

# Call to Justice: “JusticeGram” of the Salvatorian Family USA

## Water as a “Thematic Nexus”

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“Thematic nexus? What’s that??”

Those are fancy words that highlight how water is right at the intersection of many different fields of study, socio-political systems, and JPIC actions. It shares this space in March with related issues. March is **International Women’s History** month. The UN raises up the realities and contributions of women on March 8, **International Women’s Day**. March 21 is the UN’s **International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination**. And March 22 is the UN’s **World Water Day**. The relevance of water flows through each of these.

International Women’s Day is a global day celebrating the social, economic, cultural, and political achievements of women. It also marks a call to action for accelerat-

“We are faced not with two separate crises, one environmental and the other social, but rather with one complex crisis which is both social and environmental. Strategies for a solution demand an integrated approach to combating poverty, restoring dignity to the excluded, and at the same time protecting nature.” (Laudato Si #139)

1 billion people have no access to safe drinking water



125 million hours are spent daily by women and children collecting drinking water



70% of the world’s fresh water is used for agriculture irrigation, while most farming occurs in water-scarce regions

Worldwater.ucdavis.edu

ing women’s equality (<http://internationalwomensday.com>) including women’s role in sustaining life.

Racism and systemic racial discrimination challenge us to act to foster a culture of tolerance, equity, and anti-discrimination and to stand up against prejudice, intolerance, and white supremacy.

World Water Day not only raises awareness about the vital importance of safe water, but also recognizes it as “the lifeblood of humanity, our economies, and our well-being.” 2.2 billion people live without access to safe water. Water is key to poverty reduction, economic growth, and environmental sustainability.

## Water is Life

“Mni wiconi,” “Water is Life.” This statement of fact served as a rallying cry during the Dakota Access Pipeline protests on Standing Rock Reservation in 2016. The movement continues today, highlighting the interconnectedness of social and political empowerment, eco-justice, and the rights of all who face political, social, economic, and ecological oppression.

Through much of US history, women have stood at the forefront of advocacy for clean, safe, sustainable water for all. To-



### Let Us Pray:

- ◇ For women and girls who do whatever it takes to get life-giving water to their families.
- ◇ For corporate users of water who disregard it's vital role and abuse it to maximize profits.
- ◇ For courage to make local changes in response to global challenges.
- ◇ For those in power and in leadership, that the laws and policies they promote and enforce be focused on the common good.
- ◇ For volunteers and development organizations that generously invest time, talent, and resources in projects that change lives and save lives.
- ◇ For each of us as we do what we can to save water and advocate for its proper use in our locales.

day, a water crisis impacts families of the Navaho Nation, Puerto Rico, Appalachia, Mississippi, California, and in the Intermountain West. In Africa, in Haiti, in India, in developing countries the world over, women and girls spend an estimated 200 million hours hauling water every day ([newworldvision.org](http://newworldvision.org).) 1.1 billion people worldwide lack access to safe water; 2.7 billion find water scarce for at least one month of the year.

Even the very rich cannot live without water. But it is the poor, especially from communities of color, who live the struggle daily.



## Puddles to Wells: *Maji ni Uhai* Sr. Sheila Novak, SDS



Salvatorians have great water stories. One is of a woman bending over a puddle to gather some water for the day. Mark Verke observes that lack of clean water can be a form of enslavement for many women in developing countries. It is women who spend hours walking to get water. Often the water they have access to carries dysentery, typhoid and other water borne diseases. The mortality rate from these pathogens is very high, especially among children age 2 and younger. Finding clean water is a matter of life and death.

For almost 20 years the Verkes have been involved in critical cistern and well projects in Africa. Bob and Denise Synder have worked on water projects with the people of Haiti. Sharon Clark and Sue Haertel, and Salva-

torian parishes St. Pius and MGC, Divine Savior and Most Holy Trinity, have collaborated to bring new wells to African villages. Workshops in building cisterns and training in constructing well machinery ensure that villagers are empowered and involved. Thousands of people benefit, and the benefit goes on for years.

Access to adequate, safe water makes a profound difference. The people can spend more time with their families. Children no longer need to help haul water, so they can go to school. Better farming means better eating, and a better standard of living. The mental and physical improvements are so visible, carrying over to improved life expectancy for children, better marital relationships, and fewer divorces. Through tears, a



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You're Reading a Salvatorian Family Publication



In response to our JLG call to focus on Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation (JPIC), we produce this quarterly newsletter for members of our SDS Family. We invite our members to **talk, pray, and act** on the issues we highlight. Use the links to learn more.

woman said it so clearly: "I am a mother, grandmother and great-grandmother and I never thought we would have a well in our village."

The next time you brush your teeth or drink a cup of coffee, say a prayer of thanksgiving: you have a tap and not a puddle. Pray in gratitude, too, for the Salvatorian water projects making a difference in the lives of so many!

### Learn More

- ◇ Water Crisis is a Women's Crisis <https://water.org/our-impact/water-crisis/womens-crisis/>
- ◇ Five Reasons Why Climate Action Needs Women: <https://unfccc.int/news/5-reasons-why-climate-action-needs-women>
- ◇ Time and Trauma: What Fetching Water Costs Women and Girls : <https://theconversation.com/time-and-trauma-what-fetching-water-costs-women-and-girls-in-nairobis-informal-settlements-172425>
- ◇ International Women's Day Resources, United Nations: <https://www.un.org/en/international-womens-day/page/international-womens-day-resources>
- ◇ Thirst for Justice <http://www.bullfrogfilms.com/catalog/tfj.html> Three true stories of water justice in the US.