



The Spirit Moving over the Great Deep

The World's Thirsts, Our Response

Religious Formation Conference
ForMission
June 13, 2016

A woman with dark hair, wearing a white, flowing dress, is shown in profile, looking towards the right. She is holding a glowing, blue and white Earth with her hands. The background is a vibrant, swirling cosmic scene with purple, blue, and pink hues, featuring stars and nebulae. The overall mood is ethereal and spiritual.

**Spirit, Spirit of gentleness
Blow through the wilderness,
Calling and free**

**Spirit, Spirit of restlessness,
Stir [us] from placidness,
Wind, wind on the sea**



You moved on the waters, you called to the deep
Then you coaxed up the mountains from the valleys of sleep
And over the aeons you called to each thing
Wake up from your slumber and rise on your wings

A wide-angle photograph of a desert landscape. In the foreground, a sand dune is covered in intricate, wavy patterns of sand, likely created by wind. The dune slopes down towards the left. In the middle ground, there are more sand dunes and some sparse, low-lying desert vegetation. In the background, a range of rugged mountains stretches across the horizon under a clear, bright blue sky. The lighting suggests it's either early morning or late afternoon, with long shadows and warm tones.

You swept through the desert, you stung with the sand
And you goaded your people with a law and a land
And when they were blinded with idols and lies
Then you spoke through your prophets to open their eyes

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**You sang in a stable, you cried on a hill
Then you whispered in silence when the whole world was still
And down in the city, you called once again,
When you blew through your people on the rush of the wind**





You call from tomorrow; you break ancient schemes
From the bondage of sorrow the captives dream dreams
Our women see visions, our men clear their eyes
With bold new decisions your people arise

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My second reflection this morning ...

- Is about the Holy Spirit
- That Spirit of gentleness and restlessness who moves over the waters of the Great Deep
- Stirring up the thirsts of the world
- And calling us to join her as Christians and religious
- To help the world recognize and slake those thirsts as transforming disciples



Four Parts:



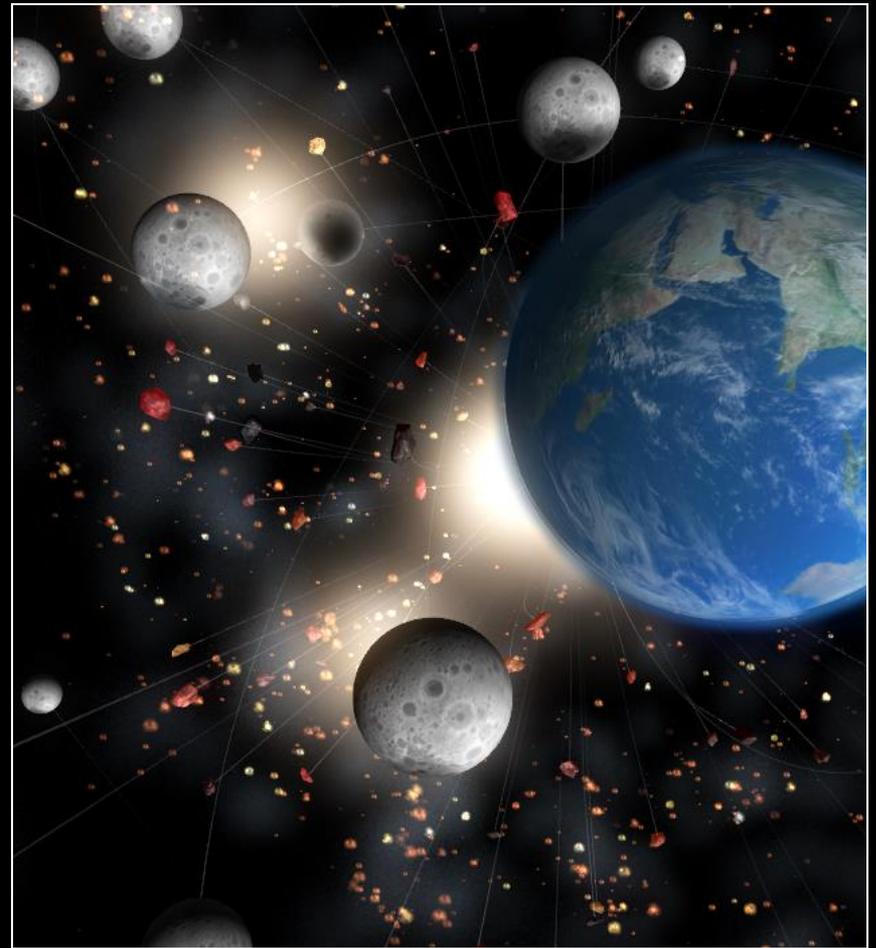
1. Reflect on the Holy Spirit, who stirs up those thirsts
2. Reflect briefly on several of those thirsts
3. Reflect on how the Spirit calls Christians to join her in helping recognize and slake those thirsts
4. Reflect on our role as religious in this

The Thirst-giving Spirit



We live in a world of grace.

- From the very first moment of creation—the Big Bang—grace has been present...
- ...through the inspiring, cajoling, persuading power of the Spirit
- Coaxing “up the mountains from the valleys of sleep”
- Calling each thing “to wake from your slumber and rise on your wings”
- “The Spirit...is intimately present at the very heart of the universe, inspiring and bringing new pathways” (LS)





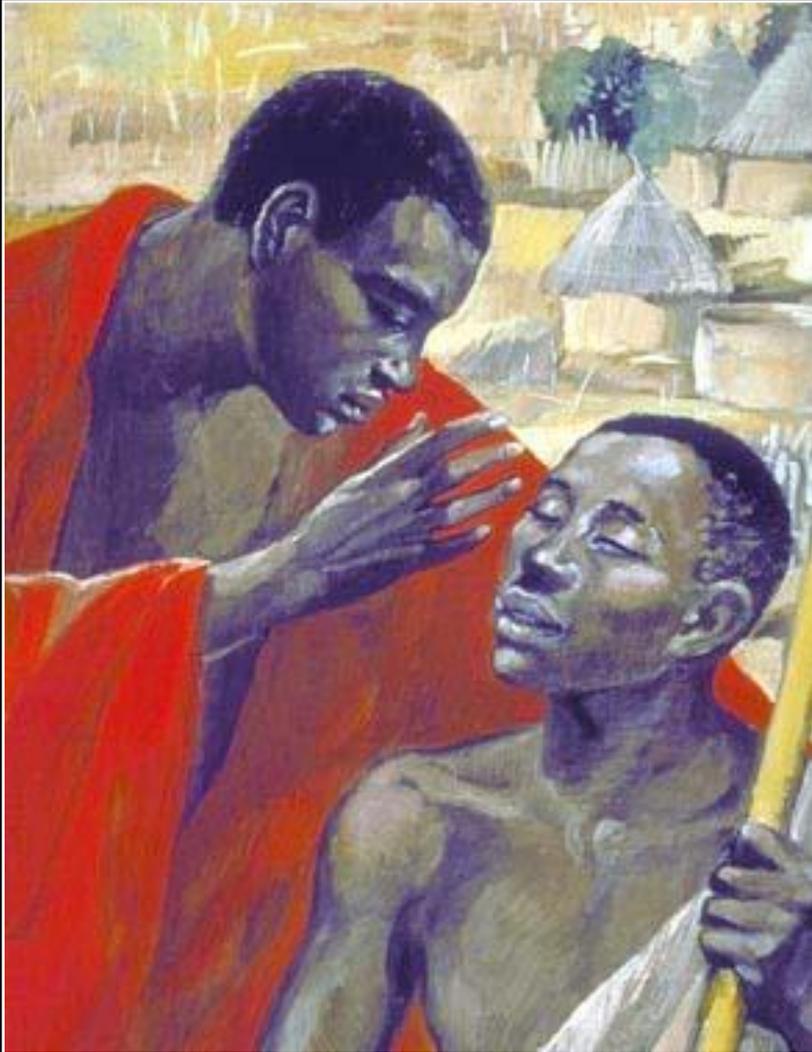
in the whole of history

Actively present,
however, not as a
monarch, but as a
lover (E. Johnson)

“...the Spirit, more mobile than any motion, blows throughout the world with compassionate love that grants nature its own creativity and humans their own freedom, all the while companionship through the terror of history toward a new future”

To the gropings of human beings toward the transcendent

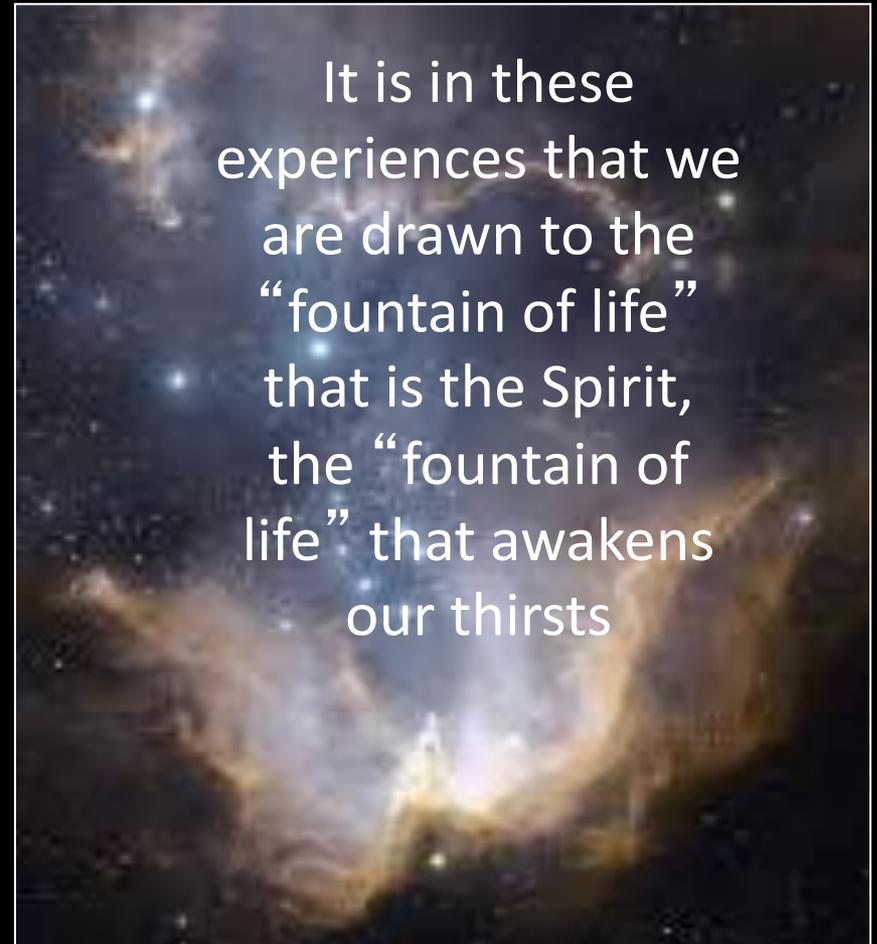
The Spirit was fully present in Jesus of Nazareth



- Kathryn Tanner: “the key to to how the Spirit works”
- From moment of Baptism— Spirit poured out like oil to bring good news to the poor...
- Mark Oakley: “God’s body language”
- *Spirit’s* body language!
- Poured out on Jesus’ disciples “on the rush of the wind”

That same active, cajoling, persuading, healing presence at the first moment of creation

- Is with us now
- “wherever we encounter the world and ourselves as held by, open to, gifted by, mourning the absence of, or yearning for something ineffably more than immediately appears...there the experience of the Spirit transpires” (Johnson)



It is in these experiences that we are drawn to the “fountain of life” that is the Spirit, the “fountain of life” that awakens our thirsts

Mary Oliver



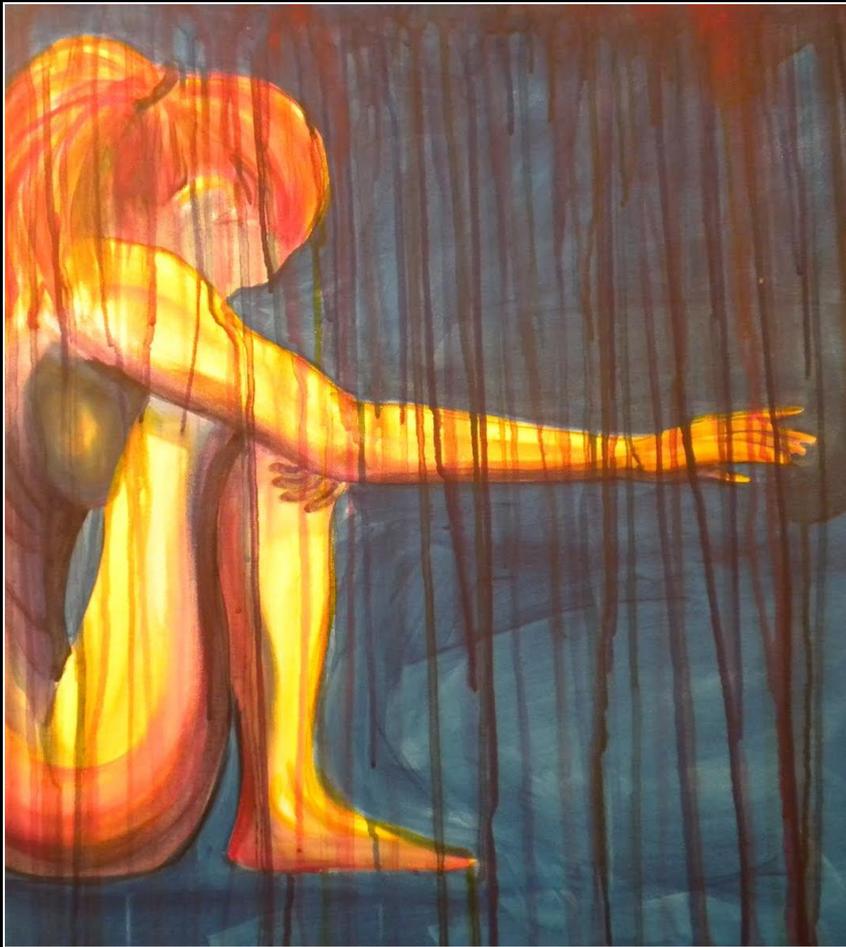
Another morning and I
wake with thirst
for the goodness I do
not have. I walk
out to the pond and all
the way God has

given us such beautiful
lessons. Oh Lord,
I was never a quick
scholar but sulked
and hunched over my
books past the
hour and bell; grant
me in your

Mercy, a little more time. Love for the earth and love for you are having such a long conversation in my heart. Who knows what will finally happen or where I will be sent, yet already I have given a great many things away, expecting to be told to pack nothing, except the prayers which, with this thirst, I am slowly learning



This thirst is grace.



- It is the evidence of that “yearning for something more” that is the sign of the presence of God’s Spirit
- Rahner: “supernatural existential” —that longing for mystery “naturally” ours by grace

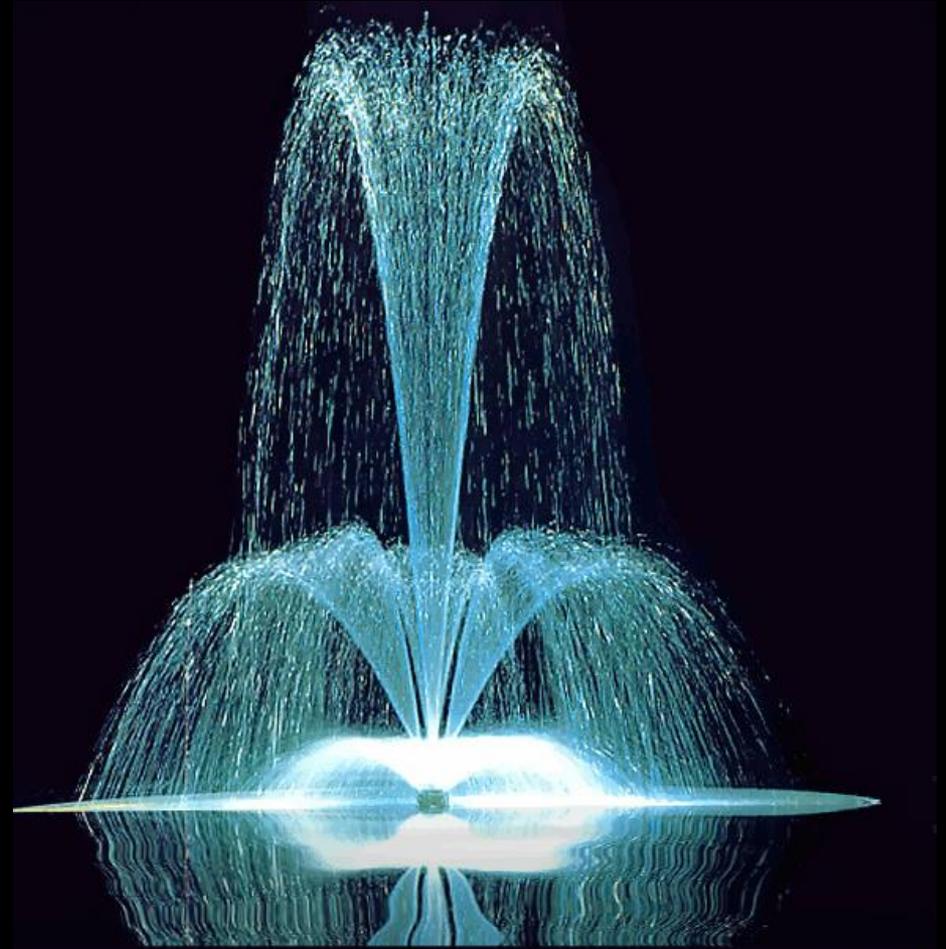
Spirit: Comforter and Disturber

- Mark Oakley:
- “It is the same God who instills peace and energy who also instills from time to time a sense of loss and the consequent renewed desire to see [God’ s] face, even in the deepest shadows. Graceful irritants are placed in the soul in order to nurture its growth”



We live in a world of grace!

- A world graced with deep thirsts
- That only the Spirit, the “fountain of life”
- Or the Christ, the “living water” who gives the Spirit
- Can help us recognize and quench



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The Thirsts of the World

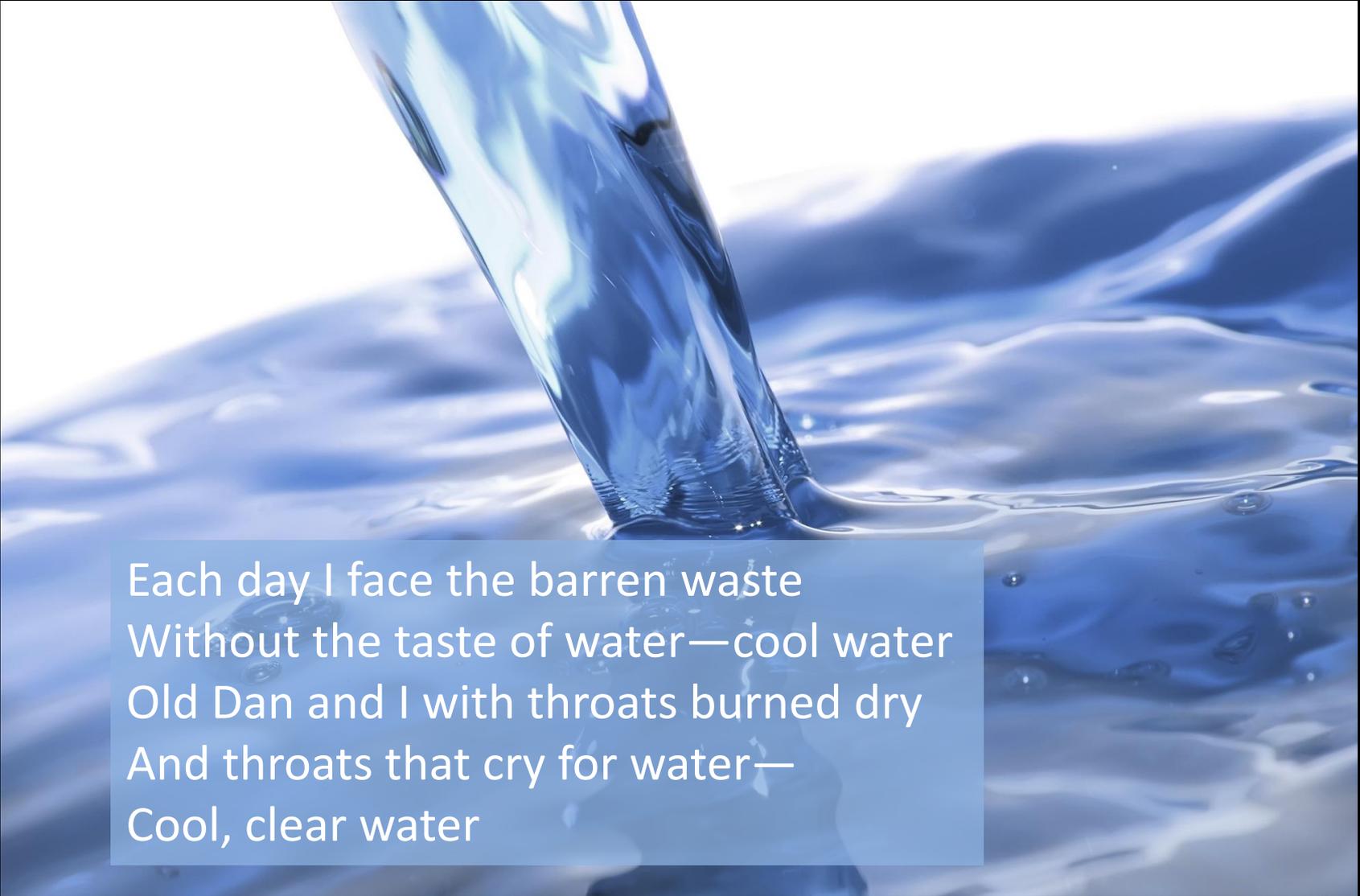


What are the thirsts that the Holy Spirit gives to the world through grace?



- There are many
- We can only reflect on a few this morning
- I'd like to propose four thirsts—reflect on them briefly
- Thirst for water of integrity
- Thirst for the wine of hope
- Thirst for the nectar of justice
- Thirst for the elixir of beauty

The Water of Integrity



Each day I face the barren waste
Without the taste of water—cool water
Old Dan and I with throats burned dry
And throats that cry for water—
Cool, clear water

Opening words ... “Cool Water”

- Nothing quite like cool, clear water!
- Hiking in the mountains in Austria
- Holding out a glass (!) jar under a waterfall
- Best water I'd ever tasted!



Cool, clear, plain old water!



- In a world filled with lack of integrity, inauthenticity, dishonesty
- “globalization of superficiality”!
- This is the drink that the Spirit inspires us to crave
- How much better our world would be if we had trustworthy politicians, business people, church leaders, communications media dedicated to truth!
- To offer us the water of integrity!

Instead--

- Regimes like in Syria or South Sudan
- Heads of greedy international corporations
- Prelates who prefer watered silk trains
- Pundits who twist the truth
- Apalled at New York prisons...
- Candidates' remarks about Latinos, Muslims
- Australia, Ireland, USA
- Paul VI, Francis: "thirst for authenticity," witnesses



This is why figures of transparency are so refreshing!

Malala
Yousafzai



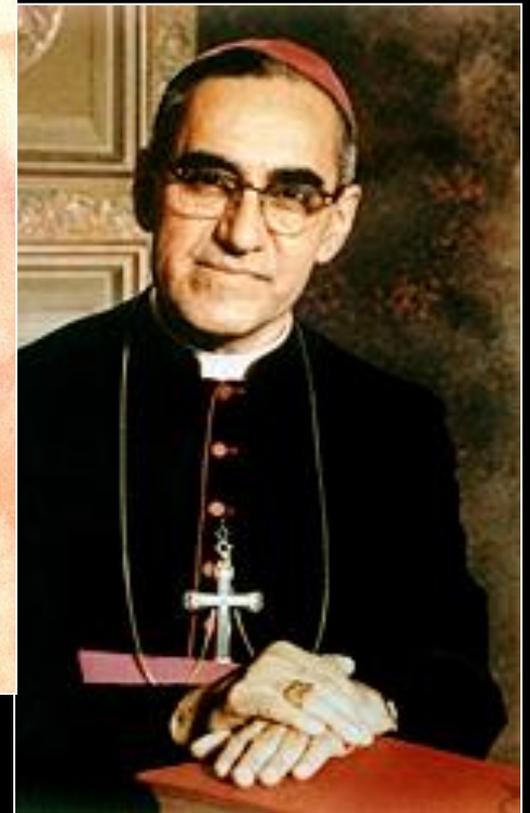
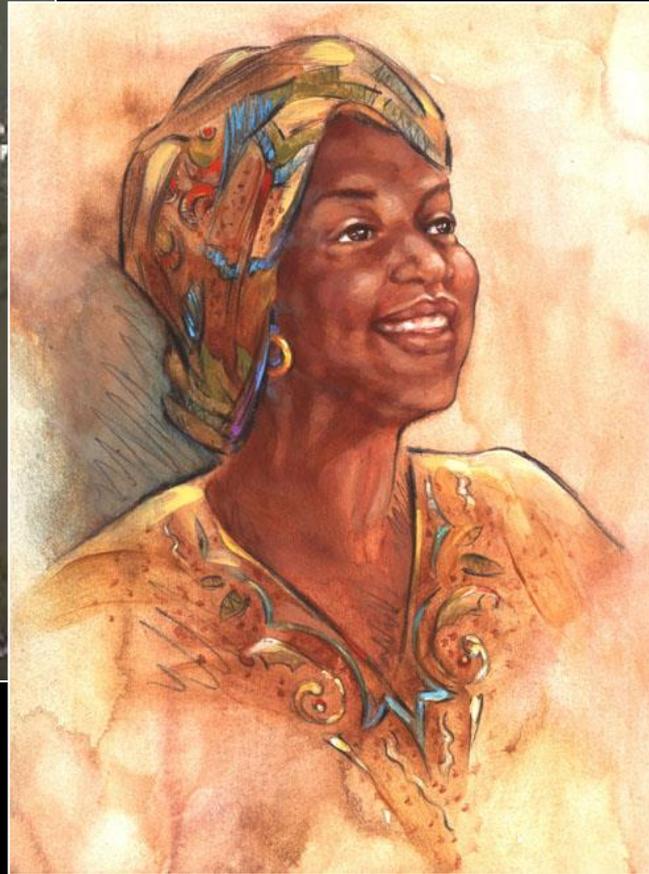
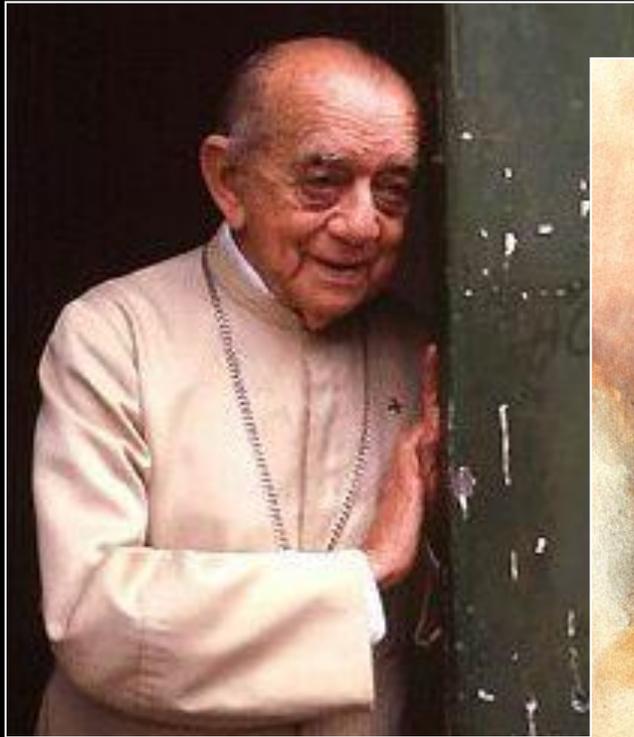
Aung
San
Suu



Nelson
Mandela



Holy People like...



Prophets like...



Church leaders like...



They offer us the
water of integrity

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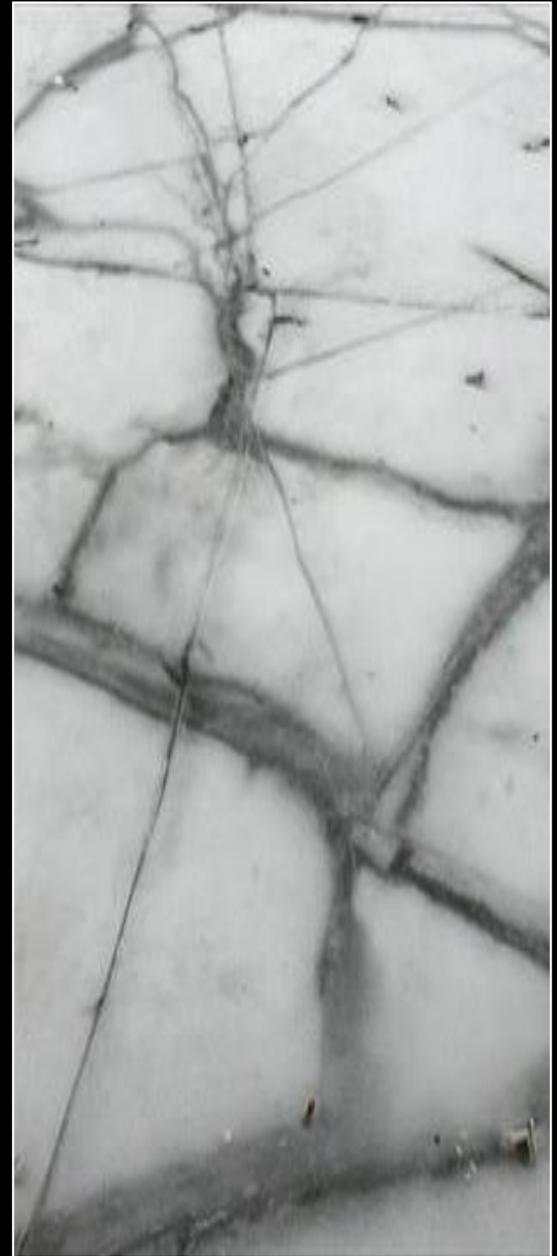
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The Wine of Hope



Those TV images from Cairo's square
A friend who waits for mortal word
Curbside-piled belongings of evictions
Spiritual biographies so vulnerable
News of trafficking for sex and sweat
Unanswered notes a puzzlement
Wayside bombs and robot drones
And—no symbol now—the waning polar ice

Holding hands, we risk our way across
To cheer and weep, protest and mourn
As, wary of each revelation of the heart
We balance on the thin tensility of hope

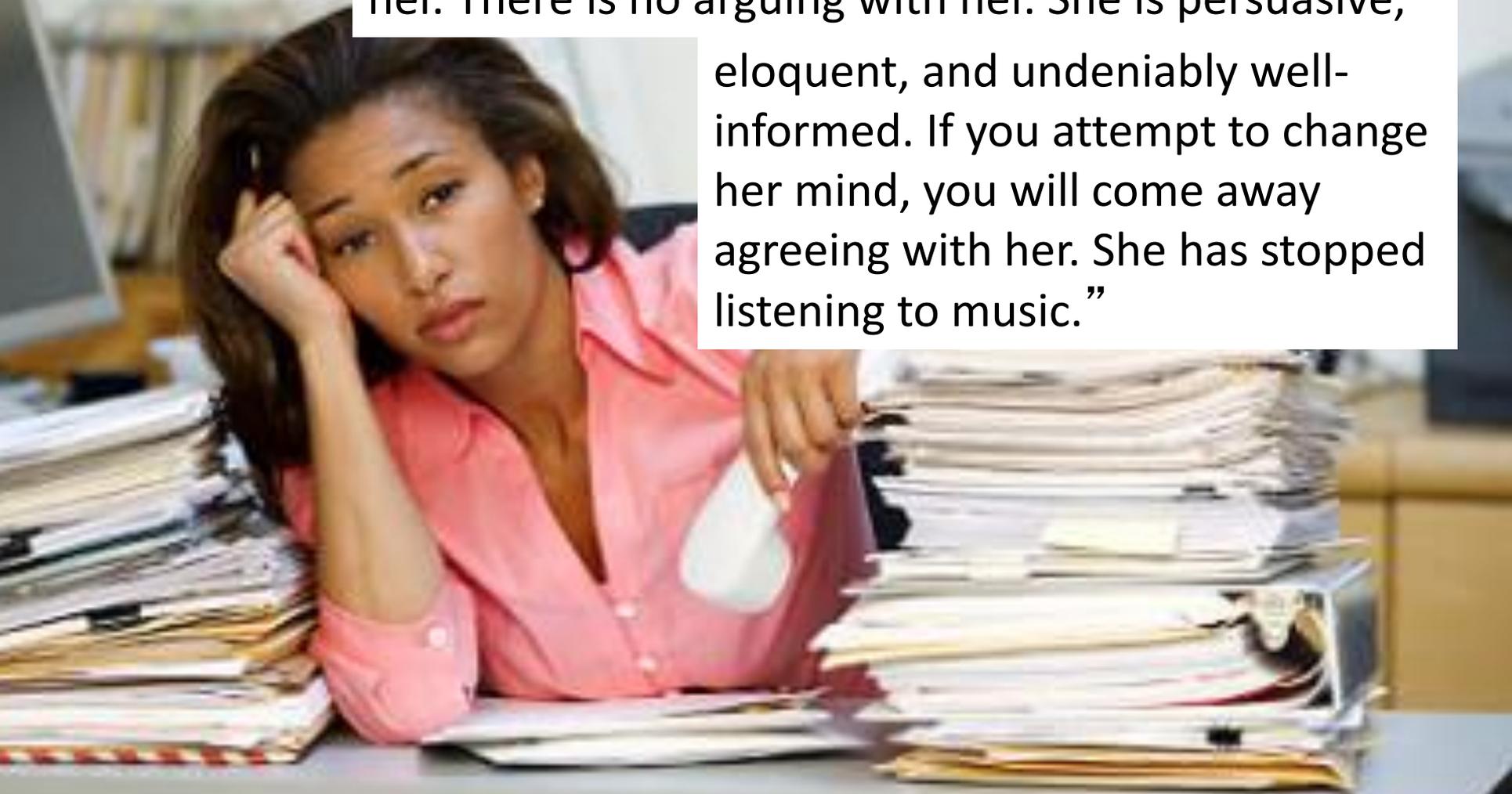


Cecily Jones' s poem ...



- Chronicles only a few of the horrors and terrors of our time
- But enough to tempt real despair!
- If we add what has been going on in the church—especially its treatment of women religious—even darker!
- Barbara Blesse—like a great tsunami!

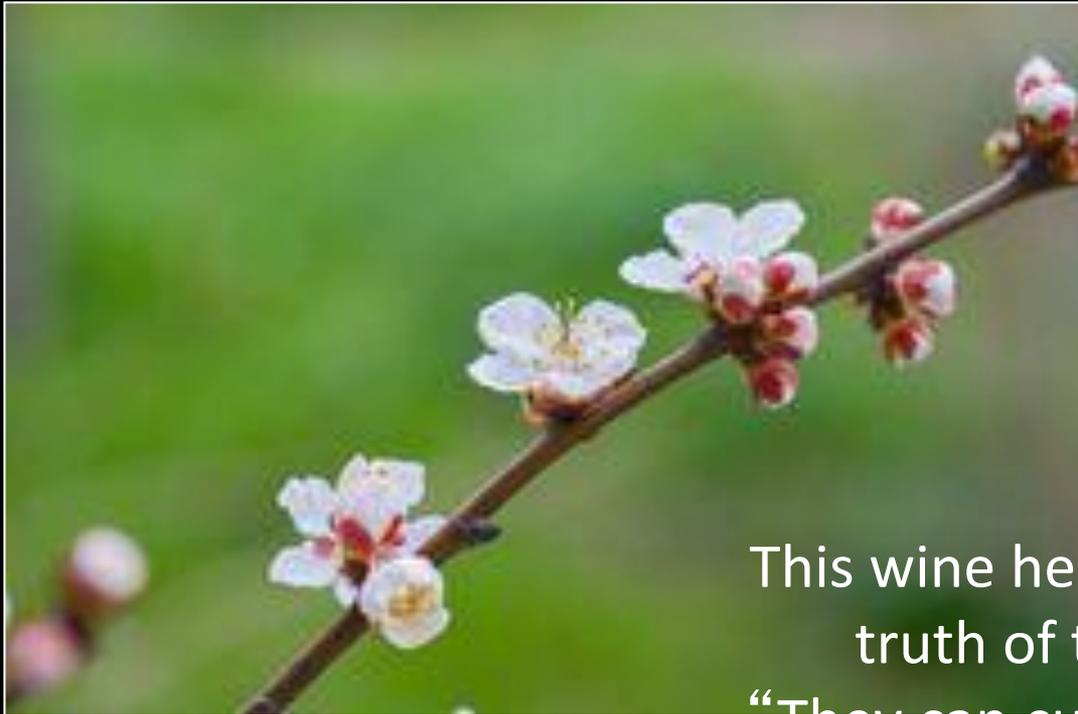
Despair, writes Ruth Gendler, “is overworked and overwhelmed. She has a heart condition. She is not lying or exaggerating. Still, it is difficult to be around her. There is no arguing with her. She is persuasive, eloquent, and undeniably well-informed. If you attempt to change her mind, you will come away agreeing with her. She has stopped listening to music.”



She has also probably stopped drinking wine!

- But in the midst of despair, over the thin ice that Cecily Jones writes of
- The Spirit is moving over the Great Deep
- Offering the wine of hope to awaken and quench our thirst
- This is the wine that calms our nerves, and gives us “anger and courage”
- To stand on the “thin tensility of hope”





This wine helps us recognize the truth of the Mayan text:
“They can cut all the flowers but they cannot hold back the spring”

Dangerous!

- We can become tipsy with hope's counterfeit optimism

- Hope de

- And ang

- Has a “thin

- “You will need a sturdy heart / a torch to fire the gloom / as the way plunges deeper” (Regina Bechle)

But thirst for the wine of hope is what the Spirit offers us in this dark time of despair!



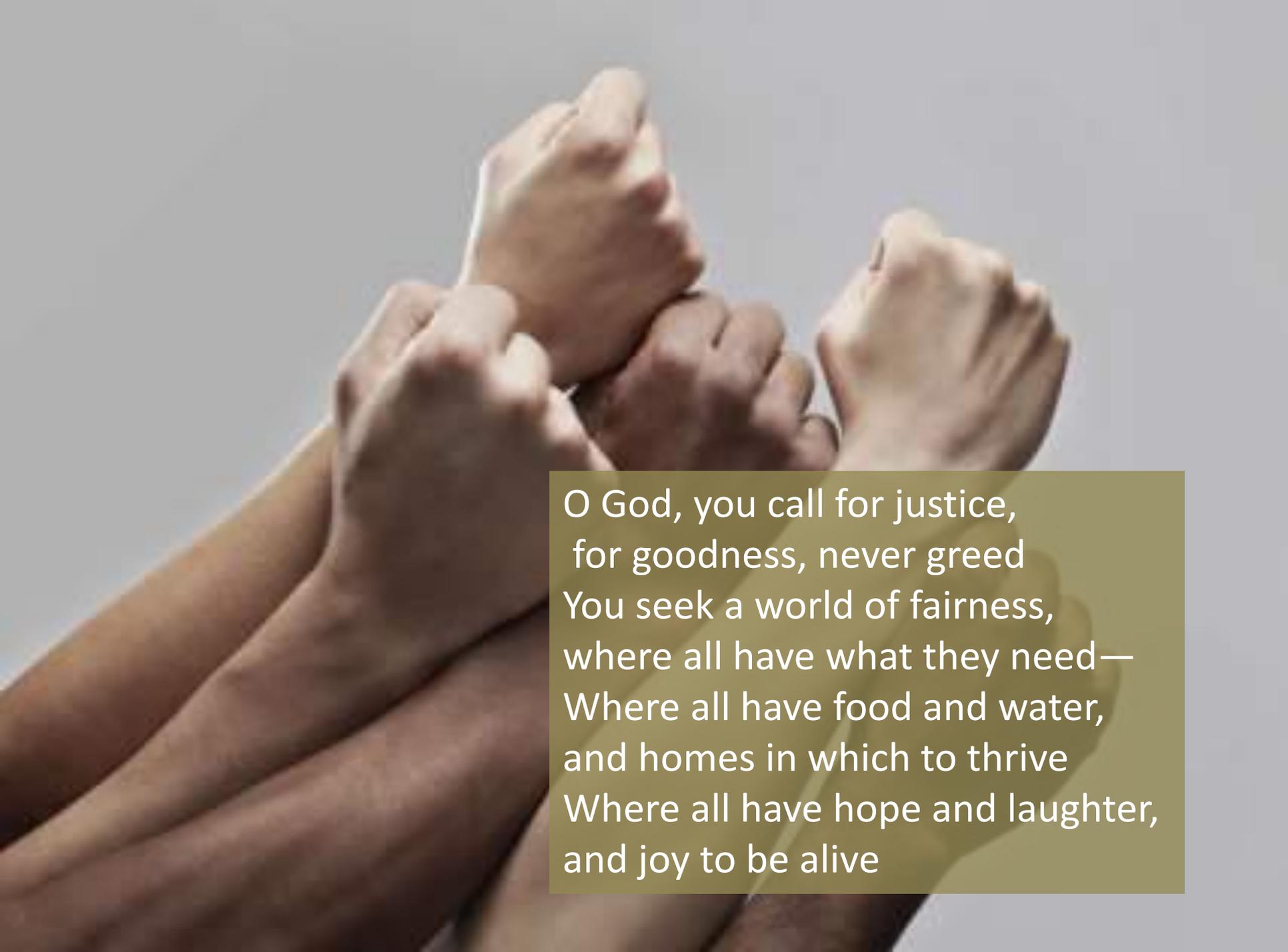
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The Nectar of Justice

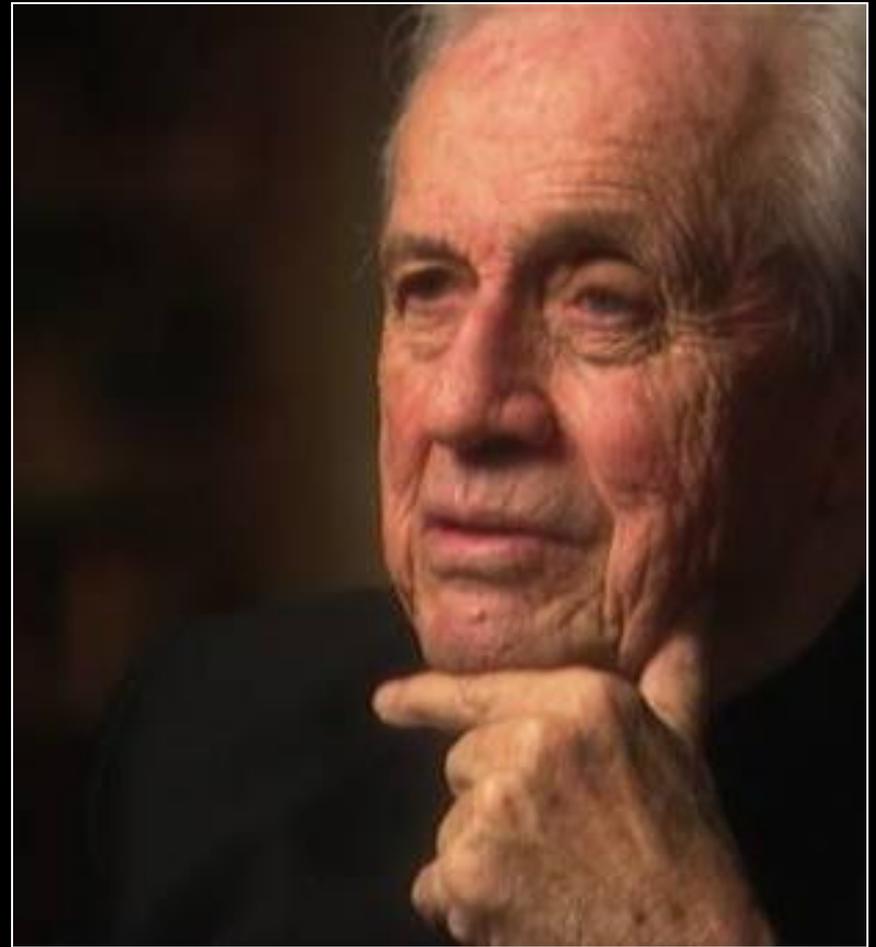




O God, you call for justice,
for goodness, never greed
You seek a world of fairness,
where all have what they need—
Where all have food and water,
and homes in which to thrive
Where all have hope and laughter,
and joy to be alive

1976—Walter Burghardt

- *Seven Hungers of the Human Family*
- Hunger for freedom and justice—certainly also a thirst
- “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for justice”
- Is there really “oppression, slavery and injustice in the world?”
- “the answer stares you in the face...”
- 40 years ago—true today as they ever were!



So much injustice in our world!



- David Moxon—29 million slaves today!
- Racism—Ferguson, Baltimore, Charleston, Chicago
- Women's rights—Mustafa Yousafzai
- Struggle for women's equality in the church
- Our Southwestern deserts; Mediterranean Sea; European borders
- Chicago—48 shootings this past Memorial Day weekend; 51 murders in January
- Orlando shooting
- Our “Common Home”!

The Holy Spirit, however, is active in this unjust world

Nectar—
the drink
of the
gods!



The thirst for the Nectar
of Justice is the thirst to
work with God's Spirit in
bringing about a world of
justice and freedom,
equality and
participation

Calling for a thirst within women and men that
can only be met by the Nectar of Justice

A thirst that recognizes...

- “God’s ways are not our ways, but they sure could be!” (Greg Boyle)
- Thirst that spurs crossing Arizona desert, and mourning for those who die
- Those who protest at Fort Benning, GA
- Annual conferences of Call to Action
- Martin Luther King, Dorothy Day

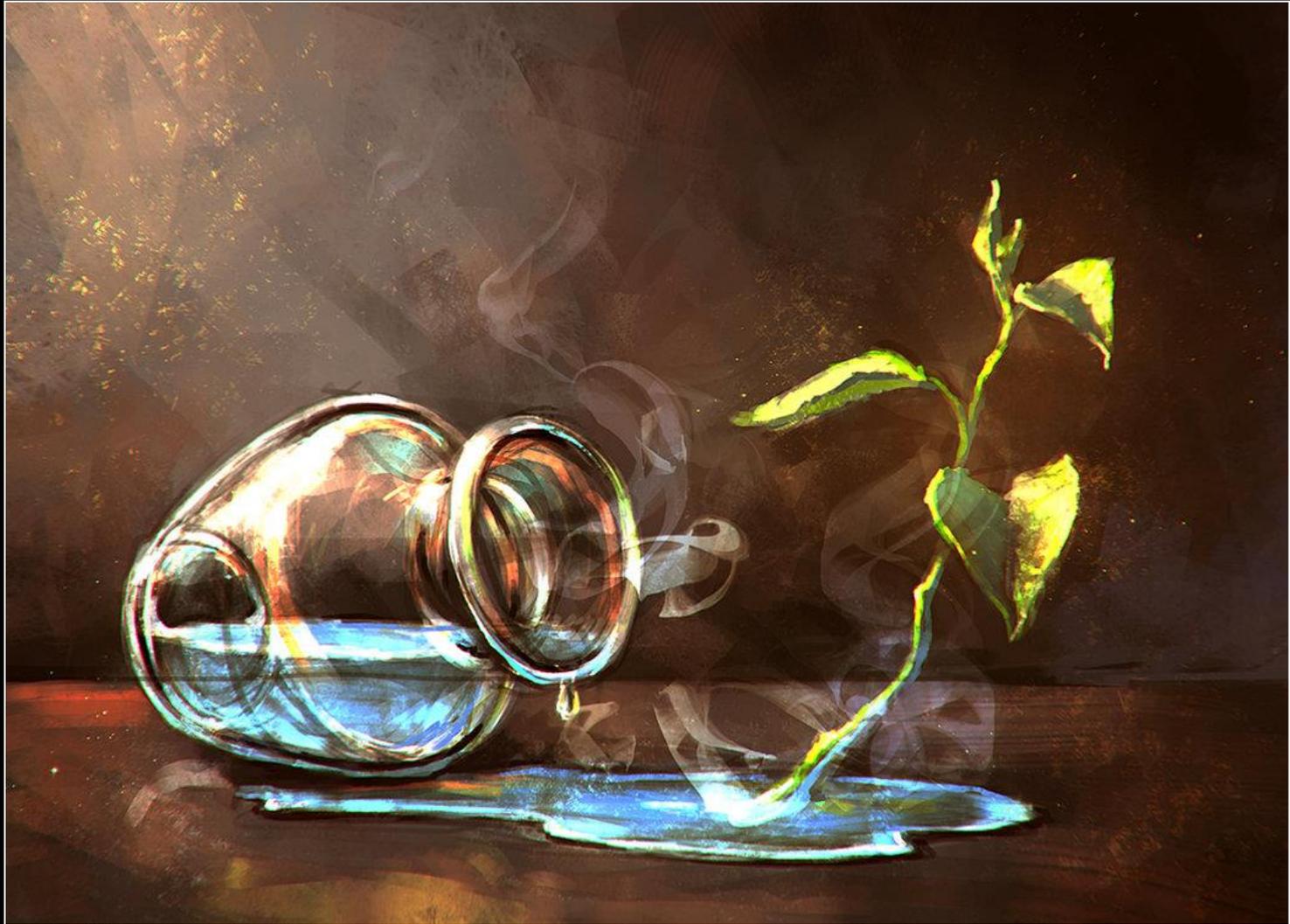


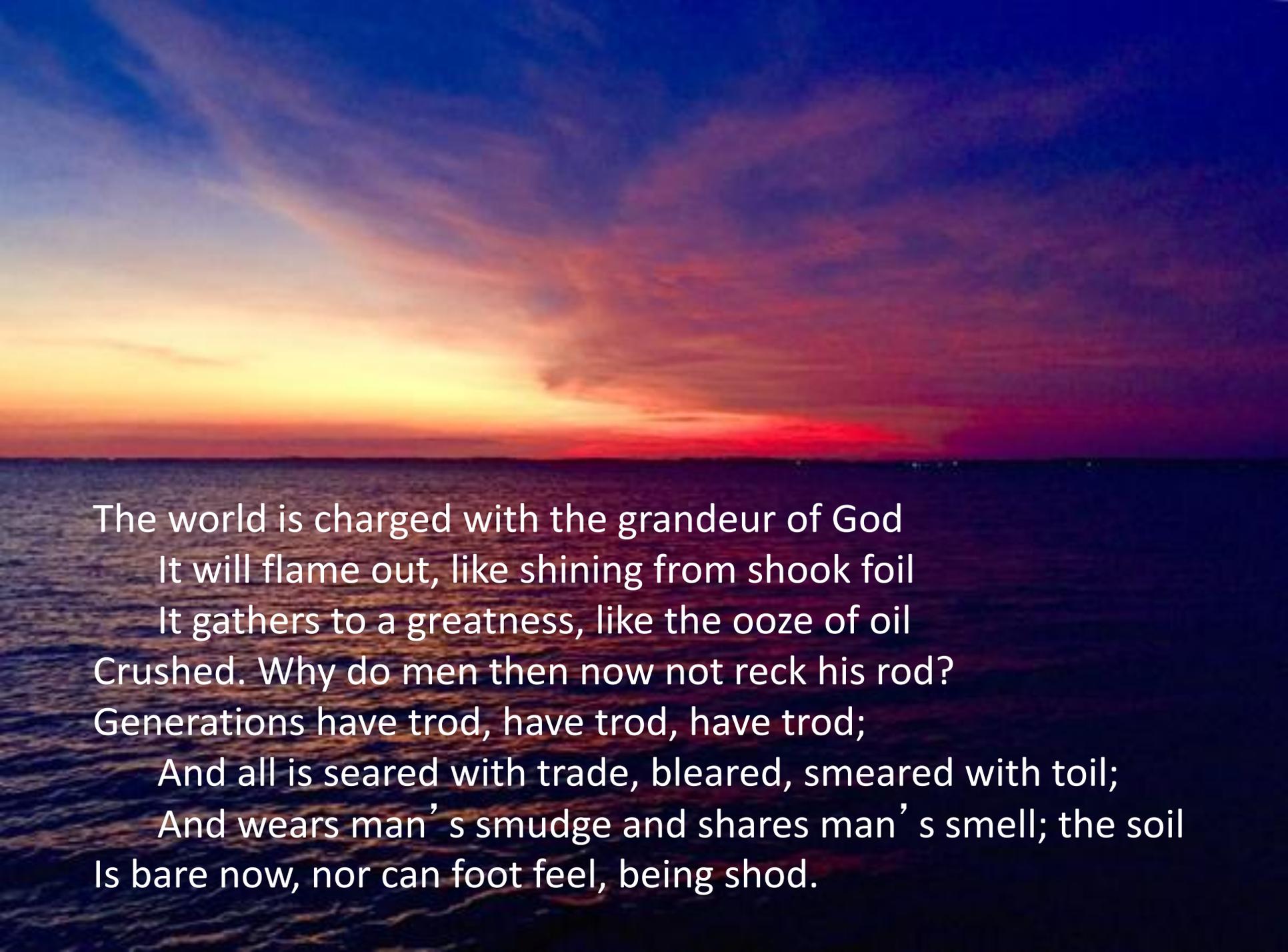
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The Elixir of Beauty



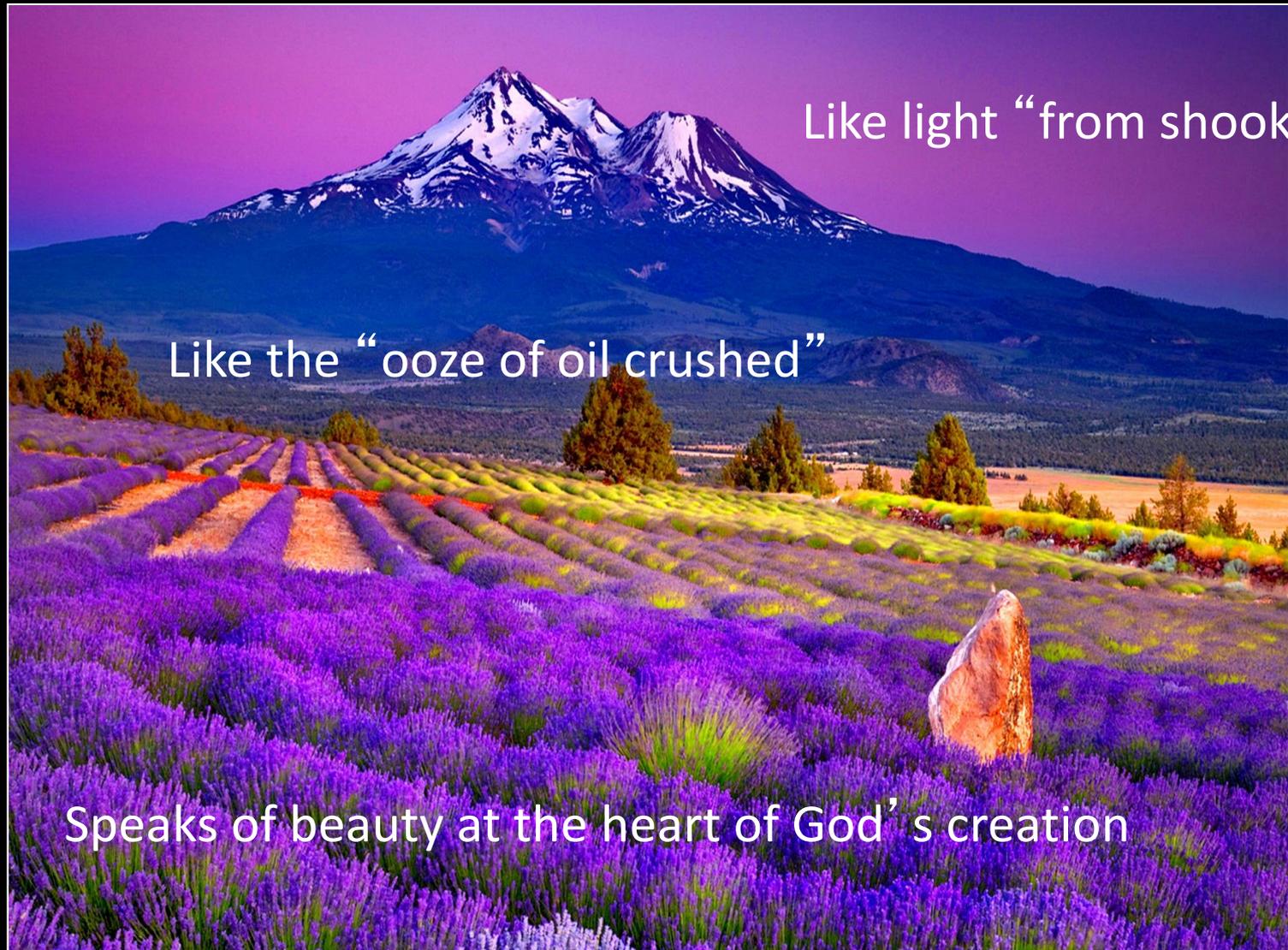


The world is charged with the grandeur of God
It will flame out, like shining from shook foil
It gathers to a greatness, like the ooze of oil
Crushed. Why do men then now not reckon his rod?
Generations have trod, have trod, have trod;
And all is seared with trade, bleared, smeared with toil;
And wears man's smudge and shares man's smell; the soil
Is bare now, nor can foot feel, being shod.



And for all this nature is never spent
 There lives the dearest freshness deep down things
And though the lights off the black West went
 Oh, morning, at the brown brink eastward springs—
Because the Holy Ghost over the bent
 World broods with warm breast and with ah! bright wings

Gerard Manley Hopkins' s famous poem



Like light “from shook foil”

Like the “ooze of oil crushed”

Speaks of beauty at the heart of God' s creation

But human beings have not respected this beauty

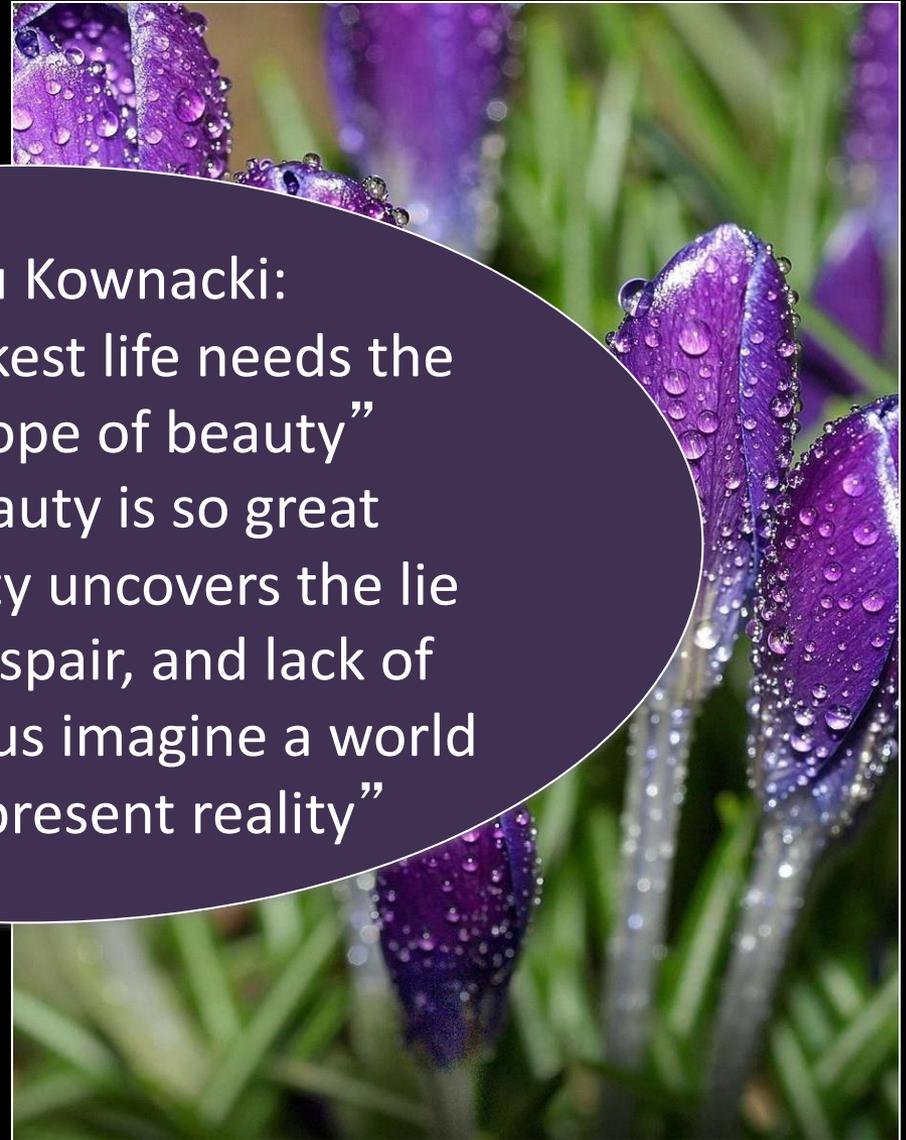
All is seared, bleared, smeared,
and smudged with humanity's
smell



Pope Francis: “the earth, our home, is beginning to look like a great
pile of filth”

And yet...

- Beauty is never extinguished, nature is never spent
- “there lives a freshness in things because beauty is with—
- The Spirit is stirring up in souls the thirst for the delicate elixir of beauty



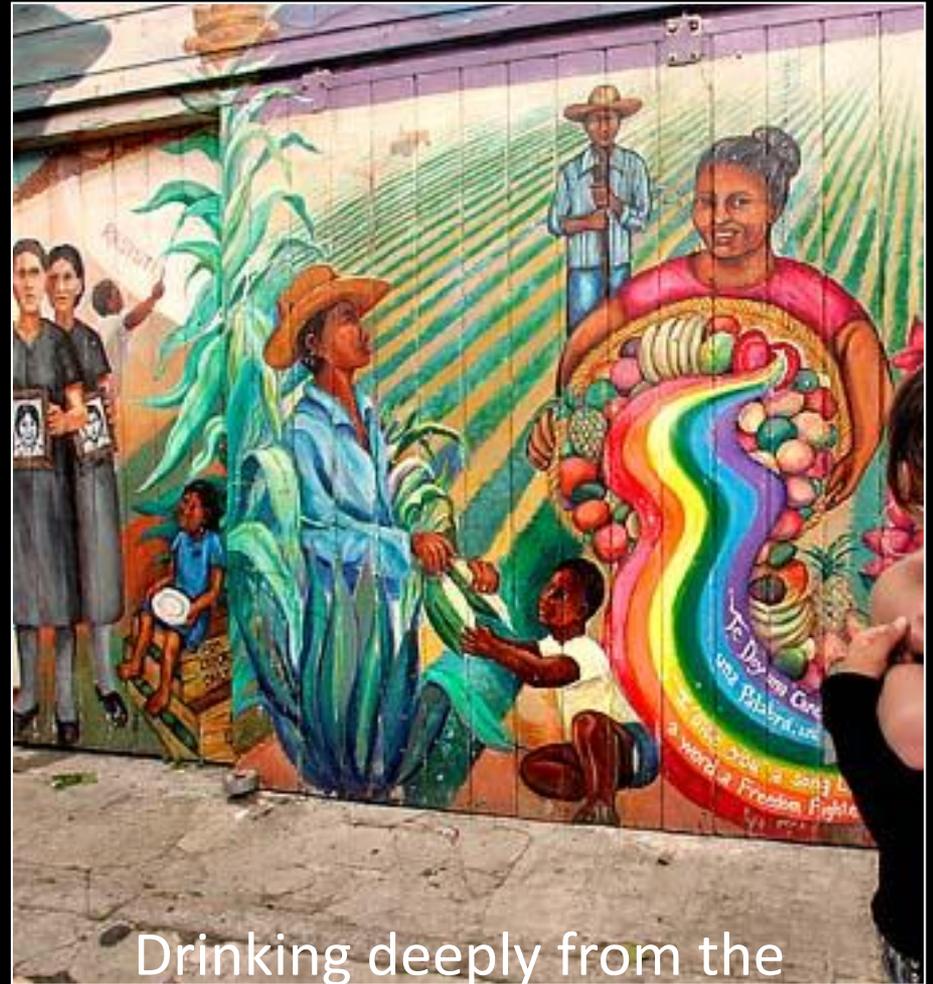
Mary Lou Kownacki:

“even the bleakest life needs the sustaining hope of beauty”

Thirst for beauty is so great because “beauty uncovers the lie of violence, despair, and lack of hope and helps us imagine a world beyond our present reality”

We see this thirst being quenched

- By the elixir of beauty in projects of public art in ghettos and slums ...
- Small oases of beauty in ghettos of ugliness
- 60 Minutes report on Dudamel and Simon Bolívar Youth Orchestra
- Mary Lou Kownacki and Erie Benedictines—Poetry Park and Art House
- “beauty in the lives of the poor is as important as bread on their tables”



Drinking deeply from the delicate elixir of beauty “will save the world”

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The Church and the Thirsts of the World



“No people are devoid of the inspiration of the Spirit”



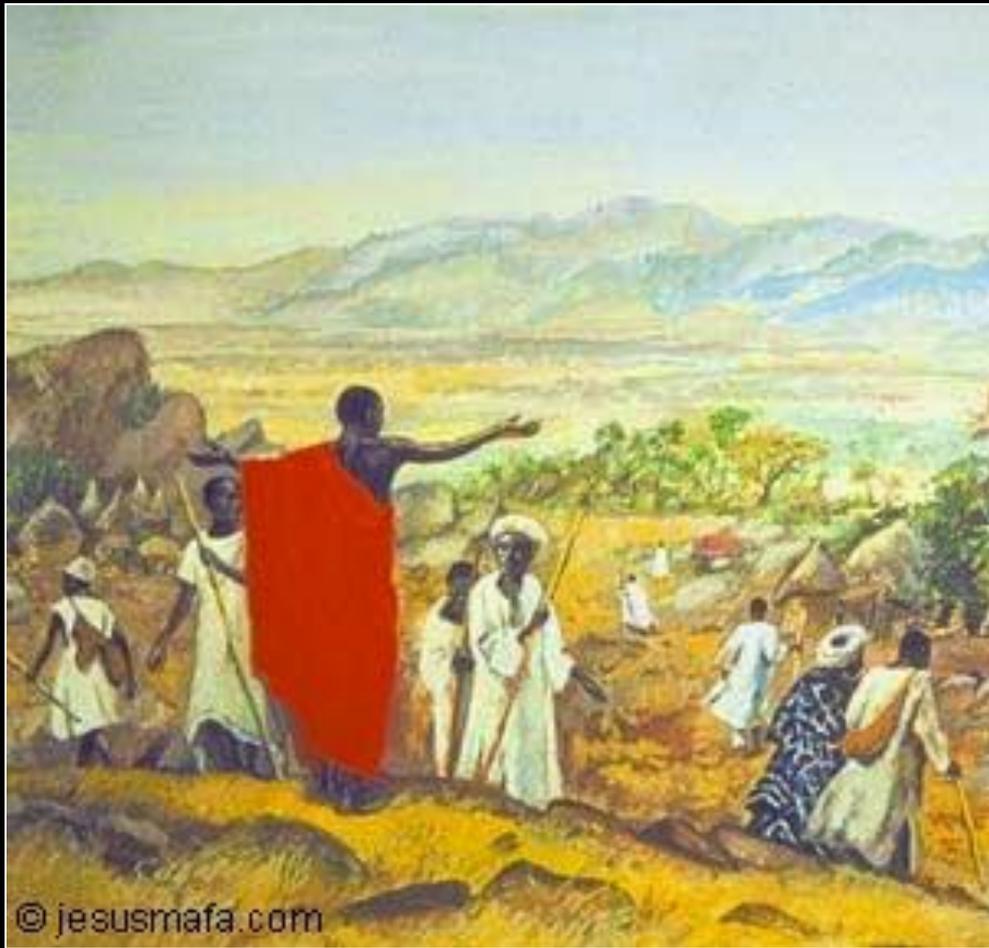
- All peoples at all times have been gifted with the thirst for
- The water of integrity
- The wine of hope
- The nectar of justice
- The elixir of beauty
- With many more thirsts...relationship, love, truth, forgiveness and mercy, peace
- GS 22: the Spirit leads all to the Paschal Mystery!

However, by God's amazing grace

- Some women and men
- Disciples of Jesus of Nazareth
- Have been anointed by the Spirit in a concrete and sacramental way
- To share and continue Jesus' mission—begun by the Spirit—
- Of calling forth and slaking the thirsts of the world



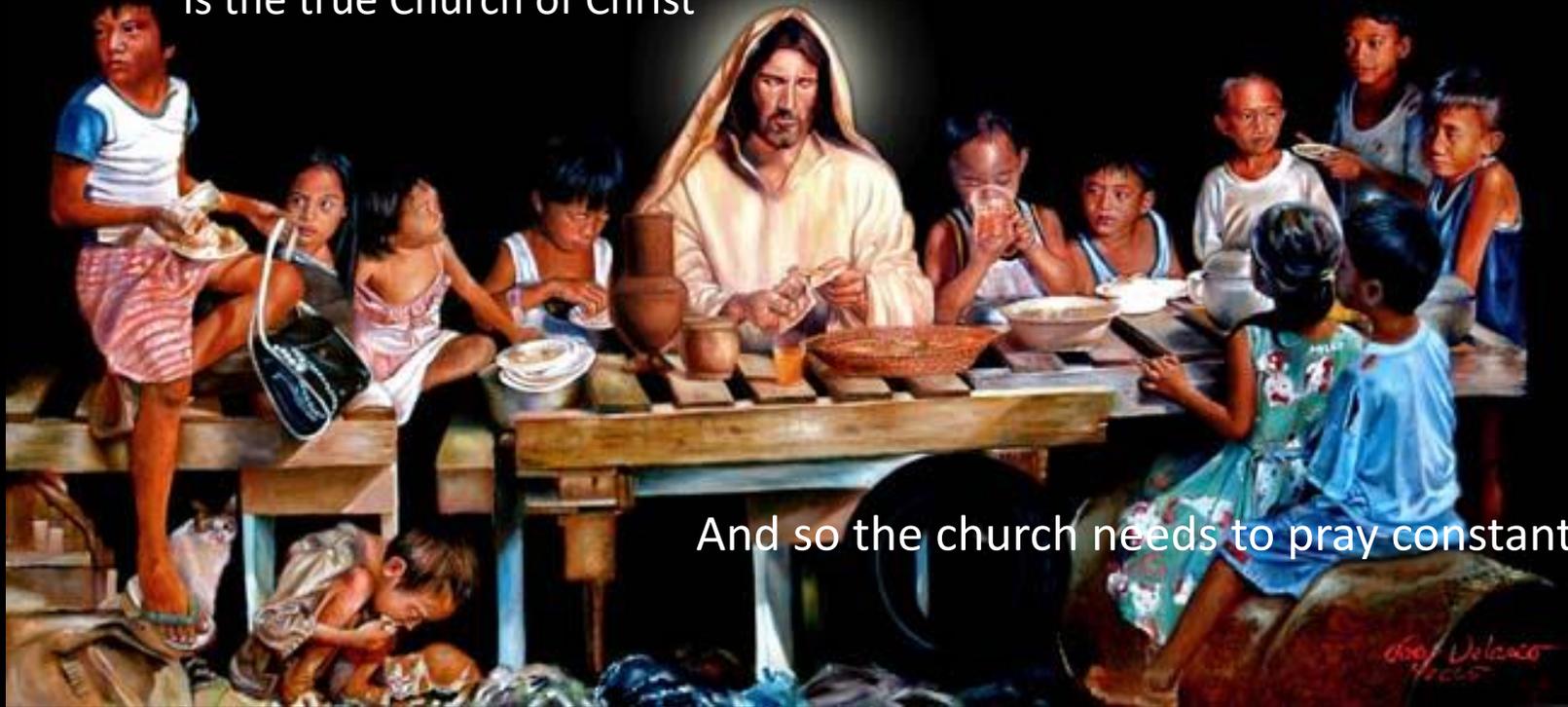
They have been gathered and sent as God's church



- God's Holy People
- The continuing presence of Christ on earth
- The Temple of the thirst-giving and thirst-quenching Spirit
- Church does not *have* a mission
- The *mission* has a church

Years ago, Korean Cardinal Stephen Kim wrote...

“only the Church which serves the cause of the poor, the suffering and oppressed Is the true Church of Christ”



And so the church needs to pray constantly:

Equally said:

The only true church of Christ is the church that strives for integrity, offers hope, practices justice, cherishes beauty

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Religious Women and Men within the Church and the Thirsts of the World



WAKE UP THE WORLD!

Within this communion-in-mission

- Women and men who live within and minister out of communities of consecrated and apostolic life
- One of main ministries: “to make interventions in the life of the church so that it will be reminded of its mission to live out the following of Christ.” (Marcia Allen)



As such, this ministry is prophetic



- A ministry “in obedience to the Holy Spirit”
- “invariably in tension with the prevailing institutional reality”
 - Prophetic ministry more than this
- Demonstrates hope, the full humanity that living the gospel opens up
- Intertwined with dialogue, cherishes every culture and people, every aspect of creation’s mystery and beauty
 - Grounded in prayer and contemplation

As religious practice this “prophetic dialogue”



- They work with the Spirit in stirring up the thirsts of the world
- And offering thirst-quenching water, wine, nectar and elixir to the entire People of God, all humanity, and all creation
- This is “ministerial religious life” “transforming discipleship”—and so they pray:

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Conclusion

*Pulsing Spirit, rippling river, source of mercy's tender might
Gentle power, humble glory, subtle, ever dancing light
Healing wisdom in us flowing, now reveal our human worth
Play beneath our muddied waters;
Come renew and quench our thirsts*

Naturally I could say much more—but let me just quote ...