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## LIVING WATER- A SACRAMENTAL COMMONS

**John Hart, Ph.D.**  
Professor  
Carroll College, Montana

*I was hungry, but you privatized the water needed for my crops and livestock.*

*I was thirsty, but you polluted the water I needed to drink.*

*I was naked, but without water my cotton could not grow, nor could my sheep drink to live.*

*I was homeless, but the trees were depleted by acid rain and the clay was hard and unyielding.*

*I was sick, because I had to drink from contaminated rivers.*

*I was in prison, because when I protested about my sick and hungry children you called me a terrorist.*

*Whenever you do this to the least of my brethren, you do it to me.*

– Cf Matthew 25:42-45

Water availability and water quality have become pressing social issues throughout the world. Waste, drought, overconsumption, greed, pollution, privatization, preemptive partitioning, unjust pricing, and politics all have contributed to convert available fresh water – a common good in creation – into a commodity, and even into a threat to human life, health and economic well-being. Water is diverted from providing basic sustenance for life, degraded to become unfit for consumption, or priced beyond people's means to pay for its use. Such impacts on the quality and use of water harm more than the human community; the broader biotic community, the community of all life, is also their victim.

Even a brief review of current events reveals dramatic alterations in the ownership, distribution and use of water. South Africa, in which several cities privatized water systems in the mid-1990's, suffered the worst cholera outbreak in its history from 2000-2002 after people who could not afford to pay for water resorted to drinking from and bathing in contaminated rivers and water holes. In the U.S., Lake Powell, which stretches from Utah into Arizona and provides water for Arizona, Nevada and California, had dropped 87 feet by February, 2003 to its lowest level in thirty years because of drought and overconsumption of water. A month earlier the city of Atlanta, Georgia, which had signed a water privatization contract with United Water in 1999, terminated the contract; among the reasons were the facts that promised repairs to the city's aging water supply system had not been done and residents of the area had

been subjected to water shortages and to brown water flowing from home faucets. In northeastern Montana, the reservation lands of the Assiniboine (Nakota) and White Clay People (Gros Ventre) are plagued by water pollution and soil contamination from the Zortman and Landusky mine, which had blown off the tops of sacred mountains to extract gold. In 1998, the Pegasus Gold Corporation, which had a \$25 million bond for reclamation, filed for bankruptcy after it became evident that the bond was less than half of the money needed for reclaiming native lands, which would be poisoned for untold generations into the future. Also in Montana, a debate is heating up over exploration for and construction of coal bed methane (CBM) drilling systems. CBM is touted as a clean energy source. CBM would not only divert water supplies used by rural communities and regional farmers and ranchers, but also would directly impact these water supplies' quality by raising their salinity, thereby altering their utility as clean water to irrigate fields; here is a case not of the false framing of an issue as "environmentalists vs. employment" but a real conflict of "energy corporations vs. agriculturalists and environment." Latin America, Nicaragua and other nations seeking aid are required by funding organizations such as the World Bank, International Monetary Fund, and Interamerican Development Bank to privatize their water, commodifying it for sale to transnational corporations headquartered in France and Germany; the latter would be able to decide to what extent water is used for homes, locally owned agriculture, and locally owned small businesses. In all of these instances of corporate profits vs. community benefit, peoples' lives, livelihoods, health and sanitation are threatened or already impacted by the pollution or privatization of vital water supplies and water distribution systems. Public participation is needed in these and similar water decisions to promote water purity, public ownership of essential water supplies and systems, and public prioritization of water uses.

The United Nations recently began to get involved in water issues, exploring how they relate to Human Rights issues. The United Nations Economic and Social Council (UNESCO), meeting in Geneva in November, 2002 approved a draft statement on the right to water. The statement declares: "The human right to drinking water is fundamental for life and health. Sufficient and safe drinking water is a precondition for the realization of all human rights," and adds that the "right to drinking water...is the most fundamental condition for survival." This right "entitles everyone to *safe, sufficient, affordable and accessible* drinking water that is adequate for daily individual requirements (drinking, household sanitation, food preparation, and hygiene." Meanwhile, *Fortune* magazine called water "one of the world's great business opportunities," a twenty-first century equivalent to oil in the twentieth century.

To counteract polluted and privatized water, Earth and its life communities need living water – as a sacramental commons and in the sacramental commons – to be restored and conserved, for the well-being and even the survival of species and the planet.

Living water as (and in) a sacramental commons provides for the *commons good* – the well-being of the Earth home and habitat of the biotic community – and the *common good* – the well-being of interrelated and interdependent members of the biotic community; living water also provides *common goods* – Earth benefits needed for the life and well-being of the biotic community.

The Catholic bishops state in *Renewing the Earth* (1991) that "The Christian vision of a sacramental universe—a world that discloses the Creator's presence by visible and tangible signs—can contribute to making the earth a home for the human family once again." Consciousness of and respect for the presence of the Spirit in creation can lead people to

care for creation, the bishops say: "Reverence for the Creator present and active in nature, moreover, may serve as ground for environmental responsibility."

Recognition of the sacramentality of creation is becoming more widespread among Christian communities, and complements perceptions of the presence of the Spirit in creation that are taught in other religions, and in varied forms of spiritual consciousness not formalized into an organized religion.

### **1. The Sacramental Commons**

The "sacramental universe" is particularized for the person of faith in a "sacramental commons." At special moments, this shared place within an individual's or a community's space is revelatory of God-immanent; in all moments, it is a sign of the divine intention that natural goods be shared among members of the biotic community for their sustenance. A *sacramental universe* is the totality of creation infused with the vision, love, creative presence and active power of the transcendent-immanent Spirit. A *sacramental commons* is creation as a moment and locus of human participation in the interactive presence and caring compassion of the Spirit immanent, who permeates and participates in a complex cosmic dance of energies, events, elements and entities.

The sacramental universe becomes localized in the sacramental commons when Spirit and spirit consciously engage in sacred space, which is potentially every space in creation. People can experience the presence of God unexpectedly in sacred moments in sacred space (a potentiality which ultimately is present in all pristine creation) when they are open to seeing signs of the Spirit in the world of nature; open to the loving and creative presence of the Spirit in evolutionary creation; or when they work to effect justice, transform society, and experience the divine presence among the oppressed, the "least of the brethren"(Cf. Mt 25). Sometimes a spontaneous sacramental moment reveals divine presence and activity in dynamic creation in a vision or new insight; at other times, it is through an overwhelming consciousness of the Spirit's presence in nature or in a community of the poor. People in their spiritual center and in diverse ways experience sacramental moments in sacramental places of a sacramental commons in the sacramental universe; in sacramental communities, they can work to ensure that at least the subsistence needs of all people are met and that survival of other biotic beings is promoted.

Sacramental moments are experiences of the loving and creative presence of the Spirit. Creation is born from divine imagination and flows toward divine vision, and is the locus of the human experience of divine presence. People perceive signs of the Spirit in creation, signs that might or might not be acknowledged but which nonetheless link innermost human being with divine Being. The sacramental commons is not only the locus of engagement of Creator and creatures. It is also a shared space whose common goods equitably provide for the needs of those creatures.

The sweeping and inspirational concept of the entire universe as revelatory of God is focused from the macro to the micro in the sacramental commons. The sacramentality of creation can be seen and experienced not only in the Earth commons, but also in specific places such as local bioregions or isolated locales. Their sacramental nature is seen in their revelation of a divine aesthetic and divine creativity in the beauty of creation; and in their potential to inspire people to consider environmental issues as creation issues and spiritual issues, and to reflect on how the Spirit intends the intricate diversity of creation to provide for the common good of ecosystems and of the biotic community and human community within them.

The *commons* good – the good of the Earth as a whole or of a bioregion of the Earth – and the *common* good – the well-being of the biotic community – when seen as integrated aspects of a sacramental reality are perceived as “goods” not intended solely for humans, to be used only for human benefit, but goods in themselves and in relation to each other. The commons good and the common good are understood to be inextricably intertwined – whether this web of relationship is acknowledged or not. Ecological integrity and ecological justice exist not in contradiction but in relation. Harm to the web of creation endangers the web of life; stability of the web of creation enhances the web of life. The web of life is part of a wider web of all creation, in which the abiotic and biotic entities are integrated strands. The web of creation is the context and habitat of life; the community of all life is the biotic community as a whole, in its ecosystemic integrity, and in its interdependence and interrelation. It is supported by the primary elements whose molecular unities and interactions provide the essential air, land and water needed for life’s sustenance and survival. The commons is the locus of engagement of members of biotic and abiotic creation, internally in their respective modes of being and externally in their interaction with each other.

In the commons, the eternal numinous Presence immanent in the universe creates freely from love, sharing the most essential aspect of intrinsic divine communion with extrinsic creation. The divine spiritual commons of love is imaged in the cosmic natural commons, which is called forth from divine imagination to nurture its inhabitants through *common goods*. The Spirit cares for the commons and all in it. The biotic community partakes of the bounty of nature, collaboratively or competitively, in a balancing of old, new and emerging forms of life; the human community similarly, but with greater knowledge, partakes of natural bounty, and is called to share its common goods within the human family so that the needs of all might be met. In this commons Earth’s goods are primevally common and destined to be permanently common: by nature, all is common, and exceptions to this fundamental law are permitted primarily for reasons of individual, community or species appropriation for survival, to meet basic needs.

The commons is the place in which dynamic natural history evolves, diversifies and complexifies, and the base from which cultural history develops in all its intricacy. Human natural history and human cultural history develop together. Human property in land and goods is part of a human commons (*Acts 2:44* states that the early Christian community “had all things in common”) which is to provide for human needs. In a complementary way, Earth is a commons - a shared space which is the source of life-providing common goods for all creatures. The Earth commons is not intended solely for humans’ use and enjoyment, although as part of the biotic community they share in its goods. Earth provides for all creatures as they live related to and dependent on each other in integrated bioregions.

The traditional human political-social understanding that a commons is a place where humans share in and utilize a common area for individual and community benefits must be extended. The idea of a shared space should be retained, but to this idea must be added the recognition that not only the human family shares it: Humans are neighbors to all of God’s creatures who dwell in and depend upon it. The Bible talks time and again of God’s love and care for these “good” creatures. People walking with the Spirit must express also that love and care. The commons is shared habitat and shared place for all, and its human inhabitants are responsible for caring about it and for it: where they live and work, and when they are engaged with it, intervening in it, or altering it to meet their needs or the needs of other creatures.

In the Earth commons, the bioregional commons and the human community commons, people are called to pursue the common good. Traditionally, in political science and sacred science, the *common good* has been defined in strictly human terms (just as “natural rights” have been confined to personal and civil human rights rather than to include “nature” as a whole or in its living forms). In a sacramental commons, humans realize that the common good is the good of the biotic community as a whole, that the “life of all” which is the focus of the common good should include the lives of not-human species.

Pristine creation is the mediation of the Spirit immanent and transcendent. The Creator Spirit has provided, through the evolutionary dynamics of the biotic community and the complementary availability of air, land and water, a sufficiency of goods to meet everyone’s needs when they are justly distributed. The poor are the mediation of Christ Jesus, the Logos Incarnate. Ecojustice is the act of linking responsibility for the natural world, engendered by engagement with the Spirit, with responsibility for the neighbor, as required by Jesus as the Son of Man present among the “least brethren.” The good of the revelatory commons and the common good of the revelatory poor are inseparable. Commons good, common good, and common goods are integrated. In acknowledging a “sacramental commons,” people express an appreciation of the sacredness, integrity, and life-sustaining qualities of creation.

There should be neither poverty nor hunger in a sacramental commons. Just as when in the dedicated sacred space of a church building people partake of sacramental communion, sharing in the special presence of Christ Jesus in the Bread of Life, so too, in the created sacred space of a bioregional commons permeated by the presence of the Spirit Immanent, all are able to partake of bread that gives life. People conscious of the sacramental commons do not limit sacred space to buildings they construct, nor their communion with God and with each other to ritual moments in such buildings. In a sacramental commons the community of faith is a sharing community that expresses in a concrete and visible form the meaning of “Holy Communion” shared in church; the invisible and visible aspects of reality blend into a moment and way of life of sacramental unity and sacramental totality, with bread for the spirit complemented by bread for the body.

In such a sacramental commons, spiritual hunger and physical hunger are satisfied. Human encounters with the works of the transcendent Creator Spirit who continues and immanents evolutionary creation, becomes incarnate in Jesus, and is present with and seeks to guide people all days, become one communion and engagement with God’s work of spiritual and material liberation. Sacramental communion in a church building is complemented and enhanced by sacramental communion in nature’s outdoor cathedral of creation: among human communities, and between human communities and the Spirit who gives life and integral liberation.

A consciousness of the sacramental commons and sacramental community offers a new way to understand the teaching of Jesus presented in the Last Judgment story in Matthew 25:31-46. In the narrative, the Son of Man invites into the kingdom people who have fed the hungry, given drink to the thirsty, welcomed the stranger, clothed the naked, cared for the sick and visited those in prison. The Son of Man declares that whatever people did for these poor oppressed ones, they did for him. Their practical works are primarily just distributions of Earth’s goods: food from the soil’s nutrients, the sun’s rays and the sky’s rain; drink from water; clothing from plants and animals; housing from trees and clay; and medicine from plants. The Son of Man is an invisible and immanent presence among the people awaiting the distribution of goods from the Earth in which the Spirit is invisible and immanent.

The Earth commons and the bioregional commons, in order to be sacramental, must be revelatory of the creating and liberating Spirit not only through pristine nature and the biotic community as a whole, but through the human community's acts of compassion and justice that reveal God's mercy and justice. The commons must provide justly for the needs of all humans, a distribution that requires that the basic needs of all take priority over the wants of a few.

Christians participate in interactive and revelatory creation as members of a *sacramental community* in which every part of creation – each aspect of abiotic nature and each member of the biotic community – is a sign of the immanence of the Spirit to every other part. Consciousness of this sacramental community inspires care for creation and concern about fulfilling human responsibilities toward Earth as home and toward humans and other members of the community of life as co-creatures loved by God.

A sacramental community happens in a time and place in which people integrate the spiritual meaning of “sacramental” and the social meaning of “commons,” and engage in concrete efforts to relate to and promote the well-being of all life, particularly the common good of the most vulnerable.

Where people follow the Way of Christianity within this sacramental community, they promote a just distribution of goods that provide for material life to parallel the sacramental communion distribution of transformed bread and wine that provides spiritual sustenance. The grain from the fields and the grapes from the vineyards represent the totality of sacramentality. The Spirit *immanent* in Earth engages the Spirit *incarnate* in Jesus. In commemorations of the Lord's Supper the sacramental commons and sacramental community are intertwined, and Christians are sent forth to engage in projects to effect the common good, beginning with providing the necessities of life to those who most need them.

## **2. Living Water**

Water is Earth's lifeblood. Water gives nourishment and life to the Earth commons. Without water, no life could exist on Earth. With water, the biotic community exists, thrives, diversifies and complexifies: in the air, on the land and in water itself. Water provides life: nutrients for salmon, and salmon for eagles and bears. Water provides for life: a sustaining medium for salmon, a sustaining liquid for creatures to drink. Water offers beautiful seascapes and embellishes beautiful landscapes, refreshing the eyes, the mind and the spirit. Water is a material good and a spiritual good when people recognize the providential presence of the Spirit as they drink the water that sustains their life.

When water is pure, its life-giving role can be fulfilled; when water is polluted, it endangers health and life not only for humankind, but for all the biotic community. When water is available to the human and biotic communities for their nourishment, health and life, it is used as a common good (a benefit provided by Earth) and is distributed for the common good (for the well-being of all life). When water is privatized, it is allocated only for those people(s), industries or commercial purposes determined by its owners: This negates the role of water as a common good and the function of water to provide for the common good. The common goods (Earth benefits), common good

(community well-being) and the commons good (well-being of Earth habitat) are jeopardized by the pollution or privatization of water.

When water is polluted by residential, industrial or agricultural effluents, it loses its life-giving properties, and thereby the role it plays in the cycle of life. It no longer provides for the commons or the common good and no longer has a sacramental character as a sign in nature of the Creator Spirit.

The sacramentality of the commons is obscured also by the privatization of water. When an individual, corporation or government (national, regional or local) removes water from the common domain; reserves water for their own purposes; and allocates or withholds water to control people, to foster exclusive private development, to thwart cooperative enterprises, to jeopardize environmental well-being, or otherwise to enhance coercive power or augment profits, these individuals, commercial operations or social institutions are seizing part of God's world and preventing it from fulfilling its purpose in the web of creation: to be a sign and mediation of the Spirit's immanence and solicitous care for the living and to be the immediate provider of sustenance for all life. The environmental and sacramental benefits of water are negated by privatizing policies, laws, politics and practices.

Deliberate destruction, deprivation, or denial of water, a water supply system, or a water treatment plant or its needed purification chemicals, directed against a specific people because of their national, racial, ethnic or religious identity, or primarily impacting a civilian population, is immoral, an act of genocide and, during warfare, a war crime.

Native peoples teach a respect for creation that rejects ownership of the natural components of Mother Earth. Land, air and water cannot be "property"; they are part of a nurturing Mother Earth, and are for the use of all who need them. Early in the twentieth century, the Mexican revolutionary Emiliano Zapata linked respect for Earth's natural goods to advocacy of a common right to the use of these goods: "The land belongs to everyone, like the water, the air, and the sun's light and warmth; and those who work the land with their own hands have a right to it." Such a sentiment might serve us well in the twenty-first century and become part of our values and practices before even air becomes the next natural good that falls victim to privatization. (Even today there are "air parlors" in some urban areas, where customers pay to breathe air unpolluted by auto and industrial emissions.)

The Bible speaks of "living water" in both a material and a spiritual sense. As a life-giving and life-providing nourishment, water that is "alive" in the Bible is water flowing pure and free. In contrast, well water is stagnant and laden with the taste of the minerals from its confined underground source.

Jesus reinforced the use of water as a symbol of spiritual cleansing and nourishment exclaim (leave as original "when he exclaimed") during prayers for rain in the Temple in Jerusalem: "Let anyone who thirsts come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as scripture says: 'Rivers of living water will flow from within him.'" (*Jn 7:37-38*) Jesus dramatically offered his teachings and way of life as spiritual living water to complement the rainwater needed for a good harvest. Jesus uses "living water," an actual element of the life of his people (and of all peoples), which they see as superior to other kinds of water, to represent the purity and efficacy of his teachings: The environmental and sacramental characteristics of water flow together here as one stream of thought and a singular spiritual teaching.

In the Christian tradition, sacramental water in religious rituals signifies a change in human consciousness and conduct, and a new or renewed relationship with the Spirit; the human spirit is enlivened in such moments. The symbolism of the ritual would be subverted by the use of polluted water in the sacramental moment – and might well endanger the health or even life of the recipient of the sacrament. The use of privatized water would have a similar impact: Water intended for all would be available only to the extent that its “owners” allowed it to be so allocated. The waters of baptism could not signify spiritual cleansing and entrance into a new life in community if the water used for the sacrament were polluted and from a privatized source. Water used for ritual blessings would be similarly affected by polluted or privatized water, losing its intrinsic physical character and its inherent spiritual significance.

Environmental degradation and water privatization have caused water to lose its nature and role as *living water*, as a bountiful source of benefits needed to provide for the common good. Water is losing also its ability to be a *sacramental* symbol, a sign in nature of God the Creator: Poisoning of waters by effluents from industrial operations and by chemicals from agricultural operations and landscaping practices has altered the life-giving nature of water; populations of creatures of God such as salmon and trout have been substantially reduced and in some cases become extinct, thereby depriving creation of some of its creatures and depriving people of some of their means of livelihood. These occurrences distract us from seeing the work of the Creator, since such harmful human works disturb the waters, distract our attention and distort our vision. No longer might people celebrate water as a sign of God’s creative work. No longer might they rejoice in human work that harvests the goods of the waters to provide for human needs. The waters are less sacramental, less a revelatory sign of God’s Presence and creativity, and more detrimental, more a sign of human ignorance, carelessness, indifference and greed.

People, as caretakers of those parts of creation with which they interact, are responsible for the restoration and conservation of living water as a sacramental commons, and living water *in* a sacramental commons.

Living water is a sacramental commons in itself, the medium and substance that serves as the world, the habitat, for *aquatic life* – fish, birds, reptiles, crustaceans, insects, and plants; for *related life* directly dependent on aquatic life – eagles, bears, fisher peoples; and for *all life*, which needs water for sustenance. Living water enables and nurtures life.

Living water as a sacramental commons provides for the larger sacramental commons, the bioregion through which it flows, and for Earth as sacramental commons, in its flow throughout regions of Earth and in the rain it provides around Earth after its evaporation and formation into clouds. Some members of the biotic community partake directly of living water by drinking it (trees through their roots and birds through their beaks, for example) or by living in its oceans, seas, rivers, streams and wetlands (fish, beavers and otters, for example); other members of the biotic community benefit both directly and indirectly from living water, as they drink it or as they eat the grasses, grains, fruits or nuts whose lives are sustained by living water’s clouds, rain and snow.

All these beneficiaries of living water need water’s sacramental character to be retained. This does not happen when chemical wastes running into water – from agricultural and lawn fertilizers and pesticides, mining operations and paper mills – harm and kill aquatic life and threaten the health and life of other members of the biotic community; when sulphur emissions from coal-fired power plants and other industrial operations mix with clouds and return to

Earth as acid rain, destroying forests, fields and aquatic life; and when water rights are held in the hands of a few individuals or corporations, through privatization, and living water is denied to the poor, to powerless ethnic groups, to oppressed people, to small, independent businesses, and to member owners of cooperative endeavors. Pollution and privatization harm the community of life and the waters of life, threatening the well-being of creation, communities and the commons.

Environmental and sacramental living water provide for the commons good and the common good. The commons needs clean water for the good of the integrated, interdependent and interrelated lives that inhabit its bioregions. The biotic community needs access to clean water for its very life, to satisfy its thirst, and, in the case of the human community, to water livestock, irrigate fields, provide fish for food and enable human health and hygiene. Water pollution and water privatization are an affront to the Creator Spirit, impede the universal destination of this natural good to meet the needs of all life, harm the good state of the commons, alter the character of a common good, and threaten the common good of life communities.

### **3. Living Water: A Sacramental Commons**

Appreciation for a sacramental universe and a sacramental commons, and actions to restore, conserve and increase the availability of living water for members of the sacramental community will prove invaluable for Christians confronting the worsening water crisis. Since living water is one of the most essential components of a healthy sacramental commons, Christians should be especially engaged in efforts to ensure that water is neither polluted nor privatized. Where either or both of these violations have occurred against a common good (natural benefit) of the commons, which is intended for the common (community) good of all, Christians should engage in efforts to reverse such practices and prevent their recurrence.

To promote living water as and in a sacramental commons, the sacramental community should engage in practical social projects to complement its spiritual consciousness. Community concern should evolve into community commitment and flow into community action.

A four-step process could effect social change and promote care for the sacramental commons: (1) *social analysis* of the historical local context of water issues— sources of pollution, politics of privatization, economic harms and threats to humans and other living beings posed by pollution and privatization; (2) *spiritual reflection* on religious and spiritual teachings regarding care for creation, community, the common good, and common goods, with community discernment about which teachings would relate to issues in this local context; (3) *social vision* that imagines what the commons might be like if spiritual teachings (about living water and the sacramental commons, for example) were implemented in the current polluted or privatized water commons, in order to begin its transformation and carry it to its full realization, its being made real, in the envisioned future; and (4) *social projects* that strive to realize the socio-spiritual vision of a sacramental community living in a sacramental commons, which shares common goods and promotes the common good.

Projects to promote living water as and in a sacramental commons might include the following:

1. Educate pastors and parishioners about the sacramental nature of nature, about the original meaning of “living water,” and about how these are significant images for our time that have important spiritual and practical environmental implications
2. Advocate living water as a human health requirement, and as necessary for the safety of people’s food supplies; beyond this self-interest appeal to humankind, suggest that other members of the community of all life, blessed by God, have intrinsic value, and intrinsic rights in their Earth home—including the right to living water
3. Engage local communities in projects that clean up local waters, restore natural habitat, and integrate human life and livelihood with local ecosystems
4. Encourage agriculturalists to halt non-point sources of pollution, by reducing and eliminating use of agricultural chemicals, and by restricting livestock access to rivers and streams
5. Promote consumption of nutritious food and drinks, nourished by clean water, organically grown locally, in school, church and hospital cafeterias; this would promote human health and provide economic support for local agricultural operations
6. Prohibit mining and manufacturing operations from dumping harmful effluents into local and state waters; evaluate the education, skills and experience of local workers, and identify alternative employment opportunities for them when their work proves harmful to the health of local ecologies
7. Reduce the consumption of gold, including by restricting the use of gold in church settings, to eliminate harmful chemical inputs – such as cyanide from the leaching process and heavy metals from newly exposed rock surfaces – into local waters
8. Transform the chemical-intensive production of paper into manufacturing methods respectful of local ecosystems
9. Implement alternative energy modes of power generation, to reduce the amount of emissions that poison clouds and produce acid rain that pollutes waters, decimates forests, and kills aquatic life
10. Restore riparian habitat for the biotic community, and conserve and protect aquatic lives not only because of their instrumental value for humankind, but also for their intrinsic value

as children of Earth and the Creator Spirit

11. Form alliances and working groups with local, state and national environmental organizations; members of such organizations know pressing issues, and usually have the scientific knowledge, technical expertise, networking contacts, and political experience to address these issues. The union of parishioners and diocesan personnel with environmentalists—including those having no religious affiliation—can have profound impacts on environmental problems and injustices as working groups seek collaboratively to promote living water through local projects.
12. Participate actively in the struggle of racial, ethnic, poor and otherwise politically and economically oppressed people to secure healthy local economies and ecologies
13. Form or promote the formation of cooperatives of small-scale and intermediate-scale independent business and agricultural operations. Economic well-being can often be better promoted or assured through cooperatives; the latter also have more political and community clout when addressing local and regional water issues.
14. Provide alternative education and employment opportunities for working people displaced from occupations that are not environmentally sustainable Provide equivalent alternative entrepreneurial opportunities, production processes, and product alternatives for investors in and owners of environmentally harmful enterprises
15. Safeguard the integrity of “takings” laws by denying, through laws and policies, efforts to apply them to measures taken – such as promoting or conserving living water – to ensure the commons good, the common good, and common goods of creation.

The book of *Revelation* speaks of a new heaven and a new Earth. In this Earth habitat, the Tree of Life that is present in the Genesis story of Adam and Eve is reborn. It bears fruit every month to provide food, and its leaves serve as medicine. It is nourished by “the river of life-giving water,” an image recalling both the story of Eden and the later prophetic vision of Ezekiel 47. In *Revelation*, Earth transformed is a paradise for all.

The commons is sacramental, presenced by the Spirit and intended by the Spirit to be the common ground, fed by living water, from which all of the biotic community draws the common goods needed to provide for their common good. Living water is essential for life and the commons good, the common good and common goods. The new heaven and new Earth envisioned in Revelation will come when people respect their bioregion, responsibly care for it, justly distribute its common goods, see signs of the Spirit in its pristine beautiful places and its diversity of creatures, and walk with the Spirit through its forests and fields, mountains and seashores, gardens and parks. Community property, community values and community sharing there will lead to communion not only among humans, but between humans and their fellow living creatures, between this biotic community and Earth, and between all creation and the Spirit.

The present is the child of the future; the future is the child of the present. Our vision of what we would like the future to be guides our actions in the present; our actions in the present form the future that we will leave for the generations to come. Let us live as a sacramental community, responsibly caring for our Earth home, conscious of our relationship to the Spirit, to each other, to Earth, and to all life. Let us promote the commons good on Earth: as a sacramental commons in itself and in its bioregional parts. Let us provide living water for all: as a common good, and for the common good. Let us plant in our sacramental commons

the seeds of trees of life, nourished by living water, that will begin to bear good fruit for our children and for the generations to come.

*John Hart, Ph.D., Professor of Theology and Founding Director of the Environmental Studies Program at Carroll College, Montana, is the author of The Spirit of the Earth—A Theology of the Land; Ethics and Technology—Innovation and Transformation in Community Contexts; and What Are They Saying About...Environmental Theology? (Forthcoming, Paulist Press, 2004). He has lectured on issues of theology and environment in twenty-four states and six foreign nations This article is based on his keynote address at the “Water: A Sacramental Commons” workshop sponsored by NCRLC in Washington, DC, February 8, 2003.*



National Catholic Rural Life Conference  
4625 Beaver Avenue  
Des Moines, Iowa 50310-2199  
(515) 270-2634  
email address: [ncrlc@mchsi.com](mailto:ncrlc@mchsi.com)  
website: [www.ncrlc.com](http://www.ncrlc.com)

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