

An Earth Day Message
April 22, 2009

Pope Benedict XVI has been forthright on environmental concerns. Recently he told a large gathering of priests “God entrusted man with the responsibility of creation.” The Pope cited St. Francis of Assisi as an example of a man who lived “a way of life that is respectful of the environment.” In another message the Pope said, perhaps reluctantly we come to acknowledge that there are also scars which mark the surface of the earth; erosion, deforestation, the squandering of the world’s mineral and ocean resources in order to fuel an insatiable consumption.”

What does Earth Day mean to us as a Diocesan family? First, we believe it is a responsibility to be good stewards of the resources entrusted to our use. We are not owners of these gifts; we are temporary users of the gifts and they are to be preserved for those who come after us. Second, on a very practical level the proper use of the resources available to us saves money and helps provide more resources for our ministries.

Following are some realistic approaches to safeguarding our environment and while we are doing it reducing our costs.

Save energy

- Turn off appliances and lights when you leave the room.
- The last person in an office should turn off the copiers and computers at the switch, not just depending on the “power saver” device. It is estimated that a computer and other office machine uses about 30% of its energy being “power ready”. Turn it all the way off at the end of the day.
- Replace incandescent light bulbs with qualified Compact Fluorescent Light (CFL) bulbs. If every household in the U.S. replaced one light bulb with a CFL, it would prevent enough pollution to equal removing one million cars from the road. CFL’s use 75% less electricity and last up to 10 times longer.

Water

- If a faucet or toilet is leaking please report the situation to our maintenance employees. A leak can waste 200 gallons of water a day.
- Consider drinking tap water instead of bottled water. The plastic used for the container of bottled water uses a lot of energy to produce and is not biodegradable. If you find that the tap water offends your taste buds let us have it tested and perhaps install a filter and fill reusable bottles. If you must drink bottled water please recycle the bottle.
- Reduce water flow to pencil width when you turn on faucets.

Reduce/reuse/recycle

Think about the three R's of conservation; first reduce how much we use, then reuse what you can, and then recycle the rest.

- Reduce
 - Buy permanent items instead of disposables
 - Use only what you need, for example, look for opportunities to double side when copying.
 - Make sign near printers and copiers that “Think Before You Print”
 - Buy products with less packaging

- Reuse
 - Repair items as much as possible
 - Use durable coffee and drink containers. We should reserve disposable containers for meetings and guests. Styrofoam cups should be anathema they use a lot of petrochemicals to manufacture and don't degrade in the landfill.
 - Reuse boxes and file folders
 - Purchase refillable pens and pencils

- Recycle
 - Recycle paper (printer paper, newspapers, mail, etc.), plastic, bottles, cardboard, aluminum cans.
 - Close the loop – buy recycled products and products that use recycled packaging.

We would appreciate your involvement and we are sure you have some good suggestions to add. Please email financeoffice@diobelle.org and we will happy to pass them along.

Pope John Paul II wrote “An education in ecological responsibility is urgent, responsibility for oneself, for others, and for the earth...a true education in responsibility entails a genuine conversion in ways of thought and behavior.”