

Resolution of the Global Water Crisis

Let it be resolved that:

As missionaries working locally and internationally, we have a duty to give witness to the principles of Catholic social justice and to the environmental teachings concerning the use and management of public natural resources such as freshwater. This may best be done by attesting to the claim that all people have a God-given right to clean water for the purposes of drinking, cooking, bathing, and other basic necessities of life.

Rationale:

The looming water crisis is one of the most critical challenges facing the world today. Global demand for this precious resource has increased more than sixfold over the past century compared with the threefold increase in world population. Without better management of water resources and related ecosystems, two-thirds of humanity will suffer from severe or moderate shortages by the year 2025.¹

There are more than one billion people who currently lack access to sufficient clean water; and, nearly half of the world's population suffers from water-related diseases.² The use of a contaminated water supply for drinking and bathing is the leading factor in the spread of infectious diseases world-wide. Waterborne diseases are the largest killers of infants in developing countries. Access to safe water is directly linked to the survival of children under age five.

Beyond the health-related issues, freshwater supplies and delivery systems are being removed from public ownership and local control. They are transferred to corporate and private ownership and control. This practice has led to the development of monopolies, to the redirection of local water resources held historically in public trust and to prices being driven by a profit motive rather than by public service and the common good.³

It is the current policy of international financial institutions such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund to aggressively promote the privatization of public water systems as a condition of loans and/or debt relief.

Call for Specific Actions:

USCMA requests its members to:

- Urge members to commit themselves to set aside time for prayer and reflection on the moral and ecological implications of their own personal and communal water use.
- Urge members to participate in and support ministries, including interfaith ministries, that assist communities in the construction of their own sustainable water supply systems through public service companies.
- Urge members to make their voices heard at all levels of government that water is to be viewed not as a commodity but as a public trust that must be protected for current and future generations.
- Urge members to stand in opposition against international trade agreements that force nations and communities to sell their fresh water inheritance in the world marketplace.

¹ MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL OF UNESCO FOR WORLD WATER DAY
(22 March 2002)

² World Health Organization 2000

³ Barlow, Maude, Blue Gold: The Global Water Crisis and the Commodification of the World's Water Supply, International Forum on Globalization, 2001.