



# water is life

## DIGNITY OF THE HUMAN PERSON



*1-1.5 hour module for family catechesis*

*Adapted from Kathryn Buckley-Brawner,  
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Photo by Karen Kasmauski for CRS

## OBJECTIVES

- Catechize about the Catholic Church's teaching on the dignity of the human person
- Use the example of lack of access to clean water to illustrate living conditions that do not honor the dignity of the human person
- Use the tippy tap to show how Catholic Relief Services puts Catholic teaching on the dignity of the human person into action
- Invite families to reflect on what they can do to live out the Church's teaching on the dignity of the human person

## MATERIALS



Photo by Ric Francis for CRS

- Paper and pens for each participant
- Materials to make your own tippy tap:
  - 6-foot long pole/cylinder (e.g., cardboard roll from wrapping paper, curtain rod, PVC pipe)
  - Hanger
  - String or twine
  - Plastic water bottle
  - Water
  - Tack or pin
  - Pen
- Projector, screen, Internet access
- Video links
- A bowl filled with holy water or the ability to gather around a baptismal or holy water font

## PREPARATION

- Read through the facilitator's guide so that you're comfortable with the material ahead of time. Some sections are scripted to help you lead the session, but it's best to familiarize yourself with the session so you can share the concepts in your own words. Visit [crs.org](https://www.crs.org) for additional information on CRS' work.
- Set up the PowerPoint and projector and test the video links.
- Assemble your tippy tap for the demonstration—have it nearby and ready to use. You can also set up the tippy tap outside, depending on the weather and number of participants. See assembly instructions on page 8.
- Prepare a space for the closing prayer: Fill a bowl with holy water to use as a symbol, or be prepared to bring the group into the church to gather around



a baptismal or holy water font.

## INTRODUCTION

*Welcome all participants.*

**Explain:** Today we will reflect on our Church's teaching about the sacredness of life and the dignity of the human person. Water is essential to life, but almost 1 billion people don't have access to water. We will reflect on how water gives life and how we, as a Catholic community, have the opportunity to live out the Gospel call to uphold the dignity of each human person.

**Opening Prayer:**

*God of Creation,*

*On the third day you caused water to fall from the heavens. And it was good. Ever since, water has been essential to our life, to our health and to our very existence. Our rivers and streams teem with life. Our forests, and farms and meadows, even the cracks in the sidewalk, are rich in vegetation because of the rain you send down and the springs that you raise up. We are grateful for this gift. We are humbled by it. And sometimes we are fearful of it. We acknowledge water's strength, its ability to flood, to devastate, to drown, even as we praise you for water's gift of life, and sustenance and growth. Help us to be worthy stewards of this great gift, to make sure that none go thirsty. Help us to safeguard its purity, accessibility and beauty. We pray in Jesus' name.*

*Amen*

Source: CRS FoodFast

## OVERVIEW OF CATHOLIC RELIEF SERVICES

**Explain:** Catholic Relief Services is the official international humanitarian agency of the Catholic community in the United States. We are motivated by the example of Jesus Christ to assist poor and suffering people in 93 countries on the basis of need, without regard to race, religion or nationality.

We will now watch a brief video about the Catholic Church's work through CRS. The video includes pictures, clips and videos from CRS over the past 70-plus years.

*Invite adults, children or family members to write down (or remember) as many different images in the video as they can. (They might see someone receiving food, a religious sister or even a World War II tank!)*

**Play YouTube video:** *Catholic Relief Services: 70 Years in a Heartbeat*

**Hyperlink:** <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VShiWdXOBqg>

**Or Google:** *Catholic Relief Services: 70 Years in a Heartbeat* YouTube

*Invite everyone to share what they saw. Make a running list of their answers.*

**Some things that might come up include:** *Agriculture/crops; homes building built; camel; children; CRS leaders (Ken Hackett, former CRS CEO, and Dr. Carolyn Y.*





Photo by Silverlight/CRS

*Woo, current CRS President & CEO); CRS logo (different throughout the years); fair trade coffee; food and supplies distribution; health clinic and AIDS relief efforts; hungry people; Blessed Teresa of Calcutta; mothers and children; people in the United States holding a “Turning our Faith into Action” poster; pictures of natural disasters (hurricanes, tsunamis, earthquakes); religious sisters and priests; CRS Rice Bowl; war images (black-and-white photos); water projects*

**Explain:** The video shows ways that people are in need throughout the world (from hunger, poverty, natural disaster, war). CRS works in partnership with local churches in 93 countries around the world (you saw pictures of priests and nuns) and helps people grow crops, rebuild their lives after natural disaster or war, obtain food and water, and access health care. CRS was started in 1943 to help World War II refugees who needed shelter, food and clothing (you might have noticed the black-and-white pictures and the sign that said “War Relief Services,” which was Catholic Relief Services’ original name).

CRS is us! This means that the work that you saw being done in this video, and that continues to this day, is done in the name of Catholics in the United States.

CRS helps people help themselves. We help communities identify and develop long-term solutions for their needs.

## WORLD WATER

**Explain:** Because water is typically accessible in the United States by turning on a faucet, we can easily take it for granted! Let’s pause and think about all the ways we use water each day. As a family, take a few moments to walk through the day—from the time you wake up until you go to bed—and try to remember all of the different ways you use water.



Photos by Karen Kasmauski for CRS

*After giving families a few minutes to discuss, call their attention back to the large group. Ask a family to share what they talked about with the group.*

**Some uses of water:** *Cleaning; cooking; drinking; flushing the toilet; watering plants/the garden; feeding animals; washing hands; taking a bath/shower*

**Ask:** Imagine how you would do all of these things without running water. What sorts of challenges do you think people without access to water might face?

*Give families a chance to share their thoughts with the group. Answers might include:*

- **Time for other activities:** *It would take much longer to do any of your daily tasks if you had to first go and collect water to use. And, if the water that you collected wasn’t clean, and it came from a stream or pond, you would need to take further steps (like boiling the water) in order to use it.*
- **Health and hygiene:** *People get very sick from drinking water that isn’t clean. In addition, without running water, it is difficult to keep your hands clean after you use the bathroom. This can cause the rapid spread of disease.*
- **Inability to grow food or feed livestock:** *Without water, it is also very difficult*

to irrigate land or feed livestock. This affects what people can eat.

**Explain:** Many people throughout the world do not have access to water:

- Approximately 3 million people die each year because of inadequate water, sanitation and hygiene.
- 780 million people do not have access to clean water.
- 2.5 billion do not have access to adequate sanitation.
- Access to sanitation, the practice of good hygiene and a safe water supply could save 1.5 million children a year.
- More than 300 million of the 800 million people in sub-Saharan Africa live in a water-scarce environment.
- By 2025, 1.8 billion people will be living in countries or regions with absolute water scarcity. (**Source: UN-Water**)

## WATER AND THE DIGNITY OF THE HUMAN PERSON

**Explain:** Our Catholic Church has a body of teaching, called Catholic social teaching, which is based on our belief in the dignity of every human person. We believe that all people were created by God and created with a dignity that cannot be erased, no matter where they live or what they do. We believe that we are called to care for each other to make sure that each person is able to live in a way that honors his or her human dignity, which includes having access to basic needs like shelter, food and water (Catechism of the Catholic Church, no. 129).

Our Catholic faith teaches that each person is created in the image and likeness of God, and that living conditions for everyone should reflect this dignity. Human life is sacred. Lack of access to water threatens human life and human dignity.

Many people all over the world lack access to safe water. We will watch a video and learn how CRS helps communities in Tanzania—a country in East Africa—that lack access to water. Swahili is the official language of Tanzania.

In the language of Swahili, “Water is Life” is: “Maji ni Uhai”

Repeat after me: “Maji ni Uhai”

We mentioned earlier how lack of access to water poses many challenges for communities. One of these challenges is the ability to stay healthy through hand-washing!

We will watch a short video about Filomena, who lives in Tanzania. Filomena had to spend two class periods a day collecting water before a tank was installed near her school. Even though she has access to water at school, she still had to learn why hand-washing is important. Filomena doesn’t have running water at home, so she set up her own “tippy tap,” or hand-washing station, at home. (*You may also need to explain that a latrine is a toilet, and that in places like rural Tanzania, many people must construct their own latrines.*)

As you watch the video, think about how access to safe water and hand-washing help uphold the life and dignity of the human person.

**Show video:** “Tanzania’s Hand Washing Generation”



Photo by Karen Kasmauski for CRS

**Hyperlink:** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ThgWjwOqXkl>

**Or Google:** Tanzania's Hand Washing Generation

**Ask:** What did you learn from Filomena? How was her human dignity respected?

**Explain:** A tippy tap helps keep clean water clean, is very easy to make and allows people to use it without touching it with their hands.

We respect the dignity of people when we honor their cultures and wisdom. The tippy tap might not be the solution you would come up with to create a hand-washing station, but it fits with the local cultures where it is used.

*Explain that you have created your own version of a tippy tap. If you have already tied the tippy tap to a branch outside, invite everyone to walk outside and continue the activity/discussion there.*

*If you are doing this activity inside, invite two children to hold up the sides of the pole. Explain that a tippy tap would typically be supported by two sticks lodged into the ground, instead of by two people. Another large stick would be placed through the two sticks in the ground and the water bottle would be hung from that stick. The hanger would typically be a smaller stick that would act as a lever.*

*Invite a volunteer to try to use the tippy tap without touching it with his or her hands.*

**Ask:** How do you think access to safe water and/or the tippy tap helps uphold the life and dignity of the human person?

*Give families a chance to share their thoughts with the group. Answers might include:*

- *If children have access to clean water, they are able to spend time in school instead of collecting water.*
- *Hand-washing helps prevent common illnesses like cholera, diarrhea and typhoid.*
- *The tippy tap is a tool that has helped people, even children, learn how to take care of themselves.*
- *Conserving clean water helps people live a better quality of life.*

**Ask:** What can your family do to uphold the dignity of people who live without access to water?

*Give families a chance to share their thoughts with the group. You might also offer these additional ideas and resources:*

- *Keep those who live without access to water in your family prayers.*
- *Be more conscious of water use as a family.*
- *Donate to a CRS Gift of Hope water and sanitation project. If you buy bottled water as a family, consider saving the money that you would use to buy bottled water and donating the money toward a Gift of Hope. Visit [gifts.crs.org](https://gifts.crs.org) to learn more.*



Photo by Charlie David Martinez for CRS

- *World Water Day is March 22. Consider limiting your water usage as a family on that day or organizing a parish awareness-raising activity.*
- *Advocate for legislation that upholds the dignity of our brothers and sisters overseas who are most in need. Visit Catholics Confront Global Poverty at [confrontglobalpoverty.org](http://confrontglobalpoverty.org) to learn more.*
- *Make a commitment to learn more about how CRS works to uphold the dignity of the human person by helping people gain access to clean water. Visit [crs.org/water-sanitation](http://crs.org/water-sanitation).*

## CLOSING PRAYER

*Gather participants around a bowl filled with holy water or a baptismal or holy water font in the church.*

**Explain:** Who has seen a baby baptized or been to an Easter Vigil when adults are being baptized? How are they baptized? Part of the baptismal ritual includes being immersed in water. Although water is normally poured over a baby’s head, at the Easter Vigil adults are baptized as they stand inside of a pool. They usually get so soaked that they have to change their clothes and return to the church for the rest of the baptismal ritual! Our Catholic faith is rich with signs and symbols. We baptize with water, which is a powerful symbol of new life and renewal (CCC, no. 1234). The waters of baptism are “the source of that new life in Christ from which the entire Christian life springs forth” (CCC, no. 1254).

The Christian life means following Jesus’ example (CCC, no. 1694). Jesus lived in a way that upheld the dignity of each human person, especially those who were suffering and outcast. We reflected today on how water is a life-giving resource that many people around the world don’t have. We learned how expecting other people to live without access to water does not respect their God-given dignity. We will close our session by praying together that we live out our baptismal call to life in Christ by following his example and upholding the dignity of others.

**Pray:**

*Loving God,  
Thank you for the gift of water.*

*We pray that each time we wash our hands, pour water in a glass or water the lawn, we will say a prayer of gratitude for clean water and be reminded to act and pray on behalf of those who live without it.*

*We pray that each time we bless ourselves with holy water or see the baptismal font, we will be inspired to live out our baptismal call to follow Jesus’ example and uphold the dignity of others, especially those who live without clean water.*

*We pray all this (signal everyone to dip their fingers in the holy water and make the sign of the cross together) in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.*

*Amen*



# tippy tap

## DEMONSTRATION ASSEMBLY INSTRUCTIONS

### MATERIALS

- 6-foot long pole/cylinder (e.g., cardboard roll from wrapping paper, curtain rod, PVC pipe)
- Hanger
- String or twine
- Plastic water bottle
- Water
- Tack or pin
- Pen

### INSTRUCTIONS



Photo by Lauren Carroll/CRS

1. Cut 1.5 feet of string/twine.
2. Tie one end to the water bottle about a third of the way from the top (typically around the label) and the other end to the middle of the pole.  
**Alternative:** Instead of using a pole, do this activity outside and tie the water bottle to a tree branch that hangs parallel to the ground.
3. Cut 2.5 feet of string/twine.
4. Tie one end to the top of the neck of the water bottle, right below the cap, and the other end to the top of the hanger (where it hooks).
5. Hold the pole up parallel to the ground, high enough so that the bottom of the hanger barely touches the ground. Make sure the water bottle tilts upwards. If the bottle doesn't tilt upwards naturally as it hangs from the string, readjust where the strings are attached to the bottle to make sure it tilts upright.
6. Fill the water bottle halfway. If this makes the bottle lean completely upright, pour out some water.
7. Use the tack or pin to poke a hole on each side of the neck of the bottle, spaced apart evenly. Use the pen to make each of the holes big enough for water to trickle through.
8. Test your tippy tap: Hold the pole so that the bottom of the hanger barely touches the ground. Step on the hanger to make the water bottle tilt downward. Water should slowly trickle out of one of the holes at the top of the bottle. If water doesn't come out, double check that the holes are big enough to allow water to trickle through.