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A blue heron stands in the wetland at Sandy Ridge Reservation in North Ridgeville, Ohio. (Brenna Davis)



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## PAUSE

This week's reflections focus on water.

## READ

*You make springs gush forth in the valleys;*

*they flow between the hills,*

*giving drink to every wild animal;*

*the wild asses quench their thirst.*

*By the streams the birds of the air have their habitation;*

*they sing among the branches.*

*From your lofty abode you water the mountains;*

*the earth is satisfied with the fruit of your work.*

— Psalm 104: 10-13

*Through our worship of God, we are invited to embrace the world on a different plane. Water, oil, fire and colours are taken up in all their symbolic power and incorporated in our act of praise. The hand that blesses is an instrument of God's love and a reflection of the closeness of Jesus Christ, who came to accompany us on the journey of life. Water poured over the body of a child in Baptism is a sign of new life. Encountering God does not mean fleeing from this world or turning our back on nature.*

— *Laudato Si'*, 235

*Gifts from the earth or from each other establish a particular relationship, an obligation of sorts to give, to receive, and to reciprocate. ... No person taught us this — the strawberries showed us. Because they had given us a gift, an ongoing relationship opened between us.*

—Robin Wall Kimmerer, *Braiding Sweetgrass*

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## **REFLECT**

The Israelites, a desert people, had a keen sense that water was necessary for life to flourish. The connection is clear between this deep dependency on water to sustain life and the new life provided in the waters of Baptism.

Yet in places where water is bountiful, where a tap is turned on and instant access to water is granted, we can easily forget that deep sense that water is a life-sustaining gift. St. Ignatius believed that ingratitude, a forgetting of the giftedness of life, was "the cause, beginning, and origin of all evils and sins." Indeed, we see many examples of this "forgetting" today, as water has been commodified and polluted by fracking, pipeline spills and microplastics.

As someone who is blessed to live by Lake Erie, a large source of freshwater, I am also guilty of sometimes forgetting the sacredness of this gift. Seeing the watershed where I live through the awe-filled eyes of recent guests from California, who live in areas currently experiencing drought, renewed my sense of gratitude and desire to better care for this precious place.

- How might God be inviting you to notice, more consistently, the gifts that water provides to you?
- How might God be calling you to make a return of love for this gift by taking action to steward the water in your specific neighborhood?
- What is your relationship with the water where you live? Do you know which watershed you live in or where your drinking water originates?
- Do you have unlimited access to clean water, or is your access to water limited in some way? How does the abundance or scarcity of water affect your sense of gratitude for it?

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## ACT

Throughout the day, pay attention to moments in which you encounter water. Each time you notice water, say a short prayer of gratitude for the gift of new and continued life it provides through God's love.

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