

The Problem with Plastic

Water and Ocean Reflection Series

MESSAGES FROM

POPE FRANCIS

'We are always capable of going out of ourselves towards the other. Unless we do this, other creatures will not be recognized for their true worth; we are unconcerned about caring for things for the sake of others; we fail to set limits on ourselves in order to avoid the suffering of others or the deterioration of our surroundings. Disinterested concern for others, and the rejection of every form of self-centeredness and self-absorption, are essential if we truly wish to care for our brothers and sisters and for the natural environment. These attitudes also attune us to the moral imperative of assessing the impact of our every action and personal decision on the world around us. If we can overcome individualism, we will truly be able to develop a different lifestyle and bring about significant changes in society.'

Pope Francis, Laudato Si #208



Photo: Ian L

CONNECTIONS AT THE UN

May 9th and 10th is International Migratory Bird Day. The theme for 2017 is "Their Future is our Future." The topic surrounding this theme will be 'Sustainable Development for Wildlife and People'¹.

Migratory birds share the same planet and the same limited resources as humans. These birds rely on food from the sea for their survival; however, evidence has shown that many of these birds mistake much of the floating plastic in our ocean as food...and are dying slow deaths primarily from malnutrition, due to a stomach full of plastic.

Food threats, due to pollution, is one cause of a decline in migratory bird numbers. Another cause is habitat loss as coastal and inland wetlands and marshes are lost due to development.

Wetlands and marshes provide safe resting places for migratory birds. They also act as filters in the cycling of water on this planet. These ecosystems can trap sediment and excess nutrients that can help improve water quality of our fresh water. Under sustainable development goal 6, one of the targets focuses on protecting and restoring water related eco-systems (target 6.6).

¹<http://www.greeningtheblue.org/event/world-migratory-bird-day>

TAKE ACTION

- FAMILIARISE YOURSELF WITH THE UN ENVIRONMENT #CLEANSEAS CAMPAIGN WEBSITE [HTTP://WWW.CLEANSEAS.ORG/](http://www.cleanseas.org/)
- BECOME INVOLVED IN EFFORTS IN YOUR LOCAL COMMUNITIES TO PRESERVE THE BEACH AND ITS INHABITANTS. BECOME INSPIRED THROUGH GLOBAL ACTION: [HTTP://WWW.WORLDMIGRATORYBIRDDAY.ORG/EVENTS-MAP](http://www.worldmigratorybirdday.org/events-map)

Reflection



Take a walk along a drain, stream, river, estuary or beach....notice pollution and pick up rubbish.

Study the rubbish (in particular, the plastics) you pick up...

What type of plastics are they? Can all the different types of plastics be recycled? Does your area/country recycle it's own plastic waste ...if so where/how? If not? Where/who does it go to and why?

What is your country's position on single-use plastics (primarily associated with medical waste)? Do they have a policy in appropriate and environmentally friendly waste disposal of single use plastics?

What is your country's position on micro plastics? (many countries are now banning micro plastics) From your walk, draw or take pictures.

Write a poem, short story or reflection on what you discover on your journey.



Prayer

Creator God

Fill us with the sound of seagulls singing out at sea...

Fill us with the sound of waves talking to the wind...

Fill us with the sound of oohhs and ahhs of children, the delight and wonder of life in rock-pools, abundant and clear...

Fill us with the sound, of laughter and community of families on the beach...

Create in us the capacity...to look at ourselves and our choices...to make change.

Create in us the capacity....to ensure we don't have silent beaches.

Amen

DID YOU KNOW?

- Plastics will take 1000 years to degrade in a landfill. Plastics need the sun to break-down and buried waste takes longer to decompose.
- The energy saved from recycling one plastic bottle can power a 100W lightbulb for one hour.

Sources : <http://your.caerphilly.gov.uk/kidsgogreen/fact-zone/plastic-facts> ,
<http://www.mrcpolymers.com/PlasticRecyclingFacts.php>