
- Sr. Chris Webb, CBS (USA)

We affirm that water has its own value and intrinsic right outside its usefulness to humans, and that as a public commons and good, water should not be commodified and must be preserved for all times, not just this generation.

UNANIMA International
As members of UNANIMA International, the
Sisters of Bon Secours affirm this statement.



Update on South Sudan – February 2018

by Brother Bill Firman, Executive Director of Solidarity with South Sudan



Brother Bill Firman, FSC

South Sudan has been through difficult times since fighting broke out in late 2013. Everybody knows living conditions would have been much better if there had been no killing, no looting, no destruction, no raping and no war. We look back to the times when the South Sudanese Pound was 2.2 = USD 1. Last week we changed money so the rate of SSP225 = USD 1. The biggest note, SSP100, is now worth only 44 US cents, Carrots have jumped recently in price from SSP300 to SSP400 per kg – USD 1.78 per kg. That's okay if one has dollars but for people paid in SSP it is a huge problem. A bottle of water is now at least 20SSP.

But while the low value of the South Sudanese Pound means it doesn't buy much at all, unless you carry a bag full of money, this is NOT hopeless. We can be made stronger by adversity and the South Sudanese are an admirably resilient people. 'Normal' for many may now be only 'one meal a day' but that does not mean they are a people who have lost hope. Indeed, they are more motivated than ever and young people are keen to go to school and on to further study after that. It is sad to see a mother struggling to feed and clothe her family, let alone educate them. We help if we can as do many others. So what better place is there to be than accompanying these people on their journey?

Solidarity with South Sudan has four principal focus areas: training teachers, health professionals, pastoral workers and farmers. Solidarity does not run schools, hospitals or parishes; but some of its member congregations do. The Comboni Priests, Brothers and Sisters, for example, do conduct schools, parishes and hospitals but they also contribute personnel to Solidarity. At present, the Principal and Deputy of our Catholic Health Training Institute in Wau, are Combonis. The Loreto Sisters provided the first Executive Director of Solidarity, Sr Pat Murray, but also began a secondary school for girls in Rumbek that is not part of Solidarity. We collaborate and provide mutual support and I was pleased to accept the invitation to chair the Loreto School Board. Loreto has also developed a thriving primary school with the first girls and boys graduating at the end of 2017. The girls can go on to Loreto Secondary Schools for girls (250 boarders) but there was no obvious avenue for the boys to gain a secondary education. Our De La Salle Christian Brothers are now responding to the local request through Loreto to begin a secondary school for boys in Rumbek.

A productive future for South Sudan depends very much on improving the standards of education and training the leaders of the next generation. Solidarity is not only producing better trained nurses, midwives, teachers, pastoral workers and farmers, but is offering live-in education where persons from a diversity of ethnic traditions live and interact daily in a mutually respectful environment. It is the same at Loreto in Rumbek. Rumbek is a Dinka area but girls are drawn from many parts of South Sudan. The new De La Salle Secondary school in Rumbek will be initially a day school. It will be building on eight years of quality, primary education and will hopefully develop young men who can aspire to future leadership in South Sudan. It is a further example of religious working together to provide the best service delivery.



Loreto will host De La Salle students and staff this year while construction begins on 48 hectares of land provided by the local chiefs. Solidarity will continue to train graduates as teachers, nurses and midwives. These are very positive steps in troubled times for the future development of South Sudan. ~ Fr. Bill



Classes at Loreto Primary School

The Educational Reality in South Sudan

- South Sudan is stuck at the bottom of the global league table for education. Enrollment rates are the lowest in the world and reflect a profound gender bias. Literacy levels, especially for women, are shockingly low; most of the country's teachers are untrained, poorly paid and lack the most basic teaching materials. School infrastructure is limited and often poor quality.
- The secondary sector in South Sudan is relatively small with enrollment in 2017 totaling about 80,000 and an enrollment rate of approximately 5%. This compares with average, gross enrollment rates at secondary level in Sub-Saharan Africa of 29%. WIT further states: This figure hides gender-based and regional disparities, which mean that in some parts of South Sudan, secondary enrollment may be as low as 1% for young women.
- With a dropout rate of over 70%, it is crystal clear that the current secondary school system is not working effectively or efficiently.
- Very few girls make the transition to secondary school. Even fewer complete secondary education. In 2017 less than 3,500 girls will complete four years of secondary schooling. Because so few young women complete secondary school, the number of women who can go on to become teachers, health workers, accountants or enter other professions is very small.
- Such catastrophically low enrollment rates for entry into secondary education have a profoundly negative effect on future economic and social development. It helps to explain why there are so few skilled or qualified South Sudanese workers in sectors as diverse as the building trades, the hospitality industry or business and accounting.



Sister Margaret Scott, RNDM - Principal
Solidarity Teacher Training College



Sister Orla Treacy, IBVM - Principal
Loreto Secondary School



Brother Joseph Alak, FSC - Principal
De La Salle Secondary School



Christian Brothers and prospective students for the new
De La Salle Secondary School for boys



Students at a formal assembly - Loreto Secondary School for Girls



Primary students in front of new building

The Congregation of the Sisters of Bon Secours is a member organization of Friends in Solidarity, a USA organization that works in partnership with Solidarity with South Sudan to support its projects and other activities.