

JUST Notes SPECIAL ISSUE ON AVOID THE USE OF PLASTIC APRIL, 2010

We promise to promote ecological justice by devoting resources to improve the quality of life in our global community and educating and advocating for the sustainability of our planet.

--Promise Chapter 2006
Sisters of St. Joseph of Orange

EARTH CHARTER--PRINCIPLE II: Ecological Integrity

5. Protect and restore the integrity of Earth's ecological systems, with special concern for biological diversity and the natural processes that sustain life.
6. Prevent harm as the best method of environmental protection and, when knowledge is limited, apply a precautionary approach.
7. Adopt patterns of production, consumption, and reproduction that safeguard Earth's regenerative capacities, human rights, and community well-being.

NOTE:

If you have no time to read the entire JUST Notes, click on the following link to gain a better understanding of the impact of our use of plastic on wildlife, an excerpt from "Message in the Waves". http://www.plasticbagfree.com/iframe_facts.php

PLASTIC - The most important thing to understand is there is no such thing as "away" when it comes to plastics. When people say "Oh just throw it away", where precisely is "away"? Just because it's no longer in our home, in our work place or in our car does not mean its "away" it just means we no longer have to view on a daily basis and its somewhere else on this planet. Out of sight out of mind, and not our problem! Well remember we've only had plastic since the 1950's and it is anticipated that it lasts for at least 400 years!

– Adapted from *PlasticBagFree.org*

MISCONCEPTIONS ABOUT PLASTIC RECYCLING

- Plastics that go into a curbside recycling bin get recycled. Not necessarily. Collecting plastic containers at curbside fosters the belief that, like aluminum and glass, the recovered material is converted into new containers. In fact, none of the recovered plastic containers from the City of Berkeley are being made into containers again but into new secondary products such as textiles, parking lot bumpers, or plastic lumber – all unrecyclable products. This does not reduce the use of virgin materials in plastic packaging. "Recycled" in this case merely means "collected," not reprocessed or converted into useful products.
- A chasing arrows symbol means a plastic container is recyclable, but the arrows are meaningless. Every plastic container is marked with the chasing arrows symbol - "resin identification code". It indicates the general class of resin used to make the container. The attorneys general of 11 states objected to false and misleading claims about plastic recyclability. The recent settlement that they reached with the American Plastics Council paves the way for a first-ever definition of what claims can or cannot be made about plastic recycling and recyclability. Packaging resins are made from petroleum refineries' waste. A non-renewable natural resource.

--Adapted from *Ecology Center*

THREE TYPES OF PLASTIC THAT ARE SOMEWHAT THE BEST CHOICES

- **#2 HDPE, #4 LDPE and #5 PP** transmit no known chemicals into your food and they're generally recyclable; #2 is very commonly accepted by municipal recycling programs, **but you may have a more difficult time finding someone to recycle your #4 and #5 containers.**
- **#1 PET** is fine for single use and widely accepted by municipal recyclers; **avoid reusing #1 water and soda bottles**, as they're hard to clean, and because plastic is porous, these bottles absorb flavors and bacteria that you can't get rid of.
- **PLA** are plastics made from renewable resources such as corn, potatoes and sugar cane and anything else with a high starch content; although you can't recycle these plant-based plastics, you can compost them in a municipal composter or in your backyard compost heap.

--Adapted from National Geographic: Green Guide

PLASTICS TO AVOID

- **#3 PVC** is used frequently in cling wraps for meat. PVC contains softeners called phthalates that interfere with hormonal development, and its manufacture and incineration release dioxin, a potent carcinogen and hormone disruptor.
- **#6 PS** found in Polystyrene-foam cups and clear plastic take-out containers can leach styrene, a possible human carcinogen, into food.
- **#7 PC** is the only plastic made with bisphenol A, polycarbonate is used in baby bottles, 5-gallon water-cooler bottles and the epoxy linings of tin food cans. Bisphenol A has been linked to a wide variety of problems such as heart disease and obesity. *--Adapted from National Geographic: Green Guide*

WHAT IS BEING DONE?

- In 2008 Canada deemed infant exposure to BPA potentially unsafe and banned the sale of baby bottles that use the chemical — a step later taken by a number of American states and major retailers, including Walmart.
- Other countries are ahead of the United States in finding ways to reduce the impact of plastic bags on the environment.
- In Bangladesh Polythene plastic bags have been banned completely - the government is promoting bags made of jute, a natural fiber.
- In Ireland individual consumers are required to pay a 15cent tax per plastic bag - this has resulted in an estimated 90% reduction in plastic bag use in the first year.
- The European Union - Member countries require manufacturers/producers of plastic bags and other plastic waste to take them back and recycle them.
- In Taiwan and South Africa thinner plastic bags are prohibited - this encourages people to bring their own bags since retailers can't afford to provide the more expensive, thicker plastic bags for free.

TAKE ACTION

- **Stop using so much plastic.**
- By using ONE reusable cloth bag, you can save up to 6 plastic bags a week that translates into 24 bags a month or 288 bags a year that amounts to 22,176 bags in an average lifetime.
- Ask your favorite stores to stop providing bags for free, or to offer a discount for not using the bags.
- Encourage your local politicians to introduce legislation taxing or banning plastic bags.
- Buy one stainless or a reusable (BPA-free!!!!) plastic bottle that you can use for years to come. You will save money as well!
- **Avoid plastic cutlery and plastic plates.**
- Insist on eliminating unnecessary packaging.
- Use glass, porcelain or stainless steel containers for hot foods and liquids.
- Don't microwave polycarbonate plastic food containers. Instead, use glass containers designed for microwaving.
- Reduce your use of canned foods — many cans are lined with a BPA-containing resin.

PRAYER

Our Land, Our Mother

Lord God, creator of all the earth, you have given us the mountains and trees, the waters and the good earth which supports our crops, our animals and ourselves. Never let us lose our love for our land, which is our mother. Help us to protect the land from abuse and to enrich the soil when we abuse it. Make our mother, the earth, fruitful again.

Prayer from the Philippines/Education for Justice

OPPORTUNITIES AVAILABLE TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE

- **Watch**, “The Story of Bottled Water” <http://www.stopcorporateabuse.org/story-of-bottled-water?r=banner>
- **Use and share** this “Green Guide for Everyday Living” <http://www.thegreenguide.com/buying-guide>
- **Use and share** these “Top 10 Simple Ways to Consume Less” <http://www.reusablebags.com/facts.php?id=30>
- **Find ways** to “Reduce, Reuse and Save” <http://www.reusablebags.com/facts.php?id=24>
- **Read** “The Perils of Plastic” http://www.time.com/time/specials/packages/article/0,28804,1976909_1976908_1976938-1,00.html
- International Biodegradable Products Initiative (www.bpiworld.org)
- Grassroots Recycling Network (www.grrn.org).
- One thing we can do...<http://earthday.nature.org/reuse/?gclid=CNTnsJjW8KACFRRcbQodInZMFg>