“...access to safe drinking water is a basic and universal human right, since it is essential to human survival and, as such, is a condition for the exercise of other human rights. Our world has a grave social debt towards the poor who lack access to drinking water, because they are denied the right to a life consistent with their inalienable dignity” (30).

– Pope Francis, Laudato Si’

Water is a Basic Human Right

A Case Study: The Flint Water Crisis

Access to safe drinking water is not just an international concern. It is happening right here in the U.S. Flint, Michigan is home to nearly 100,000 residents, 41% of whom live at or below the poverty line. For the past 50 years they had received water from Lake Huron and the Detroit River. In April 2014, officials made the money-saving decision to source from the local Flint River instead.

Almost immediately residents complained their water smelled and tasted foul. It poured out of the faucet orange-colored. General Motors had to stop using Flint water in one of their plants because it was corroding engine parts. But city officials continued to assure residents the water was safe.

In truth, residents were being poisoned. Aging pipes had leached lead into the water supply causing moderate to serious health issues for adults and an estimated 6,000 - 12,000 children. The water may even be linked with an outbreak of Legionnaires’ disease that affected 87 people and killed 10.

In January 2016, President Obama declared the city as a federal state of emergency.
Did You Know?

- 1 in 10 people lack access to safe water
- Women and girls spend 125 million hours each day collecting water
- Women and girls living without a toilet spend 266 million hours each day finding a place to go
- Every 90 seconds a child dies from a water-related disease
- According to the United Nations, by 2050, 1 in 4 people is likely to be affected by chronic shortage of fresh water worldwide.

Change for Global Change

A donation of even a few dollars can provide clean drinking water for a year or more for people in the developing world. The Sisters of St. Joseph of Philadelphia have a fund that generates sustainable change through water projects around the world where Sisters of St. Joseph minister. Grant money is funded by collecting spare change.

These grants assist our brothers and sisters with the basic necessities provided by potable water. For example, the villages of Bhrerupur, Jharkhedi, and Shyampura Tappa in India received grants for the restoration and repairs of wells to provide safe drinking water.

To contribute your spare change, please visit www.changeforglobalchange.org. 100% of donations are used for water projects.

Take Action

- March is Water Action Month
- Watch: Impact of water on Jobs
  www.unwater.org/worldwaterday/about/en
- Purchase a Chalice and help provide 5 years of clean water for 1 person in the developing world.
- Read the CA Water Action Plan 2016
  resources.ca.gov/docs/california_water_action_plan/Final_California_Water_Action_Plan.pdf

Resources

- Learn: Water Accessibility as a Socioeconomic Opportunity
  water.org/water-crisis/womens-crisis
- UN Sustainable Development Goal #6: Clean Water and Sanitation
  sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdg6
- Watch Video: Water4.org
  www.water4.org/resources/videos
- Learn more about conservation:
  Save Our Water – saveourwater.com/what-you-should-know

* March 22, World Water Day

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