

Global Campaign To Prevent Plastic Pollution – SIGNS OF HOPE...

Our Journey Into Using Plastic..

Plastic was first discovered in 1907 but it was only in the 1960s that it became popular, for example plastic bags have only been in circulation for the past 50 years. In his extraordinary series on the 'Blue Planet' David Attenborough revealed the enormous damage plastic pollution is causing: *"The world's oceans are turning into a 'toxic soup' of industrial waste and plastic, putting the future of humanity at risk."* Images of turtles with plastic straws in their nostrils and dolphins slowly dying because of plastic tightly wrapped around their necks, is making everyone think again about our collective and personal use of disposable plastic like straws and water bottles.

If as Attenborough states bluntly: *"The Future of humanity and all life on earth now depends on us..."* then it is our responsibility to take action NOW, to 'care for our Blue Planet'. Plastic is a major culprit of deadly pollution, due to the fact that it is permanent and indestructible, taking hundreds of years to degrade. Currently eight million tonnes of plastic ends up in the ocean each year, making it imperative that each of us addresses the situation as a critical concern.

"We can be silent witnesses to terrible injustices if we think that we can obtain significant benefits by making the rest of humanity, past, present and future, pay the extremely high costs of environmental degradation." Pope Francis, 'Laudato Si' 36:



www.google.ie/search?q=free+images+of+plastic+pollution Blue Ocean Network

It is possible to address plastic pollution via a two pronged approach. One is to demand that manufacturers produce less plastic, whilst scientists look for a viable alternative. The other is we each consciously work towards not using plastic i.e. eliminate one-use plastic at home, not buy goods like fruit, meat and bread wrapped in it, nor buy non compostable coffee cups.

Awareness Raising – Seeds of Hope...

In recent years various campaigns across the world are making inroads towards a plastic free environment. Signs that momentum is slowly growing is evident in the number of articles and news items on plastic pollution. At the same time there are initiatives offering great hope. Some of these include:

- 1. Anti Plastic Mantra:** The adoption of the popular and important mantra re my personal use of plastic i.e. *Refuse, Reuse, Reduce and Recycle*. An increasing number of grocery shops are offering loose vegetables and fruit or providing paper bags for shoppers,

thereby reducing the demand for one-use plastic. McDonalds is committed to eliminating plastic straws globally by 2020 but many countries are working towards a target of 2019.

2. **Boyan Slat**, the young Dutch Founder and CEO of *'The Ocean Cleanup'*, specifically the Great Pacific Garbage Patch (four times the size of California!) stated in May 2017 that half of this huge area will be free of plastic in five years! This is possible through a design break-through in the technologies they are developing, to rid the oceans of plastic.
3. **Favellas Anti-Plastic Initiative**: Some excellent programmes have been developed in the favellas of major cities e.g. Sao Paulo in Brazil, whereby teams of youth and adults go out early each morning and pick up plastic rubbish. They take their load to a depot where it is weighed and they receive payment. In some instances the money is banked, facilitating the payment of school fees and rent; making it a popular and expanding programme.
4. **UN Sustainable Development Goal number 14**: *"Conserve and Sustainably Use the Oceans, Seas and Marine Resources."* One of the 17 SDGs of the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, Goal 14 was the focus of the UN Ocean Conference held in NY in June 2017. Among the 4,000 attending, were participants drawn from the UN, Governments, NGOs / Not For Profit, Private Organisations and Academia, to discuss the critical situation of plastic pollution in the oceans. The outcome was the adoption of an ambitious document: *'Our Ocean, Our Future: Call for Action'* evoking 1,400 voluntary commitments to redress the situation. All Governments are being urged to implement this important document.
5. **Global Personal Response**: More of us are responding to the campaigns encouraging everyone not to use plastic water bottles, opting instead for a glass bottle or buying a 'keep container' thereby reducing a huge source of plastic pollution. According to UN Secretary-General António Guterres 1 million plastic drinking bottles are purchased every minute, and annually up to 5 trillion disposable plastic bags are used! In total, 50 per cent of all plastic is of single use. During his address on World Environment Day this year Guterres said *"Our world is swamped by harmful plastic waste. Every year, more than 8 million tonnes end up in the oceans, so micro plastics in the seas now outnumber stars in our galaxy."* New York, June 5th 2018
6. **Pope Francis Speaks Against the 'Throwaway Culture' in Laudato Si**
Since he presented his ground-breaking encyclical 'Laudato Si' to the world three years ago, echoes of Pope Francis' call to heed 'The Cry of Earth and the Cry of the Poor' continue to challenge us to relate differently with Mother Earth. This change calls us: *"..to enter into dialogue with all people about our common home."* LS Paragraph 3. Francis consistently refers to the 'throwaway culture' that is doing so much damage to Earth but is also reflected in the disregard for humans, expressed in many forms. As Ireland prepares for the World Meeting of Families in August, there are many groups working to ensure that it is a **green event** with the minimum amount of rubbish generated...

The Ongoing Journey Towards a Plastic-Free World...

- ✚ Eliminate 'one-use plastic' from my life i.e. plastic straws, vegetable, fruit and meat plastic packaging. At home use dishes or jars or paper towels, to store food instead of using cling film. See: <https://myplasticfreelife.com/plasticfreeguide>

- ✚ Take personal responsibility for the plastic pollution I generate and encourage others to do the same. Choose other options to plastic.
- ✚ Support Campaigns and initiatives working towards a plastic-free world; that challenge manufacturers to find an alternative to plastic; and that support companies to get rid of harmful plastic like straws.
- ✚ Check this *Plastic Pollution Resource* to learn more about the damage plastic causes: www.earthday.org/wp-content/uploads/Plastics-pollution-primer-master-file-for-website.pdf

Pray Pope Francis' Prayer:

**"... Bring healing to our lives,
that we may protect the world and not prey on it,
that we may sow beauty, not pollution and destruction.
Touch the hearts
of those who look only for gain
at the expense of the poor and the earth.
Teach us to discover the worth of each thing,
to be filled with awe and contemplation,
to recognize that we are profoundly united
with every creature..."**

Further Information

Boyan Slat <http://www.theoceancleanup.com>

David Attenborough: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Blue_Planet_II

Plastic Ocean-United Nations https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ju_2NuK5O-E

Pope Francis' Encyclical 'Laudato Si'

http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si.html

Mercy World website: www.mercyworld.org

<http://www.plasticpollutioncoalition.org/take-action-1/>

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