

# WATERSPIRIT



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## WATERSPIRIT MISSION

**WATERSPIRIT** is a center committed to informing, inspiring and enabling people to:

- \* Recognize the connection between ecology and spirituality
- \* Appreciate the interdependence and sacredness of all creation
- \* Become more aware of the significance of water and watersheds in the wider context of the story of the Universe and the life of planet Earth
- \* Grow in knowledge of ecological issues related to oceans, rivers, lakes, coastlines and wetlands
- \* Embrace life style changes necessary to protect and preserve creation
- \* Commit to joining efforts with others in confronting ecological issues

**WATERSPIRIT** collaborates with other groups locally, regionally, nationally and internationally in promoting informed concern and action

*A Ministry of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Peace*

## Water for Life or Water for Profit?

Essential for life, water, from the earliest accounts of human history, has been seen as sacred. Water gave rise to the ancient spiritual myths and legends. Creation stories are inevitably related to water. The Egyptians believed that their great sun god reposed in the ocean. The Babylonians held that both their gods and all living beings came from the fusion of salt water and fresh water. In the Bible's Genesis account of the beginning of creation "the spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters."

In modern times, in beliefs and rituals of religions throughout the world, water is revered as life giving, purifying, healing, transforming and strengthening.

Each year millions of Hindus come to the Ganges River to wash and be purified from their sins. Every Shinto shrine in Japan has a purification water bowl decorated with sacred images. Shintoists, in the tradition of many Eastern religions, believe that the spirits of their dead travel to the next life through flowing river waters.

Muslims, in the ritual highlighting their sacred pilgrimage to Mecca, circle seven times around the Black Stone in the shrine which marks the place where the prophet Mohammed and his followers walked. Near the stone, is a sacred well, believed to have sustained Hagar, the mother of Ishmael, in her wanderings in the wilderness. The ritual walk includes drinking the miraculous life giving well water.

Indigenous peoples, throughout the world, perceive the rivers, lakes and oceans as Mother Earth's arterial system pumping life and vitality throughout the planet.

Water is the element most frequently mentioned in the Bible.

In the Christian tradition people are transformed into new life through the waters of Baptism. Jesus, understood as "the fountain of living water," heals through water, preaches by and about water, prays by water and performs miracles connected with water.

Deep within the human spirit – soul – psyche, there is a profound sense of the mystery, and for believers, the sacredness, of life giving and life sustaining water.

Recently the United Nation's Commission on Sustainable Development completed its annual two week meeting, much of which was dedicated to addressing the crisis of over a billion people who do not have access to clean water and, underlying this harsh reality, the pollution, manipulation and diversion of water that has created deserts and sewers of whole bioregions. One sensed that, in the midst of the Commission's long and difficult deliberations on strategies and policies, there was a growing global commitment to change

what had to be changed.

However, it was the NGOs (non-government organizations) at the meeting who consistently warned about the growing movement toward the privatization of water. Ten major corporations are now globally delivering freshwater services for profit. The three biggest are Suez, Vivendi and RWE-AG. Ten years ago, multinationals serviced about 51 million people in just 12 countries. Today, they deliver water and wastewater services to nearly 300 million customers in more than 100 countries.

*(Continued on page 2)*



*Photo by X. Zbigniew Pytel of Poland. From the United Nations International "Water is Life" Contest*



## Water for Life or Water for Profit?

*(Continued from page 1)*

Maude Barlow and Tony Clarke, authors of the book, "Blue Gold," warn of a trend effecting our part of the world. Multinationals are beginning to concentrate on the nations of Europe and North America because of the security of these markets. Vivendi, Suez and RWE have bought leading U.S. water companies, United Water, American Water Works and U.S. Filter, which service many towns and municipalities throughout the country. At their present rate of expansion, in a decade, the top three corporations will control over 70 percent of the water systems in Europe and North America.

A growing "track record" is revealing serious flaws in these private takeovers. Water prices go up. The water quality deteriorates. Local workers often lose jobs. With the loss of local control, transparency in the operations is reduced and corruption can and sometimes does occur. For these multinational corporations, water is but a tradable commodity to be bought and sold for profit.

However, a rapidly strengthening "grass roots" movement is finding its voice and power as citizens become more aware. The determined efforts of people in villages and cities in countries as diverse as India, Bolivia and the United States are beginning to result in successful reclaiming of local water rights. The theme of this movement is often "Water for life, not for profit!" Deep within themselves, ordinary people are re-connecting with that sense of water as a precious gift meant for all life.

Be part of this movement. Know where your own water comes from. What is your water company? Is it publicly managed? Is your water company a subsidiary of a multinational corporation? How and when did it become a subsidiary? Share information with your neighbors. In your daily habits, reverence life-giving water, rather than taking it for granted.

Essential for all life, water is sacred.

**For more information on WATERSPIRIT, visit our website**

<http://www.waterspirit.org>

