

ECOLOGICAL SUSTAINABILITY BY REDUCING SINGLE-USE PLASTICS

Single-use plastics are the waste products of a throwaway culture that treats plastic as a disposable material rather than a valuable resource to be harnessed. These plastics find their way into our water, soil and air. Plastic elements have now successfully entered then entire food chain.

Single-use plastics account for about half of the plastic waste in the world. The most common single-use plastics found in the environment are, in order of magnitude, cigarette butts, plastic drinking bottles, plastic bottle caps, food wrappers, plastic grocery bags, plastic lids, straws and stirrers, other types of plastic bags and foam take-away containers. Plastic packaging is responsible for an extraordinarily high proportion of waste, which all too often ends up in the wrong place. Packaging generates more plastic waste than the next four biggest industrial sectors combined ([World Economic Forum](#)).

AVOID SINGLE-USE PLASTICS

- **Use a refillable water bottle.** Most water bottles are not recycled, only about 10% of the world's PET plastic (the stuff a water bottle is made of) actually ends up being recycled, this is a problem of epic proportions. A single liter of bottled water takes as much as 2,000 times the amount of energy it takes to produce the same amount of water that comes out of your tap. So, let's get out our refillable water bottles and fill them with tap water. It's not as convenient but its good for our planet. Bring along your own mugs and glasses when you to go to meetings or buy coffee out.
- **Be proactive when ordering out.** When you go out to eat, ask for your drink without a straw. It's a habit that can become natural. Same thing when you order food to go, be sure to order it without plastic silverware. Keep a set of silverware in your car that you can use when you are on the go.
- **Bring your own bags to the store.** In addition to reusable grocery bags, did you know that there are plastic-free mesh options for fruits and vegetables? Environmentally friendly bags and containers allow you to avoiding excess plastic packaging. You can also use reusable bags to buy bulk items and avoid packaging.
- **Wrap gifts thoughtfully.** Find alternative wrapping materials for your food and gifts that can be repurposed or reused like cloth towels or paper bags.
- **Invest in recycling what you cannot avoid.** When you can't refuse, reuse, or recycle an item easily, consider some of the more expensive but environmentally sustainable practices for recycling, such as [Terracycle Zero Waste Boxes](#).

Plastic pollution is a defining challenge of our times. The global production of plastics is projected to nearly double in the next 10 to 15 years. Our ability to cope with plastic waste is already overwhelmed. Only 9% of the nine billion tons of plastic the world has ever produced has been recycled. Most ends up in landfills, dumps or in the environment. If current consumption patterns and waste management practices continue, then by 2050 there will be around 12 billion tons of plastic litter in landfills and the environment. By this time, if the growth in plastic production continues at its current rate, then the plastics industry may account for 20% of the world's total oil consumption (United Nations Environment Program).

Each of us can reduce our individual use of plastic, lobby companies to use alternative materials and reusable containers and push our governments to enact legislation in the best interest of public health (American Scientist).

SELF ASSESSMENT

As a congregation we have committed to implement Laudato Si', which involves our individual and collective actions and choices. Please help us understand what practices you are already doing. Are there 1-2 choices you can make this year to make your life more sustainable?