

THANKSGIVING  
APPEAL ENVELOPE  
INSIDE THIS ISSUE

*Dear partner in mission,*  
You walk with Scarborough missionaries as we witness to the Gospel overseas and in Canada. Please remember us with your prayers and financial support so that we may continue the vital work of mission. Thank you!



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**COVER:** Adapted from the poster for the Canadian Catholic Organization for DEVELOPMENT AND PEACE 2004 fall action campaign, *Water: Life before profit.*

## GUEST EDITORIAL



By Danny Gillis

# A most precious gift

EXAMINING THE GIFT OF WATER AND SOME OF THE WAYS THAT THIS NECESSITY OF LIFE IS UNDER THREAT TODAY

During my time as a lay missionary with Scarborough Missions I spent three very formative years in the Philippines. For much of this time, I lived among the Manobo indigenous people in the mountainous interior of the island of Bukidnon. I tried to imitate the lifestyle of these gentle people even though, in truth, I possessed great material wealth compared to them. I drove a small motorcycle; they walked everywhere. I bought my food at the market; they grew their food. I regularly visited other towns and islands; for many of the Manobo,

common bond shared by every human being and every living thing.

Like the Manobo, many indigenous peoples see water as a sacred gift of the Creator. An Indigenous Declaration on Water, endorsed at a gathering in 2001 in Penticton, British Columbia, states:

"We know that by listening to the songs of the Water, all creation will continue to breathe. Our knowledge, laws and ways of life teach us to be responsible at all times in caring for this sacred gift that connects all life. In ceremony and as time comes, the Water sings. Her songs begin in the tiniest of streams, transform to flowing rivers, travel to majestic oceans and thundering clouds, and back to Earth to begin again."

## ONE THING I DID HAVE IN COMMON WITH MY MANOBO FRIENDS WAS WATER.

the moon seemed closer than the provincial capital. They could see the moon every night but most had never traveled more than 40 kilometres from their village, let alone seen the capital.

One thing I did have in common with my Manobo friends was water. We lugged drinking water from the same faraway spring, we bathed in the same pools, we laundered in the same brook, we waited out incredible thunderstorms in the same fragile shelters. Water was a common medium, a common bond, alongside so many differences. Indeed, water is a

In this issue of *Scarboro Missions*, we examine the gift of water. Two theologians, Heather Eaton and Laura Vargas, examine this gift from different starting points: one ponders the ecology and spirituality of water; the other explores water in light of biblical imagery and Catholic Social Teaching. We also present water's central importance to the religious traditions of the world.

Sadly, this most precious gift of water is under threat. Scarborough missionary Fr. Ron MacDonell writes about pollution and overfishing in the Amazon and how this impacts the Makuxi people.

Another threat that we examine is the privatization of water. The World Bank, a powerful interna-

tional financial institution, is pressuring poor countries to privatize the delivery and management of their water resources. This trend threatens public systems and places particular stress on the poor who cannot afford to pay the increased fees that accompany privatization.

## Join the DEVELOPMENT AND PEACE fall action campaign

This fall, the Canadian Catholic Organization for DEVELOPMENT AND PEACE launches the second year of its "Water: Life before profit" campaign (see pages 11-14) focusing on water privatization. All across Canada, parishes, schools and community groups will use DEVELOPMENT AND PEACE campaign materials, including this issue of *Scarboro Missions*, to help them respond to this very real threat to the world's water.

The goal of the campaign is to ask the World Bank to prioritize access of water for the poor and to allow the communities affected by water problems to have meaningful participation in the management of their water resources. We hope that you will support this campaign by signing the enclosed postcard or by participating in local events.

Help to keep the sacred gift of water a common good and a collective responsibility.∞

*Danny Gillis is the education program coordinator for the Canadian Catholic Organization for DEVELOPMENT AND PEACE.*