

All Saints Episcopal Church  
The Rev. Justin R. Cannon & Sejal Choksi-Chugh  
September 4, 2016  
Ocean Sunday

[FR. JUSTIN]

In the Baptismal Rite the priest prays, “We thank you, Almighty God, for the gift of water. Over it the Holy Spirit moved in the beginning of creation. Through it you led the children of Israel out of their bondage in Egypt into the land of promise. In it your Son Jesus received the baptism of John and was anointed by the Holy Spirit as the Messiah, the Christ, to lead us, through his death and resurrection, from the bondage of sin into everlasting life.” Aside from our most basic need for water to survive, spiritually speaking water is a critical, indispensable element in the Christian life. In fact, Jesus himself says, “Very truly I tell you, no one can see the Kingdom of God unless they are born of water and the Spirit,” a teaching from which Holy Baptism emerges. There is an ancient document believed to come directly from the apostles entitled “The Lord’s Teaching of the Twelve Apostles” which dates to 96 A.D. In this document there is brief teaching about baptism. In it, the idea of “living water” is mentioned, which was understood as moving water like the ocean, or a river. The author writes:

“And concerning baptism, baptize this way: Having first said all these things, baptize into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, in living water. But if you have not living water, baptize into other water; and if you cannot in cold, in warm. But if you have not either, pour out water upon the head into the name of Father and Son and Holy Spirit...”

The now common practice of pouring water on the forehead was an accommodation made if living water was not available. Living water is a wonderful phrase to hold in mind as we consider the ocean and streams. It makes me think of the living ecosystems within the waters—this intricate network of creeks and springs, led downhill by gravity, navigating turns and shifts in the surface to streams and rivers, that follow that same tendency downhill, finally to the oceans.

One of my favorite books is the *Tao Te Ching*, which translates in Chinese as The Book of the Way and it’s Power. The book dates back to the 6<sup>th</sup> century BC and was written by *Lao Tzu*. I’ve always found a deep resonance between the *Tao Te Ching* and Jesus’ teachings. In fact, the Chinese translation of Christ’s statement in John 14:6 “I am the way” is “I am the Tao.” In my favorite chapter, he writes:

“The sage’s way, Tao is the way of water.

There must be water for life to be, and it can flow wherever. And water, being true to being water is true to Tao. Those on the way of the Tao, like water need to accept where they find themselves; and that may often be where water goes to the lowest places, and that is right. Like a lake the heart must be calm and quiet having great depth beneath it. The sage rules with compassion, and her word needs to be trusted. The Sage needs to know like water how to flow around the blocks and how to find the way through without violence. Like water, the sage should wait for the moment to ripen and be right: water, you know, never fights it flows around without harm.”

In considering the Way of Water—and the Ocean where all waters seek to reach—I thought it would be fitting to invite Sejal (Say-Jahl), the Executive Director of Bay Keeper to speak with us about their good work. The Bay is our most direct link to the ocean, so with no further ado, I introduce to you Sejal Choksi-Chugh, the official Baykeeper...

[SEJAL]

Thank you so much for welcoming me today on Ocean Sunday. I feel grateful to be here with you on this beautiful morning speaking about one of my favorite topics: water.

Water on this planet is precious. It covers over 71% of the Earth and is central to life. More than 95% of our water is saline and contained in our mysterious, deep blue Oceans. But sadly, through every day actions, we are changing the Oceans and causing a profound, irreversible impact. Human activities are slowly destroying the fundamental composition and very nature of the most abundant and life-giving resource on this planet.

Through anthropogenic acts, we're contributing to climate change. The planet has experienced the warmest years on record in just the last decade. The Oceans are absorbing this rising heat. Ocean warming has resulted in alarming changes: causing an estimated loss of 400 billion tons of glaciers worldwide in just the last 20 years and causing ancient, life-sustaining coral reefs and phytoplankton to disappear. Excessive carbon dioxide in the atmosphere is trapped in the Oceans and has led to a precipitous 30% rise in Ocean acidity. We're also harming the Oceans in other ways – by over-fishing and introducing harmful, non-native species. And we are polluting our Oceans with oil and plastic.

This pollution, and these changes in the composition of the Oceans, are wreaking havoc on our wild creatures. Whales are migrating off course in search of food. Seal pups are washing up on beaches starved and sick. Crabs and oysters are too toxic to eat, and the birds that eat them – and that also eat plastic trash – are dying at alarming rates. These changes are also causing sea level rise, which means that the beaches and shorelines we all currently enjoy may vanish under a few feet of water during our lifetime.

While most of us are not able witness firsthand this slow, ongoing destruction of our Oceans, we do have a smaller Ocean-connected waterbody in our very own backyard. And we can see these same impacts of global warming, pollution, and sea level rise here, magnified on this smaller, magnificent ecosystem.

San Francisco Bay is our mini-Ocean. It's a playground for seals, sea lions, boaters, paddlers, intrepid swimmers. It's a food source, a travel route, an economic center, a destination. And it's the place we all call home. More than 7 million people live in the Bay Area, and we each have our own reasons to love the breathtaking, moody blue Bay. And we have personal inspirations to want to protect it for future generations.

Yet every day, in almost every way, we take our mini-Ocean for granted. We drive or BART by the Bay and our mind is on work or our commute or our daily concerns, and sometimes we

forget to look out the window and appreciate the big blue expanse that defines the Bay Area. And many local residents are unaware of the threats converging beneath and beyond the Bay's sparkling surface.

As the largest urban estuary in the world, the Bay deals with the same threats facing our Oceans but on an even greater scale that is far more concentrated. Sea level rise is already drowning our shorelines AND our wetlands when we experience the bi-annual king tides. And in a more immediate way, our Bay deals with:

- An onslaught of heavy metals from 1300 industrial facilities,
- oil and coal pollution from five refineries, a coal export facility, and more than 350 vessels that travel across the water every day, and
- millions of gallons of sewage spills and thousands of tons of trash washing out of 101 surrounding cities.

While the situation sounds dire, I'm also here because I can provide some good news. The Bay, our mini-Ocean – has a highly effective champion. For over 25 years, Baykeeper has been the Bay's best advocate. We are a staff of 10 scientists, lawyers, and advocates on the water, on the case, and on the Bay's side. Our investigations uncover pollution and habitat destruction and then we fight to defend the Bay. Baykeeper's 260 victories have helped create a healthier Bay. We tackle the biggest threats because we believe polluters have no right to destroy the Bay that belongs to all of us. Allow me to give you just a few examples of how Baykeeper has made an impact:

In 2007 the oil tanker Cosco Busan spilled over 53,000 gallons of crude oil into our Bay killing birds and fish. When government agencies faltered in their response, Baykeeper stepped in to help protect our shorelines and to advocate for the passage of 13 new statewide laws to improve oil spill response. We received the U.S. Coast Guard's highest civilian commendation for our assistance.

In 2012 Baykeeper's boat patrol captured evidence of toxic coal pollution from a shoreline facility. When we brought the polluting activities to the company's attention, they denied everything and refused to clean up until a federal judge asked them to do so. The company has now agreed to install over 1 million dollars of improvements to ensure their coal pollution doesn't reach the Bay ever again.

And earlier this year there were two dazzling fireworks displays put on during the Super Bowl extravaganza. The mornings after, Baykeeper's Pollution Hotline was inundated with calls from Bay swimmers and boaters about plastic fireworks pollution washing up on local beaches. When the government agency declined to respond, Baykeeper contacted the company directly and worked out an agreement to ensure they would start using new practices to keep future fireworks debris out of the Bay.

So now, YOU may be thinking: Sejal, Baykeeper sounds amazing and your staff is doing a lot to protect our waters, but what can I do to help? Well, there are at least five things we can all do as individuals to honor the Bay and our Oceans:

First, Report pollution – don't turn a blind eye and assume someone else will report it. If pollution is in the Bay, call Baykeeper at 1-800-Keep-Bay.

Second, We've all heard of reduce, reuse and recycle. These three R's actually work to keep plastic out of our waters. Support the plastic bag ban when it comes up for a vote. Take cloth bags to go shopping. And use cosmetic products and toothpaste without harmful microplastics and microbeads.

Third, Use less toxic pesticides and fertilizers and wash cars at certified stations not at home, so that pollutants aren't sent down storm drains. These chemicals and soaps run off into the Bay and harm fish and wildlife. And pollutants in the Bay eventually wash out into the Ocean.

Fourth, Conserve water and choose renewable energy whenever possible. In our fifth year of California drought, we should continue to conserve. Take shorter showers, water lawns less frequently, and fix leaks. We can also do our share to help stop the acceleration of climate change by turning off lights, using public transit, and selecting greener energy sources to power our homes and cars.

And finally, take a moment to show the Bay your love. Whenever you drive by the Bay or catch a glimpse from a window, take a moment to appreciate this vibrant, essential ecosystem that makes the Bay Area special. Support groups like Baykeeper that work to protect the Bay in different ways. And share your love for the Bay with friends and family to help inspire them to protect all of the spectacular waters on our *tiny blue planet*.

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