



Season of Creation: Week 5

WE ARE WATER:

Health and Water Security

CALLED TO LIVE FOR THE COMMON GOOD

*The earth and all that it contains are for the use of every human being and all peoples. This principle of **the universal destination of the goods** of creation confirms that people and countries, including future generations, have the right to fundamental access to those goods which are necessary for their development. Human beings, and the communities in which they live, cannot do without water since it corresponds to their primary needs and constitutes a basic condition of their existence. All depend upon the fate of water. Access to safe water and sanitation is indispensable for the life and full development of all human beings and communities in the world*
Water, an Essential Element for Life Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace

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. (LS23)

WHAT'S HAPPENING HERE?

- UK drinking water ranks amongst the safest in the world (2024)
- Public supplies complied with regulatory standards in 99.97% of tests in 2025
- The UK Public Health Water Taskforce advises the government on the public health risks associated with drinking and recreational water and options to reduce those risks.
- In 2025, Anglian Water received the fourth highest number of recommendations (59) from the Drinking Water Inspectorate

- While our water is safe (that is, it doesn't make anyone ill), it is not necessarily pure: UK water is now being tested for "forever chemicals" which persist in the environment for many years.
- Grouped together as PFAS these chemicals are found in many domestic and industrial products
- PFAS monitoring and research is being done across the water industry, including toxicity levels and the potential for longer term accumulation of some PFAS in the human body

AND FURTHER AFIELD

- 2.2 billion people are still without safely managed drinking water
- Each year diarrhoea kills around 443 832 children under 5 and an additional 50 851 children aged 5 to 9 years.
- A significant proportion of diarrhoeal disease can be prevented through safe drinking-water and adequate sanitation and hygiene.
- The 10 countries with the lowest EPI water quality scores are all located in Africa.
- Four billion people — almost two thirds of the world's population - experience severe water scarcity for at least one month each year.
- Half of the world's population could be living in areas facing water scarcity by as early as 2025.

ACTIONS WE CAN TAKE

- To avoid forever chemicals: avoid products, including cosmetics, varnishes, and household items, that have PTFE or "perfluor" in the ingredient list.
- When buying clothing, try to avoid products and fabrics with a Scotchguard or Goretex coating
- Avoiding buying items with PFAS, such as coated dental floss, non-stick foil
- Don't replace old non-stick pans with more of the same; get cast-iron or stainless steel, which are free of PFAS
- Extra-careful disposal of packaging and waste to avoid PFAS entering the water system



THE UNIVERSAL DESTINATION OF GOODS: FOR EACH AND ALL



It was only in 2010 that the United Nations General Assembly explicitly recognized the human right to water and sanitation, affirming that clean drinking water and sanitation are essential to the realization of all human rights. The resolution calls upon states and international organizations to provide financial resources, build capacity and transfer technology, particularly to developing countries, to scale up efforts to provide safe, clean, accessible, and affordable drinking water and sanitation. Since 2015, the General Assembly and the Human Rights Council have recognized both the right to safe drinking water and the right to sanitation as closely related but distinct human rights. International human rights law obliges States to work towards achieving universal access to water and sanitation for all, without any discrimination, while prioritizing those most in need.

The most important problem was that most sewer lines became clogged because of a lack of water. To solve this, I suggested a small septic tank with each toilet, so that only liquid would go into the system. The minimum cost of such a tank was 2,400 rupees, which Dr Khan deemed unaffordable. When I asked him what would be affordable, he replied 240 rupees. No argument could make him alter this figure. So we decided that we would work backwards and design a septic tank costing 240 rupees.

THE ORANGI PILOT PROJECT - Pakistan's low-cost sanitation programme known as the Orangi Pilot Project (OPP) has become famous worldwide for how it keeps costs down, delivers high quality sanitation and involves poor communities in upgrading their own settlements. Despite its name, the scope and impact of the Orangi Pilot Project (OPP) is much greater than that of a 'pilot project' and has expanded to many areas beyond Orangi (a municipality of Karachi). By aligning its goals with the common good, the community mobilised its skills, raised funds and enhanced its capacities to develop an affordable and functional sewer system. The OPP, a non-governmental organisation that orchestrated and expanded this project to other regions, strongly emphasises that such initiatives need to stem from a collective interest in achieving objectives.

The OPP intentionally employed technology that aligned with the existing infrastructure, and local artisans and construction workers executed the project, ensuring that local knowledge would be capable of sustaining the operational needs of the sanitation system in the future.

As we urgently needed a map of the township, UN staff suggested hiring a survey company. I proposed students of architecture and engineering, under the supervision of Parveen Rehman (who had just joined the OPP), should do this to strengthen links with the universities.

When you twin your toilet, you help support people living in poverty with sustainable access to safe water, sanitation and hygiene.

In the UK, using the loo, drinking water or washing our hands is something we don't have to think twice about. By twinning your toilet today, you help bring that same access, dignity and safety to communities around the world.

Toilet Twinning funds global WASH projects (water, sanitation and hygiene), working with local teams to transform lives through sustainable access to private toilets, safe drinking water and healthy hygiene.

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