

Do You Know Your Watershed?

Reflection by Integral Ecology Team Member Tony Garascia

The Integral Ecology Team of the Marianist Social Justice Collaborative has been thinking and talking a lot about water — water safety, quality, and access to clean water. Just recently I listened to an episode on The Rights of Rivers hosted by [Big Picture Science](#). The episode is devoted to the question of granting legal rights to rivers just as we grant them to incorporated legal entities. It is worth a listen.

Molly Bentley, the Executive Producer, commented during the program that maybe we should list the watershed where we live in the same way we list our zip code. That got me thinking about how we Marianists often do a “land acknowledgement” where we acknowledge our indebtedness to the native tribes who for thousands of years have tended the land we now occupy. I thought to myself, “maybe we should also to a “watershed acknowledgement” where we acknowledge the watershed that not only drains the lands we occupy but which also supplies us with life giving water.

Another insightful comment during the program is that we carry in our body's rivers of water. I grew up being taught that we carried in our bodies the same composition of the sea— that composition of our blood resembles that of the oceans in terms of mineral and salt content. The program made me realize how much our bodies resemble the watersheds that sustain us. From our “blood streams” to the glymphatic and lymphatic systems in our bodies that help flush out toxins in our brain-bodies, we seem to mimic the earth’s own natural rhythms of hydration and flowing and living waters.

So, if you get a chance use a search engine to find the watershed that sustain your community. I put in my zip code and found not only my local sub watershed (Bowman Creek), but my regional (St. Joseph River watershed) and the Major Drainage Basin of Lake Michigan.

As Marianists one of our icons is that of Mary at the Foot of the Cross. In John 19:34 the Centurion pierced Jesus in his side when he died and out flowed “blood and water” — which for the Church became a sign of re birth through the waters of baptism. For the Church water became a principal sacramental symbol.

But there is more to this symbol of blood and water. Jesus’ own “water and bloodshed” first encountered the earth which received life giving water and blood. Mary and John were there to witness the renewal of creation and the regeneration of earth air, water and all living creatures touched by the gift of Jesus.

In our present day we assume water will always be there for us, yet we know that this life-giving reality cannot be taken for granted. Because of the call to Integral Ecology of Popes Francis and Leo, we are called through our Baptism in “blood and water” to continue to care for the earth and all living creatures.