

## Wednesday: From Generation to Generation

### Keywords

Solidarity Inter-Generational Waste Compassion Mercy Family  
Environment Water

### Introduction:



*Photo Credit: George McCready, published in Donegal Free Press, 24 February, 1999.*

Look at this photograph.

What do you think is going on? What decade might it be taken? Do you notice anything about the gender of the people in the photo? Do you know anyone who collected water from the well in her youth?

**Reflective Exercise:** Consider the impact having to collect water everyday would have on your life. Compose a response in your copy.

**Numeracy Moment:** If an average person in Ireland uses 150 litres a day, how many trips to the well would it take if you have a twenty litre bucket?

Do you think your grandparents or great-grandparents used less water because they had to carry it by hand?

Could you talk to an older relative, perhaps a grandparent, to ask them about how they used water, and how they see water being wasted today?

**Fact:** A young person in Malawi uses about twenty-four litres a day and girls and women spend about four hours a day fetching water.

**Watch the Trócaire Video: Clean water means ...**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZY3R0M654qc>



**Discussion:**

Pope Francis mentions the word water 47 times in his Encyclical on the environment, *Laudato Si'*. Why do you think he mentions it so often?

**Activity:** Read the following passages from *Laudato Si'*.

**II. The Issue of Water**

Other indicators of the present situation have to do with the depletion of natural resources. We all know that it is not possible to sustain the present level of consumption in developed countries and wealthier sectors of society, where the habit of wasting and discarding has reached unprecedented levels. The exploitation of the planet has already exceeded acceptable limits and we still have not solved the problem of poverty. (*Laudato Si'*, 27)

**Discussion Questions:** Can you give examples of waste when it comes to water?

We can no longer speak of sustainable development apart from intergenerational solidarity. Once we start to think about the kind of world we are leaving to future generations, we look at things differently; we realize that the world is a gift which we have freely received and must share with others. Since the world has been given to us, we can no longer view reality in a purely utilitarian way, in which efficiency and productivity are entirely geared to our individual benefit. Intergenerational solidarity is not optional, but rather a basic question of justice, since the world we have received also belongs to those who will follow us. ... What kind of world do we want to leave to those who come after us, to children who are now growing up? *Laudato Si'* 159, 160

**Discussion Questions:** What does 'intergenerational solidarity' mean? How might it relate to water use? How might Pope Francis' view on intergenerational solidarity relate to the image on this slide?

**How does this relate to what the Pope is saying in *Laudato Si'*?**

**Treat the earth well – it is not inherited from your parents: it is borrowed from your children.**  
Kenyan Proverb

**Activity:** View the clip from Trócaire on Water

**Watch:** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-DiuPhcfSYM>



**Discussion:** Did you realise that the amount of water on the planet is finite? What can you do in a concrete way to reduce wastage of water?

**The impact of Bottled Water**

- From July 2015 to July 2016 Irish consumers spent more than €76.5 million on bottled water – that is about €15.30 per head.
- Three litres of water are needed to manufacture a one-litre bottle of water.
- It takes more than 1,000 years for a water bottle to biodegrade.
- Each year people on our planet dump more than three million tons of plastic bottles into landfill. In the US alone about 30 million water bottles end up in landfill every day.
- The production of a litre of bottled water emits hundreds of times more greenhouse gases than a litre of tap water.
- Making enough plastic to satisfy the US water market takes 17 million barrels of oil – enough fuel to keep half of Ireland’s two million cars motoring for a year.
- According to the World Health Organisation, more than 1.6 million people in the developing world die each year from drinking contaminated water.
- The vast majority of these are children under five.
- We in the developed world spend more on bottled water every year than would be needed to eradicate the deaths of all the children infected with fatal waterborne illnesses.

*Source: Conor Pope, Irish Times, The Hidden Costs of Drinking Bottled Water, 22 August, 2016*

**Discussion Questions:**

What is the average amount spent on bottled water annually?  
Do you think your own consumption is greater or lesser? Where do the additional costs come from in relation to bottled water?



**Take the Water Bottle Challenge!**

Take the water bottle challenge: Don’t just flip the bottle, ditch it!  
As a class, try to use drink only tap-water and to use recyclable bottles, even if only for a week.  
Estimate how many plastic bottles a year this will save.  
Donate the money you would have spent to Trócaire

**Reflective Exercise:**

Would you consider giving up using bottled water completely?

**Extension activity:**

Water is one of the most important symbols in Christianity. Ask students to copy the following mindmap into their religion journal, and complete it in pairs.

