

Water Related Spirituality for Adaptation

Good morning from New York. I am very grateful for this invitation to speak on the panel. My name is Marvie L. Misolas, a Maryknoll Sister, currently serves as the congregation's NGO representative to our UN advocacy and maintains engagement as an accredited NGO to the Economic and Social Council.

Spirituality has three important aspects: Relationships, values and life purpose. Adaptation has to do with change or the process of change by which an organism or species becomes better suited to its environment. We are reflecting in the context of water and climate change.

To understand these three aspects together - I recall a Native American proverb, "*The frog does not drink up the pond in which it lives.*" Water and climate - two of the Earth's spheres. The hydrosphere and atmosphere are in constant interaction with the other two: lithosphere and biosphere. A form of symbiotic relationships that has a purpose - to maintain life. Water and climate have their own integrity as part of Earth's systems that maintain life.

I would like to share my STORY in relation to our topic: Water Related Spirituality for Adaptation

In 1968, my family migrated internally from the southern part of the island of Luzon, Philippines to the newly sprawling river town of Marikina. The local people speak Tagalog **dialect** - from the word - "*taga-ilog*" which means inhabitants of the river/by the river. The Marikina River winds along eastern Metro Manila, Philippines. It is the largest tributary of Pasig River with headwaters located in the Sierra Madre Mountains of Rizal province.

Marikina River was an important commerce and transport route used by Chinese and Arab traders before and during the Spanish colonial era. The Jesuits landed on its shores and established their mission territory in Jesus de la Pena, one of the villages. The fluvial towns of Marikina river was the food plain because of its rich soils. Other forms of inland transport eventually took over river transport which resulted in the lack of river transport traffic and the deforestation of the upland areas to give way to peoples housing affected what is now the *Upper Marikina River Basin Protected Landscape* contributed to the river's siltation. Factories mushroomed along the banks. Lack of local

environmental laws and ordinances to oversee these early developments polluted the Marikina river.

On September 26, 2009, Typhoon Ketsana (local name Ondoy) dumped 258.6 mm of rain in Manila and Metro Manila. Within a matter of hours, Ketsana submerged most parts of Metro Manila and neighboring cities causing \$1.15 billion in damages and 921 fatalities. The river, which was once teeming with life and supported life to these communities, became a deadly tributary, causing loss of lives and suffering and displacement to millions of inhabitants of Marikina and nearby towns. Typhoons in the category of Ketsana are increasing in frequency. In the Philippines, 2009 was one the deadliest years in the history of disasters. With the rise of temperature because of global warming, frequency in super typhoons and category 5 hurricanes will continue to bring harm and destruction as we are experiencing now and into the future, as we have seen in the aftermath of Typhoon Haiyan in 2013. People cannot keep up with disasters. Filipinos are tired of disasters. Filipinos are busy surviving from one calamity to another. Climate adaptation has its limit. Those who are responsible for greenhouse gas emissions and inept governments must stop playing up 'resilience'.

What does it mean, when we say, "*water related spirituality of adaptation*"? We cannot speak of 'spirituality of adaptation' without understanding and talking about - water justice, Earth justice and climate justice. We must evoke the power of righting relationships.

Righting relationships. With this - I would like to suggest that we refer to THOMAS BERRY'S TEN PRINCIPLES OF JURISPRUDENCE

I will only focus on Principle #5

Ten Principles of Jurisprudence

1. Rights originate where existence originates. That which determines existence determines rights.
2. Since it has no further context of existence in the phenomenal order, the universe is self-referent in its being and self-normative in its activities. It is also the primary referent in the being and the activities of all derivative modes of being.
3. The universe is composed of subjects to be communed with, not objects to be used. As a subject, each component of the universe is capable of having rights.
4. The natural world on the planet Earth gets its rights from the same source that humans get their rights: from the universe that brought them into being.
5. Every component of the Earth community has three rights: the right to be, the right to habitat, and the right to fulfil its role in the ever-renewing processes of the Earth community.

6. All rights are role-specific or species-specific, and limited. Rivers have river rights. Birds have bird rights. Insects have insect rights. Humans have human rights. Difference in rights is qualitative, not quantitative. The rights of an insect would be of no value to a tree or a fish.
7. Human rights do not cancel out the rights of other modes of being to exist in their natural state. Human property rights are not absolute. Property rights are simply a special relationship between a particular human 'owner' and a particular piece of 'property,' so that both might fulfil their roles in the great community of existence.
8. Since species exist only in the form of individuals, rights refer to individuals, not simply in a general way to species.
9. These rights as presented here are based on the intrinsic relations that the various components of Earth have to each other. The planet Earth is a single community bound together with interdependent relationships. No living being nourishes itself. Each component of the Earth community is immediately or mediately dependent on every other member of the community for the nourishment and assistance it needs for its own survival. This mutual nourishment, which includes the predator-prey relationship, is integral with the role that each component of the Earth has within the comprehensive community of existence.
10. In a special manner, humans have not only a need for but also a right of access to the natural world to provide for the physical needs of humans and the wonder needed by human intelligence, the beauty needed by human imagination, and the intimacy needed by human emotions for personal fulfillment.

Thomas Berry expressed the above principles in terms of rights that he believed must be recognized in national constitutions and courts of law.

Thank you.

(Source: <https://www.therightsofnature.org/thomas-berrys-ten-principles-of-jurisprudence/>)