Justice Herald

"A Christian who doesn't safeguard creation, who doesn't make it flourish, is a Christian who isn't concerned with God's work, that work born of God's love for us."

—Pope Francis; Meditation, Vatican City, February 9, 2015

April 2018

All information in this edition of Justice Herald comes from https://www.earthday.org/
Please visit for more info!

PLASTIC POLLUTION

The invention of plastic in 1907 was considered a breakthrough. Plastic products soon became omnipresent in our daily lives. For many years, we only perceived the benefits of plastic and knew little of the damaging consequences for human health, natural ecosystems and the climate. Plastics are a problem mostly due to their un-biodegradable nature, the materials used for plastic production (hydrocarbon molecules—derived from the refining of oil and natural gas), and the challenges behind properly discarding them. We have all contributed to this problem – mostly unknowingly – and we must work to reduce and ultimately to *End Plastic Pollution*. From poisoning and injuring marine life to disrupting human hormones, from littering our beaches and landscapes to clogging our waste streams and landfills, the exponential growth of plastics is now threatening the survival of our planet.

The Justice and Human Concerns Committee of St Matthew Parish, meets every third Tuesday at the parish center at 6:30pm. If you are interested in joining the committee please contact Jackie Thiry at jackiemthiry@yahoo.com

10 SHOCKING FACTS ABOUT PLASTIC POLLUTION

- 8.3 BILLION Metric Tons (9.1 BILLION US Tons) of plastic has been produced since plastic was introduced in the 1950s. The amount of plastic produced in a year is roughly the same as the entire weight of humanity

- Virtually every piece of plastic that was ever made still exists in some shape or form (with the exception of the small amount that has been incinerated).

- 91% of plastic waste isn't recycled. *And since most plastics don't biodegrade in any meaningful sense, all that plastic waste could exist for hundreds or even thousands of years.*

- 500 MILLION plastic straws are used EVERY DAY in America. *That's enough to circle the Earth twice.*

- Nearly TWO MILLION single-use plastic bags are distributed worldwide every minute

- 100 BILLION plastic bags are used by Americans every year. *Tied together, they would reach around the Earth's equator 773 times!*

- ONE MILLION plastic bottles are bought EVERY MINUTE around the world — and that number will top half a TRILLION by 2021. *Less than half of those bottles end up getting recycled*

- 8 MILLION METRIC TONS of plastic winds up in our oceans each year. That's enough trash to cover every *foot* of coastline around the world with five full trash bags of plastic…compounding *every* year.

- There is more micro plastic in the ocean than there are stars in the Milky Way.

- If plastic production isn't curbed, plastic pollution will outweigh fish pound for pound by 2050.

PLASTICS AND YOUR OWN HEALTH

After decades of producing trillions of oil-based plastic items, the negative consequences are startling. Plastic pollution is now recognized as a hazard to public health and the human body. Chemicals leached from some plastics used in food/beverage storage are harmful to human health. Correlations have been shown between levels of some of these chemicals, and an increased risk of problems such as chromosomal and reproductive system abnormalities, impaired brain and neurological functions, cancer, cardiovascular system damage, adult-onset diabetes, early puberty, obesity and resistance to chemotherapy.

Many plastics contain phthalates (DEHP) and the chemical BPA. If food or drink is stored in these plastics, they can be contaminated with these chemicals. If food is heated inside these containers in the microwave or if the plastic is ingested as in the case of a small child, these chemicals make their way into our food and into our bodies. Both chemicals are potentially harmful to human hormones, reproductive systems, and early childhood development.

THE WONDER MATERIAL YOU CANNOT GET RID OF

Plastic bags are one of the most difficult things to recycle. They're very light and they float around. They get twisted around things. The recycling business, like the garbage business, is all about tonnage. You want so many tons of aluminum cans and so many tons of paper that you can bale. Put simply, it costs so much more to process the bags than can be earned from selling them that they're simply trucked off to the dump. And while a few flimsy bags don't seem like much, they add up: Americans consume an estimated 100 *billion* of them every year.

It's a problem that's pretty clear when you see how much we send to the dump. Each of us generates more than 1,600 pounds of garbage every year. That's more trash per person than any other nation on Earth. Much of it comes from plastic bags, plastic water bottles and plastic packaging. As some see it, our love affair with plastic has turned us into a throwaway society. The plastic heads straight to landfills, where it stays for years and years and years. Recently, the plastics industry has come under pressure to boost the relatively low percentage of plastic recycling. While close to three-quarters of cardboard boxes and nearly half of aluminum cans find new uses, only about a quarter of plastic bottles -- and just 5 percent of plastic bags -- get recycled.

Indeed, when plastic is thrown away, it doesn't just go away. Far out in the Pacific Ocean, where currents carry floating waste, plastic is now more plentiful than plankton. Along coastlines, seabirds are turning up dead - their bellies literally stuffed with it. In landfills, there are concerns about long-term pollution as plastic decomposes. All reasons why just last week, the And remember all those bags? San Francisco's leaders have calculated that a plastic bag which costs a supermarket just a penny to buy costs the public seventeen cents to deal with as litter. So the city has moved to ban them from big chain stores and wants to replace them with biodegradable bags made from corn starch.

WHY IS PLASTIC SO HARMFUL TO MARINE LIFE?

Do you know why marine life is so disproportionately impacted by plastic pollution? It's because it can cause harm to them in so many different ways. Many marine organisms can't distinguish common plastic items from food. Animals who eat plastic often starve because they can't digest the plastic and it fills their stomachs, preventing them from eating real food. Birds and other larger animals often become trapped or ensnared in plastic bags, fishing line, and other debris. Sea turtles specifically are highly susceptible. They both mistake plastic bags for jellyfish, and frequently are trapped in plastic debris, restricting their growth and movement.

Plastic never fully degrades, over time it breaks into smaller and smaller pieces. Eventually it becomes small enough to enter the bloodstream of marine organisms. Since the organisms cannot ever digest or process the plastic, it remains present until the organism is eaten. This passes all the plastic on to its predator, which is usually fish. If that fish is caught, then the plastics will be passed on to humans who consume fish.

From the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops on…

Care for God's Creation

"We show our respect for the Creator by our stewardship of creation. Care for the earth is not just an Earth Day slogan, it is a requirement of our faith. We are called to protect people and the planet, living our faith in relationship with all of Gods creation. This environmental challenge has fundamental moral and ethical dimensions that cannot be ignored."

MICROPLASTICS

When plastics break down due to exposure to water, sun or other elements they can break into tiny pieces -so tiny, most of them cannot be seen with the naked eye. These small plastic fragments are now everywhere. When you drink water, eat fish or other seafood, or when you add salt to your meals, chances are you can also be ingesting tiny pieces of plastic. Those particles -called microplastics- are a contaminant which is now present in the oceans, water ways, the soil and even in the food that we eat. The entire cycle and movement of microplastics in the environment is not yet known, but research is currently underway to investigate this issue further, as reported by NOAA.

Some microplastics are specifically produced for certain uses. Some are microbeads, created for use in skin care products. They are very tiny pieces of manufactured polyethylene plastic that are added as exfoliants to health and beauty products, such as some cleansers, toothpaste, face wash, soap and shower cream. Others originate from plastic-based fabrics such as polyester and nylon that shed plastic fibers when washed. Several studies have shown synthetic fibers to make up the lion's share of microplastics found in oceans, rivers and lakes, and clothes made from synthetics (polyester, acrylic, nylon, and so on) are widely implicated as the source of that pollution. In addition, some industrial processes can produce microplastics that can contribute to the problem when mishandled.

While there is some contention over their size, most agree that to be considered a microplastic a particle should be less than 5 mm in diameter and have been found to evade filtration systems at water treatment plants, allowing them to be discharged directly into rivers, lagoons and the oceans. Governments are paying attention and passing legislation to limit or eliminate pollution related to microbeads and companies are working to replace them or phase them out from their products and processes. In 2015, the US passed the Microbead-Free Waters Act, banning plastic microbeads in cosmetics and personal care products. The law has the support of the Personal Care Products Council, an industry group. Similar legislation has been approved by other countries.

CLIMATE PRAYER

By Sr. Marlene Kelly, GSIC, from Citizens for Public Justice

Gracious God, Creator of All, we raise our hearts in grateful praise for all the beauty that surrounds us. May we learn to respect all as a sacred gift and do what we can to repair the damage we have caused through our consumerism, greed and carelessness. Grant us an ecological conversion so that we can leave our next generation with a future full of hope where there is enough for all. We ask this in the name of Jesus. Amen.

Catholic Social Teaching calls each of us to Care for God's Creation. A reminder to us of this call is the celebration of Earth Day on April 22. The idea for a national day to focus on the environment is credited to Earth Day founder Gaylord Nelson, then a U.S. Senator from Wisconsin, after witnessing the ravages of the 1969 massive oil spill in Santa Barbara, California. Earth Day 1970 achieved a rare political alignment, enlisting support from Republicans and Democrats, rich and poor, city slickers and farmers, tycoons and labor leaders. Earth Day is now a global event each year, and it is believed that more than 1 billion people in 192 countries take part in what is the largest civic-focused day of action in the world. It is a day of political action and civic participation. People march, sign petitions, meet with their elected officials, plant trees, clean up their towns and roads. Corporations and governments use it to make pledges and announce sustainability measures. Faith leaders, including Pope Francis, connect Earth Day with protecting God's greatest creations, humans, biodiversity and the planet that we all live on.

Earth Day Network, the organization that leads Earth Day worldwide, announced that Earth Day 2018 will focus on mobilizing the world to End Plastic Pollution, including creating support for a global effort to eliminate single-use plastics along with global regulation for the disposal of plastics. This Justice Herald will offer information from Earth Day Network materials on why decomposing plastics are creating serious global problems and some ways to end plastic pollution.

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

Reduce, Refuse, Reuse, Recycle and Remove

• Prevent the creation of microplastics by being careful not to toss plastic products in water ways, beaches or open spaces.

• Pick up trash -especially plastics- whenever you see it, especially in ponds, streams, rivers, beaches, when possible.

• Participate in organized clean-up activities as much as you can.

• Look up products on the Internet and choose not to buy products containing microbeads. Choose products that have natural exfoliators instead.

• Consider changing the way you wash your clothing to reduce the number of microfibers that are released. There are also bags and other devices you can use in your washing machine to collect the fibers.

• Consider purchasing items made of natural fibers, when possible.

• Do not wash off lint from your dryer down the drain. Dispose of it on the trash

• When you order a drink at a restaurant, you can tell the waiter that you don't want a straw. If you need a straw, you can purchase a metal or wood/paper based straw and bring that with you. You could go a step further and ask the restaurant to stop providing plastic straws or to only provide straws to customers when requested.

• Refuse the plastic shopping bags given away at retailers and grocery stores. Bring a reusable bag to carry your purchases. Buy cloth or mesh bags to carry fresh produce to the cashier

• Select products without plastic packaging and always be sure to avoid or even boycott products that are excessively wrapped in plastic (for example fresh produce).

• Select products that are designed for multiple uses and make sure nothing gets thrown away before its usefulness is spent. Avoid single use plastics.

WHAT ABOUT MY PLASTIC BAGS?

Plastic bags cannot be recycled through your curbside bin. So what do you do with your growing supply of plastic bags? You can go to https://www.plasticfilmrecycling.org/ and simply type in your zip code and get a list of businesses that you can recycle your bags at; here are a few of our favorites!

- St Vincent de Paul (1529 Leo Frigo Way Green Bay, WI 54302)
- JCPenny (800 Willard Dr Ashwaubenon, WI)
- Target (1001 Cormier Rd Green Bay, WI)
- Kohl's (2300 E Mason St Green Bay, WI)
- Festival Foods (2250 W. Mason Street Green Bay, WI)
- Shopko (2430 E Mason St Green Bay, WI)

To find out where to recycle other odds and ends go to https://www.browncountyrecycling.org anything from batteries, paint, and everything in between!

EARTH DAY OPPORTUNITIES

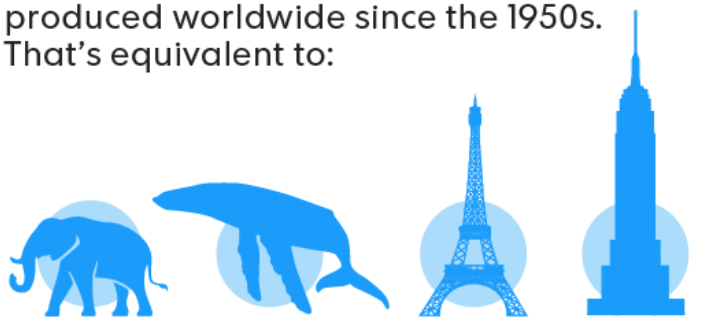
- 4/14 March for Science, 11-3, City Deck
- 4/18 View & discuss the documentary "Before the Flood", 6:30-8:30, Norbertine Center for Spirituality
- 4/20 Full week of events (4/20-4/25 at UW-Green Bay. Google "Earth Day Green Bay"
- 4/21 Party for the Planet, 10 to 2, at the New Zoo. Focus on one time use of plastics.
- 4/22 Public event at the Mauthe Center starting with Water Walk at 10:00, Pot Luck at noon, and speakers from many organizations starting at 1:00. See full day of events at : https://www.facebook.com/events/220000095407658
- 4/22 Visit Bay Beach Wildlife Sanctuary from 11 to 3. Find activities by goggling "Earth Day Green Bay".

ACTIVISM TO HOLD CORPORTATIONS ACCOUNTABLE (IT WORKS!)

- Starbucks was successfully pressures to create a 100% recyclable cup. The coffee giant announced it is putting $10 million into research to create a 100% recyclable and compostable cup to be introduced in stores within 3 years.
- City government of San Francisco has announced it would stop buying bottled water.
- Wisconsin Assembly Bill 789, authored by Senator Cowles and Representative Paul Tittl, will help to divert more plastics out of landfills and convert these plastics into valuable commodities such as oil, gasoline, or chemicals. This bill passed the Senate on March 18, and it now heads to the Governor to be signed into law.

PLENTIFUL PLASTIC

18.2 trillion pounds of plastic has been produced worldwide since the 1950s. That's equivalent to:



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Janet Loehrke, USA TODAY

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