

World Water Day

Yesterday was marked by the United Nations as World Water Day. To quote from the official website:

“World Water Day, on 22nd March every year, is about focusing attention on the importance of water. The theme for World Water Day 2018 is ‘Nature for Water’ – exploring nature-based solutions to the water challenges we face in the 21st century.

Damaged ecosystems affect the quantity and quality of water available for human consumption. Today, 2.1 billion people live without safe drinking water at home; affecting their health, education and livelihoods.

Sustainable Development Goal 6 commits the world to ensuring that everyone has access to safe water by 2030, and includes targets on protecting the natural environment and reducing pollution.”

That statistic of 2.1 billion people without direct access to safe drinking water is quite dreadful. It is something that we automatically take for granted, and yet a large proportion of people in the world do not enjoy that basic right.

Put quite simply we cannot live without water. If we are deprived of water we will become ill and eventually die. And that is a terrible fate. And so we need to be mindful of the need not to waste water which to many in our world is such a scarce and precious commodity.

It is not surprising that there are very many references to water in the Bible, with both a literal and a symbolic reference. We heard just now part of the encounter between Jesus and the Samaritan woman at the well (John 4.5-14). For devout people of the time this would have been shocking on a number of counts: Jesus speaking alone to a woman, Jesus speaking at all to a Samaritan, a foreigner, Jesus asking for water from a Samaritan. These were all taboo. Yet Jesus is happy to go against all conventions and to show real concern and compassion.

As Christians we associate water above all with baptism. In this encounter Jesus offers the gift of living water that will satisfy not merely a physical thirst but more importantly a spiritual thirst. And that is something we all need, something for which we all can pray. That is particularly so as we approach Holy Week and follow our Lord on the way to the cross. For it is by his death and resurrection that we know that Jesus can truly offer us that living water, that love, that liberation, that reconciliation, that deep and lasting peace with ourselves, with others and with God.

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