



# Water: Sacred Gift, Sacred Trust

## A Welcoming Water Ritual

This ritual was prepared by an Ojibway woman, Sister Priscilla Solomon CSJ, for the Canadian Catholic Organization for Development and Peace and KAIROS. It incorporates aspects of the teaching on the four directions, but it does not represent a traditional Anishnaabe water ceremony. Kitchi meegwetch (thank you very much) to Sister Priscilla for her generous sharing of this ritual and many other teachings with us.

The Welcoming Water Ritual requires four participants with jugs or bowls of water, and a single bowl set up in the centre to receive the waters from each direction. One person stands in each direction and in turn each holds up a jug of water. While the person in the east holds up the water, the group prays the prayer, then the person pours the water into the large central bowl. This is repeated for each of the directions.

Finally, the leader picks up the large central bowl of water (now full) and stands beside the person who reads “The Sacred Water Pot”; then, commenting that we need to take responsibility together for water, the leader invites the reader to carry the water bowl with her and place it back in the centre.

### Introduction: One

The oceans of this precious planetary jewel we call our home are one. They greet each other in countless places, sharing their waters and releasing them. Waters once called Atlantic are sooner or later Pacific, or Arctic. Waters once swirling around our northern lands will, or have, graced the shores of India and Antarctica. The sacred gift that we call water journeys through stream and river, sky and earth to find communion with itself in other waters. In its search for union and oneness, it calls to the human community to also seek communion.

Always, water is sacred gift, with the sacred trust given to it by the Creator to bring life, healing, and transformation. These are water’s instructions from the Creator. Beautiful and powerful, ever ancient yet ever new, it relies upon us to care for and protect it, enabling it to carry out the Creator’s instructions.

### Opening Prayer: ALL

**Creator God, we give you thanks for the precious gift of water. We remember the instructions you gave to water, and we long to ensure that your sacred gift will forever bring life, healing and wholeness to all creation. Amen.**

### Welcoming the Waters

*Read each prayer together as each direction is honoured.*

I am the water that stands in **east**: the water of newness, the water of life.

Just as the morning light dispels the darkness, so also I dispel death and destruction. Where drought, flood, quake, tsunami or frost destroy, I bring new life. Green appears, hope arises, community forms.

I seek your care and protection.

I am the water that stands in the **south**: the waters of healing.

Where sickness prevails, I heal. Yes, I

carry disease, but it is not mine by nature. By my nature and my call I bring healing. My instructions are to carry nutrients and goodness for healing, but I am forced to carry contaminants, pollutants and disease.

I seek your care and protection.

I am the water that stands in the **west**: the water of transformation.

From the beginning I have used my power to transform, shaping land and shore, rock and mountain. My power brings life and death. Whether I come as vapour, mist, liquid, ice or snow I transform. But others have sought to control and use my power for their profit.

I seek your care and protection.

I am the water that stands in the **north**: the water of wholeness.

Like the blanket of snow in the north that brings all together as one, or the ocean that becomes one with the

horizon, I call all to know the oneness of life, the kinship of all creation. In the wintry cold, I am the promise of new life. I am given for the wholeness of creation, for the life of all creation. Yet there are some who take possession of me as though I belong to them alone. I seek your care and protection.

**Response: ALL**

**We remember: Water is a sacred gift that connects all life. It is a shared legacy, a public trust and a collective responsibility. We do care. We will respond.**

## Words of Life and Hope: “The Sacred Water Pot”

BY VANDANA SHIVA

“Sacred waters carry us beyond the marketplace into a world charged with myths and stories, beliefs and devotion, culture and celebration. These are the worlds that enable us to save and share water, and convert scarcity into abundance. We are all ... thirsting for waters that liberate and give us life — organically and spiritually. The struggle ... between those who nurture and those who exploit is ongoing. Each of us has a role in shaping the creation story of the future. Each of us is responsible for the kumbh — the sacred water pot.”

— Indian environmental thinker and activist Vandana Shiva, in *Water Wars: Privatization, Pollution, and Profit, Between the Lines*, Toronto, 2002

**NOTES:** Part of the response is quoted from the 2003 DEVELOPMENT AND PEACE “Life before Profit!” Declaration on Water.

**SEE ALSO:** “Water: Lifeblood of Mother Earth, Reflection 1” by Priscilla Solomon, available from CCODP ([www.devp.org](http://www.devp.org)).



*This journey with the pail of water that we carry is our way of Walking the Talk. We really don't have to say anything. Just seeing us walk is enough to make a person realize that, yes, we are carriers of the water. We are carrying the water for the generations to come. Our great grandchildren and the next generation will be able to say, yes, our grandmothers and grandfathers kept this water for us!*

— Josephine Mandamin, Anishnaabe Nation: Women Water Walkers

*Not only is there the same amount of water on the Earth today as there was at the creation of the planet, it's the same water. The next time you're walking in the rain, stop and think that some of the water falling on you ran through the blood of dinosaurs or swelled the tears of children who lived thousands of years ago.*

— Maude Barlow and Tony Clarke, YES Magazine