

WE ARE ALL 'WATER COUSINS'

By John M. Scott, S.J.

Do you consider your body to be your own personal property? Does it belong to you alone and to no one else? Does it have the sort of permanence that reminds you somewhat of the Rock of Gibraltar or the stone faces on Mt. Rushmore?

Now consider some interesting facts. Your body is some 70 percent water. The water you drink is as old as the hills. The water in your glass is older than the pyramids, older than the ancient dinosaurs.

It is true that water is made undrinkable by the waste poured into streams. But let it evaporate into the atmosphere, and it becomes clean and refreshing again.

When you turn on your faucet, you are getting water from ancient seas, the final source and reservoir of Earth's water.

This means that the water you drink today, you may drink in years to come. If not the exact cupful, some of the same molecules. This hydrological cycle has a starting point. There has been no more and no less water on Earth. Water is not used up but simply changed from one form to another. Some of the water in your glass today may have passed the lips of a Crusader or lapped the boards of Noah's ark.

Some of the molecules coasting through your bloodstream this very moment may once have flowed through the veins of Saint Louis, king of France. Perhaps some of the water molecules in your head once slaked the thirst of a mighty elephant as he drank by a river's edge in Africa. Molecules of water in your right hand may once have been in the hand of Alexander the Great or Richard the Lion-Hearted.

Through water molecules, you are linked to the millions of people who have lived before you. You don't belong entirely to yourself. You are "part" of others, a part of our spaceship, planet Earth. You are cosmic.

There is no such thing as "private water" that is "yours only." Through water, you are united to the whole human

race, plus no doubt a few zebras and roosters.

Some people may find it somewhat humiliating to realize that you cannot call your body your "own." It is made of "reused" and "reusable" molecules, molecules forever "on the move"; molecules that have been part of other people in the past and will be part of other people in years to come.

This should give us a sense of unity and close association with all the world and the people who live on it. Through water, we are made a cosmic family. We become "water cousins."

Remember, your body is only a temporary resting place for vagabond water molecules from the deep sea, the wide lake and the blue sky.

Dr. Deepak Chopra, a medical doctor and the author of such best-selling books as *The Seven Spiritual Laws of Success*, puts it this way. "In order to stay alive, your body must live on the wings of change. At this moment, you are exhaling atoms of hydrogen, oxygen, carbon and nitrogen that just an instant before were locked up in solid matter; your stomach, liver, heart,

lungs and brain are vanishing into thin air, being replaced as quickly and endlessly as they are broken down. The skin replaces itself once a month, the stomach lining every five days, the liver every six weeks and the skeleton every three months.

"To the naked eye, these organs look the same from moment to moment, but they are always in flux. By the end of this year, 98 percent of the atoms in your body will have been changed for new ones."

We sometimes refer to our spaceship as "Mother Earth" and well we may. Not only did God make this sphere for our cruise through space, He continually uses materials from planet Earth to make our bodies.

—About the author: Fr. John Scott, S.J., is a former high school physics teacher living in the Jesuit community at Creighton and the author of numerous books.

