

Laudato Si in Action

Most Common Source of Plastic Waste: Cigarettes

What's the most common form of plastic pollution in the world? Straws, industrial waste, plastic bags? No, according to an article in earthday.org:

Cigarette butts are actually the most abundant form of plastic waste in the world, with about 4.5 trillion individual butts polluting our global environment.

Cigarette butts are made up of paper, tobacco, chemical toxins from smoking, and surprisingly, mostly plastic.

In *Laudato Si*, Pope Francis tells us:

We read in the Gospel that Jesus says of the birds of the air that “not one of them is forgotten before God” (Lk 12:6). How then can we possibly mistreat them or cause them harm?

But according to an article in the journal *Environmental Research* from May 2019:

Cigarette butts are a pervasive, toxic and recalcitrant type of marine litter that requires urgent attention from manufacturers, users, authorities and the public to prevent the ingestion of cigarette butts by biota and water pollution from its leachate.

So what can you do about cigarette butt litter? First, if you smoke, consider this another reason to quit. But if you continue to smoke, please dispose of your cigarette butts carefully in garbage bins so they stay out of our waterways and the environment.

And whether you smoke or not, you can help with the clean up. Earthday.org suggests:

Picking up cigarette butts from your local environment is unpleasant but is a great way to clean your community — you'll be amazed at how many cigarette butts you can find in any given area. Use gloves and masks for safety.

You can read more about the problem of cigarette butt waste and suggested solutions at <https://www.earthday.org/tiny-but-deadly-cigarette-butts-are-the-most-commonly-polluted-plastic>

Working together, we can help take care of our common home.

Paul Litwin