

## Time for Bay to appreciate spiritual significance of water

Danie Mouton

With the combined water level of dams servicing Nelson Mandela Bay inching towards 10% fears are mounting that we may run dry before Christmas.

Let that sink in.

Water is fundamental to life. Absolutely essential. Without water all living creatures perish.

Water calls for respect. It has to be used responsibly.

Without water we face enormous difficulties and a bleak future.

Given the current levels of consumption we are out of options. We need to reduce water usage.

Therefore, the church in Nelson Mandela Bay calls on all citizens to drastically reduce our water consumption.

The remedy starts with each of us. We may use only 50 litres of water per person per day.

This is not a new message. Yet citizens remain deaf and continue to use more water per day than that we can sustainably withdraw from our dams.

The haunting questions are: Why are we so stubborn?

Why the lack of cooperation?

Why the continued high consumption?

What will it take to motivate us to be responsible use water sparingly?

As a first step we need to reconnect with the deep spiritual meaning the Bible attaches to water and to the service of others.

God created the world with an abundance of water, to feed and sustain all life.

Being the gift of the Giver, water has to be used and managed responsibly.

Jesus is the source of Living Water. He provides in our literal but also our spiritual thirst.

Water is God's precious gift to us. Let us honour God by using God's gift sparingly and wisely.

By limiting my own use of God's gift, I care for others.

The less I use, the more I enable my neighbour to enjoy the sustenance of God's living water.

Indeed, our stubborn refusal to save water displays a lack of proper spiritual motivation.

Secondly, some of us play the blame game.

We blame the municipality for water leaks and argue this exonerates us for reducing our own consumption.

Blaming others is a way to let yourself off the hook.

The good news is that the municipality is attending to water leaks.

The problem has not been solved at all, but there is noteworthy progress.

The onus is on us. We ask: will you for once, stop blaming others and play your part to reduce your consumption?

Will you encourage others to do the same?

A third reason for the lack of cooperation is apathy.

We have to deal with so many crises, e.g., Covid-19, economic hardship, violence, loss of life and the daily struggle to survive. We simply cannot muster the energy to change our water consumption habits.

Apathy blocks our ears, our antennae, to register the challenge and to act on it.

Apathy makes us blind to the reality of a dry city without water in the taps, with long lines of people in the suburbs lining up at water tankers over an extended period to get their ration of a few litres for the day.

Those of us fortunate enough to be living in the parts of the metro which have functional water systems haven't seen anything of the kind in our lifetime.

We simply cannot imagine this reality. It is too ghastly to contemplate.

We will have to own this reality while there still is time to mend our ways.

Just imagine how dry taps may feed civil unrest, and lead to an escalation in crime, insecurity and economic hardship.

It is within our reach to change this horrendous outcome.

Taking individual responsibility means that I play my part to reduce consumption irrespective of what others do.

It starts with me.

If I cut some corners and use more than my share of water, I need to realise the implication if all others do the same.

My actions, magnified by a hundred thousand times, empty the scarce resources and plunge us into the abyss.

On the other hand: my individual good example magnified in the choices of others is what will rescue us.

We are challenged to acknowledge the hard facts and to respond appropriately to them.

During a recent discussion between church leaders and the senior director of water and sanitation in NMB we became aware once again about the full extent of our current predicament.

Water from the Gariiep Dam, channelled via the Nooitgedacht scheme, cannot currently be fed effectively across the whole metropole.

Many suburbs and industrial areas will therefore run dry.

If we can stretch the available water from the western dams to reach April 2022 the crisis can be averted.

By that time, a series of linkage initiatives to transfer water across the whole metro will be completed.

Water is a sign of God's presence amongst us.

If I save water, I enable others to live, work and play. I extend God's grace to them.

Let's simply do it.

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