

EARTH DAY 2018: CARING FOR CREATION

Beyond a Throwaway Culture

Introduction *(WELCOME! Please read this introduction silently before the program starts)*

April 22, 2018 marks the 48th anniversary of Earth Day. Catholic Climate Covenant is joining the Earth Day Network's campaign to End Plastic Pollution (www.earthday.org/campaigns/plasticscampaign). From contributing to land and marine pollution to increasing our use of carbon producing fuels, our reliance on single-use plastics has a devastating impact on God's creation. The good news is that we can solve this problem. We can all play a role in reducing plastic pollution and minimizing our contribution to what Pope Francis calls "a throwaway culture" by working together as a community.

This program focuses on how we, both individually and collectively, contribute to the growing problem of single-use plastic. We hope you and your community will commit to using less disposable plastic and to participating in a months-long challenge to reduce single-use plastic.



Readings

1. Isaiah 24:4-6

The earth dries up and withers,
the world languishes and withers;
the heavens languish together with the earth.
The earth lies polluted
under its inhabitants;
for they have transgressed laws,
violated the statutes,
broken the everlasting covenant.
Therefore, a curse devours the earth,
and its inhabitants suffer for their guilt;
therefore the inhabitants of the earth dwindled,
and few people are left.

2. "The earth, our home, is beginning to look more and more like an immense pile of filth."
- *Laudato Si* 21, Pope Francis

3. "The culture of selfishness and individualism that often prevails in our society is not ... what builds up and leads to a more habitable world:

rather, it is the culture of solidarity that does so. We must never allow the throwaway culture to enter our hearts, because we are brothers and sisters. No one is disposable!. I would therefore like us all to make the serious commitment to respect and care for creation, to pay attention to every person, to combat the culture of waste and of throwing out so as to foster a culture of solidarity and encounter".

(Papal addresses on July 25 and June 5, 2013, Pope Francis)

4. "Currently about 300 million tons of plastic are produced each year to make bags, bottles, packages, and other commodities for people all over the world. Unfortunately, only about ten percent of this plastic is properly recycled and reused. The rest ends up as waste in landfills or as litter in our natural environment, where it leaches dangerous chemicals into the nearby soil and water, endangering humans and wildlife alike." Z

- *Earth Day Network website*

TAKE INDIVIDUAL ACTION

In the next several minutes you have the opportunity to pledge to reduce your reliance on single-use plastics and to minimize plastic pollution.

Commit to examining how you and your family can move away from a throwaway culture. **HANDOUT A** (next page) **has information and easy tips to get you started.** Making any of the suggested lifestyle changes is a great step towards changing our throwaway culture. Share the information with family and friends.

Consider signing the *Laudato Si*/St. Francis Pledge online or on paper:

(www.catholicclimatecovenant.org/pledge) and committing to care for our Common Home – the Earth!

HANDOUT A:

Suggested Individual Beyond a Throwaway Culture Activities

These are ideas that you and your family can pledge to do in response to Pope Francis' call for us to "counteract the throwaway culture which affects the entire planet."

- **Refuse/say NO** to disposable plastic whenever and wherever possible. Choose items that are not packaged in plastic, and carry your own bags, containers and utensils. Say, "no straw, please."
- **Reuse** durable, non-toxic straws, utensils, to-go containers, bottles, bags, and other everyday items. Choose glass, paper, stainless steel, wool, ceramic and bamboo over plastic.
- **Reduce** your plastic footprint. Cut down on your consumption of goods that contain excessive plastic packaging and parts. **If it will leave behind plastic trash, don't buy it**
- **Recycle** what you can't refuse, reduce or reuse. Pay attention to the entire life cycle of items you bring into your life, from source to manufacturing to distribution to disposal.
- **Participate** in a beach, stream, river, park, road cleanup.
- **Support** local bans on single-use plastic bags and Styrofoam.
- **Avoid microbeads:** Tiny plastic particles, called "microbeads," are a growing source of ocean plastic pollution. Microbeads are found in some face scrubs, toothpastes, and body washes, and they readily enter our oceans and waterways through our sewer systems. Avoid products containing plastic microbeads by looking for "polythelene" and "polypropylene" on the ingredient labels of your cosmetic products.



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TAKE COMMUNITY ACTION

Use this time to discuss and brainstorm what your community (parish, school, religious community) can do TOGETHER to reduce plastic pollution.

We invite you to join other Catholics in moving beyond a throwaway culture.

Our actions can be as simple as committing to educate community members as to how we must be conscious of our throwaway habits, or we could organize a more elaborate community-wide disposable plastics reduction program. It's your choice! **See: HANDOUT B for ideas for collective action. →**

Are you ready to answer Pope Francis' call? Commit to joining a parish effort to plan/design your community's participation in activities to move beyond a throwaway culture.

HANDOUT B:

Collective Action to Move Us Beyond a Throwaway Culture

“Our industrial system, at the end of its cycle of production and consumption, has not yet developed the capacity to absorb and reuse waste and by-products. We have not yet managed to adopt a circular model of production capable of preserving resources for present and future generations, while limiting as much as possible the use of non-renewable resources, moderating their consumption, maximizing their efficient use, reusing and recycling them. A serious consideration of this issue would be one way of counteracting the throwaway culture which affects the entire planet.” Pope Francis, *Laudato Si* 22

What is The Beyond a Throwaway Culture Project?

It's an exciting community-wide creation care opportunity to begin to shift our culture from one that carelessly wastes God's gifts to one that values all people and creation. If your community decides to take on this “plastic challenge,” you'll be taking a giant step towards counteracting our throwaway culture.

How can my community participate?

1. **The OMOS Care for Creation Initiative** will schedule a meeting of those interested in participating in a Community Challenge. Following are the steps we will take:
2. Choose one of the suggested activities below, or brainstorm how your community can reduce the use of disposable plastics. Your community is unique. You are the experts about what you can do to reduce single-use plastics in your parish, school, or religious community. You decide what type of program fits your community!
3. Sign up! (catholicclimatecovenant.salsalabs.org/earthday18throwawayculturecommunitysignup)
Your community signs up online as a challenge participant here. Your group will need to agree upon an activity or activities to reduce your use of disposable plastics, and decide how you will measure your results (number of participants, amount of plastic use reduced, a waste audit before the challenge and one after the challenge, etc.). Groups that sign up will receive regular tips, information, and resources to help you in your efforts.
4. Time: You have between April 22nd and the Season of Creation (Sept. 1st - Oct. 4th) to act on your challenge. Note: All report backs are to be sent to us no later than Sept. 30th)
5. Report the results of your challenge to Catholic Climate Covenant using this online form (catholicclimatecovenant.salsalabs.org/earthday18throwawayculturecommunitysignupcopy1). You have until Sept. 30th to report back on the results of your community's plastic challenge.
6. During the Season of Creation (Sept. 1st-October 4th), Catholic Climate Covenant will promote your community's challenge results through our website and social media. All challenge participants will receive a “Beyond a Throwaway Culture” certificate (sent via email). On Oct. 4th, we will tally all the reported data and let the world know what the U.S. Catholic community is doing to reduce throwaway culture and plastic pollution.

COMMUNITY CHALLENGE IDEAS

- Conduct a Plastic Audit (<http://www.plasticfreejuly.org/bin-audit.html>) to find out how much plastic you are throwing away. Then at the end of the challenge, conduct another one and compare the results.
- Pledge to remove all single-use plastics from your parish, school, or religious community by a certain date. Think about alternatives to plastic dinnerware (cups, plates, knives, spoons, and forks), and disposable plastic bottles. Find biodegradable or washable substitutes. Estimate how much plastic you have avoided.

- Coffee cups: If your church serves coffee in the lobby on Sundays, encourage the congregation to start bringing their own non-disposable cups. Have a “mug drive” and encourage everyone to donate one of their extras. Setting out the mugs on the table next to the coffee pot is a good way to reduce paper and plastic waste. How many plastic disposables have you kept out of the landfill or away from streams?
- Attempt to refuse single-use plastic, such as plastic shopping bags, plastic cups, straws, plastic packaging (anything that’s intended to be used only once and then discarded). Try the TOP 4 challenge (refusing plastic bags, bottles, takeaway coffee cups & straws). Pledge to do this for a period of time (summer, a month, a week) and find ways to measure how much plastic your community reduces during that time.
- Does your community use plastic disposable bags while shopping? Initiate a local public information campaign to help people understand the threat that the planet faces due to plastic pollution. Advocate for a plastic bag ban in your community. Perhaps you can sell reusable cloth bags with your community’s logo and *Laudato Sí* quote emblazoned on the sides.
- Plan a beach, stream, or park cleanup. Estimate the amount of plastic you remove from the environment.
- Refuse “Styrofoam” (polystyrene) food and drink containers. Advocate for a Styrofoam ban in your community.
- Promote the Beyond a Throwaway Culture Project with weekly tips in your bulletins, on a bulletin board, or newsletters.
- Get buy-in with your community by finding a common project to work on and then promote that one. Be creative!
- Incorporate creation care into your worship experiences during your community’s challenge. Check out the Covenant’s website for worship/prayer resources.
- Remember to estimate the amount of plastic reduction you accomplish and report back (catholicclimatecovenant.salsalabs.org/earthday18throwawayculturecommunitysignupcopy1) to Catholic Climate Covenant by Sept. 30, 2018!



Together, as a Catholic community, we can make a difference!

Closing Reflection (from a reflection by Blessed Archbishop Oscar Romero)

The kingdom is not only beyond our efforts,
it is even beyond our vision.
We accomplish in our lifetime only a tiny fraction
of the magnificent enterprise that is God’s work.
Our work may be incomplete,
but it is a beginning, a step along the way,
an opportunity for the Lord’s grace to enter and do the rest.
We may never see the end results, but that is the difference
between the master builder and the worker.
We are workers, not master builders; ministers, not messiahs.
We are prophets of a future not our own.

“Loving Creator, we offer our work, our ministry, and our lives to YOU. + AMEN

*Thank you for participating in this Earth Day program! This program is a beginning.
We hope you will continue to work with us to reduce plastic pollution
and move us beyond a throwaway culture.
- Catholic Climate Covenant*