

**ECOLOGICAL
RESOURCE
KIT
for
INDIVIDUALS
and
FAMILIES**

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**Commission on Justice
Glenmary Home Missioners**

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FOR
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Table of Contents

Introduction.....	1
Travel.....	2
Energy.....	3
Food.....	5
Water.....	6
Landscape Options and Lawns and God.....	8
Educate Oneself: Lobby for the Environment, Vote Wisely and Take the Pledge.....	10

WHAT INDIVIDUALS and FAMILIES CAN DO

INTRODUCTION

The Gospel call to love invites us to care for Earth upon which all of us depend for life. Together, in our homes, our workplaces, our communities, and our parishes, we can make choices that help to heal our planet and one another.

Today the destruction of the natural environment calls out to us in an urgent way. We believe that our response is called forth by the Holy Spirit, the teachings of the church and the reality of desecration. Now more than ever we must experience our unity with planet Earth, heal our separation from Earth, and accept our unique responsibility to ensure that our decisions will enhance and not diminish God's gift.

“The Great Work now... is to carry out the transition from a period of human devastation of the Earth to a period when humans would be present to the planet in a mutually beneficial manner... We might observe here that... No one is exempt... We cannot doubt that we too have been given the intellectual vision, the spiritual insight, and even the physical resources we need for carrying out the transition that is demanded of these times, transition from the period when humans were a disruptive force on the planet Earth to the period when humans became present to the planet in a manner that is mutually enhancing.”
(The Great Work, by Thomas Berry, CP)

“Christians in particular realize that their responsibility within creation and their duty towards nature and the Creator are an essential part of their faith... Respect for life and the dignity of the human person extends also to the rest of creation which is called to join man in praising God.” (John Paul II, 1990 Day of Peace Message)

Changes are needed on all levels. The institutional church as well as in governments need to change. However, each of us as individuals and as families has a responsibility to:

- **Consume less, share more, live more simply**
- **Borrow when you need to. Lend when asked**
- **Reduce, Reuse, Recycle**
- **Educate, Conserve, Insulate**
- **Be energy efficient and use renewable energy**

It is hoped that this Environmental Kit will be of help to live out this responsibility.

We want to be able to look our children, nieces, nephews, grandchildren, grandnieces and grandnephews in the eye knowing that we did everything that we could to leave them a viable and healthy planet.

We are all meant to be mothers of God because God is always needing to be born. (Meister Eckhart).

TRAVEL

Cars/Personal Vehicles

- Consider the advantage of buying hybrid cars. Trading a standard car for a hybrid cuts about one ton of carbon emissions. The cost will be coming down as the market is more favorable to hybrids. "I have a Honda Hybrid. At 68 miles an hour and with the AC on I got 48.6 miles to the gallon on an appeal last week. Not my math. There is an indicator on the dash that tells this." (Glenmarian)
- If you can't afford a hybrid, check the energy efficiency of a regular car...use cars that give good mileage per gallon.
- Keep vehicles in top shape for best MPG
 - Check your tires. Keeping tires properly inflated can improve gas mileage more than 3%.
 - Give your engine a tune-up. This can improve gas mileage 4% or more. Replacing a clogged air filter can boost efficiency 10%. If you can boost your gas mileage from 20 to 24 m.p.g. your car will put 200 fewer pounds of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere each year. (*Time*, 4/9/07)

Personal Habits

- Drive slower
- Carpool whenever possible
- Consolidate trips
- Ride a bike
- Pay your bills online, if possible. It saves trees by eliminating paper and reduces fuel consumption used by the truck that transports the paper. If every U.S. home viewed and paid its bills online, the switch would cut solid waste by 1.6 billion tons a year. (*Time*, 4/9/07)

ENERGY

Energy use: Reduce your consumption of energy in every way possible. Determine your carbon footprint and pledge to reduce it. Calculate your carbon footprint by visiting http://www.begreennow.com/redoffset/begreenreduceofset_cal.

Energy Audit: An energy audit determines how much energy you use, how much you waste and makes suggestions on how you can save energy. You can usually have an energy audit done through your utility company or you can do it yourself.

Lighting:

- Change your light bulbs to Compact Florescent Light bulbs (CFL). These use one-fourth the electricity and last years longer. Most of these bulbs are labeled “Energy Savers.” However remember that each CFL contains 5mg of mercury, so you cannot dispose of them in your regular trash.
- Turn off the lights when not in use.
- Use more natural light, when possible.

Appliances and other electrical devices:

Look for Energy Star labeled products. When you are in the market for home electronics, major appliances, office equipment, heating and cooling systems, windows or even a new home, choose one that has earned the Energy Star.

General Household

- Shut off electronic devices such as computers, TVs, DVRs, stereos, etc.
Remember, a screen saver is not an energy saver. According to the U.S. Department of Energy, 75% of all the electricity consumed in the home is standby power used to keep electronics running when TVs, DVRs, computers, monitors and stereos are “off.”” (*Time*, 4/9/07)
- Attach your appliances to a power strip that can be turned off.

Kitchen/Laundry Appliances:

- Energy Star Products: When buying new appliances, buy Energy Star products. These products consume 35% less energy than the average appliances.
- Washing Machine: Use a front load washing machine. Save up your clothes for a big wash and wash them in warm or cold water instead of hot water.
- Clothes Dryer: If possible, DO NOT use one. Instead, hang your clothes outside to dry.
NB. If you use an Energy Star washing machine to wash a full load in warm or cold water and then hang it out to dry you can reduce the CO₂ created by your laundry up to 90%. (*Time*, 4/9/07)
- Use the dishwasher only when it’s full.
- Use an “on demand” tankless water heater.
- Turning down the thermostat on the water heater to 120 degrees and wrapping it in an insulated blanket can save your household about 250 lbs. of CO₂ emissions annually. (*Time*, 4/9/07)

Heating and Cooling

- Heat and cool smartly. Have your system checked annually and install an Energy Star labeled programmable thermostat so you are not paying to heat or cool your house when you are not at home.
- Adjust the thermostat a couple of degrees higher in the summer and lower in the winter. In the winter, put on a sweater. Layers of clothing can be put on or taken off to keep comfortable. This way we use the body's natural heating and cooling system.
- Open a window in spring or autumn instead of running the air conditioning.
- Inspect your home for air leaks. Keep the warm air in and the big energy bills out of your house by following Energy Star Home Sealing recommendations for adding insulation to your home and weather-stripping and caulking around doors and windows.
 - Install insulating foam pads under your outlets and light switches.
 - Ensure your furnace filter is clean.
 - Insulate any garage, attic and basement with natural, nontoxic materials.
 - Protect windows from sunrays with large overhangs and double-pane glass.
 - Emphasize natural cross ventilation.
 - Consider solar electric systems, compact wind turbines and geothermal heat pumps to help power your home.
- Plant native, deciduous trees on the west and south side of your home to provide shade in the summer but will allow the sun to pass through in the winter.
- Live in a smaller house. A relatively inefficient small house consumes less energy than a greener large house and uses fewer building materials which also expands the carbon footprint.
- Buy green power. Check with your utility company to see if this is an option. If you don't live in a green power zone, you can support the industry by buying renewable energy certificates in another part of the country.
- Consider the possibility of investing in solar/wind power.

Paper: Use/buy recycled paper for use in offices and bathrooms. It uses 60% less energy than virgin paper. Each ton purchased saves 4,000 kWh of energy, 7,000 gallons of water and 17 trees. A tree has the capacity to filter up to 60 lbs. of pollutants from the air. (*Time*, 4/9/07)

FOOD

FOOD

- Eat and serve energy-efficient food that is locally produced and low on the food chain by:
 - Supporting your local farmer, thus reducing “petroleum miles.”
 - Buying local organic when possible. (good for humans and the soil)
 - Eating vegetarian...in terms of the amount of food produced from the land vs. feeding animals.
 - Eating fresh and nutritious food.
 - Eating local, grass fed, free range meat
 - Eating local fish as much as much as possible
 - Eating a balanced diet, according to season
- Use canvas grocery bags when shopping.
- Carry your own cup for coffee
- Use EnergyStar appliances in preparing food.
- Use reusable cloths instead of paper towels in the kitchen as much as possible

Waste.

- Compost pile: compost anything that does not walk, swim or fly.
- Use the compost to grow a garden
- Try to choose food with less packaging
- Recycle cans, paper

WATER

- **Water is a gift from God and a basic element of all life on the planet.**
- **Fresh water is at a premium** and is characterized by many as the “oil of the 21st century.” Future wars may indeed be about the control of water.
- **Water is seen as a commodity:** Corporations worldwide are converting water –a resource essential to life-into a commodity to be bought and sold. Unfortunately, this is supported by various trade agreements which describe water as a “service”, an “investment”, or a “good”.
- **Water is not recognized as a human right:** Water, while recognized as a human need, is not often recognized as a human right. There is a very strong for-profit attitude which overrides concern for people and/or the planet. **“Water is a public trust, a common heritage of people and nature and a fundamental human right.** We must challenge the notion that water is a commodity to be bought and sold on the open market. Those who are committed to the privatization of water are denying people a human right as basic as the air we breathe”.(Miguel D’Escoto, President, UN General Assembly, to the March 2009 World Water Forum.) Water cannot be treated merely as a need, privilege or a commodity.
- **Water privatization began in the 1990s** and was often stipulated as a condition of assistance from international financial institutions such as the World Bank and the Inter-American Development Bank.
- **Resistance to privatization is also strong.** However, resistance is often difficult because of the giant institutions of corporations and governments that people are up against. There have been successes, for example, in Bolivia where subsidiaries of the US-based Bechtel, and Suez, a French company have been banned from further business in Bolivia due to popular uprisings.
- **The 5th World Water Forum (WWF)**, organized by the World Water Council, which takes place every three years, took place in Turkey in March 2009. Although 180 countries were represented, it is considered by many, including the People’s Water Forum (PWF), a global water justice movement, as corporate driven. PWF calls for the next World Water Forum to be organized by the United Nations.

What can we do?

1. Learn more about the issue.

As we use lots of water for drinking, cooking, washing, and more for producing food, paper, cotton clothes, etc., we can take it upon ourselves to learn more about the issue. We can find out what is our water footprint, i.e. what is the total volume of freshwater that is used to produce everything that we consume.

Some facts on water from www.waterfootprint.org:

- The production of 1 kilogram of beef requires 16 thousand liters of water.
- To produce one cup of coffee we need 140 liters of water
- 900 liters of water needed to produce q kilogram of maize

- 1,350 liters of water to produce 1 liter of milk.
- 3,000 liters of water need to produce 1 kilogram of rice.
- The water footprint of China is about 700 cubic meters per year per capita. Only about 7% of the Chinese water footprint falls outside China.
- Japan with a footprint of 1150 cubic meters per year per capita, has about 65% of its total water footprint outside the borders of the country.
- The USA water footprint is 2500 cubic meters per year per capita.

2. Calculate your water foot-print by going to www.waterfootprint.org:

3. Say **No to Bottled Water:**

- **Don't buy it.** It's not a commodity! It's expensive, wasteful and toxic. In 2005, people spent \$100 billion dollars on bottled water. Plastic is made from non-renewables, natural gas and oil. Only 14% of plastic bottles are recycled and they take 1000 years to biodegrade. Potentially, carcinogenic chemicals and toxins leach from the plastic bottle into the water it contains. 25% to 40% of bottled water is actually "reprocessed" tap water. (www.wilpf.org)
- **Don't provide bottled water at events.** Provide an alternative.
- **Use glass bottles or stainless steel containers for personal use**
- **Support efforts for clean accessible water.**
- **Download the "No To Bottled Water Pledge"** from Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (www.wilpf.org), and collect signatures

4. Use **water conservatively:**

- Washing machines: When buying, look for top loading, low water use machines.
- Showers: Use low-flow showerheads.
- Toilets: Use low water toilets or composting toilets
- Brushing teeth: Don't let the water flow continuously while brushing.

5. **Don't use anything** that would contaminate the water.

6. **Collect** rainwater and 'grey' water for use in the garden.

7. **Sign on** to any group's call for water to be treated as a "heritage of people and of nature" and a fundamental human right. For example, the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom Petition (www.wilpf.org) and/or the petition to Congress as found in the Food and Water Watch site (www.foodandwaterwatch.org)

More information:

www.alliancefordemocracy.org

www.blueplanetproject.org

www.insidethebottle.org

www.sierraclub.org

www.nrdc.org

www.catholicandclimatechange.org

www.ccappal.org

www.isiswoemn.org

LANDSCAPE OPTIONS

- Landscape with edibles for yourself and birds using blueberry, figs, vegetables, edible flowers, fruit or nut trees.
- Xeroscape your grounds by “using native plants and natural materials to create a garden that adapts perfectly to its environment without coddling or special requirements. It is a non-invasive way of creating a pleasant outdoor environment, a way to connect with the feel and flavor of your region by living with the land, not on it.” (Rebecca Rankin.)
Reduced water consumption is an added benefit.
- Collect rain water for watering, washing the car, etc.
- Use solar outdoor lights and fountains.
- Limit the use of chemicals and pesticides in the yard.
- Use a rechargeable mower/weed eater.

LAWNS AND GOD!

GOD: St Francis, you know all about gardens and nature. What is the world is going on down there is the United States? What happened to the dandelions, violets, thistle and stuff I started eons ago? I had a perfect, no-maintenance garden plan. Those plants grow in any type of soil, withstand drought and multiply with abandon. The nectar from the long lasting blossoms attracts butterflies, honeybees and flocks of songbirds. I expected to see a vast garden of colors by now. But all I see are these green rectangles.

ST. FRANCIS: It’s the tribes that settled there, Lord. The Suburbanites. They started to call your flowers weeds and went to great lengths to kill them and replace them with grass.

GOD: Grass? But it’s so boring. It’s not colorful. It doesn’t attract butterflies, birds and bees, only grubs and sod worms. It’s temperamental with temperatures. Do these Suburbanites really want all that grass growing there?

ST. FRANCIS: Apparently so, Lord. They go to great pains to grow it and keep it green. They begin each spring by fertilizing grass and poisoning any other plant that crops up in the lawn.

GOD: The spring rains and warm weather probably make grass grow really fast. That must make the Suburbanites happy.

ST. FRANCIS: Apparently not, Lord. As soon as it grows a little, they cut it sometimes twice a week.

GOD: They cut it? Do they then bale it like hay?

ST. FRANCIS: Not exactly, Lord. Most of them rake it up and put it in bags.

GOD: They bag it? Why? Is it a cash crop? Do they sell it?

ST. FRANCIS: No, sir—just the opposite. They pay to throw it away.

GOD: Now, let me get this straight. They fertilize grass so it will grow. And when it does grow, they cut it off and pay to throw it away?

ST. FRANCIS: Yes, sir.

GOD: These Suburbanites must be relieved in the summer when we cut back on the rain and turn up the heat. That surely slows the growth and saves them a lot of work.

ST. FRANCIS: You aren't going to believe this, Lord. When the grass stops growing so fast, they drag out hoses and pay more money to water it so they can continue to mow it and pay to get rid of it.

GOD: What nonsense. At least they kept some of the trees. That was a sheer stroke of genius, if I do say so myself. The trees grow leaves in the spring to provide beauty and shade in the summer. In the autumn they fall to the ground and form a natural blanket to keep moisture in the soil and protect the trees and bushes. Plus, as they rot, the leaves form compost to enhance the soil. It's a natural circle of life.

ST. FRANCIS: You'd better sit down, Lord. The Suburbanites have drawn a new circle. As soon as the leaves fall, they rake them into great piles and pay to have them hauled away.

GOD: No. What do they do to protect the shrub and tree roots in the winter and to keep the soil moist and loose?

ST. FRANCIS: After throwing away the leaves, they go out and buy something which they call mulch. They haul it home and spread it around in place of the leaves.

GOD: And where do they get this mulch?

ST. FRANCIS: They cut down trees and grind them up to make the mulch.

GOD: Enough! I don't want to think about this anymore. St. Catherine, you're in charge of the arts. What movie have you scheduled for tonight?

ST. CATHERINE: "Dumb and Dumber," Lord. It's a real stupid movie about...

GOD: Never mind, I think I just heard the whole story from St. Francis.

(Author Unknown)

EDUCATE ONESELF

- Get in touch with the natural world.
- Get to know your bioregion.
- Estimate your carbon footprint and pledge to reduce it. (cf page 2)
- Teach your children to care for earth and have good practices.
- Join an ecology group at your church or start one if there isn't one.
- Educate oneself on what policies to support.
- Invest in socially responsible investments

LOBBY FOR THE ENVIRONMENT AND VOTE WISELY

- Demand policies that will drastically diminish greenhouse gases from the atmosphere now and protect the impact this has on the poor and the developing nations while allowing them to have an impact on global warming.
- Work with both state and federal legislators.
- Encourage your city to save energy by illuminating public space with light-emitting diodes (LEDs). They used 40% less electricity and last years longer.
- Lobby for the peaceful use of federal tax money
- Lobby for less packaging.
- Demand that the federal government set a national carbon standard for power companies. Follow California's tough new rules. (*Time*, 4/9/07)

TAKE THE PLEDGE

I pledge to demand that my country join an international treaty within the next two years that cuts global warming pollution by 90% in developed countries and by more than half worldwide in time for the next generation to inherit a healthy earth.

To take personal action to help solve the climate crisis by reducing my own CO₂ pollution as much as I can and offsetting the rest to become carbon neutral.

To fight for a moratorium on the construction of any new generating facility that burns coal without the capacity to safely trap and store the CO₂.

To work for a dramatic increase in the energy efficiency of my home, workplace, school, place of worship and means of transportation.

To fight for laws and policies that expand the use of renewable energy sources and reduce dependence on oil and coal.

To plant trees and to join with others in preserving and protecting forests.

To buy from businesses and support leaders who share my commitment to solving the climate crisis and building a sustainable, just, and prosperous world for the 21st century.

The pledge is available at: http://www.avaaz.org/en/global_climate_movement/tf.php